

mode of living. He was again relentlessly pursued by the officers of the law, and met with such hair-breadth escapes as have seldom been recorded even in the most sensational literature. On one occasion, it is said, when closely followed by marshals and a pack of bloodhounds, he leaped into the Canadian river and swam to a spot where an overhanging branch touched the water's edge; catching on with his teeth, his mouth and nose over water, his head and entire body concealed from view, he remained in that position until his pursuers, supposing him drowned, at last gave up the chase. For a short time after this incident Tom Starr was reported dead, but he was heard from in Eastern Texas a few weeks later. A large reward was placed upon his capture, dead or alive, and fully half a dozen deputy marshals and Cherokee officers laid plans to ambuscade or otherwise entrap him. Starr was not a highway robber as reported by his enemies, nor was he a robber at all. True, he once, when in a terrible strait for the means of subsistence, carried off some negroes and disposed of them to the first bidder; but in his case it was a matter of steal or starve, as he could not stop long enough at any one place to work for wages. Horses he never laid hands on with the intention of appropriating them to himself, though several times, when closely pursued, he leaped into the first empty saddle that met his eye, or, leaving his tired beast, exchanged it for a fresh horse wherewith to continue his flight. Such actions are not to be placed on a par with horse-theft, an offense which Tom Starr looked upon with contempt, as did all men possessing a spark of honor or principle.

As remarked before, Tom Starr was never captured. He had too many friends willing to sacrifice much for his sake. In him they recognized a certain nobility of nature that elevated him above the petty criminality of theft. Had he been a thief, this sympathy would never have existed. He was one of themselves, outlawed by the cruel combination of adverse