

THE DEMOCRAT.

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JAMES BOWIE'S DUELS

Legends of the Mississippi River in the Early Sixties.

Late as the year 1860, the steamers plying on the Mississippi river were just as infested with organized gangs of gamblers as are some of the steamers now that ply between this country and Europe, and the scenes thereon occurring were frequently of a violent character, for people are robbed nowadays with much more equanimity in all ways than they were in the good old times.

During the fall of 1862, the steamer Orleans, Captain Davis commanding, running between Nashville and the Crescent City, became the theatre of a rather typical encounter. A young man of Natchez going North for the summer on his wedding trip, had been requested by a number of merchants and planters in the neighborhood to collect sundry accounts due them in New York and some other places where he proposed to visit.

A gambling syndicate in some mysterious way, had gotten news of this and had been informed that if properly handled, the young man might be an easy mark. They watched him carefully and shortly after his arrival in New York some of their members made his acquaintance and learned that he would return South by way of Pittsburg, where he proposed to board a steamer for Louisville, and, after visiting a few days in that city, to take a packet for New Orleans that stopped at Natchez and other points on the river.

One of the men who had made his acquaintance in New York joined him on the boat at Pittsburg, and, greeting him heartily as an old friend, introduced him to two alleged Louisiana planters, who made themselves quite agreeable. Cards were introduced in the gentlemen's cabin during the evening, and the young man was allowed to win small sums, so that by the time the boat reached Louisville he fondly imagined that he was a complete master of the game and the equal of his opponents.

The game played in those days was 20 card poker, that is with no cards in the deck below the 10—an excellent game to hold high and inspiring hands and in which the "three-pluck-one" or favorite cross-fitting trick of the gambling fraternity can be brilliantly employed.

The packet Orleans was differently buffed from the steamers nowadays, the men's cabin being on main deck, directly under the women's, and, instead of the round wheel houses of the present, those of the Orleans were square, with a flat top which rose within two feet of the hurricane deck, with a distance between the houses of about 36 feet.

The gambler's had won all their victim's money but a few thousand before the vessel reached Vicksburg, but intended to complete their work before it arrived at Natchez.

But a few miles above Vicksburg, a tall man with smooth-shaven face, who looked very much like a preacher, had come on board and he, with others, stood looking at the game in the men's cabin. The dupe was half drunk and wholly desperate, the misfortune of hoping to win back holding him as in a vise and making him deaf to the entreaties and tears of his young wife, who several pushed through the throng of men, begging him to leave the game and come to their stateroom.

At 1 o'clock in the morning the last dollar of the victim had been swallowed up by the human river sharks, and, rising from the table he rushed wildly to the side of the vessel, doubtless with the intention of anticipating disgrace by suicide. He was seized by the tall stranger, who had followed him, and by his wife who was watching him, and was persuaded to go to his cabin and seek sleep instead of death.

"Keep awake and watch him closely till I return," said the stranger to the distracted wife.

Going back to the cabin where the gamblers and others were clustering at the bar, the stranger drew from his pocket a big wallet, and handing a \$100 bill to the bartender, quietly asked for change. The other being unable to make it, referred him to the chief gambler.

"With pleasure," said the man, and noting the fat wallet, added courteously "won't you have a drink?"

The tall man assented and casually remarked that, as he was going to stop off at Natchez, it was hardly worth while to go to bed, whereupon one of the other gamblers, getting a wink from his chief, chimed in: "I don't care to go to bed either. Let's play another game."

Whereupon the stranger was invited to join them, and after some demur, consented.

They allowed him to win some sizable bets, but just as day was beginning to break, the dealer gave him a hand that would induce him to bet a little more largely.

The ante was \$5 and the blind was \$10, the next man put in \$20, the stranger \$40, which was followed by \$100. They went on raising each other in the usual fashion, except that the hundreds jumped rapidly into thousands, while the breathless crowd around them instinctively drew closer with a sense that something was coming.

At last \$100,000 was stacked up on the table and the dealer and one of his confederates had dropped out. The man who made the blind and the stranger remained, looking into each other's faces, the former with a flush on his forehead, the latter pale and cool, as if he were napping at church. But his eyes were

very vigilant and he was only waiting for the crucial moment when the dealer would slip a card to his opponent.

Suddenly rising, he drew a long, hideous-looking knife, with a curious curved point, from his bosom, and, throwing his own hand on the table, said serenely: "Four kings and a 10 take this pot."

Then he seized the gambler by the wrist and added: "Show your hand as it is. If it contains six cards, I shall kill you."

The stranger's voice was almost as quiet as if he were speaking in a lady's parlor. But there was a depth, a purpose, in it which the whole crowd felt from head to foot.

As the cards from the gambler's suddenly twisted wrist fell on the table, there were seen to be four aces, a queen and a knave.

There was a moment of deathlike silence. Then a roar like the breath of a prairie fire went up from the crowd which was composed chiefly of planters and honest travelers.

"Who the devil are you anyway?" cried the baffled gambler when the shouts subsided.

"James Bowie," was the answer.

The voice was like velvet, but it cut like steel into the hearts of the chief gambler's confederates and deterred them from any purpose or impulse they might have had to interfere. They, with the crowd, shrank back from the table, smitten with sudden terror by the name. Bowie slowly swept the bank notes into his large slouch hat and lightly clapped it on his head.

"You must fight me for this," said the chief gambler, recovering his courage at the loss of his booty.

"Certainly," said Bowie, "I said I should kill you. In what way do you prefer it? With knife or pistol?"

"Not with your weapon," replied the man savagely.

"Se be it, then!" returned Bowie. "Will some gentleman lend me a pistol and act as my second?"

A dozen were instantly offered, and selecting one very carefully, Bowie said: "Let it be on this boat, and at once. Make the arrangements to suit yourselves. I will return in five minutes."

Lightly as a panther, he bounded up the stairs and went to the young man's cabin, knocked, handed the contents of his hat to the wife, telling her that two thirds of it belonged to her husband and the rest to himself and that he would return in a few minutes.

The seconds had arranged that each of the duellists should stand on one of the wheelhouses, and that the signal "one, two, three, fire—stop!" They were to shoot between the words "fire" and "stop" as often as these words were uttered.

At the first call the professional gambler fired before the word three was entirely uttered. Bowie fired just after, apparently without taking aim, and his opponent, with a shriek of agony, turned a somersault backward and fell into the river, just as the great round face of the sun, like a golden cannon ball, shot up from behind the neighboring bluff.

Bowie blew the smoke out of his pistol, shut down the pan and descended from the wheelhouse as if little affairs of this kind were his usual appetizer before breakfast. Then he divided the money with the young man's wife, and, in spite of their affectionate solicitations, for they regarded him as their savior, clung about him and wished to take him home with them, he got off the boat at Rodney telling the young man that he must never touch a card again as long as he lived.

THE SOFTEST PLACE.

How the Widow Broke Tim's Uncle all to Pieces.

"I was down to see the widow, yesterday," said Tim's uncle, "and she gave me backbones for dinner. I went down rather early in the morning; we talked and laughed, and chatted and run on, she going in and out occasionally to see to things till dinner was ready, when she helped me graciously to backbone. Now I thought that, Tim, rather favorable. I took it as a symptom of personal approbation, because everybody knows I love backbone, and I flattered myself she had cooked them on purpose for me. So I grew particularly cheerful, and I thought I could see it in her too. So after dinner, while sitting close beside the widow, I fancied we both felt sorter comfortable like—I know I did. I felt that I had fallen over head and ears and heart in love with her, and I imagined from the way she looked, she had fallen teeth and toe-nails in love with me. She appeared just for all the world like she thought it was a coming, that I was a going to court her. Presently I couldn't help it, I laid my hands softly on her beautiful shoulder, and I remarked, when I had placed it there, in my blindest tones, Tim, for I tried to throw my whole soul into the expression, I remarked then, with my eyes pouring love, truth, and fidelity, right into her, 'Widow, this is the nicest, softest place I ever had my hands in all my life.'"

"Looking benevolently at me, and at the same time flushing up a little, she said, in melting and winning tones: 'Doctor, give me your hand, and I'll put it on a much softer place.'"

"In a moment, in rapture, I consented and taking my hand, she gently, very gently, Tim, and quietly laid it on my head—and burst into a laugh that's ringing in my ears yet."

"Now, Tim, I haven't told this to a living soul but you, and by jinks! you mustn't; but I couldn't hold it any longer, so I tell you; but mind, it mustn't go any further."

THERMAL CITY NOTES.

Accident and Rhe at the Alcohol Works.—Going West.

THERMAL CITY, N. C., February 25.—Some of the cross tie magnets are stopping at the Thermal House. Mr. Conquest, the leading manager for Brockie & Welsh, Messrs. Tapp, Carpenter and Kanipe are here.

Mr. A. F. Weaver is driving out with Mr. Conquest a pair of black horses.

Mr. Bob Miles discoursed, sweetest music every evening on his guitar.

Mr. Williams, the genial salesman from Messrs. Hirschinger & Co., Charlotte, displayed a fine line of samples here last week.

Messrs. Johnnie and Herbert Weaver, also Mr. Baber and family are going West next week. Their many friends regret this exodus.

An accident occurred at Mr. Clark's alcohol works. A team fell through a dilapidated bridge and badly crippled one mule. The driver escaped without injury. A few nights ago one of his shanties was burned. We could see the fire from here.

The Widow Sarratt has been very ill, but is better now. Drs. Nabors and Royster are in attendance.

"The cheekiest drummer" was here a few days ago. We admired his assurance.

We learn later that the accident at Mr. Clark's works was not caused by a dilapidated bridge. One mule pushed the other off and fell on it. Moral: Always walk over a bridge, if it is not banistered.

We have had many letters of inquiry, concerning the "proposed cotton mill" here. We refer all to Mr. Conner, Pittsfield, Me., who owns a fine woolen mill there, and is also one of the stockholders in the Golden H. L. Co. here.

Mrs. John Weaver and Miss Laura are doing the honors at the hotel, and Mr. Herbert is "mine host."

MARGARET MALONE.

CUBA CHAT.

Copper Bill Gives Some More Good Advice to Farmers.

CUBA, N. C., February 24.—We have just passed through another cold snap. It came very near getting us while out hunting for coppers. Our ears were frost bitten, but kerosene oil is cheap and a good remedy.

Some of the farmers have got on a hustle, and sowed their oats too soon this spring, and we expect they will have to sow again, or do like the folks do over the river. Some of our brother farmers are in such a hurry that they can't wait for the ground to get dry enough to plough when it rains. They just hitch up and make the dirt roll, and some even plough when it is so cold that the ground freezes before they get a round ploughed. Don't be in too big a hurry, brother farmers, it is a good while till planting time yet. Plough soon and late when the land is dry enough, and when it is too wet cut ditches, or better, throw up terrace ridges so as to prevent the land washing, and better still, haul pine needles or rich earth into the barn yard and make compost in abundance; and it would be a right good idea to get in, or prepare, a lot of wood for spring and summer, so we would not have to stop the plow some nice, fair day to cut and haul a few loads, for in my opinion it injures our land very badly to plough it when too wet. We believe this is the cause of so much soddy and dead land. This writer does not claim to put all this into practice, but only trying to get into it by degrees.

We have heard a great deal of in-praising and complaining among the people about hard times, and I, for one, have come to the conclusion that we are responsible for a good portion of the hard times. We spend too much money foolishly for things we could live without. But we hope this hard time cry is over. Last year certainly was a bountiful crop year. Everything in the way of staples was in abundance. The apple crop certainly will bring some money into North Carolina. The wagons, both horse and mule teams, are running all the time to South Carolina, to say nothing about the ox wagons. They are so numerous that we will not attempt to put any estimate on them. They are like the sands of the sea shores.

I think we are on the eve of prosperity. I don't fear but one thing and that is this: Since Col. Corn Cob Cracker has taken into copartnership a bigger corn cracker than himself, the people are sure to suffer where he goes. I had much rather he would have kept his snow shoe rabbit foot.

Rev. Z. D. Harrill preached one of his able sermons at Pleasant Grove Baptist church last Sunday morning and at Piney Knob Baptist church in the afternoon.

As the services were nearing a close Mr. Logan W. Haynes and Miss Florence Latimer walked in and were happily married, Rev. Z. D. Harrill officiating. The groom is a son of A. B. Haynes and his bride a daughter of William Latimer. We wish them a life of happiness.

We are glad to say we had the pleasure of meeting Col. T. C. Harris the other day. We swapped a few jokes, but I was a little surprised to learn he had given himself over to the reformers. I would have expected Grover Cleveland or Col. Corn Cracker to have made the break, but every man to his trade. This only makes me feel more Democratic.

Success to all the correspondents and readers of THE DEMOCRAT.

COPPER BILL.

Rutherford Democrats Want It Too.

It's whispered around that Hon. J. Frank Ray, of Macon, is seeking Congressional honors, or rather that his friends are making an effort to create a "boom" for him. Just in this connection, we beg to ask Mr. Ray to explain more definitely his position as to the disgraceful conduct of Judge Robinson. The hustler does not feel that it could endorse a man for any position, who tries to excuse such gross errors as Judge Robinson has, no doubt, willfully committed. "Will Mr. Ray explain?" is the question Transylvania Democrats desire to ask.—Brevard Hustler.

A Far-Reaching Prayer.

There is nothing in the world which equals in uniqueness the prayer of the old time darkey. A Union county negro is credited with winding up a long and fervent petition in the following words: "Now, oh Lawd, bless all dem people away off yander in Africa and Asia and Spasia and all dem foreign countries where de foot ob main has neber trod and Gawd himself knows not off!"

"So they were divorced, eh?"

"Yes, for incompatibility of temperament."

"How did it come about?"

"Well, you see, he had the incompatibility and she had the temper."

That the blood should perform its vital functions, it is absolutely necessary it should not only be pure but rich in life-giving elements. These results are best effected by the use of that well-known standard blood-purifier, Ayer's Sarsaparilla.

Salisbury aldermen have passed an ordinance prohibiting lewd women and boys under 10 on the streets after 9 o'clock at night.

The Robesonian claims that not a single mortgage was foreclosed in Robeson county last year.

On the War Path.

Cutting Prices to Death with the mighty Sword, "Cash Down." Watch the people that daily crowd the Racket Store, carrying away arm loads of matchless bargains. 18 pounds Standard Granulated Sugar, \$1.00. One Pound Package Arabica Coffee, 20 cents. Iron Shoe Last 15-inch Stand, 3 sizes of Last, 31cts.

Just arrived big lot Factory Remnants, Percaloes, Gingham, Calicos, etc; also Bleaching, Plaids, Bed Ticking and Shirting in full bolts.

Children's black wool hose, 5cts Large glass lamp complete, 14cts Ladies' black wool hose, 15cts Patent wire hair brush, 9cts Ladies' black cotton hose, 5cts Large bladed pocket knife, 10cts Kantopen hook and eye 2 doz., 1ct Winder shades on patent rollers, 18cts

Come and see our 10c counter, you will never regret it. The Racket is overflowing with goods right from the big auction sales in New York. Come today, tomorrow might be too late. Have just received a machine for fastening buttons on Shoes, and will put them on for everybody free of charge, it does not differ whether you bought them from me or not. Come one, come all. Spot cash, one price.

THE RACKET STORE.

Seed Potatoes.

I have just received 20 barrels of Early Rose, Beauty of Hebron, Burbank's and Peerless Seed Irish Potatoes which I will sell at \$1.20 per bushel; 60 cents per half-bushel; 30 cents per peck, or \$3.25 per barrel. I also have a few bushels of Mountain Irish Potatoes at 60 cents per bushel.

Red & White.

Have you seen my beautiful new oil tank? I sell red and white oil, 175 test, at 20 cents per gallon and furnish a splendid nutrient can free. With these cans any child can safely fill a lamp and it is impossible to run them over. I am headquarters for everything good to eat.

A. J. NETTLES,

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In order to secure 100,000 subscribers the following offer is made: To the subscriber first guessing the correct or nearest correct number of bales of cotton received in Memphis from September 1, 1895, to May 15, inclusive, 1896, as follows: If correct or nearest to the correct guess is received on or before February 29, 1896, it gets in cash \$2,500; if in March 1896, \$1,500, but if not till April only \$500. The contest closes April 30.

Receipts in former years were as follows: Up to May 15, 1894, 474,851 bales; to May 15, 1895, 581,181 bales. \$1,180 in cash and valuable gifts given to agents. Also a rifle, single barrel and double barrel breech-loading shotgun free. Send for special terms to agents and sample copies.

Fifty cents must accompany every guess for twelve months subscription; both guess and subscription in same letter. Sample copy free.

A special contract enables us to offer THE WEEKLY COMMERCIAL APPEAL and THE DEMOCRAT for one year for only \$1.15 cash in advance; also allowing guess on cotton received in Memphis. Subscriptions may begin at any time.

Those who have already subscribed to THE DEMOCRAT can get the Commercial Appeal for one year and a guess at the Memphis cotton receipts for 30 cents. Address

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