

THE NORTH-CAROLINA STAR.

NORTH CAROLINA—"Powerful in intellectual, moral and physical resources, the land of our sires and home of our affections."

TERMS—Two Dollars in Advance.

THOMAS J. LEMAY, Editor.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

THE CROSS ROAD.

Two weary travellers were seen bending their way along a dim and narrow road that wound in course through a country but thinly inhabited, along the side of a rugged, barren mountain, which towered away high up to the heavens, and around whose top the threatening mists hung heavily, and were joining with an appalling black mass of thunder clouds that were rising up in the west, and looked frowning down upon all beneath upon the edge of which the lightning almost sported, now darting in a zig-zag direction, and then gleaming forth in an unbroken chain of light, followed by peals of deep-toned thunder that burst upon the hill and rolled down upon the valley, dying suddenly away in the distance. The travellers mended their pace as the darkness gathered into deeper gloom, and the coming night was stealing on with dreary forebodings.

Far along that narrow road the travellers had now proceeded, which was growing more and more imperceptible as it wound still further into that impenetrable wild; yet they continued moving on with great vigor, as objects were but faintly seen in the light that was fast giving place to coming darkness.

"This cross-road is a fearful place," said the elder traveller; "but see you yonder light that twinkles in the distance?—it is from the mountain house."

When the sentence was broken by a bright and vivid flash that burst upon them, and the report of a musket penetrated the gloom that surrounded them.

The speaker fell, and two men rushed from the thicket, but the nervous arm of the other as he threw himself before them, laid them prostrate. It was thought of a moment to lend assistance to his companion, and he bent to raise him upon his feet.

"Fly, fly, and leave me," said the wounded man, you know not the danger that surrounds you, but remember this!—and then closing his eyes, he repeated again in a whisper, "fly," when immediate escape was rendered necessary, for the two ruffians had risen, and were preparing for revenge, as two others were seen approaching.

At the termination of the cross-road was situated what in those untroubled days was called the mountain house, and there weak and faint, the wounded man was lying upon a bed, whither he had been carried. His wounds, which were not dangerous, having been dressed, and every accommodation which that rude inn afforded had been given, and he was left to silence and repose. The other was watching the movements of the clouds without, with something of a restless anxiety; but as they rolled together in a dark and confused pile, and the heavy moaning wind swept through the forest and a howled around the house, it too surely indicated a coming storm that would pour down torrents from the mountains to sweep upon the lowlands below.

The signs of the storm were now upon the mountain tops, and as the first rain fell, upon his memory and side over every eye with something of an inextinguishable fear, he listened to the pattering of the rain which had commenced fast, and the deep breathings of the wind, as it bent the tops of the forest trees about him, until his fancy was wound up into a feeling of fearful awe. Other sounds seemed to mingle with the wind; and as the traveller listened, these words were audible:

"Murder him to-night, and further it upon the wounded traveller—you shall be mine for ever; take these, they are the pledges I promised."

At that moment the whole heavens became lit up with a vivid brightness, and flash succeeded flash as the lightning played around the mountain tops, and peal after peal of heavy-toned thunder followed in awful sublimity.

At the first burst of light, the traveller perceived him who had just uttered the words of fearful import; his ears had caught. He appeared in earnest conversation with a female, and at the moment the features of both were impressed as with a gleam of association upon his memory; but by the faint glimmering that succeeded the deep darkness that had followed the first gleaming flash, the place where they stood was only occupied by some objects which lay upon the grass, and those the traveller secured.

The evening had worn away until the hour of nine, but the rain had now ceased, and the light, flying clouds which lately crossed the horizon, and a thousand stars were twinkling in the heavens, rejoicing in their beauty; the moon, too, was casting her mellow light upon the valley, as it had slowly ascended over the distant mountain, and beamed forth in its own lovely brightness. At any other time the youthful traveller would have paused to view the beauty of the scene, but now he journeyed hastily on only turning his eye occasionally at the bushes that grew by the way-side, where he will leave him, and return to the mountain house.

A noise in the adjoining room had awakened the wounded man from a refreshing slumber, and the voices of several persons were heard, earnestly conversing.

"Here he is," said the landlady, as she opened the door; "no doubt he will be found unable to rise, but we'll see," and entering, was followed by several men.

The traveller had risen up in the bed in a hasty manner, and alarm was evidently pictured upon his countenance, as he heard.

"What want you here?"

"We come to arrest you for the offence of murder—so rise dress yourself," said the officer of justice.

The poor man was unable to comply, but his clothes were hastily forced upon him, as he murmured.

"For murdering whom?"

"Ah, he will pretend to know nothing of it. O, my poor husband!" cried the landlady, and then bent back to the room.

"Yes, will you ever see him again?"

"I saw a savage-looking man, but he confessed, my dear, were his words as he addressed the female."

Notwithstanding his wounds the traveller

was hurried away to an examination, where, by the testimony of the landlady, substantiated by the other speaker, he was committed for trial.

The day for the sitting of the court at length arrived, and before the crowd of anxious spectators, the prisoner was brought forward; feeble and lame, he rested upon the officer until he arrived at the bar, where he pleaded "not guilty" to the indictment in a firm voice, and the trial proceeded.

A criminal testimony was strong against him; a bloody knife had been found upon the bed the morning of his arrest—and all the thought and circumstance of the trial, which will transpire when spectators are east upon an individual, all tending to throw a veil of still deeper dye over such transactions that will gain credit as they spread from mouth to mouth, and the table became more doleful as it circulated abroad, until prejudice had pronounced guilt upon the dead. The prisoner felt this to be the case, but relying upon his innocence, he rose and simply related his story.

There was something in his manner that penetrated the heart; and pale and dejected, as he stood before the spectators and artlessly told his tale, all was in favor, and many there were who believed it true.

"What testimony had you to corroborate what he said?"

"I have none," the prisoner answered, in a firm yet subdued voice, which was followed by a momentary and sympathetic silence.

But I have something to say," said a young man, who rose, went forward, and took his stand as a witness, and bending his knee upon the guilty pair, he produced a handkerchief and a letter from his pocket, and laid them before him.

"Do you know this handkerchief, madam?" he inquired of the female; "and you, sir, addressing the man of savage aspect, 'can you tell the contents of this letter?' will he held up to the view of all."

"Yes you murdered him," cried the female in a voice of merr, addressing the savage-looking man.

"And so I did, and you assisted me," was his reply; then clenching the sheriff, shoved aside, and rushed towards the door.

It was in vain, for he was soon secured, brought back and seated by the side of the female. Order being restored, the young man related every incident, and the traveller was unanimously acquitted; and loud cheerings succeeded this triumph of innocence.

The guilty pair were punished, and two grass-grown hillsides now mark the spot where the cross road terminated. The wandering whodunn has given him only memorial to their memory or their crime, which is carved upon the noble tree that spreads its branches over their graves.

AN AMUSING STORY.

Hooper, the editor of an Alabama journal whose name we need not forget, but who has almost always something in it to make us laugh, tells the following capital yarn:

"I tell you a bit of a story, having no connection with politics, this hot, dry weather. By permission—"

"Old Col. D., of the Mobile district, was one of the most singular characters ever known in Alabama. He was tall and decrepit, but many fine qualities, which were fully appreciated by the people of the district. He was a free and frank man, and the accuracy of his 'old news' of Mr. D. and all of them will tell you that the Colonel, though hard to beat, was a real 'tall' in a couple of legs, tells the story; but however that may be, it is in keeping with others related of the old gentleman."

"It seems that Col. D.—had a misunderstanding with two gentlemen alluded to, and was not on speaking terms with them, although all of three were professionally riding the circuit pretty much together. The young ones, being well aware of Colonel's irascible nature, determined, as they left one of the courts for another, to have some sport at his expense by the way. They accordingly got about half an hour's start on the road, and presently they arrived at a broad dark stream, that looked as if it might be a dozen feet deep, but which, in reality, was hardly more than six inches. Crossing it, they alighted, pulled off their coats and boots, and sat down quietly to watch for the old 'Far-tar.'"

"Jogging along, at length came up the old fellow. He looked at first at the youngsters, who were gravely drawing on their boots and coats, as if they had just had a swim—and then he looked at the broad creek that rolled before him like a fluent translucent star. The Colonel was awfully puzzled."

"Is this creek swimming?" he growled after a pause of some moments.

"No reply was made—the young men simply mounted their horses and rode off, some little distance and stopped to watch our hero."

"The Colonel slowly divested himself of boots, coat, pants and drawers. These he neatly tied up in his handkerchief and hung them on the horn of the saddle; then he mounted, and as he was a fat, short man, with a punch of moderate size, rather inadequate legs, a face like a withered apple, and a brown wig, there is no doubt he made an interesting picture as he bestrode his steed, with the 'breezy holding gentle dalliance' with the extremities of his only garment."

Slowly and cautiously did the old gentleman and his horse take the creek. Half a length—and the water was not deep. Here the horse stopped to drink. A length and a half—and the stream no deeper. Thirty feet farther, and a decided slumping!

"Here Colonel D.—reined up. 'There must,' said he, 'be a—of a swift deep channel between this and the bank. See how the water runs! We will dash through!'"

A sharp splash made the horse spring the water way and another creek the horse and rider safely to the opposite bank. The creek was nowhere more than a foot deep."

A wild yell from the young ones announced their approbation of the sport as they galloped away.

"I'll catch you—'rascals,'" was ground between Colonel D.—'a leech; and once he galloped in, and caught, muttering vengeance on his fires."

On—say speed, pursue and pursue! The youngsters laughed, yelled, and screamed—the Colonel dashed with mighty emphasis, while his shirt flattered and cracked in the wind, like a loose flying jib."

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"But, gentlemen, I was no respecter of persons—American or Mexican—native born or foreign born—whenever knew the law and obeyed it not—whenever, reckless of his own responsibilities, and the rights of others, trampled under foot and set at naught the law that was over all, I punished. I did hang the crimes stated, and I would have hung a hundred seekers of innocent blood, and violators of female chastity, if so many had been the offenders! And for this, perverted and misapprehended, I am made answerable to a charge against which my every feeling revolts, and which my whole nature and my whole life repel. No, gentlemen, it is false (the charge as made, or that any were so cruelly punished), a false and groundless lie. I am unthankful to my good friends, who have said of me these things! It was right, but gentlemen, I stand here, before you, and declare as I have already declared, and again declare, that the principles that governed my command in Mexico, are those of my life. To that life in my country's service, need not appeal in vain for an answer now. With equal freedom and consequence do I throw myself under the honest verdict of every man, who with me, acted his country in the fields of Mexico."

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