

F. D. Rylee
(COPY) made from file of *Mr F. H. Bates*



MEMORIES OF LONG AGO.

by

Mrs. J. D. Rylee of Granbury, Texas.
(nee Sadie McDonald, of Glen Rose, Texas.)

When the sun is smiling brightly,
And life seems one glad song,
"I'm your friend," spoken lightly,
Seems to well up from the throng.

Should you sky be overcast,
With dark clouds hanging low,
Would any of these friendships last -
Through the storm, do you know.

How rare is our friends,
Whom you can trust above the rest,
Search your realm from end to end,
See who will stand the test.

Copy
My father, William McDonald, was reared in Rockford, Ala. by Scotch-Irish parents. Later married Miss Mary Collens and several years later came to Texas, which was in the year 1858. Settled on Squaw Creek, then Johnson County, but now Somerville County, four miles north of Glen Rose.

Copy
He lived in a large hewed log house, two rooms with a long hall between, the cracks being tightly plastered with mortar, for they did not dare have any openings through which the light could shine at night, on account of the Indians. He was living at this place when St. Helen came to make his home with us. I was father's first Texas child, opening my blue eyes and discovering America on a Sunday morning, Dec. 4, 1860. They christened me Sadie Elizabeth, but often called me their Texas dear (deer). *born*

I was seven or eight years old when St. Helen came, and he stayed with us several years, then went away for a good while. He then came back and stayed another year with us before he went in business at Glen Rose. I was 12 or 13 years old when he left our house, or went away from Glen Rose, and I never saw him any more, but I remember him, the things he did and said, as well as if it was yesterday they happened.

He was medium height, hair black as a raven. Long black mustache, black eyebrows, dark piercing eyes. What any one would call a real handsome man. He dressed in a black suit, black hat, white shirt and black tie, black shoes or boots, which were neatly polished at all times. His suit was always clean and nicely pressed, something unusual for men in the West at that time. They looked more to the comfort of the family and protecting them from the Indians that was troubling them here in those days.

But nothing of this kind bothered St. Helen. The trouble that he carried with him day and night was concealed in the depths of his heart, and was of such a nature as to worry him much more than the thought of coming in contact with the red skins would have. I have noticed him looking morbid, or morose, in deep study, but only for a short time, then he would think - throw off this cloak of unhappiness - and soon be alert and seemingly happy.

He carried a cane most all the time. I thought at first it was for style, and it was a long time before I knew it was to hide his bad thumb, he was so proud.

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He limped very much when he first came to our home, and would often bathe and rub his leg with liniment. He said a horse fell with him and broke his leg. It was the custom here then for every one to ride horseback. Most people would ride any horse that would hold still long enough for them to get on, but St. Helen would choose a more gentle one, saying he did not want to get hurt any more. I thought then that was his reason, but now I know it was just because he couldn't ride like the rest of the boys.

He roomed with my two older brothers, Jack and Dave, and often went with them and my older sister, Sudie, to parties or dances. There were several neighbor girls and boys, and they all went together, and some times all of them would be at our house. St. Helen would go with or talk to the crowd, but never went with any single girl, or made love to any of them. So many wondered at this, the same as they did about so many strange things about him. He dressed, acted and was so different from any one else in the West that people wondered why he was here, spending his time in the wild West, where it was so dangerous to try to live, besides encountering so many hardships, denying himself so many of the comforts and pleasures of the cities in the far East, which he was used to. Every one who met him marveled at the cause of his being here. But he was so clever, made himself so interesting with any crowd he happened to be with, that they all loved him and bothered no more about the strangeness of him being here. We were always happy in the evenings when he would amuse us with his poems, and sometimes tell us an entire play of Shakespeare, or Browning, and often recited Tennyson's poems. The girls all liked him, for he made a good beau, spending his money lavishly on them, or on any one he would be with. He always had plenty of money. Father said he received money every three months, from different places. The people wondered how he kept plenty of money and didn't ever work, but that didn't bother him. It seemed to be the least of his troubles.

My father would go to Cleburne two or three times a year, which was 25 miles east of Glen Rose, or 40 miles further to Dallas, to market his bacon and other produce, bringing back supplies needed for the family. St. Helen sometimes went with him. The negroes, several of whom stayed with father after they were freed, would drive the double team to the wagon, and father and St. Helen would follow on horseback. They always took saddle pockets with them. On their return St. Helen would always bring fruit, candy, handkerchiefs and perfume to us children. Girls were not allowed to take valuable handsome presents from men in those days as they do now; therefore, St. Helen never offered anything except such as I have mentioned. He was too much of a gentleman.

It was after he made one of these trips, near Christmas, he came in with a beautiful gilt edged box, with a picture of a beautiful girl on the top. He opened it and gave each young lady two handkerchiefs, one of the neighbor girls was there so he gave her the ones he had intended for me. He then stepped back, filled the box with mixed candy, turned to me and said: "Now the little girl gets the nicest yet, the box and candy," giving it to me. That was what I wanted, the box and some of the candy too.

I still have the box and some of the verses that were around the candy. I was always a great lover of curios or relics. My father told me after I was older that there was something mysterious about our friend, St. Helen. I am most sure father knew all about it, but I was too young to be trusted with such a secret.

Many times St. Helen would teach me to recite a short poem. He would tell me just how to stand and how to make gestures. The last time he was with us I was older and took more pride in my lessons, as he called them. He was the only elocution teacher I ever had. I still give readings in the Literary Club at this place (Granbury) of which I am a member. What I know in this line of study I owe it all to St. Helen, for we had no elocution teachers here then in our little school.

The last time the wild Indians made a raid through this country was in October 1869. They took 14 head of horses out of our corn patch near the house. It was in the fall of the year and father had gathered the corn, and so would turn into the patch at night the horses they had used the most so as to have them handy the next morning. Brother Jack was in this fight. The Granbury men head them off and kept them from going on until the Glen Rose crowd came up (of which my brother was one.) They run them in a ravine with a high bank on one side and brush all around. It was difficult to get to them. They had the advantage and would shoot any one that came in front of them. They had killed one man and wounded another, when God sent His wisdom to their rescue. It had been a little cloudy all day, but now the clouds began to gather fast and then the rain began to pour. Soon the ravine was more than waist deep in water and they got their bows and arrows wet and they could not use them, as they were made of raw hide. It was then easy for our men to step around and kill them. They placed them on the bank of the creek and scalped them, took other things in their possession, got all of the horses back. St. Helen laughed about Brother bringing the saddle, bridle, scalp and bow and arrows of the squaw. There was only one Indiana woman in the bunch of seven. I don't know who killed her, but Brother brought all of her belongings home with him. We felt so proud of him for being so brave. St. Helen wouldn't even go to the fight, guess he did not want to see anybody else killed.

He used to sit and watch me mold candles and parch coffee, a duty I had to perform every Saturday. Some of the rest of the family would mould bullets while I would mold candles. He always seemed so interested. I know now it was because it was so different from the way he had lived in the city.

I would have recognized St. Helen's picture anywhere. I remember distinctly what an awful rattling he had in his throat, so much more when lying down, especially when sleeping on his back. By the time he came back to our house the last time he stayed with us, father had built a new room, off some 20 feet from the main house, built it of plank, and had two glass windows in it. My, we were proud of it. We called it the "New Room." St. Helen and my brothers occupied this room after it was built. When this room was finished (it was real large) father gave a big supper and dance, a custom of those days. I guess there were 50 people there. The table stayed set all night, with plenty of good things to eat and drink. Every one danced, ate, drank and made merry as they pleased, but still no one took too much to drink or said anything to mar the pleasure of others. Look how many they fed

then, and the food was all good, too. Now if you get invited out to dinner once a year, you are lucky, and then they can tell in a month from then just how many pieces of chicken and how many biscuit you had eaten.

Oh! Where is the world that we used to know,
In the good glad days of the long ago.

Where are the good old fashioned mothers. Not a woman of the period - painted and enameled - with all of her society manners and fine dresses, white jeweled hands that never felt the clasp of sweet baby fingers. The mother, with the sweet voice, eyes filled with love light, and brown hair just threaded with silver. Her hands gently guided our footsteps in childhood and smoothed our cheeks in sickness, ever reaching out to us in yearning tenderness. Blessed is the memory of such a mother, it floats to us like the sweet perfume of some rare wood blossom. The music of other voices may be lost, but the enchanting memory of her's will echo in our souls forever,

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Mrs. J. D. Rylee,
Granbury, Texas.

November 7, 1920.

To Mr. F. L. Bates,
Memphis, Tenn.

STATE OF TEXAS :
COUNT OF HOOD :

Before me the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared Mrs. Sadie Rylee (Mrs. J. D. Rylee) known to me to be the person whose name is affixed to this instrument and says that the statements contained in the foregoing pages are true and correct.

(Signed) Mrs. J. D. Rylee,
AFFIANT.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th. day of October, 1920.

(SEAL) (Signed) Nellie G. Robertson
Notary Public in and for Hood
County, Texas.

My commission expires June 1, 1921.