

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WICHITA.

Wichita was headquarters for the Texas cattle trade for two or three years after the Santa Fé Railroad was completed into that place, and nearly all of the tough characters of the West drifted into the city during that time. One of the best known "bad men" there was "Rowdy Joe," who had formerly been at Abilene. He had a common-law wife, who was his partner in crime, and who could drink more poor whisky and shoot quicker and more accurately than could Joe. She was known as "Rowdy Kate," and fully justified the appellation, for it was said that she had shot and killed five men, two of whom were former husbands. She was jointly interested with Rowdy Joe in a dance-house on Douglas avenue, just south of the river. Old Red, also a killer and an all-round tough, started a dance-house just west of Rowdy Joe's place, and one evening in the summer of 1872 they were sitting in front of their respective places discussing the direction that the Arkansas river was running just where the bridge crossed, and Old Red disputed Rowdy Joe about the matter. Without any further provocation, and probably, as he afterward expressed

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it, to "cinch the argument," Rowdy Joe drew his revolver and shot Old Red through the breast, causing instant death. Rowdy Joe was never arrested for this crime, but continued in the same business by annexing Old Red's place to his, making a double establishment.

Joe Basset, one of the best known gamblers of the Southwest, was in 1873 operating a gambling-house at Jim Dagen's place, over the saloon on Main street, near Douglas avenue. One day a drummer called Long Long visited Basset's place, and, playing lucky, won several hundred dollars playing "bank." After he quit the game he invited Basset to go down town with him and show him the sights, as he had never before been in a red-hot cowboy town. Long Long was a tall, slender man, a neat dresser and polite and suave at all times; he was about six feet five inches in height, and this was probably the cause of his being called "Long Long." Basset took him over the river to Rowdy Joe's place, where they found about fifty men and women engaged in dancing. Everything was harmonious and peaceable for a while, and Long seemed to be enjoying himself greatly, but presently some cowboys who had been drinking freely, and for that reason, probably, were refused admittance to the hall, rode around to the north side of the building and fired twenty or thirty shots through the windows, probably not intending to kill anyone, as the shots all ranged

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upward and therefore went above the heads of the dancers. Long Long heard the revolver-shots and saw the glass shattered and falling to the floor, and then he made a rush for the door and down the street toward the bridge, followed by Basset, who was accustomed to such exploits and wished to convince his friend that there was no cause for alarm. Basset called in vain for Long to halt and wait for him, but that polite gentleman, looking back and seeing Basset was calling him, replied: "No, no; many thanks, Basset; I am under many obligations for your courtesy in introducing me to this lively and interesting cowboy show, but I have other engagements that will prevent me from staying longer, and I do not desire any company at this time, as my mind is preoccupied and I could not be social; so if you will permit me I will proceed to the hotel alone." All of this was spoken while he was making double-quick time toward the bridge. Basset was unable to overtake him until he reached the hotel, and then it took several good stiff drinks of whisky to get his nerves back to their normal condition.