

# The Colonel Swallows a Thunderbolt

*Davy Crockett was capable of playing the back woods rube to the hilt. The following tale, though, shows that behind the act he was a sophisticated humorist, as well.*

Thar ar a grate menny kinds of larning. I found'it out when I went to Kongress. That ar your mattymatticks, your jommytrees, your sighentifficks, and your axletrissity. I nose nothin about the other wons, but the axletressity is a screamer. Thar war a feller in Washington that put the thunder and litening into glass bottles, and when a feller had the roomatiz, or the Saint Vitals dance, he would put the axletressity into his corpse jist like pouring whiskey into a powder horn, and it cured him as clean as a barked tree. So I seed how 'twas done; and intarmined whenever ennything aled me to try it, only I didn't keer about the bottles, for I thort I could jist as well take the litening in the raw state as it cum from the clouds. I had been used to drink out of the Massissippi without a cup, and so I could take the litening without the bottles and whirligigs that belongs to an axletressityfyng masheen. It fell out that sum two yeers arter I had ben to see this axletrissity, I got a leetle in love with a pesky smart gal in our cleering, and I knowed it war not rite, seeing I war a married man. So I combobbolated on the subject and at last I resisted that I would explunctificate my passions by axletrissity, so it must be done by bringing it rite on the hart and driving the love out of it. So I went out into the forrest one arternoon when thar war a pestiferous thunder gust, I opened my mouth, so that the axletressity might run down and hit my hart, to cure it of love. I stood so for an hour, and then I seed a thunderbolt a cummin, and I dodged my mouth rite under it, and plump it went into my throte. My eyes! It war as if seven buffaloes war kicking in my bowels. My hart spun round amongst my insides like a grindstone going by steem, but the litening went clean through me, and tore the trowsers cleen off as it cum out. I had a sore gizzard for two weeks arterward, and my inwards war so hot that I use to eat raw vittals for a month arterward, and it would be cooked before it got farely down my throte. I have never felt love since.

*Sometimes a previous tale make his req*

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### III. KILLERS

*He gained this recognition not because he was bad but rather because he was a man of swift and decisive action.*

—CAPT. JOHN R. HUGHES

#### 1. WILD BILL HICKOK

**T**HE line of Western heroes is an unbroken one. As a boy in La Salle County, Illinois, James Butler Hickok, born the year after Crockett died, like him killed wolves for bounty, and idolized Kit Carson, who later

From *Artemus Ward: His Travels (Part II: Among the Mormons)*, by Charles F. Browne, pp. 148-149. New York: Carleton, Publisher. 1866.

<sup>1</sup> "Dead man for breakfast"—a common phrase in California by which to designate a murdered man.—C. F. B.

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praised him for his fearlessness. And when he was twenty, according to tradition, Wild Bill came to the aid of an eleven-year-old boy, named Will Cody, who was being rough-handled by his companions in Lew Simpson's wagon train. Wild Bill's prowess in knock-down and drag-out fighting and in marksmanship recall the feats of Mike Fink. On his first job as a towpath driver on the Illinois and Michigan Canal, he emerged as the victor of a fist fight that lasted over an hour, beginning on the towpath and ending in the water with his adversary nearly drowned. "I allers shoot well," he told George Ward Nichols, "but I come ter be perfect in the mountains by shootin at a dime for a mark, at bets of half a dollar a shot." As a killer Wild Bill has been the subject of much controversy. Was he a gun fighter, who fought fair, or a gunman, who didn't? As a legend, he eclipses Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, and other marshalls who were also "bad men."

The killer arose out of the turbulent conditions of the frontier, where "the six-shooter was the law of the land," and a man shot to kill if self-preservation demanded that he kill or be killed. Since a split second in which one got the drop on one's adversary, might mean the difference between these two alternatives, the mastery went to the man who combined agility of movement and steadiness of nerve, such as were required for drawing quickly and shooting straight, with coolness of head. "Whenever you get into a row," said Wild Bill, "be sure and not shoot too quick. Take time. I've known many a feller slip up for shootin' in a hurry."

The law of the six-shooter was based on an utter disregard for human life, which elevated murder to a cold-blooded science. "As ter killing men, said Wild Bill, 'I never thought much about it. The most of the men I have killed it was one or t'other of us, and at such times, you don't stop to think; and what's the use after it's all over.'" And as to how he got into fights: "'D—d if I can tell . . . but you know a man must defend his honor.'" Again: "That I have killed men, I admit, but never unless in absolute self-defence, or in the performance of an official duty. I never, in my life, took any mean advantage of an enemy. Yet, understand," he added, "I never allow a man to get the drop on me."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, when confronted by a desperado with a gun in each hand, Bill stepped back, with upraised hand: "'Don't shoot him—he's only in fun!' he called out. Mulvey turned, expecting to confront a deputy approaching from behind. In the instant that his attention was distracted Bill snatched out a revolver and dropped him with a bullet in the brain."<sup>2</sup>

Although no seasoned trapper like Buffalo Bill, with whom he appeared briefly in Ned Buntline's melodrama, *The Scouts of the Prairie*, in 1875, Wild Bill displayed considerable showmanship in living up to his early-acquired reputation as a "bad man to fool with." George Ward Nichols' account of his fabulous exploits was probably no more extravagant than Wild Bill's conception of himself. For throughout his varied career as stage-coach driver, Civil War sharpshooter and spy, Indian fighter, scout, guide, and peace officer, Wild Bill helped create his own legend by combining a certain amount of pose with a sense of his own mission. Thus do

<sup>1</sup> *Wild Bill Hickok*, The Prince of Pistolers, by Frank J. Willstach, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

heroes both during and after their lifetime make it easier for the folklorist and harder for the historian.

Wild Bill's reputation as a bad man to fool with rested on his reputation as a gunfighter and this in turn on his use of all those tricks of gunplay which old-timers attribute to the pseudo bad man and the fancy shooter, such as carrying two guns, shooting from the hip, and "fanning" (firing a revolver by brushing back the hammer with the palm of the left hand). Whether this show of daredevilry and flashiness were due to courage or the lack of it, Wild Bill made the most of it, while at the same time taking no chances. The result was such myths as the "McCanles massacre" and such stunts as simultaneously killing two assailants who had entered by opposite doors of a restaurant. He could do this not because he "drew his pistols, both of his head, or some sixth sense," but because he "drew his perceive; and with one he killed the man in front of him, and at the same time with the other gun hand resting on the opposite shoulder he killed the man behind him, looking through the mirror" over the front door.<sup>1</sup>

His good looks and gallantry, plus his taste for fancy clothes, also gained for him the reputation of a lady-killer. Mrs. Cody was entranced at the actuality, as she had been terrified at the prospect, of meeting him.

I could have danced the Highland Fling, I believe, so happy was I to find mildness where I had been led to believe would be the most murderous of persons. Instinctively I looked for revolvers. There were none, not even the slightest bulge at the hips of the Prince Albert he wore. I was happier than ever. We danced. And I must confess that we danced and danced again until Will laughingly put a stop to it.<sup>2</sup>

There was no end of miracles. Many of his hair-raising exploits during the war involved his well-trained horse, Black Nell (reminiscent of the marvelous steeds of earlier heroes), whose "trick of dropping quick" saved his life time and again. With the warriors and tribal chieftains of other heroic ages this "prince of pistolers" was linked not only by his saga of daring challenges, thrilling combats, and miraculous escapes but also by his tragic doom. In fact, the fairies presided at his death as well as at his birth. Even his remains, as evidenced at the time of their exhumation for reburial, underwent the miracle of natural embalming.

## 2. BILLY THE KID

The superman among killers was Billy the Kid, whose golden legend has grown out of all proportion to the few sordid facts of his short, lightning-swift career. Born as William H. Bonney in New York City in 1859, he was brought to Kansas at the age of three; at twelve killed his first man in Silver City, New Mexico, for insulting his mother; after a series of wanderings and crimes in Arizona, Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico, joined the Murphy-Dolan faction in the Lincoln County war; made a

<sup>1</sup> *The Bad Man of the West*, by George D. Hendricks (1941), p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Buffalo Bill*, by his wife Louise Frederici Cody, in collaboration with Courtney Riley Cooper (1919), p. 91.

sensational escape from his captors at Lincoln; and while visiting his sweetheart at Fort Sumner was shot in the dark by Sheriff Pat Garrett. This bare outline has been filled in by old-timers, journalists, and dime-novelists with some of the most lurid and fantastic traditions and fictions that the popular imagination has ever concocted. Both the hero-worshippers and the debunkers have had a field day with the apocrypha of the "Southwest's most famous desperado" and "best-loved hero in the state's history"—the "darling of the common people." The list of twenty-one killings in twenty-one years which was the Kid's boast has been repeatedly revised downward, conservative estimates ranging from twelve to three. And the reputedly handsome, generous daredevil stands unmasked by his only authentic photograph, according to one unsympathetic critic, as "a nondescript, adenoidal, weasel-eyed, narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered, repulsive-looking creature with all the outward appearance of a cretin."<sup>1</sup> His dual personality has made him something of an enigma, which has fascinated his biographers. According to Pat Garrett:

The Kid had a lurking devil in him. It was a good-humored, jovial imp, or a cruel and blood-thirsty fiend, as circumstances prompted. Circumstances favored the worse angel, and the Kid fell.

The two sides of his nature met in a curious "nerveless imperturbability," which Walter Noble Burns analyzes as "a sub-zero vacuum—devoid of all human emotions."

"A little while before we made a dash for our lives, the Kid rolled a cigarette. I watched him. It seemed just then as if he had about a minute and a half to live. But when he poured the tobacco from his pouch into the cigarette paper he did not spill a flake. His hand was as steady as steel. A blazing chunk of roof fell on the table beside him, barely missing his head. "Much obliged," he said; and he bent over and lighted his cigarette from the flame. Then he looked at me and grinned as if he thought that was a good joke. He didn't roll that cigarette because he was nervous but because he wanted a good smoke. You could tell by the way he inhaled the smoke and let it roll out of his mouth that he was getting real pleasure out of it. If you had seen Billy the Kid roll that cigarette and smoke it, señor, you would have known at once that he was a brave man."<sup>2</sup>

Like many another Western gun fighter—Wild Bill, Jesse James—Billy the Kid was killed without a chance to fight for his life. An extra touch of tragic irony is added to the Kid's fate by the fact that his slayer was, up to the time of his appointment as sheriff, a good friend. As his biographer Pat Garrett was a good friend after the Kid's death, too. And by his death the Kid did Garrett a good turn. Partly because of the fame of his victim and partly because of the special kind of courage that it took to carry out his assignment, Pat Garrett became a hero in his own right, as not the greatest (Wild Bill's title) but the "last great sheriff of the old frontier."

<sup>1</sup> *Belle Starr*, by Burton Rascoe (1941), pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, by Walter Noble Burns (1925), p. 145.

By writing his *Authentic Life of Billy the Kid*, Pat Garrett also tried to kill the monstrous lies that sprang up after Billy the Kid's death. But as late as 1926 the rumor persisted that the Kid was still alive, as reported in an El Paso paper for June 24:

Leland V. Gardiner . . . believes Billy the Kid, notorious outlaw of pioneer days, still lives, and has thought so for the past ten years, he said. He is not the El Pasoan, however, who communicated his belief to the New Mexico Historical Society. That informant said he had seen the Kid about ten years ago (in an eastern city).

"I am not certain, but believe I have seen the Kid," said Mr. Gardiner. "I am told that he is on an isolated ranch within 500 miles of El Paso. When strangers come to the ranch he disappears until they are gone. . . . He can't take chances on being detected."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. JESSE JAMES AND OTHERS

Similar rumors have dogged the memory of Jesse James, and no less than seventeen persons, according to his granddaughter, have claimed to be the "original Jesse James." As Billy the Kid was the child of the cattle rustling wars, so Jesse James was the product of the bloody border warfare of Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas, beginning with the conflict over the Free Soil issue, passing into Civil War bushwhacking, and culminating in postbellum outlawry. As a boy on a Missouri farm, Jesse played at shooting or hanging Jim Lane or John Brown. In his youth, it will be recalled, Wild Bill Hickok was a member of Jim Lane's Red Legs and had his cabin burned down in retaliation by Missouri border ruffians; and Buffalo Bill's father, Isaac Cody, was likewise involved in the free-state cause. In 1863 what had been a game became for Jesse a life-and-death affair. While ploughing in a cornfield, he was seized and lashed with a rope by a squad of Federal militia, who nearly hanged his stepfather and subsequently arrested and jailed his mother and sister. Joining the guerrillas under "Bloody Bill" Anderson, he was outlawed at the close of the war. Whether or not they were "driven" to crime by "persecution," he and his brother Frank and their cousins, the four Younger boys, all ex-guerrillas, turned to robbing banks and trains for a livelihood.

This background in sectional conflict and civil strife perhaps helped to make Jesse James stand out in the popular imagination as a symbol of revolt and protest against the forces of tyranny and injustice. For most Americans he represents the Robin Hood tradition of the "good bad man," certain aspects of which are seen in Billy the Kid. In his bland, quixotic humor and impish williness, however, the Kid, like Wild Bill Hickok, has more in common with the tradition of the "cheerful rogue," which has given us "bad boys" and "bad good men" from Robin Hood and Ty Eulenspiegel to Huckleberry Finn. Jesse James, on the other hand,

robbed from the rich and he gave to the poor,  
He'd a hand and a heart and a brain.

<sup>1</sup> *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, by J. Frank Dobie (1929), p. 174 n.

And he, all but achieved martyrdom through death by treachery. These lines, reminiscent of the refrain of the ballad, were inscribed on his monument at his mother's request:

Murdered by a Traitor and Coward Whose  
Name Is Not Worthy to Appear Here

The classic instance of Jesse James' chivalry is the episode in which he paid off the mortgage for a poor widow and then stole the money back from the mortgage owner. The same story is told of Sam Bass, the "Texas Robin Hood," who was also a victim of the treachery of one of his own men—the best example of the good boy gone wrong.

The last Robin Hood of the Southwest was Charley ("Pretty Boy") Floyd, of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, described as a "nice, soft-spoken boy, good to his mother," with a special grudge against bankers and sheriffs.

It was his custom . . . to inform the sheriffs ahead of time when he was about to rob a bank, and it was so well known that he would rather pot a sheriff any day than rob a bank that nowadays the sheriffs invariably locked themselves in and barred the doors or left town as the date approached. The last of sheriffs and deputies whom "Pretty Boy" had shot in the head—he never shot except at the head and there was only one record of his missing—was desperately long.<sup>1</sup>

## The King of the Pistoleers

*A potpourri of contemporary quotations.*

Six feet one in his moccasins, deep-chested, with quiet gray eyes, clear and calm as a woman's, an almost womanly gentleness of expression, bright chestnut hair floating over his shoulders—it does not seem a promising picture to those who would hear of adventure. But that small, muscular hand had taken deadly aim at scores of men; before the gaze of that eye many a bold border spirit had quailed. He was the 'Magnificent,' Wild Bill Hickok, the terror of evil-doers."

Ladies found Wild Bill the handsomest man west of the Mississippi. His steely, piercing eyes could be the ruin of the chastest woman, turning to the glittering steel when faced with danger. "He is a naturally fine-looking fellow, muscular and athletic, as lithe and agile as the Borneo Boys of circus fame. Ah, Wild Bill, the Adonis of the Prairie!"

General Custer's wife, Libby, looked upon the "Knight Chivalric" as one of the finest specimens of "rugged American manhood." A Kansas lady vowed that she always thought John Wilkes and Edwin Booth the most beautiful men in the world—until she met Wild Bill.

HOWEVER . . .

"The man they call Wild Bill is an effeminate-looking fellow, his hair is falling in auburn ringlets over his shoulders like that of a girl. In contrast, his nasal organ is quite out of proportion. They call him the 'Human Ant-Eater,' and the 'Cyrano de Bergerac of the Plains.' Hickok shot and killed a man for calling him 'Duck Bill.'"

WELL, BUT . . .

He was called the "King of the Pistoleers," the "Knight Chivalric," and the "Pistol Dead Shot." He once bagged two Indians galloping away from him at top speed, one riding behind the other, with a single bullet, coolly waiting until both horses and riders were perfectly aligned. His bullet never failed to find its target. No man in

the whole wide world was as adept as our hero at wielding a six-gun. Inside a Kansas saloon Hickok performed a Homeric feat, never repeated since. Two ruffians, killers of ill repute, assailed him simultaneously from front and rear. Watching the ruffian behind him in the reflection of the barroom mirror with one eye, the other fixed on the assailant before him, the champion "triggernometrist" shot both of them through the heart with his brace of ivory-handled Colts.

As marshal in Hays City, Wild Bill had a row with Captain Tom Custer, brother of the famous general. Not wishing to face the "Sir Galahad of Pistols," the vindictive officer hired two murderous miscreants to kill the man who had humiliated him. They found Hickok inside the Free Soil drinking establishment. One of the soldiers tackled the bold marshal from the front, the other caught him from the rear. Hickok got one arm free, pulled his Colt, putting it over his shoulder, and killed the trooper behind him. Then he took care of the fellow in front with equally deadly effect.

To demonstrate his skill with his fabled ivory-handled "dragons," Wild Bill tossed his wide-brimmed hat high into the air, using it as a convenient target. He shot an even-spaced row of holes along the outside of the rim as it was falling and before it touched the ground.

Hickok was able to hit the ace of spades, at fifty paces, with all six bullets, drive a cork into a bottle at seventy-five yards, and hit spinning silver dollars while racing his horse. He could hit a fly crawling on a wall.

#### HOWEVER . . .

"Old Bill couldn't hit the side of a barn at fifty paces. He was snail-like slow with a Colt. He was a successful killer because he shot the other fellow when he wasn't looking. He fired at a man sitting across from him at a table—and missed. As marshal Hickok had a fatal flaw, he often shot the wrong man, shooting a friend or harmless bystander instead of the bad hombre he was aiming at. When it came to telling an honest fellow from a felon, Wild Bill couldn't tell shit from honey."

It is said that on one occasion Bill pursued two murderers running away from him in *opposite directions*, up and down the street, sending them up the flume *simultaneously*, which he could have done if nature had fitted him with a *third eye* at the back of his head.

#### WELL, BUT . . .

"He was absolutely fearless. Fear was not a part of his make-up. He was afraid of no man, nor death, nor the devil and all his minions. Any man who by his own force and fearlessness beats the dark forces of savagery and crime, so that civilization may be free to take another step forward on her march to progress—is he not the greatest and truest type of the frontiersman? Such a one was Wild Bill."

Asked how many men he had killed, Hickok replied: "I suppose I have killed considerably over a hundred, but, by heaven, never without good cause. I was twenty-eight years old when I killed my first white man. I never included Indians in the list of those I sent to the far side of Jordan. This fellow was a cardsharp and counterfeiter. I was then in a hotel in Leavenworth, and seeing some loose characters around, and as I had some money about me, I thought it better to retire to my room. I soon heard men at my door. I pulled out my revolvers and bowie knife and held them ready, but concealed, and pretended to sleep. The door was opened and five men entered the room. One whispered, 'Let's kill the son of a bitch. I bet he has money.' I kept perfectly still until just as the knife touched my breast, I sprang aside and buried mine in his heart, and then used my revolvers on the others, right and left. One I killed, another I wounded, and then, gentlemen, I dashed from the room, and with the help of some soldiers, captured the whole gang of them—fifteen in all. Would you not have done the same?"

"Single-handedly, 'Magnificent Bill' wiped out McCanles' gang of Confederate cutthroats and robbers, no fewer than ten of them, with his trusty rifle, his silver-ornamented revolvers, and keen bowie knife. Remark our hero striking savage blows, following the devils up from one side to the other of the room into the corners, striking and slashing until all were dead. He had sent to the Nether World six of the desperadoes with his Dragoon Colts, and dispatched the other four blood-thirsty devils with his knife."

While traveling by rail one night, Bill had a narrow escape. Eight bloodthirsty braves, determined to murder the marshal who had so often thwarted their evil designs, had secretly boarded the train. But Bill was on his guard. He left the car in which he was sitting, and with a pistol in each hand, went to that in which he knew he would find his would-be assassins. He threw open the door, and walked up to them, covering the gang with his pistols.

"Now, you scoundrels," Bill addressed them, "get out of this car, or I'll put a bullet into each of you. Leave the train instantly!"

His tone was so quiet that it would, of itself, have attracted no attention from bystanders, but they saw *shoot* in his eyes, and prudently retreated backward to the door of the car.

"Jump!" he commanded as they hesitated a moment on the platform, and the muzzles gleamed ominously in the flickering light of the next car. The train was rushing over the level prairie at a fearful rate, but death awaited them here, while that jump might give each a chance for life. Into the darkness then, each man leaped as the train sped onward; one was killed outright, three badly hurt in the fall; but if they had not jumped, there would have been none that escaped.

And then there was Wild Bill's famous fight with Conquering Bear. "Bill jumped from his hiding place, crying out defiance to the thunder-struck warrior: 'Defend yourself, you treacherous, lying red-skin!'

"Bill drew his pistols and tossed one to the savage chief. But Conquering Bear knew too well the deadly aim of his antagonist and refused to fight with pistols.

"'If you don't fight, I'll shoot you like the good-for-nothing dog that you are,' Bill hissed from between his teeth, and the trembling Indian chose the bowie knife as the weapon to be used. The field of battle was prepared, but Conquering Bear stood motionless.

"'Cowardly, stinking coyote! If you don't come and fight, I'll shoot you down in your tracks!'

"Aroused, the Indian leaped into the ring and the fight began. As the white man made a pass with his keen-edged blade, the Indian drew back as if to make a rush at him; now with a tigerish thirst for blood, each leaps upon the other, his left arm grasping his antagonist's body, his right hand holding his knife, the two blades edge to



edge. So they cling together, each striving to secure some advantage, however trifling; but in vain; they are too evenly matched. The gray eyes gleam like steel as they turn with every movement of the savage, and the dark orbs of the Indian are no less watchful. Then Conquering Bear again springs forward, and once more two flashing blades clash in the sunlight. Both by vigorous passes endeavor to surprise their enemy. At last Bill sees his opportunity and cuts at the Indian's heart, but a medal on the broad, tawny breast received the blow, and the knife glanced aside, though not without inflicting a deep gash in the Indian's side. But the thrust, so nearly successful, has exposed Bill's own body, and the savage makes a desperate lunge at the white man's heart. The scout's left arm, however, has served as a shield for the more vital part, and the flesh is stripped from the bone from the shoulder to the elbow. Still they fought on, though growing weaker every moment, as the blood flowed from their terrible wounds. Conquering Bear saw that victory must come quickly if it precede death, and once more made a pass at the scout's heart; but the blow was skillfully parried, and in another instant the keen edge of the white man's knife was drawn across the tawny throat; for a moment the swarthy form swayed in the air, the head thrown backward, then fell to earth, the blood gushing from the ghastly wound. So ended the fight. There was none braver than James Butler Hickok, known to the world as WILD BILL."

#### HOWEVER...

"It is disgusting to see the eastern papers crowding in everything they can get hold of about 'Wild Bill.' If they only knew the real character of the man they so want to worship! 'Wild Bill' is nothing more than a drunken, reckless, murderous coward, who is treated with contempt by true bordermen, and should have been hung years ago for the murder of innocent men. He shot an old teamster in the back for a trifling provocation, and was booted out of a Leavenworth saloon by a boy bartender—a fine example of his 'bravery.'

"And about that yarn of the Old Ant-Eater wiping out a dozen of McCanles' ruffians all by himself—he gunned down David McCanles, who was unarmed, while hiding behind a curtain, shot the second man from behind a door, and shot the third fellow in the back while the poor sot was running away.

"The whole McCanles deal is pure hogwash. Wild Bill is depicted with his bowie knife up to the hilt in one bushwhacker's heart, with

half a dozen men upon the floor in picturesque attitudes, two of the three remaining desperadoes have their knives puncturing his waistcoat, and the final one of the ten is levelling terrific blows at his head with a clubbed musket. We congratulate Bill on the fact that it is rather not true. It would have been too risky even for Bill, the 'Great Scout of the Plains.'

"One who knows says that Bill's brave deeds exist only in the fevered, prostituted brains of eastern scribes. The farther away the writer is from the object of his veneration, the more heroic become the 'heroic deeds of Wild Bill, the "Achilles of the Western Prairies." , , ,"

WELL, BUT . . .

"No finer physique, no greater strength, no more personal courage, no superior skill with firearms, no better horsemanship than his—especially horsemanship. Admirers call him the 'Centaur of the Plains.' His fabled equestrian skills seem to fuse man and horse into one single living sculpture.

"His extraordinary black mare, Nell, was a noble animal with traits to match his own. Bill had trained her to perform tricks which would have put the most famous circus horse to shame. If Hickok slowly waved his hand over her head with a circular motion Nell would fall down as if struck by a cannon ball, and whenever the Great Scout would mention the precious mare's sagacity she would wink affirmatively to the great amusement of all present. Obeying Wild Bill's low whistle she jumped upon the billiard table of the Lyon House. One well remembered feat was Bill mounting Nell inside Hoff's saloon and with one bound, bursting through the batwing doors, alighting in the middle of the street."

HOWEVER . . .

"Old Nell was black, all right, but she was a 'He,' not a 'She,' a broken down old nag, blind in the right eye, and ripe for the knacker. As to Wild Bill's equestrian feats, they included frequently toppling from his horse, particularly if he had filled himself to the top with cheap whiskey. As for jumping in one bound from the interior of Hoff's whiskey mill, through the door, over a wide porch and over a five foot fence and boardwalk in front, some fifty feet in all, that's a tall fish story."

WELL, BUT . . .

"Bill was the darling of the weaker sex, whether virtuous matron or sporting woman. Withal, he was a model of comportment, a true gentleman in every sense of the word. His moral standards were high. He had none of the swaggering gait, or the barbaric jargon ascribed to him by the Beadle penny pamphlets. With his fine, handsome face, free from blemish, his light mustache, blue-gray eyes, and magnificent forehead, he was irresistible to the fair sex, yet never stooped low enough to perform a 'mean action.' And he was well-groomed always, affecting a black frock-coat and the finest, whitest linen shirts. His boots were made of kid, or the thinnest finest calf. He paid as much as fifty dollars for a pair.

"He kept house with his life-long love, Calamity Jane, but only after they were duly wed and received the blessings of an ordained clergyman. 'Oh, dearest Bill,' Calamity whispered in Wild Bill's ear, 'I love thee and will be thine forever. And I shall be to you a true wife. Do not believe the vile tales told about me. I am yet chaste and no gossip or scandal shall henceforth touch me. But let us keep our marriage secret. There are jealous men who would kill you for having won Calamity's heart, and there are jealous women who would poison me for having robbed them of the hope of winning your love.' 'It shall be so,' said Bill. When Calamity Jane finally shuffled off her mortal coils her last words were: 'Bury me next to my darling Bill!'"

HOWEVER . . .

Hickok's morals were much the same as those of Achilles, King David, Lancelot, and the Chevalier Bayard, though his amours were hardly as frequent as David's or as inexcusable as Lancelot's.

"He always had a mistress. I knew two or three of them. One I believe was a redhead to whom he gave twenty-five dollars to make her leave town. There was Nan Ross, but Bill told her he was through with her and she moved on. When Mrs. Lake, the widow of 'Old Lake of Circus Fame,' came to Abilene, she fell for him hard, fell all the way clear to the basement . . .

"He was a libertine and a rowdy, but the tales that Calamity Jane was his paramour, or even his wife, are pure horse manure. Whatever can be said against Bill, he was fastidious and picked his women for their looks. The idea of taking up with a drunken, foul-mouthed whore like Calamity, with that ugly mug of hers, is just plain humbug. One man said of Bill that his looks and movements were so

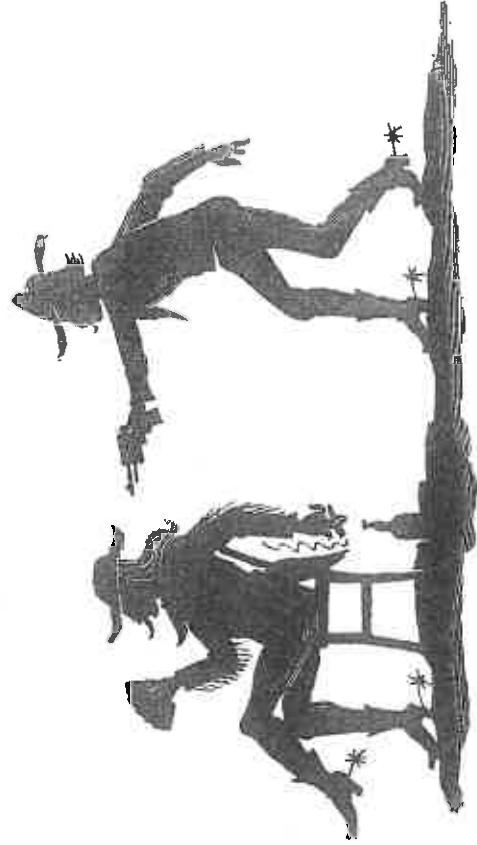
feminine that some suspected him of practicing that vice which shall forever be nameless. They are wrong, but Bill is great lover!—that's ridiculous!"

WELL, BUT...

"Cat-eyed, he was. He slid into a room, keeping his back to the wall always, watching every man and every movement like a hawk. Not the slightest detail escaped him. He looked like a man who lived in expectation of getting killed. Nobody ever was able to tackle him from behind. Over the years he had developed the habitual alertness to shoot fast and to shoot first. Whenever Hickok sat down at a table, whether to eat or to play a game of cards, he always positioned himself with his back to the wall. This he did quite automatically. It had become second nature to him."

HOWEVER...

On August 21, 1876, Wild Bill sat in on a game of poker at Nuttal and Mann's saloon in Deadwood. He had settled down with his face to the wall and his back to the swinging doors. It was the first time he left his back uncovered and also his last. He was holding a pair of aces and a pair of eights, known ever since as the "dead man's hand."



A tinhorn gambler named Jack McCall came up behind him and shouted, "Take that!" and neatly drilled a hole through Wild Bill's cerebellum. The bullet passed through Hickok's head and came to rest, permanently, in the wrist of his poker partner, Captain Frank Massey. Frank later made it his habit to enter saloons with the exultant cry: "Gentlemen, the bullet which killed Wild Bill has come to town!"

The physician who inspected Hickok's body wrote: "I have seen many dead men on the field of battle and in civil life, but Wild Bill's was the prettiest corpse I ever saw."

## Billy the Kid

### I. THE PEOPLE REMEMBER THE KID.

You would learn in what affectionate regard the people of New Mexico cherish the memory of Billy the Kid to-day, you have but to

turn *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, by Walter Noble Burns, pp. 64-69. Copyright, 1925, by Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York.



journey in leisurely fashion through the Billy the Kid country. Every one will have a story to tell you of his courage, generosity, loyalty, light-heartedness, engaging boyishness. More than likely you yourself will fall under the spell of these kindly tales and, before you are aware, find yourself warming with romantic sympathy to the idealized picture of heroic and adventurous youth.

Sit, for instance, on one of the benches under the shade trees in the old square at Santa Fé where the wagon caravans used to end their long journey across the plains. Here the rich and poor of this ancient capital of the land of mañana and sunshine come every day to while away an hour and smoke and talk politics. Mention Billy the Kid to some leisured burgher. Instantly his face will light up; he will cease his tirade against graft and corruption in high places and go off into interminable anecdotes. Yes, Billy the Kid lived here in Santa Fé when he was a boy. Many a time when he was an outlaw with a price on his head, he rode into town and danced all night at the dance hall over on Galisteo Street. The house is still there; the pink adobe with the blue door and window shutters. Did the police attempt to arrest him? Not much. Those blue-coated fellows valued their hides. Why, that boy wasn't afraid of the devil. Say once over at Anton Chico. . . .

Or drop into some little adobe home in Puerta de Luna. Or in Santa Rosa. Or on the Hondo. Or anywhere between the Ratons and Seven Rivers. Perhaps the Mexican housewife will serve you with frijoles and tortillas and coffee with goat's milk. If you are wise in the ways of Mexicans, you will tear off a fragment of tortilla and, cupping it between your fingers, use it as a spoon to eat your frijoles that are red with chili pepper and swimming in soup rich with fat bacon grease. But between mouthfuls of these beans—and you will be ready to swear they are that, else you are no connoisseur in beans—don't forget to make some casual reference to Billy the Kid. Then watch the face of your hostess. At mention of the magic name, she will smile softly and dream-light will come into her eyes.

"Billee the Keed? Ah, you have hear of heem? He was one gran' boy señor. All Mexican pepul his friend. You nevair hear a Mexican say one word against Billee the Keed. Everybody love that boy. He was so kind-hearted, so generous, so brave. And so 'andsome. *Nombre de Dios!* Every leetle señorita was crazy about heem. They all try to catch the Billee the Keed for their sweetheart. Ah, many a pretty *muchacha* cry her eyes out when he is keel; and when she count her beads at Mass, she add a prayer for good measure for his soul to rest in peace. Poor Billee the Keed! He was good boy—*muy valiente, muy caballero.*"

Or ask Frank Coe about him. You will find him a white-haired old man now on his fruit ranch in Ruidoso Cañon. He fought in the Lincoln County war by the Kid's side and as he tells his story you may sit in a rocking chair under the cottonwoods while the Ruidoso River sings its pleasant tune just back of the rambling, one-story adobe ranch house.

"Billy the Kid," says Coe, "lived with me for a while soon after he came to Lincoln County in the fall of 1877. Just a little before he went to work for Tunstall on the Feliz. No, he didn't work for me. Just lived with me. Riding the chuck line. Didn't have anywhere else special to stay just then. He did a lot of hunting that winter. Billy was a great hunter, and the hills hereabouts were full of wild turkey, deer, and cinnamon bear. Billy could hit a bear's eye so far away I could hardly see the bear.

"He was only eighteen years old, as nice-looking a young fellow as you'd care to meet, and certainly mighty pleasant company. Many a night he and I have sat up before a pine-knot fire swapping yarns. Yes, he had killed quite a few men even then, but it didn't seem to weigh on him. None at all. Ghosts, I reckon, never bothered Billy. He was about as cheerful as little hombre as I ever ran across. Not the grim, sullen kind; but full of talk, and it seemed to me he was laughing half his time.

"You never saw such shooting as that lad could do. Not a dead shot. I've heard about these dead shots but I never happened to meet one. Billy was the best shot with a six-shooter I ever saw, but he missed sometimes. Jesse Evans, who fought on the Murphy side, used to brag that he was as good a shot as the Kid, but I never thought so, and I knew Jesse and have seen him shoot. Jesse, by the way, used to say, too, that he wasn't afraid of Billy the Kid. Which was just another one of his brags. He was scared to death of the Kid, and once when they met in Lincoln, Billy made him take water and made him like it. Billy used to do a whole lot of practice shooting around the ranch, and had the barn peppered full of holes. I have heard people say they have seen him empty his shooter at a bat tossed about twenty feet into the air and hit it six times before it struck the ground. I won't say he couldn't do it, but I never saw him do it. One of his favourite stunts was to shoot at snowbirds sitting on fence posts along the road as he rode by with his horse at a gallop. Sometimes he would kill half-a-dozen birds one after the other; and then he would miss a few. His average was about one in three. And I'd say that was mighty good shooting.

"Billy had had a little schooling, and he could read and write as well as anybody else around here. I never saw him reading any books, but he was a great hand to read newspapers whenever he could get hold of any. He absorbed a lot of education from his newspaper reading. He didn't talk like a backwoodsman. I don't suppose he knew much about the rules of grammar, but he didn't make the common, glaring mistakes of ignorant people. His speech was that of an intelligent and fairly well-educated man. He had a clean mind; his conversation was never coarse or vulgar; and while most of the men with whom he associated swore like pirates, he rarely used an oath.

"He was a free-hearted, generous boy. He'd give a friend the shirt off his back. His money came easy when it came, but sometimes it didn't come. He was a gambler and, like all gamblers, his life was chicken one

day and feathers the next, a pocketful of money to-day and broke to-morrow. Monte was his favourite game; he banked the game or bucked it, depending on his finances. He was as slick a dealer as ever threw a card, and as a player, he was shrewd, usually lucky, and bet 'em high—the limit on every turn. While he stayed with me, he broke a Mexican monte, bank every little while down the cañon at San Patricio. If he happened to lose, he'd take it like a good gambler and, like as not, crack a joke and walk away whistling with his hands rammed in his empty pockets. Losing his money never made him mad. To tell the truth, I never saw Billy the Kid mad in my life, and I knew him several years.

"Think what you please, the Kid had a lot of principle. He was about as honest a fellow as I ever knew outside of some loose notions about rustling cattle. This was stealing, of course, but I don't believe it struck him exactly that way. It didn't seem to have any personal element in it. There were the cattle running loose on the plains without any owner in sight or sign of ownership, except the brands, seeming like part of the landscape. Billy, being in his fashion a sort of potentate ruling a large portion of the landscape with his six-shooter, felt, I suppose, like he had a sort of proprietary claim on those cattle, and it didn't seem to him like robbery—not exactly—to run them off and cash in on them at the nearest market. That's at least one way of figuring it out. But as for other lowdown kinds of theft like sticking up a lonely traveller on the highway or burglarizing a house, or picking pockets, he was just as much above that sort of thing as you or me. I'd have trusted him with the last dollar I had in the world. One thing is certain, he never stole a cent in his life from a friend."

The history of Billy the Kid already has been clouded by legend. Less than fifty years after his death, it is not always easy to differentiate fact from myth. Historians have been afraid of him, as if this boy of six-shooter deadliness might fatally injure their reputations if they set themselves seriously to write of a career of such dime-novel luridness. As a consequence, history has neglected him. Fantastic details have been added as the tales have been told and retold. He is already in process of evolving into the hero of a Southwestern Niebelungenlied. Such a mass of stories has grown about him that it seems safe to predict that in spite of any thing history can do to rescue the facts of his life, he is destined eventually to be transformed by popular legend into the Robin Hood of New Mexico—a heroic outlaw endowed with every noble quality fighting the battle of the common people against the tyranny of wealth and power.

Innumerable stories in which Billy the Kid figures as a semi-mythical hero are to be picked up throughout New Mexico. They are told at every camp fire on the range, they enliven the winter evenings in every Mexican home. There is doubtless a grain of truth in every one, but the troubadour touch is upon them all. You will not find them in books, and their chief interest perhaps lies in the fact that they are examples of oral legend kept alive in memory and passed on by the story-tellers of one generation to the story-teller of the next in Homeric succession. They are folklore

the making. As each narrative adds a bit of drama here and a picturesque detail there, one wonders what form these legends will assume as time goes by, and in what heroic proportions Billy the Kid will appear in fire-side fairy tales a hundred years or so from now.

## II. THE "WAR OF BILLY THE KID"

### CHAPTER V

#### *Lincoln County War*

To the average dweller in that portion of the great West known as New Mexico, the Lincoln county war is as well known as was the inter-necine "war of the Roses" to the people of the time of York and Lancaster. Its causes and its results yet form the theme of conversation around the camp fire, on a winter's night, or a summer's evening, and it will be many years before the tale will have grown old and uninteresting. Were nothing else needed to make it live the mere fact that The Kid was a leading spirit in the deadly strife would suffice to give it a certain place in history. Much as small men are known as the husbands of Mrs. ———, the actress, or lecturer, will the Lincoln imbroglío be known as the war of "Billy the Kid."

According to Marion Turner, who was a prominent actor in the war, the trouble began with the determination of "Old John Chisum" and partner, Alex. McSwain, to establish a monopoly of the stock-grazing business and make themselves in truth the cattle kings of the Pecos Valley. This valley is next to that of the Rio Grande, the most important in the Territory, running as it does almost along its entire length from North to South, and is, with the exception of the Rio Hondo, the only one of any size in Lincoln county. To have entire command of such a range would be a fortune in 1881. Chisum drove in 80,000 head of cattle. The herds of the smaller rancheros were swept away, as if by an avalanche, by this multitude of boots and horns; naturally enough those who lost their little all in this manner attempted to reclaim their animals. This was dangerous business and collisions between the herders were of daily occurrence. The smaller herds banded together under the leadership of Murphy, Dolan & Co., men who had important cattle interests and were anxious to defend them. Both sides enlisted all the strength and influence they could command and prepared for what bid fair to be a deadly conflict. Chisum and McSwain in a happy moment, hired The Kid, and his dare-devil ways, his deadly manumanship, his perfect command of a horse, combined with what seemed to be an absolute delight in murder, soon caused him to be made the leader of his faction. The strife progressed with alternate success and

From *The Cowboy's Career, or The Dare Devil Deeds of "Billy, the Kid," The Noted New Mexican Desperado*, by "One of the Kids," Chicago, Belford, Clarke & Co., St. Louis, Belford & Clarke Publishing Co., 1881. (From a typewritten transcript prepared by Philip Edward Stevenson.)

defeat for each party. Early in 1879 Chisum arranged for the appointment of The Kid as deputy constable and clothed in this authority he was given a warrant for the arrest, on a trivial charge, of Billy Morton and Fred Baker, two herders employed by Tom Catron. This Catron, by the way, used to live in Lafayette county, Missouri, and was the partner of Ho Stephen B. Elkins, himself a Missouri boy, later delegated to Congress from New Mexico and now one of the moneyed men of New York. The Kid saddled his horse, when told what was to be done, and, without a word to any of his comrades, silently rode off to the range in search of his prey accompanied by one McCluskey. He found Morton and his company in a camp near the eastern boundary of the county and showing him the warrant said:

"You are my prisoners. Come along."

"What do you want of me?" said Morton, in a threatening tone.

"Shut up, or I'll blow your brains out. You have been working against Chisum. That's enough."

"We'll see about this pretty soon, young man," said Baker. "It's a free country and no man arrests me without I know what it's for."

"Haven't I told your white-livered friend the reason. Hold your tongue or I'll stop it forever with a bullet."

At this point McCluskey interfered and remonstrated with the young desperado.

"You don't mean to kill a defenseless man do you?" he said.

"If I wish to, yes; and you, too."

With these words The Kid drew his revolver and before the astonished McCluskey could move his hand shot him in his tracks.

"You see how I treat men who fool with me, do you?" the murderer said, as he scornfully kicked the lifeless form at his feet. "Be careful what you do or I'll serve you as I have him."

Chaining the two men together by the wrists and carefully securing them to the saddle he placed them both upon McCluskey's horse and started back at a slow trot towards Chisum's ranch. The feelings of the prisoners can easily be imagined. Should they be taken into camp in vengeance of Chisum would be upon their heads. There was, at least a chance of escape. If the handcuffs could only be loosened and the opportunity of a successful break might be made. Those "ifs" must be gotten off the way in the next twenty miles. The men worked cautiously and almost freed themselves, when the watchful eye of The Kid espied their movements. Without saying a word he coolly drew his rifle to his shoulder and fired twice at them. As the distance was only ten feet and his sure the reports were followed by the simultaneous fall of both Morton and Baker, and in a moment their souls had flown to what we may hope was a greener range, where even the cow-boy has a place. The dead without hardly an excuse. Thus The Kid added two more to the list of those who had felt his deadly power. Thus far he had killed four men and the career of this pseudo James boy had hardly begun. Fearful at its beginning the reader must judge the rightness of the end.

Riding into camp The Kid informed Chisum of what he had done and asked that two men be sent out to bury them.

"Where is McCluskey?" asked Chisum.

"None of your business," replied The Kid.

"It is my business and I will know. I am not afraid of you and you may as well understand it now as any time."

"Come, come, old feller," he said, changing his tone and manner, "I was just bantering you a little. Now to be honest about it I killed Mc."

"Killed him!"

"That's the racket."

"Why, what had he done?"

"Too infernally inquisitive. Didn't know his place, either. Thought he'd try to boss the job, but I settled him quick."

"He was my best man, next to you," said Chisum, after a pause, in which he eyed The Kid closely and rubbed his chin reflectively.

"Don't care if he was, he had to go."

"Do you know, Kid, that this affair will leak out and the officers will be down here to inquire into it and arrest you?"

"Chisum, you must think I'm a fool. I care no more for Brady and Hindman than I do for a dog. If they get the drop on me—all right, but The Kid won't be caught napping and don't you forget it."

"I'm afraid they'll bring the troops down on us!"

"Let them do it. If we can't whip any company of 'blue coats,' why then I'll change my name and herd sheep in the States," and with this assertion The Kid carelessly sauntered down to his tent and threw himself down to catch a few hours' sleep before morning should dawn.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Numbers Five and Six*

As hinted by Chisum, the news of the killing of Morton, McCluskey and Baker quickly reached the ears of the authorities of the county. Although a wild section, a triple murder could not be winked at, or a reign of lawlessness would ensue destructive of the already loose fabric of society and containing elements of disaster of great moment to the cattle men and their employes, as well as to the few farmers and store-keepers of Lincoln county. When sheriff Brady first heard of The Kid's bloody deed from the lips of a special detective, who, in turn, learned the fact from one of Chisum's men—a friend of the murdered parties, and who had recently been discharged because of suspected intimacy with the opposing faction—he realized that in capturing the murderer he would have no easy task to perform. The matter was talked over carefully with his deputy, George Hindman, and it was resolved to at once proceed to Chisum's ranch and, if possible, effect the capture. No one else was taken into the secret, as it was feared that The Kid might be informed of the intended raid of the officers and prepare himself accordingly. The pre-

caution was, however, an unnecessary one, since he was always ready to meet a personal enemy or an officer of the law, knowing himself to be practically an outcast, with the hand of almost every man against him.

The news came to Brady Wednesday. The murders were committed Monday. The officers left Thursday, bound for the home of The Kid. Each was heavily armed and rode horses of fine staying powers. The trip was a solemn one. They fully recognized the fact that the chance of coming back alive were hardly even. Indeed, before the start was made, they settled their business affairs and otherwise made ready for any emergency.

"I confess I don't like this," remarked Hindman to his superior as the galloped out of Lincoln.

"You are not afraid, are you?" responded Brady.

"No man ever saw George Hindman turn pale, even when looking down the barrel of a rifle in the hands of an enemy," he said, "but I can't shake off the feeling, somehow or other, that we won't come out of the fight alive."

"The Kid is a bad man, I know," replied Brady, after a moment's thought, "but if I take him off his guard he will be my prisoner and blood will be spilled, either."

"Catch a cat sleeping. The Kid is surrounded by men who will defend him to the last. I tell you it's a bad job. We are in for it, though."

It will be seen that they did not walk into the trap blindly but with eyes open. It is all very well to praise the immortal six hundred who made the charge at Balaklava; one may become enthusiastic at the bravery of the men at Bunker Hill, or Vicksburg, but to the unprejudiced mind the act of Brady and Hindman had in it more elements of heroism than all others. The one faced death in behalf of an idea and surrounded by all the glory of conquest and insanity of battle; the other, in behalf of law and order, quietly took even chances of death or life without a murmur at all alone.

A few words will tell the story. All day Thursday The Kid seemed possessed with the idea that something would happen. As he expressed himself to a comrade: "Either I or the man whom I meet will die to-day and an early hour he cleaned his rifle carefully, loaded it with a heavy proper equipment of his Derringers and was never for a moment off guard. Between the hours of eleven and twelve his watchful eye discerned two horsemen slowly riding to the ranch from the west. At the instant he espied them they were fully five miles off. In forty minutes they would be at the ranch, in twenty they would be near enough to be recognized. As they came nearer, making a detour to the south, hoping to reach a good and escape observation until almost at their destination, The Kid procured a spy glass and leveled it in the direction of the approaching horsemen.

"The officers!" was all he said.

Quietly walking to McSwain's adobe, which was located near the side of the little hamlet, he placed himself in readiness. Five—

fifteen—twenty minutes had elapsed. A sound was heard around the corner—the measured tramp of approaching feet. The Kid peered cautiously around the corner. The two officers. Then he discovered himself to them, at the same time raising his rifle to the shoulder, and pulling the trigger, with the barrel aimed at Brady's heart, there was a quick flash, followed by a loud report and a white cloud of smoke; then another flash and another report. The south wind quickly cleared the air, and stepping forward, with Derringer drawn The Kid saw Brady and Hindman at his feet, the one dead, the other breathing faintly and asking to be put out of his misery.

"You shall go as quick as I can send you," the cow-boy said. "Give Baker my love," and he placed the muzzle of his Derringer at Hindman's right temple and finished the bloody work.

By this time a crowd had gathered, but no one, if so inclined, dared to arrest The Kid. Instead, he ordered his comrades to join him in an hour, fully equipped with arms, ammunition and horses, saying that it would be too hot for them as soon as Baker's friends discovered the murder, and that escape must be made to the mountains where a defense could be more easily made. He accordingly gathered around him a band of outlaws and desperadoes and defied county, territory and United States authorities.

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Crisis*

The tacit defiance of law, the reign of terror and bloodshed inaugurated by The Kid were met in a determined manner by the proper authorities. June 15th, 1879, two days after the occurrence mentioned in the preceding chapter, Marion Turner, deputy sheriff of Lincoln county, had a warrant placed in his hands for the arrest of The Kid for the murder of Morton Baker, McCluskey, Brady and Hindman. Turner was not only a very brave but a very wise man. He knew that the man for whom he had a warrant was a desperate character, and therefore desperate measures were resorted to to effect his capture. Turner organized a posse of thirty-five men, consisting principally of ranchmen and cowboys of the anti-Chisum faction. In adopting this course Turner not only took advantage of the general horror which every man would feel at the cold-blooded murders, but also of the peculiar and intense hatred entertained against The Kid and his gang by those who conceived their rights had been trampled on by Chisum. The posse was not a very large one, but every man in the crowd was an expert handler of the rifle and could be depended on in an emergency. As emergencies were very liable to arise, this readiness and nervousness was a good and important factor of the problem.

On the seventeenth day of June, after being out two days, Turner and his posse came upon The Kid and his sixty-three men. The place where they met was in a narrow cañon at the mouth of a range of low foot hills.

To the right was a thickly wooded expanse, to the left huge boulders with here and there a straggling pine tree, while in front ran a small stream which had its source ten miles distant, to the north. The Kid's party had made their camp five miles up the stream, and had come down to the place where it left the hills in order to reconnoiter, when they were met by Turner's posse. The former divided, one division running back to protect their camp, and the other remaining to confront the posse, each side thus being evenly balanced. Turner halted nearly a hundred yards from where The Kid was standing, and arranging his forces in the best possible manner with each man's hand on his rifle, stepped out a few steps from the ranks and read his warrant. To the requisition a defiant answer was returned to the effect that they would never get him, dead or alive, whereupon Turner ordered his men to arrest him. They advanced at a double-quick, on horseback, but The Kid, wishing to avoid a fight and he could effect a junction with the remainder of his gang, as well as secure a better position, hastily retreated. Seeing his purpose the order was given to fire, but the aim of the posse was rendered uncertain by the motion of their horses and only two men were hit, one being seriously and the other fatally wounded. None of the Sheriff's party were touched by the return fusillade. The fight continued in this way for five miles, neither side scoring another fatal shot. A decided stand was made at the camp and Turner drew off for consultation. At the camp all was bustle and confusion. A rude embankment had been thrown up, behind which The Kid, his men, their horses and pack animals were waiting to receive the expected onslaught. The consultation between Turner and his men resulted in the employment of strategy. They retired a short distance and halted just on the edge of the wood. Ten of the party formed a line along its edge and the other twenty-five dashed into the wood with the intention of making a circuit and coming in upon the gang from the rear. This was easily accomplished, provided the ruse was successful, because The Kid's camp joined the woods on the right. The danger of the undertaking lay in the fact that if the plan was discovered the little party of ten would fall an easy prey to a foe outnumbering them six to one. The minutes that succeeded the departure of the twenty-five were anxious ones to those who remained. Every movement of the enemy was watched and a show of preparation for renewing the conflict was kept up. Five minutes had passed. The detour should have been made in that time. The Kid appeared at the head of his men and began to file out of the camp, confident of the superiority of numbers and his own charmed life. At that moment, and not a second too soon, a yell was heard from behind. Turner had flanked them. They turned, and another yell was heard. The men who had guarded the operation of their comrades rushed up the stream. A deadly fire was poured in from two sides, and for a moment all was confusion and panic. At this juncture The Kid dashed forward, calling upon his men to rally broke through the opposing force, killing one of them and slightly wounding two more. He was followed by Turner

the Nemesis. Volley after volley was fired. The flight was so rapid that neither the dead nor the wounded were cared for. On! On! in feverish haste. Crossing and recrossing the little stream, turning to fire and then savagely spurring their horses forward, they fairly flew. Of the sixty-five men whom The Kid led into the cañon only forty escaped alive, while Turner lost but five. The odds had changed, and they were not as favorable to the desperado. Across the plain, dodging hither and thither, now advancing, then retreating, the two forces went, each wreaking vengeance on the other, each paying old scores and getting even with bitter enemies. Strange as it may seem, this running fight lasted two days, with scarcely a stop for food or water. The forces by this time had become considerably reduced, numbering but twenty-five each. Lieut. Col. Dudley, of the famous 9th Cavalry (colored), learning that re-enforcements were being sent to The Kid, took two companies of his regiment and went to Turner's assistance. As luck would have it Dudley was first on the ground and The Kid and his gang at once retreated towards Lincoln which was but a few miles distant. They took shelter in McSwain's house, one of the most elegantly furnished dwellings in the Territory, in which only the most fashionable were wont to enter. The cavalry rushed up but were repulsed and fell back. Again the line was formed, this time on foot, and an advance was made. The fight raged furiously. It was a question of annihilation for one side or the other, and every man fought like a demon. Pot-holes were cut and rifle balls sent from them with unerring aim. The house became a fort and the garden surrounding it a battlefield. During the battle Mrs. McSwain encouraged the garrison by playing martial airs upon her piano, and singing inspiring battle songs. The besieging posse soon got the range of the piano from its sound, and shot it to pieces with their heavy buffalo rifles, the wife of McSwain narrowly escaping. This siege was of three days' duration. On the third day of the fight Turner, being convinced that they could not be conquered by legitimate warfare, ordered the house to be fired by throwing bucketfuls of blazing coal oil on the roof and inside through the windows. This precipitated the crisis, and about dusk of the third day the desperadoes made a rush for their horses with the intention of thereby effecting an escape. A hand to hand combat ensued in which twelve of The Kid's men and two of Turner's posse were killed, McSwain being among the number. During the rush from the burning house, Tom O'Fallagher, a "pard" of The Kid's, young and from San Antonio, Texas, noticed a friend fall. Although a storm of balls and buckshot rained around him he coolly stopped, picked up his comrade and was about to carry him out when he noticed that he was dead. Throwing the body down he drew a sword and fought his way out. This brave fellow was afterwards killed by deputy sheriff Garrett's posse, shortly after the capture of The Kid.

The leader of the gang, The Kid, seemed to bear a charmed existence. A hundred bullets were speeded towards him and not one reached the mark. He escaped without a scratch, and with barely a dozen men fled,

hotly pursued but never caught. Immediately after this fearful flight he reorganized his followers, received accessions to his cause, and was again in condition to make the average New Mexican go to bed with feeling of insecurity. The Kid in the meanwhile had added five names to his death-roll. It now numbered eleven.

### III. DEATH OF BILLY THE KID

In March, 1881, a Deputy United States Marshal by the name of John W. Poe arrived in the booming mining camp of White Oaks. It had been sent to New Mexico by the Cattlemen's Association of the Texas Panhandle. Cattle King Charlie Goodnight, being the president of the association, had selected Mr. Poe as the proper man to put a stop to the stealing of Panhandle cattle by "Billy the Kid" and gang.

After the "Kid's" escape, Pat Garrett went to White Oaks and deputized John W. Poe to assist him in rounding up the "Kid."

From now on Mr. Poe made trips out in the mountains trying to locate the young outlaw. The "Kid's" best friends argued that he was "nobody's fool," and would not remain in the United States, when the Old Mexican border was so near. They didn't realize that little Cupid was shooting at tender young hearts full of love-darts, straight from the heart of proboscis little Miss Dulcinea del Toboso, of Fort Sumner.

Early in July, Pat Garrett received a letter from an acquaintance by the name of Brazil, in Fort Sumner, advising him that the "Kid" was hanging around there. Garrett at once wrote Brazil to meet him about dark on the night of July 13th at the mouth of the Taiban arroyo, below Fort Sumner.

Now the sheriff took his trusted deputy, John W. Poe, and rode to Roswell, on the Rio Pecos. There they were joined by one of Mr. Garrett's fearless cowboy deputies, "Kip" McKinnie, who had been raised near Uvalde, Texas.

Together the three law officers rode up the river towards Fort Sumner a distance of eighty miles. They arrived at the mouth of Taiban arroyo an hour after dark on July 13th, but Brazil was not there to meet them. The night was spent sleeping on their saddle blankets.

The next morning Garrett sent Mr. Poe, who was a stranger in the country, and for that reason would not be suspicious, into Fort Sumner five miles north, to find out what he could on the sly, about the "Kid's" presence. From Fort Sumner he was to go to Sultry Side, six miles north to interview a merchant by the name of Mr. Rudolph. Then when the moon was rising, to meet Garrett and McKinnie at La Punta de Glorietta, about four miles north of Fort Sumner.

From *History of "Billy the Kid,"* by Chas. A. Siringo, pp. 124-133. The true-life most daring young outlaw of the age. He was the leading spirit in the blood Lincoln County, New Mexico, war. When a bullet from Sheriff Pat Garrett's pistol pierced his breast he was only twenty-one years of age, and had killed twenty-one men, not counting Indians. His six years of daring outlawry has never been equalled in the annals of criminal history. Copyright, 1920, by Chas. A. Siringo.

failing to find out anything of importance about the "Kid," John W. Poe met his two companions at the appointed place, and they rode into Fort Sumner.

It was about eleven o'clock, and the moon was shining brightly, when the officers rode into an old orchard and concealed their horses. Now the three continued afoot to the home of Pete Maxwell, a wealthy stockman, who was a friend to both Garrett and the "Kid." He lived in a long, one-story adobe building, which had been the U. S. officers' quarters when the soldiers were stationed there. The house fronted south, and had a wide covered porch in front. The grassy front yard was surrounded by a picket fence.

As Pat Garrett had courted his wife and married her in this town, he knew every foot of the ground, even to Pete Maxwell's private bed room. On reaching the picket gate, near the corner room, which Pete Maxwell always occupied, Garrett told his two deputies to wait there until after he had a talk with half-breed Pete Maxwell.

The night being hot, Pete Maxwell's door stood wide open, and Garrett walked in.

A short time previous, "Billy the Kid" had arrived from a sheep camp out in the hills. Back of the Maxwell home lived a Mexican servant, who was a warm friend to the "Kid." Here "Billy the Kid" always found the newspapers, placed there by loving hands, for his special benefit.

This old servant had gone to bed. The "Kid" lit a lamp, then pulled off his coat and boots. Now he glanced over the papers to see if his name was mentioned. Finding nothing of interest in the newspapers, he asked the old servant to get up and cook him some supper, as he was very hungry.

Getting up, the servant told him there was no meat in the house. The "Kid" remarked that he would go and get some from Pete Maxwell.

Now he picked up a butcher knife from the table to cut the meat with, and started bare-footed and bare-headed.

The "Kid" passed within a few feet of the end of the porch where sat John W. Poe and Kip McKinnie. The latter had raised up, when his spur jingled, which attracted the "Kid's" attention. At the same moment Mr. Poe stood up in the small open gateway leading from the street to the end of the porch. They supposed the man coming towards them, only half-dressed, was a servant, or possibly Pete Maxwell.

The "Kid" had pulled his pistol, and so had John W. Poe, who by that time was almost within arm's reach of the "Kid."

With pistol pointing at Poe, at the same time asking in Spanish: "Quien (Who is that?), he backed into Pete Maxwell's room. He had repeated the above question several times. On entering the room, "Billy the Kid" walked up to within a few feet of Pat Garrett, who was sitting on Maxwell's bed, and asked: "Who are they, Pete?"

Now discovering that a man sat on Pete's bed, the "Kid" with raised pistol pointing towards the bed, began backing across the room.

Pete Maxwell whispered to the sheriff: "That's him, Pat." By this

time the "Kid" had backed to a streak of moonlight coming through a south window, asking: "Quien es?" (Who's that?) Garrett raised his pistol and fired. Then cocked the pistol again and it went off accidentally, putting a hole in the ceiling, or wall.

Now the sheriff sprang out of the door onto the porch, where stood two deputies with drawn pistols.

Soon after, Pete Maxwell ran out, and came very near getting a lead from Poe's pistol. Garrett struck the pistol upward, saying: "Don't shoot Maxwell!"

A lighted candle was secured from the mother of Pete Maxwell, who occupied a nearby room, and the dead body of "Billy the Kid" was found stretched out on his back with a bullet wound in his breast, just above the heart. At the right hand lay a Colt's-41 calibre pistol, and at his left a butcher knife.

Now the native people began to collect,—many of them being with friends of the "Kid's." Garrett allowed them to take the body across the street to a carpenter shop, where it was laid out on a bench. Then lighted candles were placed around the remains of what was once the "brave" and coolest young outlaw who ever trod the face of the earth.

The next day, this, once mother's darling, was buried by the side of his chum, Tom O'Phalliard, in the old military cemetery.

He was killed at midnight, July 14th, 1881, being just twenty-one years seven months and twenty-one days of age, and had killed twenty-one men not including Indians, which he said didn't count as human beings.

#### IV. SONG OF BILLY THE KID

I'll sing you a true song of  
 Billy the Kid, I'll sing of the  
 desperate deeds that he did  
 way out in New Mex—ico long, long  
 ago. When a man's on-ly chance was his own for-ty four.

From *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, collected and compiled by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, pp. 137-138. Copyright, 1934, by The Macmillan Company, New York.

#### JESSE JAMES.

I'll sing you a true song of Billy the Kid,  
 I'll sing of the desperate deeds that he did  
 Way out in New Mexico long, long ago,  
 When a man's only chance was his own forty four.

When Billy the Kid was a very young lad,  
 In old Silver City he went to the bad;  
 Way out in the West with a gun in his hand  
 At the age of twelve years he first killed his man.

Fair Mexican maidens play guitars and sing  
 A song about Billy, their boy bandit king,  
 How ere his young manhood had reached its sad end  
 He'd a notch on his pistol for twenty-one men.

'Twas on the same night when poor Billy died  
 He said to his friends: "I am not satisfied;  
 There are twenty-one men I have put bullets through  
 And Sheriff Pat Garrett must make twenty-two."

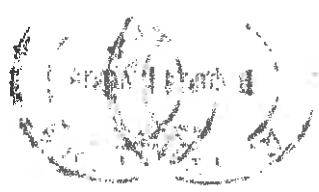
Now, this is how Billy the Kid met his fate:  
 The bright moon was shining, the hour was late.  
 Shot down by Pat Garrett, who once was his friend,  
 The young outlaw's life had now come to its end.

There's many a man with a face fine and fair  
 Who starts out in life with a chance to be square,  
 But just like poor Billy he wanders astray  
 And loses his life in the very same way.

#### Jesse James

##### I. BALLAD OF JESSE JAMES

Jes-se James was a lad who killed man—ya man. He  
 robbed the Glen-dale train. He stole from the rich and he  
 gave to the poor, Hed a hand and a heart and a brain.  
 Chorus  
 Jes-se had a wife to mourn for his life, Three  
 chil-dren, they were brave; But that dirt-ty lit-tle cow-ard that  
 shot Mis-ter How-ard, Has laid Jes-se James in his grave.



# The Weeping Woman

*In the Southwestern United States, and in Mexico, the reigning queen of ghosts is La Llorona, the weeping woman. So many tales exist about the origin of her presence that looking at a few of them provides a fascinating look at the folk-process at work.*

## I.

A long time ago, an Indian couple was to be married, another ordinary marriage as it may appear. But as time went on, the economic status of the family went from fair to very poor. When the couple had its first baby, a boy, the father knew he couldn't feed him, so after thinking about what was best for the child, he went to the river, and after asking God for forgiveness, he dropped the child in the river. The husband believed he was doing the right thing and repeated his feat as each child was born. Each time the town's people heard the wife screaming, "Ay, my hijo" [Oh, my son] in an eerie tone.

When her last son was born [all previous ones were boys], she was determined to have him live. She went down to the river, and after her husband dropped the boy, she went after him. Since she wasn't skilled in the art of swimming, she drowned along with her son.

Nobody thought much of it after the death, but one foggy night, one of the farm workers saw the ghostly figure of a woman and child in the river. The woman screamed in her high pitched voice, "Oh, my son." After that night, the ghost appeared on the water and the nearby land. The husband couldn't sleep because he heard these eerie sounds. Finally the husband, knife in hand, jumped into the river and tried to kill the woman. After his unsuccessful try, his body was never found.

After the story was spread around, people reported seeing her in different places. But the local people said that she appeared only on rainy, foggy nights.





II.

La Llorona hated men, especially men who have two or more women. She appears to them dressed in a white robe and makes a pass and when they follow her they are always found drowned, sometimes in the canal, but sometimes they will be in the street. They always die with their eyes open like they were looking up at something and couldn't stop.

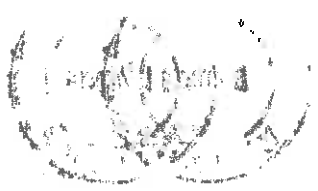
III.

There was a woman who had gone out into the fields one day to help her husband with the crop. She left her children unattended. When she came home that evening, she found all of her children dead. Somehow they had poisoned themselves. When she saw this, she went out of her mind and killed herself. Since a suicide cannot be admitted to heaven, the Llorona was condemned to wander the earth.

IV.

When she was born, she was a twin. She and her sister were so identical, that when they were baptized, the other one was baptized twice. La Llorona was never baptized. She married when she was nineteen and had a son and a daughter. But she did not love them, so she drowned them in a ditch. When she died and went before God, He punished her by having her cry and search throughout the world for her children until the day the world ends. Then she will be pardoned. They say that she appears where there are lakes and ditches, and her weeping and wailing can be heard.





• THE WEeping WOMAN •

V.

Well, my friends told me there once lived this lady who had a bunch of kids. Well, you see, she couldn't feed these kids. So she decided to kill them. She took them to the river and told them they were going to go swimming. They believed her. She drowned them. And God punished her for this. So He said, "You will always cry when a person puts a broom in the corner and it's raining." She regretted what she had done. But every time someone puts a broom in the corner when it rains at night, she has to go out and kill someone.

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The Skeleton Hand

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Jacob Schutz probably never existed in the flesh, but he lives on in a saga of the earliest "Far West," namely the Pennsylvania wilderness, battleground of Indians, settlers, Canadian *coureurs de bois*, and British and French soldiers. The name Schutz, in German, means "shooter" or "marksman"—a fitting name, as Jacob's overmastering passion was the hunt. No ordinary huntsman was he. Small game was not for him. Only the fabulous and supernatural drew him on. He had no use for a woman and children of his own, who would have been in the way of his one and only passion. He shunned the company of men and lived the solitary life of a badger. If any pioneer settled closer than ten miles from his one-room log cabin, he at once felt crowded and abandoned his hovel to move deeper into the primeval forest. He suffered only two living beings to share his hermit life—a huge, black, shaggy dog called Wacker, that is, "bold," and an equally huge, black, and omery stallion named Rabe, meaning "raven." His cabin was made of rough, untrimmed logs, carelessly chinked, so that the wind whistled through it whenever a storm arose. The floor was dirt trampled into metallic hardness. The chimney and



fireplace was indifferently cobbled together with rocks of various sizes and colors. Acrid smoke filled the single room whenever a fire was lit. A bearskin served as bed, a rolled-up deer hide as pillow, two sewn-together timber wolf skins as blanket. Of possessions there was an iron kettle, blackened with soot; a knife and fork; a wooden spoon, plate, and cup, artlessly carved by Schutz himself; an ax and a saw—that was all. At night the chimney fire shed the only light.

As the house, so the man. Jacob's lean, muscular frame was encased in dirty gray homespun pants and a fringed rawhide shirt, made by a long-departed squaw who had also fashioned for him a pair of beaded moccasins, now worn with age, the beads mostly gone. A coon cap and a sort of woolen poncho completed the huntsman's wardrobe, everything mended and remended, yet full of holes. Of visage this Schutz was severe, hollow-eyed, sharp-nosed and beetle-browed. His hair was matted, his shaggy beard unkempt, his body scarred. His eyes were compelling, piercing, and steely blue—the eyes of a fanatic, a madman even. By contrast, his weapons were fine and lovingly cared for—an ancient jager, a snaphaunce-type weapon his father had brought over from the old country, artfully inlaid with figures of men and animals, done in ivory, paired with a recently made Lancaster rifle, unadorned, yet beautiful in its perfection. An incised powder horn, the fruit of much labor on its owner's part, and an old German hirschfänger completed the armament. The latter was wicked, outlandish, more sword than hunting knife, designed to give a wounded beast the coup de grace.

Jacob's nourishment consisted almost entirely of meat—fowl and venison. He was not finicky. If he could not feast on deer or wild turkey, a muskrat, possum, or gopher would do. He eked out this monotonous diet with dried berries, nuts, and wild roots. Twice a year he would ride sixty miles to the nearest settlement to swap his furs for powder and lead, flour, salt, tobacco, and a keg of Monongahela rye. If someone had asked him how a Christian could live in this appalling manner, he would have answered that this kind of life suited him perfectly. He had, however, few occasions to philosophize. Only rarely did white men venture into his forbidding realm, which swarmed with dangerous beasts and hostile Indians. The latter avoided Schutz, thinking him mad. Madmen had strange powers. Their persons were sacred and inviolate. White folks, too, were afraid of him though he did them no harm. Jacob's speech was a mixture of German, English, and Indian, including a few French words thrown in for good measure, almost unintelligible for lack of practice. Sur-

prisingly, he was pious and God-fearing. The son of a Moravian Dutchman who had fled his native land to seek freedom of religion in the New World, Jacob prayed long and often, mostly for a successful hunt. A rare backwoodsman stumbling upon his cabin was given shelter for the night, a meal, a dram of whiskey, and then was speedily sent on his way. Fellow hunters were eyed with suspicion. They might have a hankering for what Jacob was after.

And what was Jacob after? First of all, he lusted after the Great Fanged Death, a giant catamount, bigger than a tiger, with huge curved fangs, emitting a fearful, ear-splitting scream that turned men's blood to ice.

Second, he wished to possess as a trophy the pelt of the Loup-Éclair, the supernaturally swift wolf of eight legs, four of them in their usual place, and four more on its back. When one set of legs got tired, the Loup-Éclair simply flipped itself over to run with redoubled speed on four fresh legs.

Third, Jacob had in mind to capture a fantastic creature the Indians called the Gormagunt. It was said to be almost as big as an elephant, with enormous flapping ears, a porcine snout, and warty skin, equipped with two male members and three female pudenda.

Finally, Jacob's supreme quest was for the Great White Hart, the fabled Lord of the Mountains, an animal majestic and unblemished, with a royal set of antlers, its snow white body glowing like burnished silver in the moonlight.

Jacob Schutz first came upon the Great Fanged Death, the gigantic man-eating catamount. The terrifying beast leapt down upon its pursuer from a cliff, digging its enormous claws and fangs into Jacob's back, inflicting fearful wounds. Commending his soul to God, and with the help of his ferocious black dog, Jacob got the better of the panther, thrusting his hirschfänger through its gaping maw deep into its heart. The Fanged Death's oversized pelt henceforth replaced the twin wolfskins as Jacob's blanket. For a while the huntsman rested content.

As soon as Jacob's wounds were healed, he was seized with restlessness once more, resolved to hunt down the Loup-Éclair. It had been seen far beyond the outermost English settlement in country claimed by the French. There, in the most inaccessible fens, the strange beast made its home. A whole summer long Jacob searched for the speedy wolf's tracks, living himself like a wild animal, sleeping under overhanging rocks or in caves. Sometimes, like a burrowing rodent, he dug a hole into the side of a hill to serve as shelter.

At last, he saw signs that the wolf was nearby. The Loup-Éclair could not be outrun, or outwitted, but it could be outfoxed. The lone hunter used a live fawn as bait, tying it to a tree, waiting for the Loup-Éclair to appear. For two days and nights he waited in vain. The eight-legged beast moved only at night, but Jacob had his long rifle loaded with a silver bullet, prayed over by pious Moravian elders and subjected to a spell by an ancient crone rumored to be a Hexe, that is, a witch. The silver bullet never failed to find its target, even in total darkness. During the third night the hunter sensed the wolf's presence. The fawn bleated anxiously, straining at the rope. At last, Jacob's sharp eyes discerned movement, a shape darker than the dark, moonless night. Swiftly, he aimed his rifle at his nearly invisible prey and fired. The silver bullet found its target, slamming into the wolf's vitals. Jacob had slain the Loup-Éclair. Soon the eight-legged skin adorned the hunter's cabin. And again Schutz felt calm and fulfilled, staying close to his log hut, hunting only for his own and Wacker's daily meal. During the winter he hibernated in his cabin like a bear, well supplied with smoked and salted meat, not infrequently taking a nip of brandywine. At night the black dog shared his blanket while the stallion munched hay in his lean-to. On the rare occasions Jacob felt lonely, he took up his jew's-harp, drawing from it melancholy wailing sounds, like laments for the dead.

Winter cold gave way to warmer weather and, with the thaw, spring fever seized the solitary hunter. He woke up one morning, his eyes glowing with excitement.

"Ja, ja, jetzt geht's hinter dem Gormagunt hier," Jacob muttered to himself. "Now for the Gormagunt!"

Mounted on his snorting stallion, his shaggy dog by his side, his rifle primed and loaded, the hunter set out for the strangest beast ever seen by human eyes. His search carried him farther than ever before into the untamed wilderness beyond the Ohio. In the mud of an evil-smelling swamp, "ein dreckich, schtinkich Loch." And there, in its farthest recesses, Jacob found the Gormagunt. The creature was even more fantastic and misshapen than rumor had described it, but it was a sluggish, slow-moving, harmless plant eater. Jacob decided to take it alive and bring it back with him among people as proof of his prowess. But the Gormagunt was so huge. How was it to be moved?

Jacob sought out a band of Erie Indians. In a mixture of German and English, sprinkled with a few French and Indian words, he indi-

cated what he wanted. Gesturing and waving his arms, he commanded them to do his bidding.

"This is a sacred fool seized by holy madness," said the chief. "His powers are great, his anger terrifying. We must humor him and do as he says."

The Indians furnished horses and ropes. They followed Jacob into the swamp. Their wonder and awe were great when they beheld the Gormagunt. Three heads, two male members, and three female pudenda! This was a beast beyond their wildest imagination. They prostrated themselves before the one who had found it. Twelve horses were harnessed to the Gormagunt. The huge beast was at first unwilling to cooperate, but it was docile and let itself be dragged along. It took over two months and the labor of the whole tribe to pull the creature to the nearest settlement and beyond to the town of Lancaster, where Jacob swapped some of his store of pelts for beads, mirrors, vermilion paint, and much brandy, which he handed over to the Eries as their well-earned reward. To the townspeople Jacob said, "Feed this Gormagunt, feed it water plants and swamp plants, and things that grow along streams and ponds. Give him lots of it!"

He left the bewildered Gormagunt standing in the marketplace. The good Dutch folk did not know what to do. Two enterprising Yankees took the beast off their hands, exhibiting it across the land, at the Crown and Eagle, at the Bull's Head, at the Royal George, at the Red Lion, for one shilling per spectator. They printed and distributed handbills:

Whereas a surprizing MONSTER was caught in the wilds of NEW FRANCE, and has with great difficulty been tamed, this is to inform the discerning, scientifick PUBLICK that it will be exhibited in this town. The Monster is of uncommon Shape, having three Heads, six Legs, three fundaments, two male and three female genitories. It is of various Colours, very beautiful, and makes a noise like the conjunction of three or four different noises. Nobody knew its name until an old Indian SACHEM said HE remembered that, when he was a boy, his Father told him that it was called a GORMAGUNT!

The exhibitors got rich. Jacob Schutz took no interest in the matter but went on living in his usual hermit way. "The Gormagunt was nothing," he was heard to say, "now for the Great White Hart, the Weisse Hirsch!" Winter was near. It was too late to start on another expedition. Again the huntsman hibernated. But this time he was fidgety, talking to himself: "The Hart is mine! Mein, mein!

Der Hirsch gehört mir. Lieber Gott, please let no one else have him. Das Geweih, those big antlers. I must have them. For the Great White Hart I would give my soul to the devil, dem Teufel. No, no, no, I did not mean that. But I must have him. Blitz und Donner!"

Thus he kept muttering, scratching himself, pacing to and fro, drinking more brantwein than he was used to.

Spring came, eagerly awaited. Jacob could only think of the Hart and nothing else. But first he had to get provisions for a long journey. Again he brought his furs to town.

The preacher hailed him: "How goes it, Jacob?"

"I am after the White Hart this time. After the big antlers. I must have them."

"No, no, Jacob," said the parson, "do not wallow in sinful pride. The White Hart is for no man. God does not mean you to have it. It is sure death to chase after him."

"Und solls mein Leben kosten! Even at the cost of my life!" exclaimed the hunter.

This time he traveled where no white man had been before. Everywhere among the tribes he inquired in word and sign language: "Where is the White Hart? Who has seen him?"

Indians did not answer him. To speak about the White Hart was bad medicine, very bad.

He chanced upon a half-breed voyageur: "Où est le Grand Cerf Blanc?"

"Speak not of him, mon vieux, it is sure death. C'est la mort."

After months of wandering, man, horse, and dog had been reduced to skin and bones, worn out by their exertions. Still Jacob doggedly pursued his quest. At last, he fell in with a French coureur de bois, a man not unlike himself.

"Tell me, where can I find the White Hart? You must tell me!"

"I once thought to run him down myself, mon ami. I was young and foolish then. I know better now. None who have hunted the White Hart ever returned."

"Verdammer Franzose! Damn frog-eater! Villain! Tell me, tell me!"

"Eh bien," sighed the coureur de bois, "if nothing will persuade you, I will show you the way, or rather the spot where the path begins. Naturellement, I will not go with you farther than that, as I intend to live a little while longer."

He led Jacob to a seemingly endless rock ledge, stretching as far as the eye could see along the side of a forbidding mountain of black

granite, devoid of vegetation except for some lichens and a few tufts of moss here and there. On one side of the ledge rose a sheer rock wall, on the other yawned a dreadful, seemingly bottomless abyss. The ledge was barely wide enough for a horse and rider.

"Voilà, mon pauvre chasseur," said the voyageur, pointing ahead, "there it is. Ride on as your evil genius bids you. I shall never see you again."

At the sight of the dreadful ledge Raven reared up. His eyes rolled in fright. With whip and curses Jacob forced him along. Once on the ledge, peering down into the abyss, Jacob could not discern its bottom, which was lost in darkness far, far below. At last, the ledge broadened, leading into a forest. Never had Jacob seen such trees! They seemed to rise into the sky. Their canopy formed a solid roof leaving only a few patches for light to filter through. Moss dangled from dripping branches. There was little underbrush, only a carpet of ferns. Riding between the majestic trunks was easy. At eventide Jacob came to a clearing, a small open space in the gloom. There he and his animals rested. Suddenly, Jacob awoke. A pale moon was shining. He heard a deep rumbling in the clouds. Flashes of lightning lit up the sky, but there was no rain. And then Jacob saw them, ghostly huntsmen galloping in the clouds after a ghostly White Hart—a diabolic crew, a fear-inspiring sight.

"Gott steh mir bei!" Jacob exclaimed. "It is the wild hunt, die wilde Jagd!" He trembled and his teeth chattered. He watched the phantom host, the spectral horses, the Ratchet Hounds pursuing their ghostly prey amid thunder and the wind's howling. The appearance of the Wild Hunt meant bad luck. Everyone but Jacob would have given up, but he had gone too far to relinquish his quest.

For weeks Jacob searched the forest for his elusive prey. In vain. Everywhere he saw the tracks of a giant stag, but never a glimpse of the Great White Hart himself.

"I've seen his imprint, I know he is here, know that he is watching me!" Jacob was turning into a specter, his eyes glowing with fever, his hands trembling. And then one day he saw the stag in the distance, far away. Digging his heels into the Raven's flanks, he rode like the wind. But no matter how fast he rode, he could never come nearer. Like a will-o'-the-wisp, the stag seemed to float before him, always at the same distance. Jacob blew his horn, but no sound emerged from it. Wacker barked, but his barking was mute. Raven neighed soundlessly. Jacob loaded his rifle with one of his three silver bullets. He aimed, he fired. There was a flash in the pan but no

report. Again and again Jacob sharpened the flint, measured out the exact amount of powder, and rammed down another silver bullet, but twice more the gun misfired with inaudible report.

All of a sudden, the stag turned around and came to Jacob. The Great Hart was so beautiful, such a perfect example of the Creator's art, that Jacob fell to his knees and burst into tears. When he dared to look up, Jacob perceived that the stag was even larger than he had ever dreamed. He towered over his pursuer, his mammoth antlers spread out like the branches of an oak tree. His body seemed to be covered with fine, glistening silk. His eyes shone like two large sparkling rubies; a golden cross was imbedded in his forehead. Jacob could only gaze in awe and wonder.

"It is true," he said at last, "you were never meant for me. You belong to God."

The hunter turned back, searching a long time for the ledge. It was already growing dark when he finally found it, but he was now in a desperate hurry to get away from that place, to get home. He rode out onto the ledge, trusting his horse and his own skill. Coal black night overtook them. A storm rose. Wind tugged at his rawhide shirt and at his hair. He was only halfway up the ledge. He could not see his hand before his eyes. He became aware of an unseen, evil presence. He could feel it, sense it. Jacob's hair stood on end, Raven shuddered, Wacker growled and howled woefully. The dog seemed to struggle against something trying to pull him off the ledge. Jacob heard a frightful, anguished howling growing fainter and fainter below him.

"The dog is gone," cried Jacob. "God have mercy on me!"

Jacob felt a violent tugging, a pulling at his clothes, his arm, his horse's body. It was not the wind. Raven screamed in terror. A furious spirit almost tore the reins from Jacob's hands. He realized that an evil the abyss to their doom. The pull became stronger, irresistible. Already the stallion was about to go over the edge. Already one of his hooves was frantically groping in thin air. Quick as a flash, Jacob drew his hirschfänger, desperately slashing with its heavy blade alongside his horse's neck and head. At once the pulling ceased. Raven regained his footing. Silently, numbed, Jacob rode on. He regained the land beyond the ledge. He slid down from his saddle in utter exhaustion. For hours he lay as if dead. When he awoke, it was daylight. Raven was grazing. Then Jacob saw it and trembled—a skeleton hand, a hand of bleached bones still clutching the reins.

Jacob had been away for a whole year. He had set out on his last hunt as a vigorous forty-year-old man. He returned as a babbling dotard. His long hair and beard had turned snow white. His eyes were rheumy, his limbs shaky. He was no longer able to care for himself. Some relatives in the settlement took Jacob in. They hardly knew him and had little chance of getting acquainted now. He never spoke again, just mumbled something nobody could understand. During the day he huddled near the fireplace. At night he slept on an old bearskin. Silently, he ate and drank what was set before him. His eyes kept wandering, gazing at something that was not there. Thus he lived a few years longer. One evening, as the candles were lit, Jacob suddenly cried out loud, "The stag is calling me," closed his eyes, and was dead.



## A Loup-Garou, or a Windigo, or Maybe a Carcajou

There was once a *joli garçon*, a voyageur, by the name of Baptiste. In 1825 he joined a party of fellow *coureurs de bois* as a trapper libre, a free trapper and mountain man, to go after beaver. Being a half-breed, part French voyageur and part Chippewa, he was as much at home in the prairies on the far side of the Missouri as was a catfish in the waters of the Big Muddy.

Civilized he was not, this Baptiste, neither in mind or body. A fierce son of nature, he was a wolfish-looking cuss, his face framed by a forest of unkempt black hair, his luxuriant beard covering almost all

of his broad chest. He had no need of possessions, save what was needed to trap Frère Castor. He owned a shaggy, razor-backed horse; a dog that was three-quarters wolf; a Hawken rifle whose heavy ball could stop a charging buffalo bull in its tracks; powder, ball, and flint; a strike-a-light and tinderbox with sun-dried punk; a skinning knife; a twist of 'baccor; a fast-dwinding supply of whiskey; and, most important, five heavy steel traps. That was all except the tattered buckskin shirt and leggings that he wore until they disintegrated from wear and tear.

Baptiste was as solitary as a badger and as averse to company as a grizzly. In his vast domain, somewhere between the Platte and the Medicine Bows, he lived like a hermit in caves, dugouts, or lean-tos. He thrived on whatever his Hawken could bring down. And he was not choosy. He devoured everything from gopher to buffalo. A lightly roasted rattlesnake was deemed a delicacy. Whatever ran, hopped, crawled, swam, or flew was très bon à manger, by gar! Painter meat didn't shine, but he ate it anyway. A feast of boudins—buffalo intestines filled with deliciously fermented grasses, roasted on a bed of hot embers—was bliss. He fought Rees and the terrible Pied Noirs and, once, argued over a fresh kill with a famished grizzly bear, winning the argument. For months at a time he did not see another white man.

His rutting season reoccurred every half year or so, usually coinciding with his rotgut and 'baccor running out. Whenever that happened, Baptiste was seized by restlessness, getting antsy, emerging from his lair like a hibernating beast, wild-eyed and gamy, setting out with his bundles of beaver plews, his "hairy dollars" as he called them.

First, Baptiste made it to the nearest fort to haggle with the despised bourge-way, the trader in charge of the fort's store, swapping pelts against a new six-month supply of provisions, particularly foofaraw, such as beads, small mirrors, and vermilion paint to charm a willing squaw into sharing his blanket. The bourge-ways always took outrageous advantage of Baptiste on the one-plug-one-plew system—that is, selling him a twist of chawin' 'baccor, worth two bits, for a six-dollar beaver plew.

"Enfant de garce!" Baptiste complained on these occasions, "Bougre, zees ees brigandage. Vous êtes robbairs. Sapisti! Vous take avantage de pauvre Ba'tiste!"

"Wagh," was the usual answer, "that's the way the stick floats. Take it or leave it."

He took it. The bourge-ways always got the better of the free trappers. With a new supply of whiskey and chewing tobacco, his possible bag and parfèches bulging with foofaraw, "pour l'amour," Baptiste put the spurs to his old pony, making tracks for the big rendezvous on the Popo Agie. On the way a snake slithered across his path while a huge horned owl hooted at him.

"Sacré bleu," he muttered, "it ees a mauvais augure, a very bad sign." He crossed himself, spat three times over his left shoulder, and gave the evil-eye sign to the unimpressed owl, because, like all his fellows, he was very superstitious.

Arrived at the grand rendezvous des trappairs, Baptiste immediately sought out his vieux compagnons—Antoine, a fellow voyageur; Gouge-Eye Luke, a beaver man out of Kaintuck; and Igmoos Tanka, the Panther, a gigantic fellow part-Stioux and part-Irishman.

"Mille tonnières!" exclaimed Antoine. "Here is ze man raisin' ze diable!"

"Hallo, old hoss," Gouge-Eye Luke chimed in. "This child is glad to see your ugly mug. Here, have a swig of old towse."

"Hau, welcome, you consarned corn dodger," added the Panther. "I thought you wuz rubbed out. Have some mni suta!"

They had not seen each other for more than a year and enjoyed their rare get-togethers. Thus the friends settled down to an orgy of



drinking, fighting, gambling, and wenching, making up in three days for a half year of hardship and loneliness.

"Old hoss," Gouge-Eye Luke remarked as Baptiste emerged wobbly from the tepee he shared with two dusky 'sposas, "there's a citizen over there braggin' he can eat more boudins faster'n any other mother's son. Why don't you take him up on it?"

"Quoi?" said Baptiste. "Zat miserable bougre ovaït zere? Parbleu, scalp my old tête if it ees not the vieux sarpint Pierre Frozen Toes. I shall beat 'eem mangeant les boudins. I shall bet ten dollairs 'pon it."

"Wagh, Ba'tiste, you cussed devil," said Pierre when challenged to perform, "voici mes dix dollairs. Hyar goes for meat."

Eager trappers placed roughly ten feet of coiled buffalo boudins on a mound of hot raked ashes after having tied a strip of red trade cloth plumb center on the sausagelike mess.

"Enfant de garce," said Baptiste. "Zut alors. Maintenant nous mangeons. Allez oop!"

"Hyar's brown skin a-comin'," shouted the Panther on a run to witness the affair. "I'll be dogged if I miss this!"

"Moi aussi," added Antoine. "This child is bettin' on Ba'tiste." Each contestant took an end of the boudins between his teeth and, at a signal from Gouge-Eye Luke, started to wolf them down. So began a mighty chawin' and swallowin'. Pierre had barely managed to get down a measly two feet when Baptiste was already past the center knot and going strong. After gobbling down another foot for good measure he stopped, exclaiming, "Moi, je suis le vainqueur, by gar!" He accepted his prize, immediately converting the dollars into a keg of "Injin whiskey," raw red-eye spiced with three rattlesnake heads for flavor and a handful of gunpowder to give her a kick.

The friends now went on a stupendous blowout, a frenzied bout lasting all of three days. After that they passed out, not emerging from their tepees or bedrolls for another three days. Coming to and getting the cobwebs out of their heads took another day. Sobered up somewhat, Baptiste exclaimed: "Diab! Mes amis, I feel a leetle queer. J'ai faim. I'm wolfish for meat. My feet, dey feel like dancin', like runnin', like goin' on a chasse. I smell strong meat, by gar! Somezin' powerful, mes amis, somezin' peut-être wiz a heap big pelt. O là là, I can smell 'eem. Mes pieds, zey are already beatin' the rataplan. Je suis bewitched, nom de diable. Je m'en vais!" With that Baptiste ran off with great leaps and bounds.

"Comme un fou," said Antoine.

"His gourd's out of whack," said Gouge-Eye Luke.

"Lila witko, out o' his mind," said the Panther. "He'll dry out. He'll be back in no time at all."

But Baptiste did not come back. Three days passed and his friends grew uneasy.

"What can de mattair be?" said Antoine. "Pauvre Baptiste. Peut-être he has gone on daïr?"

"It's those Blackfoot devils," said Gouge-Eye Luke. "They've rubbed him out at last."

"Maybe a grizzly chewed him up," said the Panther. "We must find him. Git up! Hiyupo! Let's go!"

Luckily, it had not rained and the Panther was the best tracker on the Plains. He had no trouble making out Baptiste's footprints on account of the hole in the sole of Baptiste's left moccasin. They tailed him for some seven miles and then noticed that Baptiste's tracks were followed by others, unnaturally large, unlike any they had ever seen, halfway between the tracks of a huge bear and a catamount, but with seven monstrous toes, or rather claws, on each paw.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed Antoine. "C'est le maudit loup-garou, de waïrwo! Pauvre Baptiste. Il est perdu!" Antoine was shaking like an aspen tree.

"Holy Mother of God!" said Gouge-Eye Luke. "I'm mighty skeered. This ain't the loup-garou, it's that cussed varmint the windigo. I can read his sign."

"It ain't the loo-garou nor the windigo," said the Panther, "it's the ghost carcajou, the Wanagi Huhatopa, maybe even the Unktehi, the Great River Monster. That's poor doin's for sure. Hurry boys, afore it's too late!"

They hastened on. After another seven miles they were terrified to see Baptiste's footprints changing, getting bigger, the toes coming out of the moccasins—five toes, six toes, seven toes on each foot, changing into claws.

"Vite, vite!" cried Antoine. "Le loup maudit. Nous sommes foutus! Le bougre ees makin' pauvre Ba'tiste into a monstre like 'eemself!"

At last, the three friends came upon a horrid scene. They beheld Baptiste, who, from his waist down, had already been changed into a loup-garou, complete with a bushy tail. Over the poor voyageur towered a monster with a bestial body, the face of a man-devil, a tiger's



fangs, and wicked eyes glowing like coals. The infernal creature was howling and cackling frightfully, turning the men's veins into ice.

"Le loup-garou!" screamed Antoine.

"The windigo!" screamed Gouge-Eye Luke.

"The ghost carcajou!" screamed the Panther.

"Windigo, loup-garou, what does it mairr?" cried Baptiste.

"Help! Help à moi, mes amis, au secours! I'm goin' on'dair!"

"Boys, run!" Gouge-Eye Luke yelled, beside himself with fear.

"Run for your lives or the dratted thing will get you too!"

"Non, non, non!" cried Antoine. "Je suis a sunner, a fornicator, a no-good drunkard, but once j'étais un étudiant for de priesthood and I still have zees," and he drew from the bosom of his greasy buckskin shirt a silver cross, holding it aloft, admonishing the werewolf: "Apape Satanas! Away wiz you, unclean demon, damned mauvais diable! Allez-vous-en, monstreux loup-garou! Vamooze!"

The monster bared its fangs, foamed at the mouth, snapped at the cross, and howled frightfully, but it retreated step-by-step. Antoine now also produced a tattered Bible from his possible bag, hitting the evil beast over the snout with both the cross and the Good Book. This somewhat amateurish exorcism worked. The monster whimpered. The light in its eyes dimmed. It cowered, it retreated and, finally, fled with gigantic leaps, leaving only its ungodly sulphurous stink behind.

"Victoire!" exclaimed Antoine. "Nous sommes sauvés! Grace à Dieu, le loup-garou has vanished. Il est disparu!"

"Hooraw! The windigo is gone! Wagh! We spooked him fo' sar-tin!" shouted Gouge-Eye Luke.

"Washtay!" shouted the Panther. "The ghost carcajou, we horn-swoggled him for sure."

"Loup-garou, windigo, carcajou be damned!" Baptisted cried angrily. "Parbleu! Je suis fouru! Look at me!" He hopped clumsily on his hair-covered wolf's legs. "Look at me! Mes jambes, mes picds! What jolie fille will give me a tumble now!"

"Il faut prier," said Antoine, "we must pray to God an' all de saints."

"Wagh, that's the way of gettin' out of a skunk hole," said Gouge-Eye Luke. "I hain't done it for years, but this old coon is prayin': God, Ba'tiste got hisself in a fix. Do somethin'!"

"Wakan Tanka, onshimala ye!" prayed the Panther, "Ba'tiste here is in a bad way. Grandfather, pity him!"

Muttering incantations in French, English, and admittedly poor Latin, Antoine passed cross and Bible up and down Baptiste's animal legs while Luke and the Panther continued praying, and, lo and behold, slowly, before their eyes, the wolf's legs became human again. Baptiste jumped for joy and clicked his heels, but the very tips of his toes remained furry for ever and his nails resembled claws for the rest of his life.

"Eh bien," was Baptiste's comment, "it could have been worse, n'est-ce pas?"



## The Windigo

The windigo is a fearful creature, the most horrible that ever was. To look at it is to go blind. To hear its unearthly growl is to become deaf. To get a whiff of its rank odor is to lose one's sense of smell. To come into bodily contact with it means becoming lame, but no one who is touched by the windigo survives longer than seven days.

The windigo has long, sharp teeth, but no jaws. It has eyes out of which shoot lightning, but it has no face. It has a shaggy fleece, but no body inside it. It has no feet or paws, but large, terrible claws like curved daggers. To cross its path is sure death, but its tracks are easily recognized because they are over twelve inches long.

The windigo can be killed in only one way. One must have a rifle made by a pious man who prayed over it three times a day while working on it. Such a rifle must be loaded with a silver bullet into which the sign of a cross has been scratched. The silver bullet has to be rammed down with a patch made from a page of the bible. Not any page will serve, but only one with the Lord's Prayer on it. The hunter must go to church on Easter Day and recite a psalm forward and backward without making a single mistake. Then the hunter must go to a crossroad and be there at the stroke of twelve on a moonlit night, in which case the windigo will appear. And if the hunter does not turn to stone with fright, and if his eyes do not fail him, and if his hands do not tremble with fear so that he cannot aim his weapon, then the hunter might, just might, succeed in killing the windigo. But if the hunter does not do everything exactly as described, the windigo will eat him up in three bites.

## He Ate All the Democrats of Hinsdale County

Some years ago a new cafeteria was opened at the Department of Interior in Washington. A wag gave it the name of "Packer Hall." Some people wondered who the exalted personage might be after whom the cafeteria was named. It turned out that it was Packer the Cannibal, a treasure-seeker who in 1873 had gone into the mountains with five fellow prospectors in search of gold and who had killed and eaten his companions when their food gave out. The higher-ups in the department were not amused and the cafeteria's name was quietly changed.

It was November, and late in the season to go into the San Juans looking for the shiny yellow metal men dream of, but the six men at Chief Ouray's camp on the Uncompahgre River were consumed with

gold fever. They partook of the chief's food and smoked the pipe with him. Ouray consulted his wise old men who had the gift of foretelling the future. The chief told his visitors: "Your medicine is bad. If you go into the mountains, winter and hunger will claim you. You will not come back. Instead of gold you will find death waiting for you. This medicine man here has had a vision—in it he saw five skeletons and one live fat man. It is a very bad vision. Wait until spring before you go."

Among the prospectors was Alfred Packer, a tall man, with long, dark curling hair, a dark mustache and goatee, and deep-set, shifty eyes. "We ain't a bunch of goddam red savages," said Packer. "We don't believe in sech drivin'. I know these mountains. I say we can do it. The woods 're full of game an' the weather is mild. We ain't goin' to sit here on our butts, wainin' like a passel of durn fools for spring. We're a-goin' now. We aim to git rich!"

They took a vote among themselves and decided in favor of going on. They picked Packer for their guide. The names of his companions were Swan, Miller, Humphreys, Noon, and Bell. With the exception of Packer, not one of them was ever seen alive again.

It snowed and snowed. The winter was the worst in men's remembrance. Elk and deer came down from the mountains into the valleys where it was warmer and where they could find things to feed on. In January, Mrs. Charles Adams, the wife of the Indian agent, was plagued by nightmares and premonitions. Clouds of icy white fog enveloped the agency, filling the valley from end to end. For days the clouds would not lift, so people could not see the hand before their eyes. Mrs. Adams was obsessed with the thought that some place out there in the snow and mist a poor soul was lost. She imagined hearing piteous cries for help. She put up a light high up on a pole to serve as a beacon that might guide a freezing, famished wanderer to safety.

One day a wild-eyed, almost incoherent man with matted hair and beard staggered into Chief Ouray's camp. It was Packer. When asked what had become of his five companions, he cursed. He said that he had sprained an ankle and gone lame, and that his partners had gone on without him, leaving him helpless and alone in the snowbound wilderness to starve. During the following weeks it was noticed that Packer was drinking heavily, throwing a great deal of money around, and betting recklessly on games of chance. People wondered where all that money came from and how Packer had acquired a watch that one miner recognized as having belonged to

Swan. Of his five companions nothing was heard. They seemed to have simply vanished. People whispered of terrible things that had happened in the mountains and began feeling uncomfortable in Packer's presence.

In 1874 the thaw came late to the high country of Colorado, but when it finally arrived, three prospectors ventured up into the mountains in their perennial search for the elusive glittering gold. They made camp near Slumgullion Pass. Their dog chased a rabbit, but instead of returning with a bunny, it came back with a human arm between its teeth. The three men investigated and, at the spot where the dog had dug up the arm, came upon the grisly remains of four men, killed and butchered, most of the flesh stripped from their bones. Nearby they found a fifth, headless corpse. They quickly determined that these were the bodies, or what was left of them, of Packer's missing companions.

Faced with the evidence, Packer confessed, though he tried to make it appear that the killing was either done by others or in self-defense. A week after leaving Ouray, Packer said, the party had run out of food. No game could be found. They dug up roots but, as Packer explained, they were not very nutritious. After one more week the members of the party became restless, looking upon each other with a certain longings, "like castaways on a drifting boat offering up a shipmate as a sacrifice to the others." Packer, so he said, went from their camp to gather firewood and when he came back found that his partners had poleaxed Swan, because he was the eldest of the group and could not put up much resistance. The remaining four were busy cutting up the body, slicing off strips of flesh from the chest, thighs, and calves. Roasted, these were quite palatable. Packer admitted that he soon developed a fondness for chest meat, which he thought was better than breast of chicken. The killers divided among themselves Swan's belongings, including several thousand dollars.

Humphreys, Noon, Bell, and Packer next agreed among themselves that Miller should furnish the next meal, because he was young, tender, and fat. He was killed with a hatchet while stooping to collect firewood. The survivors now eyed each other with a great deal of apprehension, but men have to sleep sometime. Humphreys and Noon did not manage to stay awake and wound up in the cooking pot, but Packer pronounced them not nearly as succulent as Miller.

Packer and Bell were now alone. Calling God to witness, they made a solemn pact not to kill each other, even if they starved to death. Each had a rifle and they were hoping to find game. Their

hopes were disappointed. Again they were living on a thin diet of roots. Bell, with that certain hungry glint in his eye, began to shout: "I can stand it no longer. One of us must make meat for the other, right here and now!"

Raging like a maniac, and baring his teeth like a wolf, he took a swing with his rifle butt at Packer, who parried the blow and, in return, buried his hatchet in Bell's skull. Packer gorged himself on his companion's flesh, packed up what was left of it, and stumbled on. Wading hip-deep in snow, and utterly exhausted, he spied a distant light. It came from the Ouray Agency. He had come full circle.

Packer was held for trial, but escaped. For nine and a half years "he got lost." There were rumors that he had gone to Australia, where a gold rush attracted thousands of prospectors. But nothing was really known of his whereabouts. In March of 1883 an old gold miner named Frenchy was tossing restlessly on his bed in a Fort Fetterman boardinghouse, being kept awake by particularly voracious bedbugs. Through the thin partition between his and the adjoining room, he heard the voice of a man slinging woo at a "lady of the night." Frenchy recognized the voice as belonging to none other than the long-sought "Packer the Cannibal." He at once roused out the local sheriff, who arrested the man in question who said that his name was John Schwartz. But it was Packer all right, and he was speedily brought to trial. The Saga of Packer the Cannibal ended on a dramatic note. Sentencing Packer to death, Judge Gerry concluded with this historic and memorable pronouncement of doom:

PACKER, YAH REPUBLICAN, MAN-EATING SON OF A BITCH,  
THERE WERE FIVE DIMMICRATS IN HINSDALE COUNTY, AN  
YAH VORACHIOUS BASTARD HEV EATEN 'EM ALL! I SENTENCE  
YAH TO BE HUNG BY THE NECK UNTIL YOU'RE DAID, DAID,  
DAID, AS A SOLEMN WARNIN' AGIN' REDOOCIN' THE DIMMI-  
CRATIC POPULATION OF THIS COUNTY. AN' MAY THE LORD  
HAVE MERCY, FOR I DON'T, ON YER DAD-BLAMED CANNIBAL  
SOUL!

♦ ♦ ♦

Packer's sentence was eventually commuted to forty years in the Canon City penitentiary. He vowed never to speak again and silently spent the next eighteen years braiding ropes and making hair bridles. Then Polly Pry, a pretty lady journalist working for the *Denver Post*,

"rediscovered" the man-eater and got a good story out of him. "PACKER THE CANNIBAL REDIVIVUS!" read the headline. The *Post* started a campaign for the cannibal's release, and on January 1, 1901, Packer was pardoned to become the doorman and elevator operator for the *Denver Post*, giving those passengers, riding alone with him to the top floor, a wonderful case of the jitters. The man-eater finally went up the flume, as the miners put it, on April 24, 1907. Democrats are now in the majority in Hinsdale County.

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## The Warrior Woman

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The strange creature of whom we write was born in Liverpool, about 1750. Her maiden name was Hennis, her husband being Richard Trotter. Together with other adventurous spirits of the time, she and her husband emigrated to America, and, as if by instinct, sought the perils and excitement of border life. Trotter was an Indian fighter. He became a volunteer in Dunmore's War, and was killed in the bloody Battle of Point Pleasant. From that day his widow led that strange career which spread her name far and wide through the border settlements, and which will perpetuate it so long as the stories of the border struggle are read among men.

Thenceforth, she followed but one pursuit—that of fighting the Indians. She unsexed herself, wore men's clothes, and instead of household tasks, she took upon herself the toilsome life of a scout. She became a dead shot with a rifle. She learned to throw the tomahawk with all the accuracy and strength of an Indian warrior. As a hunter, she had no superior on the border. Wherever prizes were offered in contests of rifle shooting, tomahawk throwing, or other athletic sports, she always appeared at the last moment as a contestant, and carried off the prize. She rode a powerful black horse, called Liverpool, after her birthplace. It was the only living creature she loved. Her horse and rifle were her constant companions.

She spent her time as other scouts, roaming the forests in search of game, or stealthily watching in ambush for some wandering Indian. Among storms of rain and sleet, beset by the rigors of winter, followed by wild beasts, or pursued by Indians, her immense frame of iron strength knew no fatigue, her restless rancor no slumber. As she

bestrode her horse, her male attire, her weather-beaten features, her black, wiry hair, cut short in men's fashion, her cold, gray eyes and grating voice, her rifle easily thrown over her shoulder, revealed the Amazon. No service on behalf of the settlers was too arduous, no mode of injury to the savages too cruel or bloody for her fierce zeal.

The story of one incident has come down to us. She was making her headquarters at Charleston Fort, in West Virginia, when the fort was besieged by an overwhelming force of Indians. Unable to subdue it by force, the besiegers undertook to reduce it by famine. The brave pioneers defended it resolutely until their hearts were chilled to find the supply of ammunition nearly exhausted. The nearest point from which supplies could be had was more than a hundred miles away. The way lay through dense forests, bottomless morasses, vast ranges of mountains, terrible precipices, and rushing rivers. Worse than all this, the whole country was overrun with war parties of savages. Great as was the peril of the fort, great as was the peril of the journey, this bold woman alone would undertake the task of procuring the supplies. Avoiding all trails, roads, and regular passes, she took her way directly across the mountains of West Virginia for more than a hundred miles.

Reaching her destination in safety, she procured lead and gunpowder, loaded it on a packhorse, and commenced the fearful return. Followed by raving packs of wolves, at every step beset by hissing serpents which still infested the mountains, discovered and pursued by Indians, hardly daring to sleep a moment, she crossed the mountain torrents, and, after exposure to every conceivable peril, and escape from all, delivered her precious load to the beleaguered. This service became famous throughout the border. On her return she again took her place among the resolute defenders of the fort, doing guard duty, or sharing in the fray of every attack.

At some point in her career, this strange, unsexed creature, with her disordered intellect, was actually wooed and won by a man named Bailey, but this marriage made no changes in her life, except that, instead of being known as Mad Ann, she was thereafter Mad Ann Bailey. Her numerous services to the settlers caused her to be as much loved by the whites as she was feared and hated by the Indians. In the later part of her life, when times had become more settled, she used at times to visit the families she had known and served in her earlier years. From such visits she never failed to return laden down with presents.

## Mike Teaches Peg a Lesson

Mike, at one time, had a woman who passed for his wife; whether she was truly so, we do not know. But at any rate, the following anecdote is a rare instance of conjugal discipline.

Some time in the latter part of autumn, a few years after the close of the late war with Great Britain, several keelboats landed for the night near the mouth of the Muskingum, among which was that of Mike. After making all fast, Mike was observed, just under the bank, scraping into a heap the dried beech leaves which had been blown there during the day, having just fallen from the effects of the early autumn frosts. To all questions as to what he was doing he returned no answer, but continued at his work until he had piled them up as high as his head. He then separated them, making a sort of an oblong ring, in which he laid down, as if to ascertain whether it was a good bed or not. Getting up, he sauntered on board, hunted up his rifle, made great preparations about his priming, and then called in a very impressive manner upon his wife to follow him. Both proceeded up to the pile of leaves, poor "Peg" in a terrible flutter as she had discovered that Mike was in no very amiable humor.

"Get in there and lie down," was the command to Peg, topped off with one of Mike's very choicest oaths. "Now, Mr. Fink,"—she always mistered him when his blood was up—"what have I done? I don't know, I'm sure—"

"Get in there and lie down, or I'll shoot you," with another oath, and drawing up his rifle to his shoulder. Poor Peg obeyed, and crawled into the leaf pile, and Mike covered her up with the combustibles. He then took a flour barrel and split the staves into fine pieces, and lighted them

From "The Western Boatmen," in *The Great West*: Containing Narratives of the Most Important and Interesting Events in Western History.—Remarkable Individual Adventures—Sketches of Frontier Life—Descriptions of Natural Curiosities: To Which Is Appended Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Oregon, New Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, Utah, California, Washington, Nebraska, Kansas, Etc., Etc., by Henry Howe, pp. 277-278. New York: Published by Geo. F. Tuttle; Cincinnati: *Miscellany*, Vol. I, 1845, pp. 156-157.

at the fire on board the boat, all the time watching the leaf pile, and swearing he would shoot Peg if she moved. So soon as his splinters began to blaze he took them into his hand and deliberately set fire, in four different places, to the leaves that surrounded his wife. In an instant the whole mass was on fire, aided by a fresh wind which was blowing at the time, while Mike was quietly standing by enjoying the fun. Peg, through fear of Mike, stood it as long as she could; but it soon became too hot, and she made a run for the river, her hair and clothing all on fire. In a few seconds she reached the water and plunged in, rejoiced to know she had escaped both fire and rifle so well. "There," said Mike, "that'll larn you not to be winkin' at them fellers on t'other boat."

## A Shooting Match

"I expect, stranger," said Davy, "you think old Davy Crockett war never beat at the long rifle; but he war, though. I expect that there's no man so strong but he will find someone stronger."

"If you haven't heard tell of one Mike Fink, I'll tell you something about him, for he was a helliferocious fellow, and made an almighty fine shot. Mike was a boatman on the Mississip', but he had a little cabin at the head of the Cumberland, and a horrid handsome wife, that loved him the wickedest that ever you seee."

"Mike only worked enough to keep his wife in rags, and himself in powder and lead and whiskey, and the rest of the time he spent in knocking over b'ar and turkeys, and bouncing deer, and sometimes drawing a bead on an injun. So one night I fell in with him in the woods, where him and his wife shook down a blanket for me in his wigwam."

"In the morning says Mike to me, 'I've got the handsomest wife, and the fastest horse, and the sharpest shooting iron in all Kentuck, and if any man doubt it, I'll be in his hair quicker than hell could scorch a feather.'

"This put my dander up, and sez I, 'I've got nothing to say agin your wife, Mike, for it can't be denied she's a shocking handsome woman, and Mrs. Crockett's in Tennessee, and I've got no horses, Mike, I don't exactly like to tell you you lie about your rifle, but I'm damned if you speak the truth, and I'll prove it. Do you see that are cat sitting on the top rail of your potato patch, about a hundred fifty yards off? If she hears again, I'll be shot if it shan't be without ears!'

"So I blazed away, and I bet you a horse, the ball cut off both the old tom cat's ears close to his head, and shaved the hair clean off the skull, as slick as if'd done it with a razor, and the creatur never stirred, nor knew he'd lost his ears till he tried to scratch 'em."

“Talk about your rife after that, Mikel’ sez I.

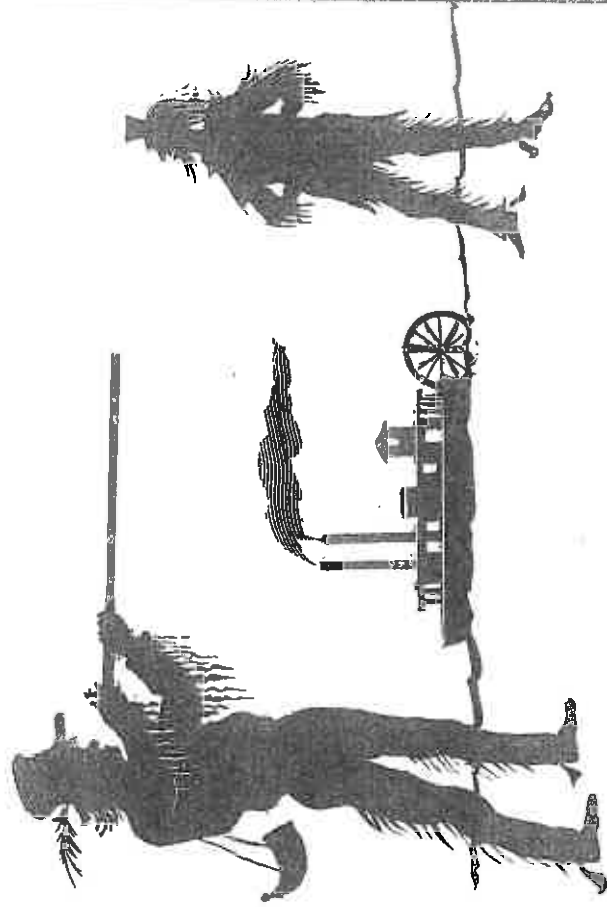
“Do you see that are sow off furdur than the end of the world,’ sez Mike, ‘with a litter of pigs around her?’ And he lets fly.

“The old sow gave a grunt, but never stirred in her tracks, and Mike falls to loading and firing for dear life, til he hadn’t left one of them are pigs enough tail to make a toothpick on.

“Now, sez he, ‘Colonel Crockett, I’ll be pretticularly obleeged to you if you’ll put them are pigs’ tails on again,’ sez he.

“That’s impossible, Mike,’ sez I, ‘but you’ve left one of ’em about an inch to steer by, and if that had a-been my work, I wouldn’t have done it so wasteful. I’ll mend your shot.’ And I let fly, and cuts off the apology he’s left the poor creatur for decency. I wish I may drink the whole Mississip’, without a drop of the rale stuff in it, if you wouldn’t have thort the tail been drove in with a hammer.

“That made Mike sorter wrothy, and he sends a ball after his wife as she was going to the spring after a gourd full of water, and knocked half her comb out without stirring a hair, and calls out to her to stop for me to take a blizzard at what was left of on it. The



angeliferous creatur stood still as a scarecrow in a cornfield, for she’d got used to Mike’s tricks by long practice.

“No, no, Mike,’ sez I. ‘Davy Crockett’s hand would be sure to shake, if his iron was pointed within a hundred miles of a shemale, and I give up beat, Mike.’”

## Did Such a Helliferocious Man Ever Live?

One early writer asked: “Did such a man like Mike Fink ever live, and did such a man ever die? And if so, how and where did he go to the happy hunting grounds?” Well, here is one tale.

In 1822 Mike Fink and two friends—if there were human beings who could call themselves the Ohio Snapping Turtle’s friends—Carpenter and Talbot, hired on in St. Louis with Andrew Henry and William Ashley to go up the Missouri in search of beaver. Mike as the “admiral,” running one of the seventy-foot keelboats, “cordelling” his clumsy craft yard by yard upstream, Talbot and Carpenter as trapper and hunter. Mike, being the “William Tell of the Prairie,” also doubled as huntsman, supplying plenty of meat to the expedition with the help of Betsy, his never-failing rifle.

Together with some sixty other adventurous mountain men, the party reached the mouth of the Yellowstone and there built a fort and stockade as protection against the “Terrible Blackfeet.” From there Major Henry, Ashley’s second-in-command, sent out small parties of about a dozen men each to trap beaver along the many streams and ponds of the region. Fink and his two companions, together with nine others, were sent to the Musselshell River and there trapped all summer and fall until winter set in. When it got too cold and the snow was too deep, they returned to the fort. In its vicinity they built themselves a dugout, preferring their primitive abode to the crowded, evil-smelling quarters inside the stockade. Then they holed up like hibernating bears during the bleak winter months. There was nothing to do but gamble and get drunk. Idleness breeds mischief and in the background, always, lurks the devil, ever ready to cause trouble. The

place attracted many 'Hang-around-the-fort Indians,' spoiled by contact with the white traders and their kegs of "Injin whiskey," a devastating mixture of raw alcohol, rattlesnake heads, and gunpowder, the latter ingredients added to give the hellish brew "a kick." Among this crowd were many squaws who, either at the order of their men or on their own account, sold themselves to the trappers for rotgut or foofaraw—trifles such as vermilion paint, red trade cloth, tobacco, or glass beads. One of these girls, called either Moon Woman or Red Leaf, was comely and willing to share Mike's blanket, but she got tired of her "Mississippi Roarer" and soon was found in the bed of Carpenter, who was said to be gentle and very handsome. Mike took it exceedingly ill.

"Give her back, you cussed, landlubbery, yellow-livered varmint! Give her back, you double-soaked whiskey pipe, or you can hang me up for bar meat if I don't cut you down to size like a Massassip alligator chaws up a puppy!"

With that, Mike seized one arm of his erstwhile girlfriend while Carpenter got hold of the other, and they proceeded to have a good old-fashioned rug-o'-war, the squaw hollering and howling like a wolf cub caught in a trap. "Come along, you infernal, two-timin' possum," shouted Mike, while Carpenter yelled back that he would cut out Mike's liver and lights and eat them raw for breakfast. Both then let go of the girl and had a go at each other, Carpenter, being younger and faster, getting the better of Fink.

After having been knocked down several times Mike began to holler for mercy: "Avast, you kankaniferous ripsallion, I never bar a grudge agin a feller who whupped me in a fair fight. That's no use fur old friends killin' each over a louisiferous she-catamount!"

With that he gave the girl a clout on the head, saying, "There, that'll larn you to be makin' eyes at that feller when you could 'ave been stayin' with your Mike, still the top man when it comes to makin' love to the wimmin. Now, let's have a drink!"

This seemed to settle the matter in an amiable way, but Mike was not a man to forget a slight. With the coming of spring, as both Mike and Carpenter were drawing their rations of hardtack and whiskey, getting in a new store of powder and lead before going on another trapping expedition, Carpenter remarked to Fink, "Old hoss, I sure hope you don't bear me a grudge on account of that injin hussy. She left me long ago for another feller."

Mike parted her erstwhile companion on the back, shouting to the bystanders: "I'll tell you boys, the fort's a skunk-hole, and I'd

rather live with the bars than stay in it. Some of ye's been trying to part me and my friend, that I love like my own cub, and tried to pizen me against him, but we remain the best o' friends as afore and no mere she-injin can come between us! There, to show you how I trust this 'ere boy, we'll sky a copper, play the game as we used to." With these words Mike walked off some sixty paces, placed a glass of whiskey on his head, and challenged Carpenter to shoot at it. "There, that's how I trust this here boy. Come on, old hoss, shoot it off like you used to do!" Carpenter raised his rifle, let fly, and missed. "Carpenter, my boy," exclaimed Mike, "I taught you to shoot differently from that last shot. Your hand trimbled, but never mind. Waal, it's my turn now."

"Hold it, Mike," cried Carpenter. "There's somethin' I jest got to do first."

He went aside and asked someone who could write to put it on paper that he bequeathed his rifle, pistol, powder horn and shot pouch to Talbot in case he should be killed. Carpenter had seen a certain glint in Mike's eyes that made him do this. In the meantime, Mike loaded his Betsy, primed it, and picked his flint. Without further ado, Carpenter took his position at sixty yards opposite Fink and, with a brave smile, put the cup of whiskey, filled to the brim, on his head as a target for Mike to shoot at. Mike leveled his rifle and drew a bead, but at once lowered his Betsy and, laughing loudly, shouted at Carpenter, "Hold yer noddle steady, old hoss, and don't spill the whiskey, as I shall want some presently!"

With that, Mike cocked his rifle, aimed, and fired. Without a sound Carpenter slumped down to the ground, the ball having smashed into the center of his forehead, killing him instantly.

"Carpenter, you cussed critter," yelled Mike. "you've spilt the good whiskey. Get up!"

"He'll never get up agin, Mike," shouted a bystander. "You've gone and killed him!"

"The devil I have," said Mike, coolly putting down his piece, blowing the smoke from Betsy's muzzle. "T'war an accident, for I took as fair a bead on the cup as I ever took on a squirrel's eye. Maybe I've lost the tech, or maybe he moved. Waal, no use to cry over spilt whiskey!"

There was many a boatman and trapper who thought it was cold-blooded murder, that Mike had used the shooting contest to pay off his old grudge over the Indian woman who had left him for the sake of Carpenter, but nothing could be proved.

But talk would not stop, because Mike had never been known to miss his aim. It was Talbot who most vehemently denounced Fink as the murderer of their mutual friend, and Mike, in turn, called Talbot a cussed, lying varmint. Some months later Mike went to the fort and made a bee-line for the gunsmith's shop where Talbot had a job repairing the trappers' rifles. Talbot saw Mike approaching, his Betsy, as always, cradled in his arms.

"I'm a-warmin' you, Mike," cried Talbot, "don't come any closer!" Mike came on.

Talbot went for his double-barreled pistol, the same that Carpenter had bequeathed to him. "Fink, ef you come any nearer, I'll fire, by God!" Mike came on. "One more step," warned Talbot, "and you're a dead man!"

Mike came on. He stepped through the door and Talbot let him have both barrels. Mike's last words were "I didn't mean to kill the boy!" Thus died "the last of the keelboatmen."

Talbot died a year later, drowned when trying to cross the Missouri in a bullboat.

## Like Father, Like Daughter

*Mike Fink's daughter Sal became a legend in her own right. She was known as "Sal, the Mississippi Screamer."*

I dar say you've all of you, if not more, frequently heard this great she human crittur boasted of, an pointed out as "one o' the gals,"—but I tell you what, stranger, you have never really set your eyes on one o' the gals, till you have seen Sal Fink, the Mississippi Screamer, whose miniature pictur I here give, about as nat'ral as life, but not half as handsome—an' if that ever was a gal that deserved to be christened "one o' the gals," then this gal was that gal—and no mistake.

She fought a duel once with a thunderbolt, an' came off without a scratch, while at the fust fire she split the thunderbolt all to flinders, an' gave the pieces to Uncle Sam's artillery men, to touch off their

cannon with. When a gal about six years old, she used to play see-saw on the Mississippi snags, and arter she was done she would snap 'em off, an' so cleared a large district of the river. She used to ride down the river on an alligator's back, standen upright, an' dancin' the Yankee Doodle, an' could leave all the steamers behind. But the greatest feat she ever did, positively outdid anything that was ever did.

One day she war out in the forest, making a collection o' wildcat skins for her family's winter beddin', she war captured in the most all-sneaken manner by about fifty Injuns, and carried by 'em to Roast Flesh Hollow, whar the blood-drinkin' wild varmints detarmined to skin her alive, sprinkle a little salt over her, an' devour her before her own eyes; so they took an' tied her to a tree, to keep till mornin' should bring the rest o' that ring-nosed sarpints to enjoy the fun. Arter that, they lit a large fire in the Holler, turned the bottom o' thar feet towards the blaze, Injun fashion, and went to sleep to dream o' thar mornin's feast; well, arter the critturs got into a somniferous snore, Sal got into an all-lightnin' of a temper, and burst all the ropes about her like an apron-string! She then found a pile o' ropes, too, and tied all the Injuns' heels together all round the fire—then, fixin' a cord to the shins of every two couple, she, with a suddenchous jerk, that made the intire woods tremble, pulled the intire lot o' steepin' red-skins into that ar great fire, fast together, an' then sloped like a panther out of her pen, in the midst o' the tallest yellin', howlin', scramblin', and singin', that war ever seen or heard on, since the burmin' o' the Buffalo Prairie!

## She Fought Her Weight in She-B'ars

Sal Fink once got into a helliferocious scrimmage with the biggest of all she-b'ars that ever was, and her two outlandishly large cubs. Sal was out in the woods gatherin' acorns for her pet pig when she heard a loud buzzin' an' hummin'. She followed the sound and came to a large hollow tree with about a bushel full of obstreper-





friends while bending his elbow at the Free Soil saloon. "He" s worried about his goddam five bucks."

Perkin went down into the pit and there, sure enough, he heard Joe's voice coming right out of the rock, whining, "I want my sawbuck."

Perkin even got a glimpse of Joe, or rather his ghost, looking exactly as in life, except that he had shrunk to the size of a little two-foot gnome—transparent to boot.

Worse than Joe's specter was another devilish imp, the ghost of one Pat O'Brien, a shovel stiff with whom Perkin had locked horns, "pattin' him on the lip," as the saying went, over a shanty queen named Lou. Pat had gone under when the timbering had caved in on him. Pat too had become a shriveled midget manikin, tripping over his beard and, like Joe Trelawney, was a "see-through" ghoul, though, sometimes, he appeared in a more solid form. He was Perkin's special curse, leering at him from crevices, hissing, "I'll teach ye to mess around with my Lou, begorra!"

It did no good at all that Perkin tried to quiet this uncouth apparition, saying, "Lou ain't any concern of yours or mine anymore. She's messin' with every Tom, Dick, an' Harry nowadays. Why don't ye stop yer cussed pranks?"

But the mischief-making troll kept knocking ladders from under Perkin's feet, tripped him up, plagued the poor miner with rock falls, and almost managed to have him crushed under the wheels of a heavy ore cart.

On the other hand, there was the phantom woman, on foot or on her headless steed, floating before Perkin, her pale flesh glistening in the flickering beam of her "miner's friend," luring him on through endless galleries, enshrouded in her long, silver-blond hair. Perkin could make out her shapely form and sinuous limbs, but her face was veiled as by fog and mist. Perkin was consumed with longing, but whenever he stretched out his hands to touch her, the enticing ghost instantly dissolved into nothing, slipping through his fingers like a gust of cold air.

One day Perkin was drilling into a vein of auriferous ore when, to his horror, water gushing from a seam turned to blood. He put this down to a case of jitters and wild imagination, caused by excessive tipping. He dismissed the frightful vision from his mind, convincing himself that what he thought had been blood was merely water discolored by an outcrop of iron ore.

A few days later the phantom woman appeared again, motioning him to "come on." Perkin followed her through gallery after gallery into parts of the mine he had never entered before—a labyrinth of natural caves where stalactites, gleaming like giant icicles, encircled him like prison bars. The phantom suddenly turned around and faced him. The veil of fog lifted from her face, and in the light of his miner's lamp he recognized her as Sukey, a girl he had, a few years before, befriended and callously discarded. The hairs on his head stood up in terror and his legs turned to water as cold, ghostly hands caressed his cheeks and icy lips pressed themselves against his mouth. And then, in a flash, the specter vanished. In its stead appeared the dwarfish tommy-knocker that once had been the living Pat O'Brien, leering, mocking, and screeching, causing a hail of rocks and stalactites to hail down from the cave's roof upon the hapless Cornishman. Perkin fled in mortal fear, and suddenly his lamp gave out, maliciously extinguished by the evil imp. Pursued by its hellish laughter, Perkin groped in utter darkness, blindly, trying to feel his way back along dripping rock walls. He came to a dead end. He was utterly lost. He cowered in a coyote hole, a little side gallery, not knowing where to turn. Then he noticed, with mounting dread, that the air around him was "dead," that he was being enveloped by a gaseous "choke-damp." As the venomous vapors rose from the ground, his breath gave out. He panted for air; he felt himself suffocating with the tommy-knockers' mocking laughter ringing in his ears. "So this is the end," he was thinking when someone took him by the hand, leading him away. Choking and on the point of death, he let himself be carried off with prodigious speed. The air began to clear and so did his head. A tiny, distant spot of daylight showed itself at the end of a long gallery, beckoning, opening a path to deliverance. Soon Perkin found himself at the mine's entrance. He turned to thank his rescuer, a fellow miner, he thought, but it turned out to be Joe Trelawney's ghost, saying gruffly, "Better make it a tenner."

Perkin stumbled into the open, deeply inhaling the air imbued with the exhilarating scent of pine needles and wild flowers. He holed up for many weeks in his lone cabin, not going down to his diggings, deep in thought, drinking soda water instead of his usual forty-rod. He emerged, as if from hibernating, went to the mine, and stuffed ten silver dollars into the crack where Joe's spirit had first appeared to him. Next he went into town, looking for the girl named Lou,

finding her at her favorite man-catching watering hole. He persuaded Lou to let him have a tinsy of her still-pretty mug in return for a small bag of gold dust. He made tracks to the boneyard and placed the tinsy on Pat O'Brien's grave with a heartfelt: "Ther, you old bastard, ther's the best I can do for ye. Our lovely Lou is now a bride of the multitude, n' you wouldn't want to hev anythin' to do with her, 'specially as she'd be makin' you a present in the form of a powerful dose of the pox. Well, pal, enjoy yerself wherever ye are."

After that he wrote a letter to Washoe, to a friend of Sukey's, whose name and address he remembered:

Miss Molly Ludlow,  
at the Long horn Saloon,  
Washoe, Nevada

Dear Miss Ludlow:

Ye mite recall me. I'm Perkin Basset, the feller usta go with Sukey. I'd deeply appreciate it ef ye would let me know what happen to her. Pleease rite to me, care of the Silver Doler, Park City, Utah.

Yer obedcent sarvant,  
Perkin Basset

After six weeks he received an answer to the effect that Sukey had died in childbirth while bringing into the world a child—namely his daughter—now five years old and called Jenny. The girl lived in Washoe's poor imitation of an orphanage.

Perkin cleaned out his cabin, put up curtains at his single window, got a second bed, bought a new pair of pants, and took the stage to Washoe. He returned to Park City with an overjoyed Jenny, adopted her legally, and found a lady, neither young nor beautiful, to move in with him, taking care of the little girl while he tried to hit pay dirt in his diggings.

Single-jacking, clicking, and hammering no longer disturbed Perkin's slumber. Tommy-knockers henceforth shunned his company. The unclad lady on her headless horse was never seen again.

## John Henry

I. JOHN HENRY, THE HERO

I<sup>1</sup>

ALL questions of authenticity of the John Henry tradition fade into insignificance before the incontrovertible fact that for his countless ad-

<sup>1</sup>From *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*, by Guy B. Johnson, pp. 142-146. Copyright, 1929, by The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

nirets John Henry is a reality. To them he will always be a hero, an idol, a symbol of the "natural" man.

It is often charged against the Negro that he glorifies his tough characters, his "bad men." But when one considers that the Negro has had little opportunity to develop outside the fields of labor and hell-raising, this tendency is not surprising. Bad men are nearly always interesting, and incidentally, no one can sing of them any more heartily than the white man. But a working man fits into the drab scene of everyday life, and it is a miracle if he achieves any sort of notoriety by his hard labor. John Henry, then, is a hero indeed. With his hammer and his determination to prove his superiority over a machine, he made a name for himself in folk history. His superstrength, his grit, his endurance, and his martyrdom appeal to something fundamental in the heart of the common man. John Henry stands for something which the pick-and-shovel Negro idolizes—brute strength. He epitomizes the tragedy of man versus machine. In laying down his life for the sake of convincing himself and others that he could beat a machine, he did something which many a Negro would gladly do. The whole thing is a sort of alluring tragedy which appeals strongly to one's egotism.

So strong, indeed, has been the admiration, the envy, of other men for John Henry that some have tried to repeat his drama. I have no doubt but that some of these John Henry episodes said to have happened at so many places throughout the country (the Alabama episode, for instance) are based on real incidents in which would-be John Henry's did their best to put themselves beside the god of the hammer.

Mention John Henry to a group of Negro working men and the chances are that you start an admiration contest. The rare man who intimates that he could beat John Henry is laughed down by his fellows. "Why man," said a true John Henryite on such an occasion, "John Henry could take that hammer between his teeth and drive with his hands tied and beat you like all git-out." "Yes, Lawd," affirmed another, "that man had a stroke like a Alabama mule." "They tells me," said a third, "that he used to keep six men runnin' just to carry his drills back and forth from the man that sharpened 'em." And so on until no one could think of any-thing else to say about him.

F. P. Barker, an old Alabama steel driver who claimed to have known John Henry, said, "I could drive from both shoulders myself, and I was as far behind John Henry as the moon is behind the sun. The world has not yet produced a man to whip steel like John Henry."

A young woman in Georgia concluded an account of John Henry's life as follows:

When he died people came from all parts of the world to see this Famous man John Henry. His wife had it engraved on his tombstone.

his Epitah: [sic]  
"Here lies the steel driving man."

John Henry has a way of cropping up at unexpected times and places. I was standing on the street at Chapel Hill one night in a throng of people gathered to hear the Dempsey-Sharkey fight on the radio. When things looked bad for Dempsey, a Negro man who stood near me began to show his displeasure. "If they'd put old Jack Johnson in there," he said, "he'd lay that Sharkey man out." At the end of the round we discussed colored prize fighters. Suddenly he came out with, "I'll tell you another colored man would've made a real prize-fighter—that's John Henry. Yessir, any body that could handle a thirty-pound hammer like that man could would make a sure-nough fighter."

There is, on the whole, a surprisingly small amount of exaggeration in the stories about John Henry told by those who worship at his shrine. Occasionally you hear that John Henry used a thirty-pound hammer or that he wore out six shakers on the day of the famous contest or that his statue has been carved in solid rock at the portal of Big Bend Tunnel, but around John Henry there has not yet grown up a body of fantastic lore like that which surrounds certain other folk characters—Paul Bunyan, for example. The only really bizarre tale I have ever heard about John Henry is one which Professor Howard W. Odum obtained from a construction-camp Negro at Chapel Hill three years ago. I repeat it here just as it was published in *Negro Workday Songs*.

One day John Henry lef' rock quarry on way to camp an' had to go through woods an' fel'. Well, he met big black bear an' didn't do nothin' but shoot 'im wid his bow an' arrer, an' arrer went clean through bear an' stuck in big tree on other side. So John Henry pulls arrer out of tree an' pull so hard he falls back 'gainst 'nother tree which is so full o' flitterjacks, an' first tree is full o' honey, an' in pullin' arrer out o' one he shaken down honey, an' in fallin' 'gainst other he shaken down flitterjacks. Well, John Henry set there an' et honey an' flitterjacks, an' after while when he went to get up to go, button pop off'n his pants an' kill a rabbit mo' 'n a hundred yads on other side o' de tree. An' so up jumped brown-baked pig wid sack o' biscuits on his back, an' John Henry et him too.

So John Henry gits up to go on through woods to camp for supper, 'cause he 'bout to be late an' he mighty hongry for his supper. John Henry sees lake down hill and thinks he'll get him a drink o' water, 'cause he's thirsty, too, after eatin' honey an' flitterjacks an' brown-roast pig an' biscuits, still he's hongry yet. An' so he goes down to git drink water an' finds lake ain't nothin' but lake o' honey, an' out in middle, dat lake ain't nothin' but tree full o' biscuits. An' so John Henry don't do nothin' but drink dat lake o' honey dry. An' he et the tree full o' biscuits, too. An' so 'bout that time it beg'n to git dark, an' John Henry sees light on hill an' he think maybe he can git sumpin to eat, 'cause he's mighty hongry after big day drillin'. So he look 'roun' an' see light on hill an' runs up to

house where light is an' ast people livin' dere, why'n hell dey don't give him sumpin to eat, 'cause he ain't had much. An' so he et dat, too.

Gee-hee, hee, dat nigger could eat! But dat ain't all, cap'n. Dat nigger could wuk mo' 'n he could eat. He's greatest steel driller ever live, regular gyaunt, he was; could drill wid his hammer mo' 'n two steam drills, an' some say mo' 'n ten. Always beggin' boss to git 'im bigger hammer. John Henry was cut out fer big gyaunt driller. One day when he was jes' few weeks ol' settin' on his mammy's knee he commence cryin' an' his mommer say, "John Henry, whut's matter, little son?" An' he up an' say right den an' dere dat nine-poun' hammer be death o' him. An' sho' 'nough he grow up right way into bigges' steel driller worl' ever see. Why dis I's tellin' you now wus jes' when he's young fellow; waits til' I tells you 'bout his drillin' in mountains an' in Pennsylvania. An' so one day he drill all way from Rome, Georgia, to D'catur, mo' 'n a hundred miles drillin' in one day, an' I ain't sure dat was his bes' day. No, I ain't sure dat was his bes' day.

But, boss, John Henry was a regular boy, not lak some o' dese gyaunts you read 'bout not likin' wimmin an' nothin'. John Henry love to come to town same as any other nigger, only mo' so. Co'se he's mo' important an' all dat, an' co'se he had mo' wimmin 'an anybody else. Some say mo' 'n ten, but as to dat I don't know. I means, boss, mo' wimmin 'an ten men, 'cause, Lawd, I specs he had mo' 'n thousand wimmin. An' John Henry was a great co'tin man, too, cap'n. Always was dat way. Why, few weeks old, wimmin come along an' claim him fer deir man. An' dat's funny, too, but it sho' was dat way all his life. An' so when he come to die John Henry had mo' wimmin, all dressed in red an' blue an' all dem fine colors come to see him dead, if it las' thing dey do, an' was mighty sad sight, people all standin' 'roun', both cullud an' white.

II<sup>1</sup>

John Henry drove steel with a ten pound sheep-nose hammer with a regular size switch handle four feet long. This handle was made slim from where the hammer fitted on to a few inches back where it reduced to one half inch in thickness, the width being five eighths in this slim part. It was kept greased with tallow to keep it limber and flexible, so as not to jar the hands and arms.

He would stand from five and one half feet to six feet from his steel and strike with full length of his hammer. The handle was so limber that when it was held out straight the hammer would hang nearly half way down. He drove steel from his left shoulder and would make a stroke of more than nineteen and one half feet spending his power with all his might

<sup>1</sup> From *John Henry, A Folk-Lore Study* by Louis W. Chappell, pp. 22-23, 32-33. Jena: Frommannsche Verlag, Walter Biedermann, 1933.

making the hammer travel with the speed of lightning. He would throw his hammer over his shoulder and nearly the full length of the handle would be down his back with the hammer against his legs just below his knees. He would drive ten long hours with a never turning stroke.

... John Henry could stand on two powder cans and drive a drill straight up equally as fast as he could drive it straight down—with the same long sweep and rapidity of the hammer. He could stand on a powder can with two feet together, toes even and drive all day never missing a stroke. He was the steel driving champion of the country and his record has never been equalled.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

John Henry was the best driver on the C. & O. He was the only man that could drive steel with two hammers, one in each hand. People came from miles to see him use the two 20 lb. hammers he had to drive with.

It seems that two different contracting companies were meeting in what is called Big Bend Tunnel. One had a steam drill while the other used man power to drill with. When they met everyone claimed that the steam drill was the greatest of all inventions, but John Henry made the remark he could sink more steel than the steam drill could. The contest was arranged and the money put up. John Henry was to get \$100.00 to beat the steam drill.

John Henry had his foreman to buy him 2 new 20 lb. hammers for the race. They were to drill 35 minutes. When the contest was over John Henry had drilled two holes 7 feet deep, which made him a total of 14 feet. The steam drill drilled one hole 9 feet which of course gave the prize to John.

When the race was over John Henry retired to his home and told his wife that he had a queer feeling in his head. She prepared his supper and immediately after eating he went to bed. The next morning when his wife awoke and told him it was time to get up she received no answer, and she immediately discovered that he had passed to the other world some time in the night. His body was examined by two Drs. from Baltimore and it was found his death was caused from a bursted blood vessel in his head.

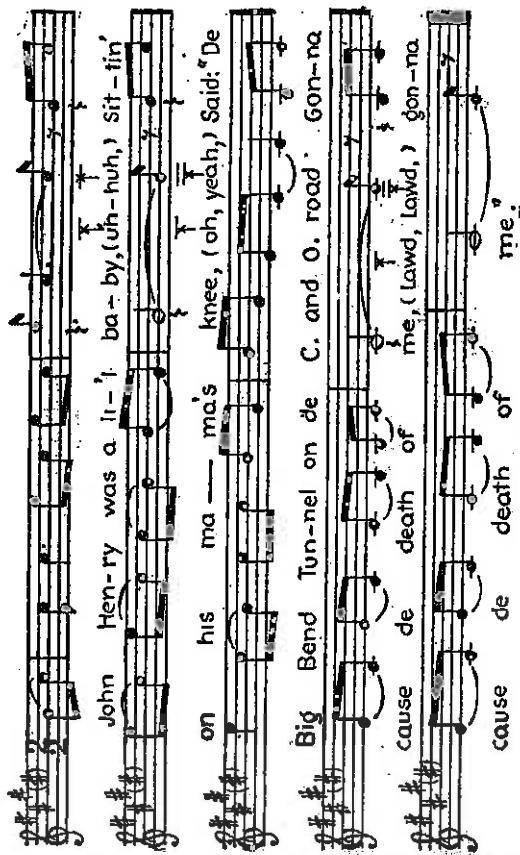
The information I have given you came to me through my grandfather. He was present at Big Bend Tunnel when the contest was staged, at that time he was time keeper for the crew that John Henry was working with. I have often heard him say that his watch started and stopped the race. There was present all of the R. R. officials of the C. & O. The crowd that remained through the race at the mouth of the tunnel was estimated at 2500, a large crowd for pioneer days.

John Henry was born in Tenn. and at the time of his death he was 34 years old. He was a man weighing from 200 to 225 lbs. He was a full blooded negro, his father having come from Africa. He often said his

<sup>1</sup> Newton Redwine, *The Besseyville Enterprise*, Beattyville, Ky., Feb. 1, 1929.

strength was brought from Africa. He was not any relation of John Hardy as far as I know. . . .<sup>1</sup>

### II. JOHN HENRY



John Henry was a li-ly ba-by, (uh-huh,) Sit-tin'  
on his ma-ma's knee, (oh, yeah,) Said: "De  
Big Bend Tun-nel on de C. and O. road. Gon-na  
cause de death of me, (Lawd, Lawd,) Gon-na  
cause de death of me."

### I

John Henry was a li'l baby, uh-huh,<sup>2</sup>  
Sittin' on his mama's knee, oh, yeah,  
Said: "De Big Bend Tunnel on de C. & O. road  
Gonna cause de death of me,  
Lawd, Lawd, gonna cause de death of me."

<sup>1</sup> George Johnston, Lindside, W. Va.

Considerable verisimilitude hardly characterizes all these details. The presence of all the officials of the road, with a crowd of 2,500, at the drilling-contest had better be accepted as fictional embroidery. But the purpose of this study is not to emphasize the tissue of falsehood in popular reports. Big Bend Tunnel was built by a single contractor, as will be shown later, but the "two different contracting companies" may well represent two crews of workmen. The steel driver may have had "2 new 20 lb. hammers" and used only one at a time. Two doctors from Baltimore may have examined Henry's body, but that they came to the tunnel for that purpose seems impossible of belief. His John Henry suggests the frontier strong man, who does impossible things.—L. W. C.

From *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, collected and compiled by John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, pp. 5-9. Copyright, 1934, by the Macmillan Company. New York.

<sup>2</sup>The syllables "uh-huh" and "oh, yeah" are to be repeated in each stanza.—J. A. L. and A. L.

John Henry, he had a woman,  
Her name was Mary Magdalene,  
She would go to de tunnel and sing for John,  
Jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring,  
Lawd, Lawd, jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring.

John Henry had a li'l woman,  
Her name was Lucy Ann,  
John Henry took sick an' had to go to bed,  
Lucy Ann drove steel like a man,  
Lawd, Lawd, Lucy Ann drove steel like a man.

Cap'n says to John Henry,  
"Gonna bring me a steam drill 'round,  
Gonna take dat steam drill out on de job,  
Gonna whop dat steel on down,  
Lawd, Lawd, gonna whop dat steel on down."

John Henry tol' his cap'n,  
Lightnin' was in his eye:  
"Cap'n, bet yo' las' red cent on me,  
Fo' I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die,  
Lawd, Lawd, I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die."

Sun shine hot an' burnin',  
Wer'n't no breeze a-tall,  
Sweat ran down like water down a hill,  
Dat day John Henry let his hammer fall,  
Lawd, Lawd, dat day John Henry let his hammer fall.

John Henry went to de tunnel,  
An' dey put him in de lead to drive;  
De rock so tall an' John Henry so small,  
Dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried,  
Lawd, Lawd, dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried.

John Henry started on de right hand,  
De steam drill started on de lef—  
"Before I'd let dis steam drill beat me down,  
I'd hammer my fool self to death,  
Lawd, Lawd, I'd hammer my fool self to death."

White man tol' John Henry,  
"Nigger, damn yo' soul,  
You might beat dis steam an' drill of mine,  
When de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol',  
Lawd, Lawd, when de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol'."

John Henry said to his shaker,  
"Nigger, why don' you sing?  
I'm throwin' twelve poun's from my hips on down,  
Jes' listen to de col' steel ring,  
Lawd, Lawd, jes' listen to de col' steel ring."

## JOHN HENRY

Oh, de captain said to John Henry,  
"I b'lieve this mountain's sinkin' in."  
John Henry said to his captain, oh my!  
"Ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win,  
Lawd, Lawd, ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win."

John Henry tol' his shaker,  
"Shaker, you better pray,  
For, if I miss dis six-foot steel,  
Tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day,  
Lawd, Lawd, tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day."

John Henry tol' his captain,  
"Looka yonder what I see—  
Yo' drill's done broke an' yo' hole's done choke,  
An' you cain' drive steel like me,  
Lawd, Lawd, an' you cain' drive steel like me."

De man dat invented de steam drill,  
Thought he was mighty fine.  
John Henry drove his fifteen feet,  
An' de steam drill only made nine,  
Lawd, Lawd, an' de steam drill only made nine.

De hammer dat John Henry swung  
It weighed over nine pound;  
He broke a rib in his lef'-han' side,  
An' his intrrels fell on de groun',  
Lawd, Lawd, an' his intrrels fell on de groun'.

John Henry was hammerin' on de mountain,  
An' his hammer was strikin' fire,  
He drove so hard till he broke his pore heart,  
An' he lied down his hammer an' he died,  
Lawd, Lawd, he lied down his hammer an' he died.

All de womens in de Wes',  
When de heard of John Henry's death,  
Stood in de rain, flagged de eas'-boun' train,  
Goin' where John Henry fell dead,  
Lawd, Lawd, goin' where John Henry fell dead.

John Henry's li'l mother,  
She was all dressed in red,  
She jumped in bed, covered up her head,  
Said she didn' know her son was dead,  
Lawd, Lawd, didn' know her son was dead.

John Henry had a pretty li'l woman,  
An' de dress she wo' was blue,  
An' de las' words she said to him:  
"John Henry, I've been true to you,  
Lawd, Lawd, John Henry, I've been true to you."

## II

Well, ev'ry Mon-day morn-in',  
When the blue-birds be-gin to sing,  
You can hear those ham-mers a mile or  
more, You can hear John Hen-ry's ham-mer  
ring, Oh, Lord-y! Hear John Hen-ry's ham-mer ring.

Well, ev'ry Monday mornin',  
When the bluebirds begin to sing,  
You can hear those hammers a mile or more,  
You can hear John Henry's hammer ring, Oh, Lordy!  
Hear John Henry's hammer ring.

John Henry told his old lady,  
"Will you fix my supper soon?  
Got ninety miles o' track I've got to line,  
Got to line it by the light o' the moon, Oh, Lordy!  
Line it by the light o' the moon."

John Henry had a little baby,  
He could hold him in his hand;  
Well, the last word I heard that po' child say,  
"My daddy is a steel-drivin' man, Oh, Lordy!  
Daddy is a steel-drivin' man."

John Henry told his old captain,  
Said, "A man ain't nothin' but a man;  
Before I let your steel gang down  
I will die with the hammer in my hand, Oh, Lordy!  
Die with the hammer in my hand."

From *Folk Music of the United States*, Album III, edited by Alan Lomax, Washington, D. C.: Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress, 1942. Sung by Arthur Bell, Gould, Arkansas, 1939. Recorded by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax. Transcribed by Ruth Crawford Seeger.

## JOHN HENRY

John Henry told his captain,  
"Next time you go to town  
Uh-jes' bring me back a ten-pound maul  
For to beat your steel-drivin' down, Oh, Lordy!  
Beat your steel-drivin' down."

John Henry had a old lady,  
And her name was Polly Ann.  
John Henry tuck sick and he had to go to bed;  
Pauline drove steel like a man, Oh, Lordy!  
'Line drove steel like a man.

John Henry had a old lady,  
And the dress she wo' was red.  
Well, she started up the track and she never looked back,  
"Goin' where my man fell dead, Oh, Lordy!  
Where my man fell dead."

Well, they taken John Henry to Washington,  
And they buried him in the sand.  
There is peoples from the East, there's peoples from the West  
Come to see such a steel-drivin' man, Oh, Lordy!  
See such a steel-drivin' man.

Well, some said-uh he's from England,  
And some say he's from Spain;  
But-uh I say he's nothin' but a Lou's'ana man,  
Just a leader of the steel-drivin' gang, Oh, Lordy!  
Leader of the steel-drivin' gang.

## III. THE BIRTH OF JOHN HENRY

Now John Henry was a man, but he's long dead.  
The night John Henry was born the moon was copper-colored and the  
sky was black. The stars wouldn't shine and the rain fell hard. Forked  
lightning cleaved the air and the earth trembled like a leaf. The panthers  
squall'd in the brake like a baby and the Mississippi River ran upstream  
a thousand miles. John Henry weighed forty-four pounds.

John Henry was born on the banks of the Black River, where all good  
rousterbouts come from. He came into the world with a cotton-hook for  
a right hand and a river song on his tongue.

"Looked up and down de river,  
Twice as far as I could see.  
Seed befo' I gits to be twenty-one,  
De Anchor Line gouter b'long to me, Lawd, Lawd,  
Anchor Line gouter b'long to me."

From *John Henry*, by Roark Bradford, pp. 1-4. Copyright, 1931, by Roark Bradford. New York: Harper & Brothers.

They didn't know what to make of John Henry when he was born. They looked at him and then went and looked at the river.

"He got a bass voice like a preacher," his mamma said.

"He got shoulders like a cotton-rollin' rouserabout," his papa said.

"He got blue gums like a conjure man," the nurse woman said.

"I might preach some," said John Henry, "but I ain't gonter be no preacher. I might roll cotton on de boats, but I ain't gonter be no cotton-rollin' rouserabout. I might got blue gums like a conjure man, but I ain't gonter git familiar wid de sperits. 'Cause my name is John Henry, and when fo'ks call me by my name, dey'll know I'm a natchal man."

"His name is John Henry," said his mamma. "Hit's a fack."

"And when you calls him by his name," said his papa, "he's a natchal man."

So about that time John Henry raised up and stretched. "Well," he said, "ain't hit about supper-time?"

"Sho hit's about supper-time," said his mamma.

"And after," said his papa.

"And long after," said the nurse woman.

"Well," said John Henry, "did de dogs had they supper?"

"They did," said his mamma.

"All de dogs," said his papa.

"Long since," said the nurse woman.

"Well, den," said John Henry, "ain't I as good as de dogs?"

And when John Henry said that he got mad. He reared back in his bed and broke out the slats. He opened his mouth and yowled, and it put out the lamp. He cleaved his tongue and spat, and it put out the fire. "Don't make me mad!" said John Henry, and the thunder rumbled and rolled. "Don't let me git mad on de day I'm bawn, 'cause I'm skeered of my ownsef when I gits mad."

And John Henry stood up in the middle of the floor and he told them what he wanted to eat. "Bring me four ham bones and a pot full of cabbages," he said. "Bring me a bait of turnip greens tree-top tall, and season hit down wid a side er middlin'. Bring me a pone er cold cawn bread and some hot potlicker to wash hit down. Bring me two hog jowls and a kitiful er whippowill peas. Bring me a skilletful er red-hot biscuits and a big jugful er cane molasses. 'Cause my name is John Henry, and I'll see you soon."

So John Henry walked out of the house and away from the Black River Country where all good rouserabouts are born.

## Casey Jones

### I. CASEY JONES, ENGINEER

#### I<sup>1</sup>

ON the last day of April [1928] occurs the 28th anniversary of the death of Casey Jones,—probably the most famous of a long line of locomotive engineer heroes who have died at their post of duty, one hand on the whistle and the other on the airbrake lever. Casey Jones' fame rests on a series of nondescript verses, which can hardly be called poetry. They were written by Wallace Saunders, a Negro engine wiper who had been a close friend of the famous engineer, and who sang them to a jiggling melody all his own.

Mrs. Casey Jones still lives in Jackson, Tenn. She has two sons and a daughter. Charles Jones, her younger son, lives in Jackson; Lloyd, the older son, is with a Memphis auto agency; and her daughter, Mrs. George McKenzie, lives at Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Although 41 years have flitted by since Miss Janie Brady said "I do" and became the bride of John Luther (Casey) Jones, Mrs. Jones still keeps green the memory of that glad occasion. Today, still on the sunny side of 60, the plump blond woman with her cheery smile tells graphically the story of how her husband was killed, and how Wallace Saunders composed the original air and words that later swept the country for years as the epic ballad of the railroader.

"My husband's real name was John Luther Jones," she told her latest interviewer. "He was a lovable lad—6 feet 4½ inches in height, dark-haired and gray-eyed. Always he was in good humor and his Irish heart was as big as his body. All the railroaders were fond of Casey, and his wiper, Wallace Saunders, just worshipped the ground he walked on."

The interviewer asked Mrs. Jones how her husband got the nickname Casey.

"Oh, I supposed everyone knew that!" she replied. "He got it from the town of Cayce, Kentucky, near which he was born. The name of the town is locally pronounced in two syllables, exactly like 'Casey.'"

Mrs. Jones remembers Wallace Saunders very well, although she has not seen him for years.

"Wallace's admiration for Casey was little short of idolatry," she said. "He used to brag mightily about Mr. Jones even when Casey was only a freight engineer."

Casey Jones was known far and wide among railroad men, for his peculiar skill with a locomotive whistle.

"You see," said Mrs. Jones, "he established a sort of trade mark for

<sup>1</sup>From *Erie Railroad Magazine*, Vol. 24 (April, 1928), No. 2, pp. 13, 44.



himself by his inimitable method of blowing a whistle. It was a kind of long-drawn-out note that he created, beginning softly, then rising, then dying away almost to a whisper. People living along the Illinois Central right of way between Jackson and Water Valley would turn over in their beds late at night and say: "There goes Casey Jones," as he roared by."

After he had put in several years as freight and passenger engineer between Jackson and Water Valley, Casey was transferred early in 1900 to the Memphis-Canton (Miss.) run as throttle-puller of the Illinois Central's crack "Cannonball" train.

Casey and his fireman, Sim Webb, rolled into Memphis from Canton about 10 o'clock Sunday night, April 29. They went to the checking-in office and were preparing to go to their homes when Casey heard somebody call out: "Joe Lewis has just been taken with cramps and can't take his train out tonight."

"I'll double back and pull Lewis' old No. 638," Casey volunteered.

At 11 o'clock that rainy Sunday night Casey and Sim Webb clambered aboard the big engine and eased her out of the station and through the South Memphis yards.

"All the switchmen knew by the engine's moans  
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones."

Four o'clock of the 30th of April. The little town of Vaughn, Miss. A long, winding curve just above the town, and a long sidetrack beginning about where the curve ended.

"There's a freight train on the siding," Casey yelled across to Sim Webb. Knowing the siding there was a long one, and having passed many other freights on it, Casey figured he would do the same this night.

But there were two separate sections of a very long train on the side-track this night. And the rear one was a little too long to get all its length off the main line onto the siding. The freight train crews figured on "sawing by"; that is, as soon as the passenger train passed the front part of the first train, it would move forward and the rear freight would move up, thus clearing the main track.

But Casey's speed—about fifty miles an hour—was more than the freight crews bargained for.

But when old 638 was within a hundred feet of the end of the siding the horrified eyes of Casey Jones and Sim Webb beheld through the gloom the booming shape of several boxcars in motion, swinging across from the main line to the side-track. In a flash both knew there was no earthly way of preventing a smashup.

"Jump, Sim, and save yourself!" was Casey's last order to his fireman. As for himself, Casey threw his engine in reverse and applied the air-brakes—all any engineer could do, and rode roaring 638 into a hotcaust of crashing wood that splintered like match boxes. Sim Webb jumped, fell into some bushes and was not injured.

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When they took Casey's body from the wreckage (old 638 had plowed through the cars and caboose and turned over on her side a short distance beyond) they found one hand on the whistle cord, the other on the air-brake lever.

"I remember," Sim Webb told Casey's widow, "that as I jumped Casey held down the whistle in a long, piercing scream. I think he must have had in mind to warn the freight conductor in the caboose so he could jump."

Probably no individual, excepting a member of Casey's family, was more affected by the sad news than Wallace Saunders.

A few days later he was going about singing a song to a melody all his own. The air had a lilt that caught the fancy of every one who heard it. But Wallace, honest old soul, had no idea of doing more than singing it as a sort of tribute to his white friend's memory.

But one day a song writer passed through Jackson and heard the song and the details of Casey's tragic death. He went off and changed the words, but retained the lilting refrain and the name of Casey Jones. That was about 1902.

## II<sup>1</sup>

There are many railroad men still living who knew and worked with Jones. The affection he aroused among all his acquaintances seems to have been an outstanding characteristic. He was 6 feet 4½ inches tall, dark-haired and gray-eyed. An excellent photograph of him, which has just come to light from the Memphis Press-Scimitar, is reproduced as a frontispiece in this issue.

His old friend R. E. Edrington, a fellow engineer on the Illinois Central writes: "The reputation which Casey enjoyed was richly earned by numerous feats of resourcefulness, skill and downright daring. He could perform feats with his famous 638 that no other engineer could equal with locomotives of the same class, or even with the same engine. Firing for him was a back-breaking and hair-raising job, but his mulatto fireman, Sim Webb, was equal to every demand, and held Casey in almost idolatrous regard, following him from one run to another through his entire career."

A. J. ("Fatty") Thomas, who often ran as conductor on trains pulled by Casey and the 638, writes: "I had often heard the song about Casey Jones, but on account of the phrases in it about the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe, rounder, Frisco, and another papa on the Salt Lake Line, I never figured that the song was intended for my Illinois Central. For he was not a rounder but a car roller, and in my estimation the prince of them all. We had a number of fast men, and since then I have had hundreds of good engineers pull me on different western roads. But I never met the equal of Casey Jones in rushing to get over the road.

"The 'whistle's moan' in the song is right. Casey could just about play

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 28 (April, 1932), No. 2, pp. 12, 46.

a tune on the whistle. He could make the cold chills run up your back with it, and grin all the time. Everybody along the line knew Casey Jones' whistle.

"I never saw him with his mouth closed—he always had a smile or a broad grin. The faster he could get his engine to roll, the happier he was. He would lean out of the cab window to watch his drivers, and when he got her going so fast that the side rods looked solid, he would look at you and grin all over, happy as a boy with his first pair of red boots. Yet he had a reputation as a safe engineer. With all his fast running I never knew of him piling them up, of any but a few derailments and never a rear-ender. He was either lucky, or else his judgment was as nearly perfect as human judgment can be."

Ed Pacey, another conductor who knew Casey Jones, writes: "In the early days of railroading there was a real glamor to the rails. Into this setting Casey, engineer of the Cannonball Express, fitted perfectly. He was a giant and came of a great railroad family. His nickname was derived from his native village, Cayce, Tenn., pronounced 'Casey.'

"Jones was famous for two things: he was a testotater in days when abstinence was rare, and he was the most daring of all engineers in the days when schedules were simply 'get her there and make the time, or come to the office and get your time.'"

Mr. Pacey lodges a protest against the popular song's line to the effect that Casey Jones' widow informed her orphan children that "you've got another papa on the Salt Lake line." Mr. Pacey chafes at the implied disrespect toward Mrs. Jones in that stanza. "There never was any other papa on the Salt Lake or any other line," he says. "Instead, the widow devoted her life to the hard struggle to maintain herself and educate her three children."

The common story of the wreck in which Jones was killed is that Casey had to meet two freight trains which were too long to clear the siding. For some reason, never clearly explained, Casey failed to stop and he piled them up when he struck the caboose and cars protruding out on the main line.

According to R. E. Edgington, however, the situation was even more complicated. "It was characteristic," he says, "of the desperate chances which were part of the period of railroading, when the engines were rapidly growing in size and the sidings, safety equipment and other appliances not keeping pace with them."

"There were not two but three trains. Two of these were north bound and had pulled into the siding. The third was racing on short time, ahead of the Cannonball. As this train scurried down to the siding it dropped off a flagman but, after it had pulled down, this flagman rode in with the idea that the mother train would protest against the Cannonball."

"But the other train crew thought that he was still out and did not flag. So Casey came down, as fast as he could turn a wheel, with the result of one of the worst wrecks in the history of the road. . . ."

## II. THE "CASEY JONES" SONG

Four years ago the Erie Railroad Magazine gathered up the real story of Casey's life and death, as told by his widow, who still lives in Jackson, Tenn. The article was reprinted in railroad magazines and newspapers all over the world and has brought a continuous stream of letters ever since. Scores of correspondents have sent in various versions of the Casey Jones song, not only in English but in French, German and even in the language of the native laborers on the South African railways.

Every branch of railroading has at least one version of the song. The hobo jungles and the I.W.W. song books contribute others. Still others come from the campfires and boarding cars of construction gangs, and several weird and often unprintable variations were composed by doughboys in France during the world war.

Come all you round-ers for I want you to hear The  
sto-ry told of a brave en-gi-neer;  
Ca-sey Jones was the round-er's name, On a  
heavy six-eight wheel-er he rode to fame.

Come all you rounders for I want you to hear  
The story told of a brave engineer;  
Casey Jones was the rounder's name  
On a heavy six-eight wheeler he rode to fame.

Caller called Jones about half-past four,  
Jones kissed his wife at the station door,  
Climbed into the cab with the orders in his hand,  
Says, "This is my trip to the promised land."

Through South Memphis yards on the fly,  
He heard the fireman say, "You've got a white-eye,"  
All the switchmen knew by the engine's moans,  
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.

*Erie Railroad Magazine*, Vol. 28 (April, 1932), No. 2, p. 12. The present text (*Ibid.*, Vol. 24, April, 1928, No. 2, p. 12), like the tune, is traditional, differing from the

It had been raining for more than a week, The railroad track was like the bed of a creek. They rated him down to a thirty mile gait, Threw the south-bound mail about eight hours late.

Fireman says, "Casey, you're runnin' too fast, You run the block signal the last station you passed." Jones says, "Yes, I think we can make it though, For she steams much better than ever I know."

Jones says, "Fireman, don't you fret, Keep knockin' at the firedoor, don't give up yet; I'm goin' to run her till she leaves the rail Or make it on time with the south-bound mail."

Around the curve and a-down the dump Two locomotives were a-bound to bump. Fireman hollered, "Jones, it's just ahead, We might jump and make it but we'll all be dead."

'Twas around this curve he saw a passenger train; Something happened in Casey's brain; Fireman jumped off, but Casey stayed on, He's a good engineer but he's dead and gone—

Poor Casey was always all right, He stuck to his post both day and night; They loved to hear the whistle of old Number Three As he came into Memphis on the old K.C.

Headaches and heartaches and all kinds of pain Are not apart from a railroad train; Tales that are earnest, noble and grand Belong to the life of a railroad man.

## The Saga of Joe Magarac: Steelman

WHILE working in the steel mills along the Monongahela valley of Pennsylvania, I often heard one of the many Slavs who worked in the mills call one of his fellow-workers "*magarac*." Knowing that literally translated the word *magarac* meant jackass, but knowing also, from the tone of voice and the manner in which it was used, that it was seldom used derisively, popular song version principally in the absence of the chorus. Copyright 1909 by Newton & Seibert. Copyright renewed. By permission of Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.

By Owen Francis. From *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. XC (November, 1931), No. 5, pp. 505-514. Copyright, 1931, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

I questioned my Hunkie leverman as to its meaning as understood by the Hunkie workers. He gave me a vivid explanation. He said:

"Magarac! Dat is mans who is jooost same lak jackass donkey. Dat is mans what jooost lak eatit and workit, dat's all."

Pointing a finger toward another of his race, a huge Hunkie by the name of Mike, who was walking from the open hearth, he yelled: "Hay! Magarac!"

At once, Mike's thumbs went to his ears, and with palms outspread his hands waved back and forth while he brayed lustily in the best imitation of a donkey that he could give.

"See," my leverman said, "dere is *magarac*. Dat is Joe Magarac for sure."

Then they both laughed and spoke in their mother tongue, which I did not understand.

It was evident enough there was some definite reason for the use of the word, and obviously that reason was, to their way of thinking, very humorous.

By working for a considerable number of years with a Hunkie on my either side, by sitting many evenings in their homes, and, since turning my thoughts to writing, by spending a good deal of my time with them, I have been fortunate enough to hear considerably more about Mr. Joe Magarac.

I find that Joe Magarac is a man living only in the imagination of the Hunkie steel-mill worker. He is to the Hunkie what Paul Bunyan is to the woodsman and Old Stormalong is to the men of the sea. With his active imagination and his childlike delight in tales of greatness, the Hunkie has created stories with Joe Magarac as the hero that may in the future become folklore of our country. Conceived in the minds of Hunkie steel-mill workers, he belongs to the mills as do the furnaces and the rolling-mills. Although the stories of Joe Magarac are sagas, they have no tangible connection so far as I have been able to find, with the folklore of any of the countries which sent the Hunkie to these United States. It seems that the Hunkie, with the same adaptability that has made him into the best worker within our shores, has created a character and has woven about him a legend which admirably fits the environment in which he, the Hunkie, has been placed. Basically, the stories of Joe Magarac are as much a part of the American scene as steel itself.

I did not hear the story which I have set down here as accurately as I have been able, at one time. Some of it I heard in the mill; some of it while sitting on the hill above the mill on pleasant Sunday afternoons; the most of it while sitting in Agnes's kitchen with Hunkie friends at my side and well-filled tin cups of prune-jack before us.

The saga of Joe Magarac is more typical of the Hunkie than any tale or incident or description I might write. It shows his sense of humor, his ambitions, his love of his work, and, in general, shows what I know the Hunkie to be: a good-natured, peace- and home-loving worker.

Joe Magarac was workit every day and every night at mill and same lak before he was makit rails with hands. Pretty soon dat pile of rails in yard get bigger and bigger for Joe Magarac is workit so hard and after coople months yard was full, everyplace was rails. When Joe Magarac see dat he joost laught and workit harder as ever. So one day roller-boss he comit up from down by finishing mills and he say to Joe Magarac who was workit by his furnace in open hearth. Roller-boss he say:

"Well, Joe Magarac, I guess we gone shut mill down early dis week. Dis time we catch plenty rails everyplace and we no catch many orders. So by Gods, we gone shut mill down Thursday night and we no start 'em up again until Monday morning. Mebbe you gone put slow heat in furnace: you tell stockman give you fifty-ton stock. You put 'em in stock and give furnace slow fire so dat she keepit warm and be ready for start 'em up on Monday."

Joe Magarac he act lak he gone say something and den he no say nothing and roller-boss tink everyting gone be all right dis time and he gone away.

When next Monday comit mans gone back to work for open hearth. Den dey see dat Joe Magarac is not workit on furnace dat morning. Everyplace dey lookit and dey no see Joe anyplace. 'Nother mans was workit on Noomber Seven and pretty soon when Noomber Seven was ready for tap 'em out melter-boss gone down to platform to see what kind steel dat slow heat makit. He was standit by ingot mould and pretty soon he hear voice what say:

"How she lookit dis time?"

Melter-boss lookit 'round and he no see nobody and den dat voice say again:

"It's me, Joe Magarac. I'm inside ladle."

Melter-boss turn around and he lookit inside ladle and he see Joe. Joe was sitting inside ladle with hot steel boiling up around neck. Melter-boss was scared lak anything and he say:

"What the hells you do in dere, Joe Magarac? Better you gone crawl out dat ladle right 'way or I tink maybe for sure dat she gone melt you up."

Joe Magarac close one eyes for melter-boss and he say:

"Dats fine. Dats good business, dats joost what I want. By Gods, I be sick dis time of mill what shut down on Thursday and no start 'em up again until Monday. What the hells I gone do all time mill is shut down anyway? I hear big boss say dat he was gone makit two, three good heats steel so dat he gone have best steel what we can makit for buildit new mill dis place. Dey gone tear down dis old mills and makit new ones what is gone be best mills in whole Monongahela valley, what gone be best

mills in whole world. Den by Gods, I get plan: I gone joomp in furnace when steel is melted down and dey gone melt 'em up me, who was made from steel, to makit steel to makit dat mills. Now Mr. Boss you gone listen for me and I gone tell you something. You gone take dis ladle steel what has me inside and you gone pour 'em out in ingot mould and den you gone roll 'em out and makit beam, channel, and maybe one, two piece angle and you gone take dat steel and makit new mills. You do lak I say for you and you gone see you gone have best mills for anyplace. Good-by."

Den Joe Magarac sit back down in ladle and hold his chin down in boiling steel until he was all melted up. Pretty soon dey pour him out in ingot mould.

Well, after dey roll 'em out dat heat and dey cut 'em up dey see dat dis time dey have best steel what was ever made. Oh, my, dat steel was smooth and straight and it no have seam or pipe nothing. Den melter-boss he gone 'round for everybody and he say:

"Now we gone have best mills for sure. You see dat steel? By Gods, nobody ever see steel lak dat before and dats joost because Joe Magarac he makit dat steel. Sure, he's inside and now we gone takit dat beam and dat channel and we gone build finest mills what ever was."

Dey do lak melter-boss say and dat is why all young boys want to go for mill, and dat is why when somebody call Hunkie *magarac* he only laught and feel proud as anyting, and dat is why we catch the best mill for anyplace, ya damn right!