

THE TRAGEDY OF BLACK ISLAND.

BY JOHN A. WYETH.

In northern Alabama the Tennessee River makes its great Southern sweep. On the map the outline of this picturesque stream is not unlike a grape-vine swing, with one end tangled among the mountains of Virginia and North Carolina and the other looped over the Ohio at Paducah.

The seat of the swing is in Marshall County, for here, after fretting its way for hundreds of miles in and out among the mountains of the Appalachian range, tearing bold Lookout in twain for daring to stretch his giant form across its path, baffled at last in its wild rush to the Southern Gulf, and seemingly broken in spirit, it turns with slackened and reluctant flow back to the north, where, with the Ohio, it joins in common tribute to the Father of Waters.

Just in this bend of the river is a group of islands varying in size from one-half a mile to as much as two miles or more in length, and from one-quarter to one-half of a mile in breadth. They are among the most fertile of all the Southern lands, receiving with each annual inundation, when in early spring the snows in the northern mountains melt, a rich alluvial deposit, giving year after year back to the soil the elements which a rank vegetation abstracts for its nutrition.

"Buck Island" is one of this cluster, and contains about eighty acres of ground. It was named in honor of a cunning old stag, which, in its dense canebrakes in the early settlement of the country, long eluded death from the huntsman's rifle and hounds. It is now cleared and cultivated, paying rich tribute in corn to the farmers' industry. At the time of which I write however, it was almost wholly covered with a heavy forest of tall oak, hickory and gum trees, of which the leafy tops shut out the rays of the summer sun, while the soil from which they sprung was hidden in a wilderness of cane from ten to thirty feet high, and so thick that in many places a man could not penetrate unless with axe or hunting knife he cut his way. In the early days, when the frosts killed the grasses on the uplands, the farmers drove their cattle into these islands for winter pasturage, where, upon the rich perennial cane, they fattened until the freshets of spring forced them again to the higher ground for safety.

In 1863-4 the storm of war struck North Alabama. It found it a paradise of plenty, and left it a wasted, blackened and desolate land. None but those who knew the fertile and beautiful "Valley of the Tennessee" in the days of the old regime, when its prosperity was a marvel, when its hillsides were burdened with fruit and foliage, and the vast plantations were white with snowy cotton or yellow with tasselling corn, and then revisited it after Appomattox, can realize the change which had transpired.

As I rode through the valley, early in 1865, it seemed one vast burying-ground of the hopes, the happiness and the wealth of a people once prosperous. From a single elevation I counted the chimneys of seven different plantation homes, standing like gravestones over the ashes that were heaped about them.

Now and then I passed a farm-house which had escaped the general ruin, and more frequently a rude shanty but recently adjusted to a chimney several sizes too tall for it, or a cabin constructed of small logs, and covered with split boards held on the roof by weight poles in lieu of nails. Fences and gardens were gone, and over fields and garden paths stretched an almost unbroken tangle of weeds and briars. Nor were the towns exempt; within a radius of thirty miles, Guntersville, Vienna, Woodville, Camden, Larkinsville, Bellefonte, Stevenson, Scottsboro, and Claysville, all thriving towns were wiped out by fire. And, saddest of all, came untimely and undeserved death to many unarmed, helpless, and innocent citizens, for the most cruel and most unmerciful of all things is civil war.

There were among the poorest and most illiterate class in northern Alabama a goodly number who, while not caring particularly whether the Union was to be maintained or not, were very particular in keeping out of the Confederate service. They held it was a slaveholders' war, and as they never owned and never expected to own, a slave they did not see why they should do any of the fighting.

When the conscription laws were enforced they dodged the enrolling officers, and when pressed too closely they left their homes and hid out in the mountains and caves or in the canebrakes in the valley. When the Southern forces were driven out of this section, and their cause was wanting, these fugitives came out of their hiding-places, took sides with the Federal soldiers, went with them as scouts or guides, or on their own responsibility organized bands of cutthroats and marauders, plundered the homes of soldiers, their former neighbors, now off in the Confederate service, driving away their cattle, appropriating their supplies, and at times murdering the men too old or boys too young to be in the service, or any unfortunate soldier who, with or without a furlough, had slipped through the lines to make a hurried visit to the wife and children or parents from whom he had long been separated.

Of these marauders "old" Ben Harris was the acknowledged chief and leader. In all the annals of crime probably no more cold-blooded, heartless, and inhuman brute ever trod the earth. He lived near Vienna on Paint Rock River, fifteen miles from my father's home, and of course knew the roads and paths and trails throughout this

section, and the "lost ferries" on the Tennessee.

He was invaluable as a guide to the Union soldiers. He knew "Buck Island," too, as will appear, and what I am about to relate is only one of the many bloody deeds of this bloody villain.

My witness is Mr. C. L. Hardecastle, who now lives near Gurley's, a station on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad. Few men have had such a thrilling experience as this man, and fewer would wish to repeat it.

I knew the Rodens, all of whom were killed, and the fact of their murder is well known to every one in and about this section.

As Hardecastle was also shot, and left for dead, and survived this frightful ordeal, I hunted him up in 1892, and had him write me his story. It is this: "On the 21st of December, 1863, I was at home on furlough. My people at that time were living in Marshall County, Alabama, on the northern side of the Tennessee River. About ten days before the expiration of my leave of absence we were alarmed by the sudden appearance in our neighborhood of the notorious Ben Harris and his gang of marauders. Knowing that if we were caught we would in all probability share the fate of many others who had been killed by this murderer, I, together with James W. Roden, E. M. Roden and Porter Roden, sought refuge in Buck Island, where Ben Roden had already driven his cattle and constructed a rude cabin for the shelter of himself and family in case of necessity, and in order to prevent his cattle from being stolen by various parties of foragers.

"At this place of concealment we were joined by old Mr. Ben Roden himself, shortly after we arrived there. We remained here in supposed security until the morning of December 27, when, about two o'clock, we were aroused from our sleep by a knocking at the door and a demand for our surrender. To our dismay, we found that we were in the hands of Ben Harris!

"He demanded to know the place where we had concealed our boat, and we were promised our lives if we would aid him in raising the boat which we had sunk, and carrying the stock from the island to the opposite bank of the river. He was accompanied by a squadron of men in the uniform of United States cavalry.

"After we had accomplished this work we were taken a few hundred yards down the river-bank, and were then informed that we had to be shot. It so happened that old Mr. Roden had long been acquainted with Captain Harris, and he asked him to step aside that he might speak with him privately; but his plea for our lives was in vain. When he returned he told us that our case was hopeless, and that we were condemned to be shot, and we all then saw that the object of Harris in shooting us was to prevent it being known, when the boat might be over, that he had taken cattle and property belonging to Mr. Roden. Harris stated to us that if any of us wanted to pray, we could do so, and that if we had anything that we wished to send to our people, they would take it to them for any of us. Porter Roden gave them several things to carry back to his wife and children. I have since learned that they never gave these things to the widow they had made.

"In looking back over this horrible experience it still seems to me the prayer Porter Roden made for himself, and for all of us, as we stood there within a few minutes of eternity, was one of the most earnest appeals to the mercy of the Eternal Judge of Man that ever fell from the lips of mortal. When he had finished we faced them, and as we stood in line it so happened that I was the last one at the end in the right of the line. Harris and his men began the shooting from the head of the line, and shot at them all from two to four times each with their pistols, I being at the foot of the line was the last one, and at the flash of the first pistol-shot aimed at me at close range I fell to the ground as if dead. The ball, which wounded me, passed through my right arm, for I turned sideways to them as they shot me, and the bullet cut the artery in my arm. When they were dragging our bodies to throw them into the river, they stopped to feel my pulse, but, fortunately for me, they felt the side which had already been wounded. As the pulsation at the wrist was absent, they threw me with the others into the river, like so many hogs. As I was plunged into the water, unfortunately, I became slightly strangled and coughed from the head of the line, and shot into his 'd-boddy' but I had floated out from the bank beyond the reach of this weapon, when they shot at me again, but missed me. As they fired I held my breath and sank under the water, and they turned and left me for dead.

"I floated under some drift-wood which had caught in the trees on the bank of the river, and under this brush I succeeded in concealing myself where I could get air until sufficient time had elapsed for them to get away. I was so great weakened from the cold, for this was winter, and from the loss of blood that I was scarcely able to reach the bank and crawl up out of the water. How long I remained upon the ground I scarcely know, but it seemed like a long time before I was able to travel, about one mile to the house of my brother-in-law, Mr. J. H. Stearns, and there got some stimulants, food and dry clothes. My friends then went with me to the river, where I got a boat and was ferried to the other side."

"Such with very slight changes in phraseology, is the simple story of this remarkable experience. Few persons have ever gone so far into the 'valley of the shadow of death' and then returned. No doubt it was to the wonderful presence of mind of this unassuming and plain countryman that he owed his preservation. Many a man would have given up at once, lost his self-control, and submitted perhaps with equal courage to his fate. But this man determined at the first crack of the pistol fired at him to drop, as if dead, and did, courageously, notwithstanding the wound which had disabled him, and with two or three other shots fired at his supposed inanimate body, remain perfectly still, and by so doing saved his life. Despite this wound and two others received in battle he survived to give to the world a true account of this horrible massacre, only one of many of like ferocity which swept men to untimely death, and left mothers and wives and children helpless and broken-hearted. Such was our war; such are all wars—Harper's Weekly.

MR. SECRETAN'S JOURNEY.

NOTES OF HIS TRIP TO THE YUKON COUNTRY.

Running Rapids in White Horse Canyon—Scenes Along the Route—A Description of Dawson City and Its Prices.

Mr. J. H. E. Secretan was sent to the Yukon country by an Ottawa syndicate to prospect. He is a civil engineer. He returned to the capital last week. Mr. Secretan kept a diary from which the following extracts are taken:—"Leaving Ottawa on the 5th of April I arrived in Victoria on the 14th and on the 15th sent a party of four men up on the Topeka for Juneau. The boat was crowded with mounted police, and I stayed behind to order some canoes, and sailed on the Mexico on the 25th. Left Juneau on the 30th on the small steamer Alert and arrived at Dyea on May 1. Dyea is a hard place at which to make a landing. There is a big tide which uncovers about two miles of sand flats. Next day I found my men were only six miles up the Dyea River. I had ordered from Juneau about 5,000 pounds of provisions, calculated to last about four months, which they were busy transporting towards the summit. The first detachment of mounted police crossed the summit on May 20. I arrived at Dyea on May 7 and walked to Sheep Camp, a distance of fourteen miles, that day; crossed the summit on the 8th in a snow-storm, which was so violent that near the summit I could not see the man ahead of me, a distance of ten feet. Arrived at Lake Lindeman that night, nine miles. The estimated distance to the summit is eighteen miles, and it is probably 3,300 feet above sea level. Lake Lindeman is 2,500 feet above the sea, and the thing that struck me as most remarkable about this route, is that the head waters of the Yukon River are practically only 27 miles from salt water. Therefore, although it is an abrupt pass, it is decidedly the shortest that can be found.

CANYONS AND RAPIDS.

"On the 8th of May I found the ice still in Lake Lindeman, and had to camp there until the 28th of May, experiencing very bad weather the whole time—rain, snow and gales of wind. Moved to the foot of the lake on the 28th of May by boat and canoe, and put in an order for lumber at Lake Bennett, which I did not get until June 2nd. The ice went out of Lake Lindeman on June 1st. I built my boat in three days and a half. She was built of two-inch plank rift through, 26 feet long, 71-2 feet beam and 3 feet deep, with an estimated capacity of 5,000 pounds and six men. She carried a square sail 14 feet by 16 feet. I sailed on Sunday night, the 6th, from Lake Bennett, and arrived at the White Horse canyon on the 10th, which is considered the first obstacle of any moment. Looked over the situation there and decided to run everything loaded. On the 11th ran the canyon, and the rapids, and the White Horse. The canyon is 3,300 feet long, and very swift water, but I don't consider it dangerous. There is then a mile and a half of swift water and plenty of rocks, which at some stages are hard to avoid. It is then rapid water for 2,000 feet to the White Horse proper, which is a dangerous chute about 50 feet wide for 150 feet. Before running through this chute I tried a log through it. The log went through the centre, but immediately disappeared, showing the existence of subterranean passages, which are no doubt dangerous for boats. Made the head of Lake Leberge on the 12th, and had the usual difficulty in finding a deep channel approaching the lake. Was detained at the head of Lake Leberge until the 14th. The lake is 31 miles long. The Lewis River is very swift after leaving Lake Leberge and there are many channels before arriving at the mouth of the Hootaliqua River. 32 miles. I made this place safely at 11 o'clock that night. I then sailed and drifted day and night, and experienced no difficulty. Ran Five Finger Rapids on the 15th at 11 o'clock at night, and the Rink Rapids, six miles below, shortly afterwards. I estimated the current of the river at 5.75 miles. From here made Fort Selkirk, the junction of the Lewis and Pelly Rivers, on the morning of the 16th, and the mouth of Stewart River on the morning of the 17th. After leaving the Stewart River we met a party of five men in a boat on the Yukon polling up.

AT DAWSON CITY.

"Arrived at Dawson City on the 18th camping about half a mile below the town, feeling a little tired, not having had my clothes off for 120 hours. Here we found two steamers, the Ellis and Porties B. Weare. We slept on six-inch moss, overlying perpetual ice of unknown thickness. Dawson City at this time, August 18, consisted of several hundred tents straggling along about a mile and a half in the mud, and at the lower end the steamboats' landing. Joe Ladue has a saw mill and the companies have stores. There were several buildings going up, chiefly dance halls and saloons. The charge for a drink is fifty cents, hair-cutting 25 cents and shave fifty cents, and everything else in proportion. The police reserve have been located on forty acres, and they have one log, storehouse up. Everything is paid for in dust, and there is very little money to be seen. In the midst of all this swarming refuse, roots, bushes, etc., there is a sweating, swearing mob of reeking humanity, mostly gamblers, whiskey men and adventurers, with an occasional honest miner, the usual sprinkling of women, Indians and the ever-present dog. There is no night in this country. I have seen the sun go down at twenty minutes to 12 at night and rise again shortly afterwards. I decided to build a cabin here and start-

ed the men out to get the logs. The month of June was absolutely tropical, the thermometer often registering 95 in the shade, and there was not a drop of rain. On the 10th of July I finished except for labor and the boat, which I broke up and used for flooring, being \$5, and sold the cabin when I left for \$500. July 12th—Some festive gentleman paid \$18 for a breakfast consisting of a dozen and a half of eggs at \$1.50 apiece, and on the 13th I bought a bottle of alleged rye whiskey, price \$7. The holders of the richest claims on Eldorado and Bonanza Creeks are either Americans or foreigners, generally Scandinavians, and no one can imagine that they are in Canada here. The 4th of July was celebrated with the usual display of firecrackers and gunpowder, but I did not notice any particular demonstration on July 1st. An Englishman or a Canadian is looked upon in my opinion as something of an interloper. The steamers are owned by Americans. The people are entirely dependent upon Americans to forward their letters, and I have heard of a man who offered \$3 for a three-cent Canadian postage stamp and could not get it. Having made up my mind to return to civilization, I left Dawson City on the T. P. Weare on July 26."

LYNCHING A KLONDIKE THIEF.

The Gold Hunters Hanged a Man Who Stole Provisions.

A letter from Juneau tells of the lynching of William G. Martin of Missouri for stealing food at Lake Bennett.

Martin had sold what he could of his provisions at Skaguay, abandoned the remainder and started in for the Klondike with less than a sixty-pound pack on his back. Being so "light," his arrival attracted particular attention from camps of boatbuilders. His pack was secretly examined to see how much grub he had. It was noticed that he had about twenty pounds of bacon among other things, but no sugar. Martin camped back on the side of the hill in the brush alone. He must have heard how scarce provisions are expected to be in Dawson City, next winter. He was suspected and watched, but it was not till after he had tried to buy provisions.

The second day it was seen that he had sugar for his coffee, and that night his pack was uncovered and a side of bacon branded with a private mark of one of the campers was found. A poor attempt to obliterate the mark had been made. The investigators reported the facts to the few campers who had not yet turned in, and, although it was late, the entire camp was quietly aroused and a miners' meeting held. It was the general sentiment that an example should be made of the thief. The question was put. The reply to the motion was an instantaneous rising to the feet of every miner, and a crowd of about sixty determined men moved off into the brush, in the direction where Martin's dying campfire could be seen dimly flickering. Martin was asleep. He was unrolled roughly from his blankets and stood blinking on his feet.

"We stand no stealing in this camp. Your time has come," Martin was told. He started to speak, but said nothing, and stood trembling from

HEAD TO FOOT.

"Do you want to leave a message to your friends?" he was asked.

"No," said the man on the brink of the grave.

"Do you want to pray?"

"No," said Martin.

"If there is anything you want to say, say it quick," said the spokesman.

A slipknot had been made at the end of a long painter of the boat, and the noose was put over Martin's head.

"Boys," said Martin, with faltering voice, "you know how it is when a man has mortgaged his all, starts for the Klondike, and sees that he can't get there. If I am not hanged, my life is not worth much to me anyhow. I've got 1,000 pounds of stuff at Skaguay, and I'll promise on my life to carry it in here for you."

"Enough of that. It would not save you if the stuff was here."

Martin was half dragged down to the shore of the lake. It took less than two minutes to lash two slender pines, dressed for masts, in a forked upright and drop another mast from the rocks on the bluff over between the forks.

"May I write a message, boys?" asked Martin.

"Be quick about it," was the answer.

Poor Martin took a letter from his pocket and kissed it. Then he tore it up, saving only the back of the envelope, stooped, pulled off his rubber boots, and, placing the paper on the sole of one, wrote in darkness, the following, in a dim and trembling hand:

"Hoping that with the money I might make in the Klondike, sacrifice would go out of the door and love return through the window, I left you, Kiss Ted, but never tell him. Signed, 'Gid.'"

In the morning Martin's body was seen turning first one way and then back, like a kettle dangling over a fire, his hands tied behind him with a pack strap. On the other half of the envelope which Martin tore in two were his name and the postmark of St. Louis.

CAREFULLY REARED.

Fond Mamma—I am glad you had such a nice time at Mrs. Tiptop's, and I hope she noticed how carefully you had been brought up. You did not ask twice for dessert, did you? Small Son—No, indeed, ma. I didn't have to. Every time I finished a dish and began scraping the saucer with the spoon and smacking my lips, the waiter came and brought me some more without saying a word.

SCORCHING CAUSES INFRUITY.

Especially Noticeable Amongst the Women of France Who Ride the Bicycle.

The doctors of France are puzzled by a new mania which is afflicting women who ride bicycles. The feminine cyclists are becoming extremely cruel. Medical men who have made a study of the matter are inclined to ascribe it to a form of insanity, the cause of which is to them an absolute mystery. There are in Paris a number of physicians who call themselves bicycle specialists, meaning that they have made an especial study of nervous and other troubles resulting from the use of the wheel. These men are completely mystified.

The first case which came into general notice was that of Mme. Eugenie Chantilly, wife of Desire Chantilly, a well-known silk manufacturer of Lyons. An enthusiastic wheelwoman for a very long time, she even takes her wheel with her when she goes upon visits to friends some distance away. It was on one of these visits to a friend of her girlhood in Paris, Mme. Henry Fournier, whose husband is one of the best known business men upon the Rue de l'Opera, that the strange affliction came upon her. Her hostess is also a wheelwoman, and the two went riding one morning along the boulevards which have made Paris famous.

When in the vicinity of the Jardin des Plantes Mme. Fournier scorched ahead of her friend, and as she drew away from her looked back laughingly over her shoulder and called to her "adieu, mon amie." Mme. Fournier, who tells the story, said she received no response and looking back a moment later, saw her friend darting down upon her.

AT TERRIFIC SPEED.

She rode to one side, thinking Mme. Chantilly would be unable to check herself by the time she came up with her, but what was her horror when her friend deliberately steered the wheel straight at her. Before Mme. Fournier could evade her Mme. Chantilly had collided with her wheel and knocked her down. Mme. Chantilly rode back a few paces and then, riding at a lightning rate, actually rode over the prostrate form of Mme. Fournier.

Screaming with terror Mme. Fournier attempted to rise, but was repeatedly knocked down by her infuriated friend, and it was not until others came to the rescue that she was able to gain security. One of the most curious features of the affair is that during this whole time Mme. Chantilly preserved an unmoved expression of countenance, apparently never even looking at the friend she was so cruelly assaulting. When she was taken into custody by those who had hastened to Mme. Fournier's rescue, she only said, "Why do you interfere with me when I am enjoying myself?" She was conveyed in a carriage to the Fournier residence, and from thence was promptly sent to her husband at Lyons. Since then she has been kept in strict seclusion.

Mme. Fournier's injuries were such that the constant care of a physician was required for several days. Her right arm was broken between the wrist and the elbow, and she received severe internal injuries! The physician, deeply interested in so singular an assault, took pains to investigate it, and communicated with the insanity expert who had been called to examine into the condition of Mme. Chantilly.

Considering the case on the whole, these two medical savants determined that they had discovered a

BRAND-NEW DISEASE

Which was due solely to the bicycle. They caused a careful inquiry to be made throughout France to discover, if possible, any cases which bore a resemblance to that of Mme. Chantilly. They found 17 women who had been seized with the same desire to injure cyclists of their own sex whenever possible, at such times as they were a wheel. The desire apparently took the same form in every instance the first action being a violent collision and then repeated attempts to ride over the form of the fallen cyclist. All were not as successful as Mme. Chantilly, because she is a wheelwoman so expert as to be well nigh a professional. The doctors also found that not only did the desire to ride down other wheelwomen appear but there was plenty of additional evidence that the mania inspired a keen delight in all things savouring of cruelty. In some of the instances women indicated this fact by torturing their pet dogs or cats in the most frightful fashion although previous to the time the mania affected them they had been kindness itself to the animals. One woman who was found torturing her dog said, when asked the reason that she was illustrating the methods of the Spanish Inquisition of which she had read not long before. She also stated that she was experimenting with animals in order that she might become sufficiently expert to make similar experiments.

WITH HUMAN BEINGS.

That it was cycling that brought the mania on there seems to be no question. Only wheelwomen have been afflicted with it, and oddly enough in every instance they have been over 30 years of age. The only theory advanced as to the cause, which has been seriously considered, is that it is the result of the effect upon the nervous system, of the intense exhaustion rapid riding brings about. French wheelwomen ride at a high pace. They are all embryo scorcher, much more so than their sisters in other countries. This being the case, it is suggested that the practice of scorching by women is likely to bring about a new form of insanity corresponding to that which afflicts the unfortunate Frenchwomen.

It is therefore, thought probable that if women are not forced to ride at a slower pace on their wheels this remarkable mania will make its appearance in the wheeling countries other than France. The worst feature of it all is that there has thus far been found no method which would result in curing a patient, or even rendering the mania less violent.