

MURDERER, NOW SHERIFF

ONE-TIME CONVICT GETS A FULL PARDON.

R. T. Mansker Was Convicted of Manslaughter—Publicly Known He Was a Convict, But Citizens Had Faith in Him.

Denver, Col., December 3.—Twenty years ago Robert T. Mansker was released on parole from the Colorado State Penitentiary, where he had been sentenced for manslaughter. Yesterday he received an unconditional pardon from Governor Shafroth. The pardon was granted in order that Mansker might accept the office of Sheriff of Union county, New Mexico, to which he was elected by an overwhelming majority.

It was publicly known that Mansker was a one time convict. In spite of that, voting in accordance with their personal impressions of the man, the citizens of Union County elected him Sheriff. He led his ticket.

In 1889 Mansker killed a man. He was tried and found guilty of manslaughter, in spite of the fact that evidence showed that he had not fired a single shot at his victim until the latter had shot three times at him. He was sentenced to four years in the penitentiary at Canon City. He believed himself to have been justified in the killing for which he had been sentenced. He was convinced that his sentence was unjust. But for all that he did not permit himself to become embittered—at least, if he did, the fact was not found out.

His conduct was exemplary, and he was paroled on December 31, 1892. That meant that he was free to come and go as he liked, but that he was still technically a prisoner of the State, subject to the will of the warden of the penitentiary. Under such conditions he went to New Mexico, became a farmer and was successful in a small way in Union County. He was pleasant to meet and had none of the cynicism that usually becomes a part of the mental attitude of those who have bitter experiences.

Many times he was asked to become candidate for county offices, but declined. At last he did yield, however, and accepted the nomination for Sheriff.

Having accepted, he went into the race with determination to win. He had made no secret of his prison life. But he was surprised when the opposing political party showed an intention to use it against him. His "criminal record" was the principal campaign material of the opposition.

As the story spread, it was exaggerated. The jury had found him guilty of manslaughter, but the citizens of Union county, New Mexico, were called upon to believe that Mansker had been guilty of cold-blooded murder. For campaign purposes there was no admission of a theory of self-defense—the fact of the shooting, and the record of the court, were all that Mansker's opponents wanted.

And on election day it was found that most of the people of the county went to the polls with just one purpose—to vote for Robert T. Mansker for Sheriff.

Then, after he had been elected, somebody dug out of the State constitution the provision that no one time convict could hold office unless he had been unconditionally pardoned by the Governor of the State in which he had been sentenced.

Then arose a public demand that that difficulty should be overcome. It was not the will of the people that the man they had nearly all voted for should be kept out of office. Petitions signed by long lists of Union county were sent to the Governor of New Mexico demanding that something be done to give Mansker the right to hold office. There was even some talk of calling an extra session of the New Mexico Legislature to make special provision for Mansker—although it was doubtful whether that could be done.

Practical minds, however, speedily reached the conclusion that there was a simpler way. What Mansker needed was a pardon, full and unconditional. The thing to do was to get that for him, Governor Mills, of New Mexico, sent a personal letter to Governor Shafroth asking for the pardon. Other State officials of New Mexico, of opposite political party to that of Mansker, sent similar requests.