CONTEST OVER A CORPSE.

A Texas Woman and an Indiana Woman Both Claim to be the Wife of the Same Dead Man.

Its Either Mistaken Identity, an Attempt to Blackmail, or a Man Who Ran Two Establishments.

ATLANTA, GA., Feb. 15, 1886.

To the Editor of the Gazette.

I hand you inclosed a clipping from the Constitution of yesterday, which I presume is all the evidence the reporter can get so far in the Pierce-Weaver case, as both parties are careful not to let all their evidence be known. This is one of the most remarkable cases I have ever known or read of, and I take it that your readers in Texas, where Wood Pierce was so well known, will think it strange that he should ever be taken for another man and one too who was so well known in Fort Worth as J. P. Weaver was. But you would be surprised and astonished were you here to meet old gray-headed men who say that they knew Weaver well and had lived near him for years and that it is the body of Weaver and no mistake about it. I have met many who say to me, "It is impossible for it to be the J. W. Pierce you say you have known so well for the past twenty years." Others who know Weaver well will listen to me while I tell how I have known him since 1866, when he settled first in Johnson county and afterward moved to the Herndon Valley, then Brown county, Hill county, Manard county, etc., and that it has only been a few months since I last met him, and then will say, "You must certainly believe it is Wood Pierce, but I am equally certain it is Weaver."

Mr. Silas Lovelady of Cleburne is here and saw Pierce before he was killed, and has also seen the dead body and says he knows it is that of Pierce.

Mr. Belton, a citizen of Tarrant county, living near Arlington, who came here with Pierce from Fort Worth and remained with him all the time up to his death, and was badly scalded himself, is here and swears to the body as that of Pierce. Parties who tell me that they know what the Weaver side can prove say that their proof is sufficient to hang a man for murder twice over. That is just what I think the Pierces can do. It is expected that Pierce's widow will be here by Thursday, accompanied by two other witnesses from San Angelo, Tex., and both parties will, it is expected, be ready for trial on Saturday next. I understand that Mrs. Weaver says she has no doubt but that Mrs. Pierce is the Mrs. Eadon with whom Weaver ran away and lived in Fort Worth in 1884, and so the matter stands at present.

An amusing thing in connection with this affair is this. Belton, who I have spoken of above, was at first reported dead. In due course of time a lady very elaborately dressed in black made her appearance in Atlanta, claiming that it was not Belton who was killed but Felton, her husband, and put in claim to his effects and was going to sue the railroad company for a large sum for his loss. This being communicated to Belton he asked a minute description of the lady, and after being sure he could select her among some half dozen others, he was ushered into her presence and at once recognized and claimed his dear wife and was proceeding to embrace her as all good husbands do, when to the utter astonishment of all present she declared him to be a fraud and no husband of hers, he insisting all the time that she was his wife and should go home with him as a good wife should. I am told that she has not been seen in Atlanta since. Mrs. Weaver appears to be a lady and is highly indorsed by a great many of the leading citizens of Indianapolis.

E. M. HEATH.

The following is the clipping from the Constitution referred to above:

What a curious case is this contest over the corpse of J. W. Pierce!

Let us review the testimony. A wealthy stock dealer from Texas is in Atlanta with his friends. His name is J. W. Pierce. He buys the Arabian mare, Gypsy, and starts home. In the Georgia Pacific wreck he is killed. His son telegraphs from Texas, asking that his remains be buried in Atlanta for the present.

Shortly afterward a Mrs. Weaver—attested a lady of irreproachable character by highest authority—appears in Atlanta and claims that J. W. Pierce was really J. P. Weaver, her husband and the father of her children.

Mr. Walter Brown is made her attorney, and the corpse is exhumed. It is identified by the peculiar pitch of the toes, by a wound in the neck and of course by the features. Mrs. Weaver being satisfied the corpse is returned to its grave. The next day it is exhumed again, and an Atlanta lady who knew Weaver identifies it instantly and positively as that gentleman.

In the meantime Mr. Belton, of Texas, who was with the dead man on his trip to Georgia, declares that the Weaver story is absurd—that he knew Pierce all his life—can bring a thousand of his neighbors to swear that Pierce never was or could have been Weaver; and then losing the gravity of the occasion in the breezy habits of the plains, offers to bet $5000 to $1000 or double or half in the same proportion that the corpse is that of Pierce. The son and son-in-law of Mr. Pierce are men of high character and standing, and say it is impossible to establish the fact that Pierce was Weaver.

Mrs. Weaver reappears, reinforced by a leading Indianapolis physician. Judge Lochrane is brought into her counsels. Her physician swears that Weaver was shot in the back of the neck, while living in Indianapolis, by a Mr. Eaton, because of trouble with Mrs. Eaton. He probed for the ball and dressed the wound. The corpse is exhumed again and the wound is found exactly as described, and is sworn to by the physician. A letter written with a stylographic pen to Mrs. Weaver, signed by J. P. Weaver and posted at Atlanta the day before the the Georgia Pacific wreck, is produced. A stylographic pen and paper corresponding to those in which the letter was written are found in the dead man's effects.

The excellent Mr. McBurney, of Oakland cemetery, overcome by the excursions into the country announced his intention of going over to the Texas appointment, which he did, but he came back up

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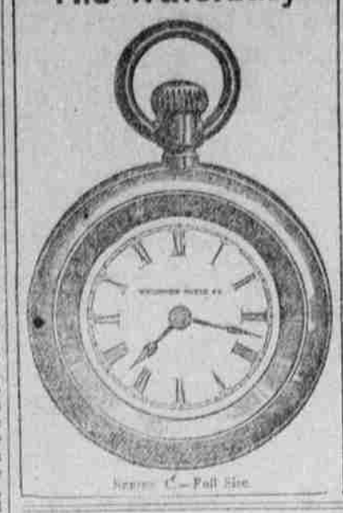

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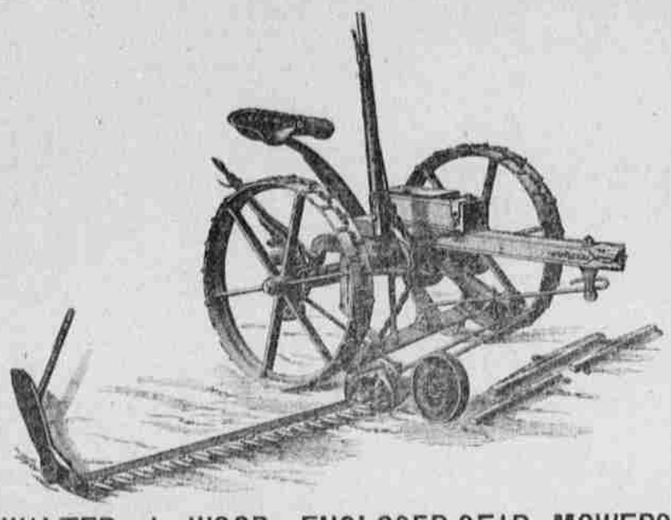

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