

"Plenty, sir—for a few days."
 "All right, then, ma'am. Now you go back where you are stopping here, and you come to the office again the day after to-morrow at four o'clock in the afternoon. Very likely by that time there will be something definite to report to you." The commissioner hesitated, and looked a little embarrassed. "You said your husband had insured his life for \$5,000. Do you know whether the premiums have been kept paid upon it or not?"
 "He paid for a whole year in advance about five months ago," said Mrs. Sharp. "I have the policy and receipts in my trunk."
 "Oh, that's all right, then," said Standifer. "It's best to look after things of that sort. Some day they may come in handy."
 Mrs. Sharp departed and soon afterward Luke Standifer went down to the little hotel where he boarded and looked up the railroad time table in the daily paper. Half an hour later he removed his coat and vest and strapped a peculiarly constructed pistol holster across his shoulders, leaving the receptacle close under his left armpit. Into the holster he shoved a short-barreled .44 caliber revolver. Putting on his clothes again, he strolled down to the station and caught the five-twenty afternoon train for San Antonio.
 The San Antonio Express of the following morning contained this sensational piece of news:

"BENTON SHARP MEETS HIS MATCH."

"The Most Noted Desperado in Southwest Texas Shot to Death in the Gold Front Restaurant—Prominent State Official Successfully Defends Himself Against the Noted Bully—Magnificent Exhibition of Quick Gun Play."

"Last night about eleven o'clock Benton Sharp, with two other men, entered the Gold Front restaurant and seated themselves at a table. Sharp had been drinking, and was loud and boisterous, as he always was when under the influence of liquor. Five minutes after the party was seated a tall, well-dressed, elderly gentleman entered the restaurant. Few present recognized the Hon. Luke Standifer, the recently appointed Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History.

"Going over to the same side where Sharp was, Mr. Standifer prepared to take a seat at the next table. In hanging his hat upon one of the hooks along the wall he let it fall upon Sharp's head. Sharp turned, being in an especially ugly humor, and cursed the other roundly. Mr. Standifer apologized calmly for the accident, but Sharp continued his vituperations. Mr. Standifer was observed to draw near and speak a few

sentences to the desperado in so low a tone that no one else caught the words. Sharp sprang up, wild with rage. In the meantime Mr. Standifer had stepped some yards away, and was standing quietly with his arms folded across the breast of his loosely hanging coat.

"With that impetuous and deadly rapidity that made Sharp so dreaded, he reached for the gun he always carried in his hip pocket—a movement that has preceded the death of at least a dozen men at his hands. Quick as the motion was, the bystanders assert that it was met by the most beautiful exhibition of lightning gun-pulling ever witnessed in the Southwest. As Sharp's pistol was being raised—and the act was really quicker than the eye could follow—a glittering .44 appeared as if by some conjuring trick in the right hand of Mr. Standifer, who, without a perceptible movement of his arm, shot Benton Sharp through the heart. It seems that the new Commissioner of Insurance, Statistics and History has been an old-time Indian fighter and ranger for many years, which accounts for the happy knack he has of handling a .44.

"It is not believed that Mr. Standifer will be put to any inconvenience beyond a necessary formal hearing today, as all the witnesses who were present unite in declaring that the deed was done in self-defence."

When Mrs. Sharp appeared at the office of the commissioner, according to appointment, she found that gentleman calmly eating a golden russet apple. He greeted her without embarrassment and without hesitation at approaching the subject that was the topic of the day.

"I had to do it, ma'am," he said, simply, "or get it myself. Mr. Kauffman," he said, turning to the old clerk, "please look up the records of the Security Life Insurance Company and see if they are all right."

"No need to look," grunted Kauffman, who had everything in his head. "It's all O.K. They pay all losses within ten days."

Mrs. Sharp soon rose to depart. She had arranged to remain in town until the policy was paid. The commissioner did not detain her. She was a woman, and he did not know just what to say to her at present. Rest and time would bring her what she needed.

But, as she was leaving, Luke Standifer indulged himself in an official remark.

"The Department of Insurance, Statistics and History, ma'am has done the best it could in your case. 'Twas a hard case to cover according to red tape. Statistics failed, and History missed fire, but if I may be permitted to say it, we came out particularly strong on Insurance."

Unkissed Children

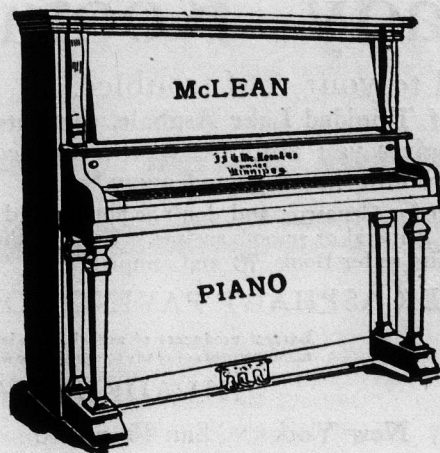
This world's a rare and joyous place
 For those who deem it so,
 With smiles enough for every face—
 This is no tale of woe.
 But yet, when all's been done and said,
 Some little children creep,
 At cuddling time, unkissed to bed
 And sob themselves to sleep.

Their daddy's off to work, somewhere,
 Their mammy's tired and worn,
 Both burdened down with carking care
 From the first break of morn.
 Each love-starved young one on the list
 Has troubles by the heap,
 Yet each must go to bed unkissed,
 And sob himself to sleep.

Oh, world of sunshine mixed with storm,
 Oh, world of tears and joy,
 Oh, world of frozen hearts and warm,
 Oh, world of man and boy!
 Less were your sorrow, less your dread,
 If, when night's shadows creep,
 Each little lad were kissed to bed
 And smiled himself to sleep.

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