The Lancaster Intelligencer.

Volume XVII—No. 138 LANCASTER, PA., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1881 Price Two Cents.

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Lancaster Intelligencer.

THURSDAY EVENING, FEB. 10, 1881

A BORDER STATE ROMANCE

THE HOMICIDAL INFLUENCES OF THE WAR.

A Southwestern Family of Murderers—The Bloodthirsty Killian Brothers and Their Crimes—The Danger of Going to the Circus.

New York Times.

There are in the South, and more particularly in the border states, where the war divided the people into enemies of the neighborhood and even of the household, and gave to their strife the atmosphere of private vendetta and individual murder, rather than of broader war, in which personal hatred was merged in the mass, numbers of families, whose members might take for a motto the boast of Jacques Frochard in "The Two Orphans" "I come from a family that kills." The disregard for human life, which had been too common among the rude and violent communities before the war, was intensified by four years of bloodshed, and hatreds, which were engendered by the cruelties of guerrilla warfare, in which neighbor lay in wait for neighbor in the brush, and when bands of bushwhackers alternately swept to and fro, murdering, burning and raiding, remained to be perpetuated for years of strife and alternating murder, and many in some cases may be continued for generations. There are vendettas of this sort which are still being carried on in the wilder regions of Kentucky, Tennessee and Arkansas, and the legacy of bloodthirstiness, and even a sort of emulation in homicide, inherited by the younger generation, who were children when it took place, still remains. One of the sections that suffered most from guerrilla warfare was Southwest Missouri. The red hills, the narrow valleys and thin woods of the Ozark uplands were a thorough debatable land, easily traveled yet apt for concealment, its shut-in valleys inviting surprises and ambuscades, the trails hard to find and harder to keep, with a scattered population, and only on rare occasions occupied by a commanding force on either side, was nominally held by the Union forces after the defeat of the Confederates at Pea Ridge, and there were usually garrison detatchments at Springfield, at Neosho, and even as far south as Bentonville, Ark. But they were compelled to be on the alert for retreat, and were swept out of the country more than once before an advance of "Old Pap" Price, Marmaduke, or Shelby. When they held their places they by no means occupied the country, and there were guerrilla bands on both sides that never left it, and who fought and ambushed each other continually, and who, by their combined destruction, swept off every hoof and horn, burned every house, except in the garrisoned towns, and left the country at the end of the war a wilderness, where the wolves howled and which human beings had deserted. It would be difficult to realize this in the thriving and populous development which has come to Southwest Missouri with the opening of railroads, the development of lead mines, and the immigration, which has been attracted by the fine climate and fertile soil. And in the lively towns and embryo cities, with a large element of Northern population, their schools, churches, and all the evidences of peaceful civilization, there is little evidence of the savagery which was created by the war, and which would more naturally be expected to survive in the slack waters and eddies of the stream of progress in the unpenetrated regions of Kentucky and Tennessee. But the element of ferocity is still there among the aboriginal inhabitants, and it was in this region that the family grew up whose exploits are about to be related, and which entitle it to the distinction claimed by Jacques Frochard. The story is perhaps the more interesting beyond its typical features because it is connected with a tragedy in the life of a young lady who is known to a wide public as one of the "queens of the arena."

The family, or at least the killing members of it, consisted of four brothers—Jacob, Benjamin, Jasper and Thomas Killian. The elder, Jake Killian, had served in one of the guerrilla bands on the Union side during the war, and, young as he was, had acquired an evil reputation for treachery and savagery. His courage then and always was doubtful, unless when stimulated with whisky; but he had been shot at so many times and taken part in so many affrays that he had become in a sort familiarized to it, as a bully acquires confidence through frequent fistic encounters. When his ugliness was inflamed with sodcorn whisky he was both quarrelsome and desperate. He had but one eye, the other having been shot out during a game of cards in which, a dispute having arisen, there was a prompt appeal to navy revolvers across the the table, and Jake lost his eye and his opponent his life. His appearance was impressed on me in a vivid manner by being halted by him on the stumbling board sidewalk of the town of Neosho one summer afternoon, and having to face the terrors of his ugly eye when he was looking for a quarrel. If one desires to test himself in a sudden call on the nerve, I do not know of any more trying occasion than to have to meet the eye of a human tiger of this sort without even a jack-knife for a weapon, and shift off the perilous imminence of attack without being cowed or inflamed into provoking the shot; and I am free to say that I don't know that I should have stood it but that I saw out of the corner of my eye, through the open door of the wooden bank building, the cashier, with a long pistol that was ready to his hand, cover Jacob from across the counter, and stand ready for the first movement of his hand toward his hip. Possibly Jake saw it, too, for he turned past and went his way with a curse. It was but an instant, but the vividness of the negative that was taken on my mind has never faded, and I can see the savage, beardless countenance, the baleful eye, the hideous scar where the other was wanting; the tall, gaunt, and muscular figure, clad in blue jeans of a somewhat dandy fashion, with black velvet collar and cuffs, the slouched hat and tall boots, and the unpaved and gullied street, the row of frontier stores, the horses and mules hitched to the posts, the prairie schooner turning the corner, and all the features of the scene as though it were before me. I can hear the ring of the bells on his spurs as he stepped away, and experience the sense of relief to the sudden and sharp tension. It was but a few months before that Jake Killian had performed the exploit of killing the proprietor of a circus in the middle of his own tent and getting away unharmed. He was then on bail for the murder, and in one of the stages of the law's delay, which made a travesty of justice in his case, and his homicidal reputation was at its highest pitch.

The affair had taken place in the neighboring town of Granby, to which the lead mines attracted the worst sort of the population. It is not easy to imagine anything more desperately forbidding than such a place. The town of rude cabins lies scattered over barren dipt hills, without the slightest pretense to regularity, or even any ways for travel except for foot paths. There are a few stores on the single street, and saloons that look positively deadly in their dark and grimy doorways. The tall chimney of the smelting furnace pours out a cloud of poisonous leaden smoke that, swept by the prevailing wind against the opposite hillside, has intensified its barrenness by a blue deposit. The stream in the valley runs thick and turbid with the washings of the red soil. In every direction hillocks are surmounted by rude windlasses by which men are lifting tubs of ore, or which are hollowed by the shafts of exhausted mines. The population is mostly of the aboriginal inhabitants—for the sinking of a shaft for a pocket of lead requires neither skill nor capital, and the corporation owning the tract prefers to make its profit from smelting—and naturally of of the rudest, most violent, and reckless. They mined with pistols in their belts, and at night gambled and drank in the dens that afforded their only amusements. Money was plenty, and it was an attractive place for the circuses, of which one or two in a year would pass through the country, although there was almost the certainty of a row.

On a night in May the dingy and weather stained tent of the circus of William Lake was set up in an open space in the town. It was clear and calm, and the bright moon of the southwest cast a softening glow on even the barren hills and rude cabins. The flaring kerosene torch sent up its smoky flames at the entrance to the tent, whose dingy walls were glowing with the light within. Horses and mules were hitched about, and the audience were dropping out of the doorway, noisy and talkative. Suddenly there crowded out a tall man, with a smoking pistol in his hand, who ran to his mule, unhitched it from the scrub, bounded into the saddle, and dashed away with a whoop and a flourish of his pistol, recklessly riding among the open shafts and in a moment gaining the open prairie, across which he galloped for the timber. There was no pursuit, although some tumult and excitement, and the murderer was gone. Within, the audience hastened down from the benches and gathered around a burly man, in his shirt sleeves, who was lying on the ground and painfully struggling with his breath, and on whose breast a stain of blood was marked. He was taken up by the performers and helpers, and borne into the dressing room, where his wife, in the costume of an equestrienne, took his head in her lap, and a young girl in the spangles and muslin of a ring fairy stood by in tears and terror. The wound was a fatal one, and in a few minutes the powerful man's breath was choked, and he struggled convulsively in giving up his life. William Lake, the murdered man, was well known as a circus proprietor in the West. He had kept a floating show on the Mississippi in the later period of the war, and afterward traveled a circuit in the Southwest. He was bold and rough, as he had need to be in his profession, but not without kindly qualities. Mrs. Lake was an accomplished rider and a woman of equal courage and spirit. She afterward married William Hickock, known throughout the West as Wild Bill, and who not long since was treacherously shot at Deadwood. The young girl, who had this baptism of blood in her profession, was Emma Lake, now known as one of the most accomplished in the manege of the equestriennes of the arena. Mrs. Lake offered a large reward for the capture of the murderer, which was also supplemented by small amounts by the state and county. Killian remained the "bush" for several months, fed and sheltered by his kindred and friends, and when the excitement and indignation had subsided, was delivered up by his friends, who claimed and received a portion of the reward, which it was supposed was used in the payment of his legal expenses. He was admitted to bail on an indictment for murder in the second degree, provocation having been claimed, as he shot Lake because the latter had ordered him out in consequence of a refusal to supply himself with a ticket for the second part of the performance. The case dragged along in the courts on motions for changes of venue and various delays, and came to an impotent conclusion, Killian being as unrestrained and dangerous as ever, and on one occasion, while he was still under indictment, visiting the circus, which was continued for some time by the widow of his victim.

The second notable exploit to enhance the reputation of the family was performed by the third son, Jasper Killian. It was a more cowardly and mercenary murder, and ultimately fatal to the assassin. One cold, February day a farmer came riding into Neosho, having in his hand a black velvet cap, which he had picked up by the ashes of a camp fire near the creek. It was recognized as being like one worn by a young man named Frank Wright, of rather reckless and dissolute character, who made his living by smuggling whisky into the adjoining Indian nation. He had been about town the day previous, had bought a barrel of whisky, and in the evening had started out with it in a team belonging to and in company with Jasper Killian. Suspicion of foul play was aroused, and parties rode out to the dead camp fire. There was some stains of blood on the frozen ground, but not more than might have accompanied the cooking of fresh meat. A close search, however, resulted in the finding of a piece of bone, which a doctor declared to have belonged to a skull of a man. With all the promptness of the Southwest parties were organized for pursuit, and men, "good with their hand," departed in the welcome excitement of a man-hunt. It was supposed that the murderer would have made his way into the Indian Territory, the ready refuge of the villains and fugitives of the border, but this proved to be an error, and was the occasion of several days respite for the assassin. Returning disappointed, the road was taken to the home of the Killians, near Granby, then only inhabited by the old man and old woman and the youngest son, a half-imbicile boy. The wagon was found bearing marks of blood partially washed out, and it was ascertained that the day previous Jasper had been endeavoring to sell a watch like Wright's in Granby. No signs were found of the murderer or the body about the house. The track of the wagon was followed back to the mouth of a deserted shaft, also solitary on the priarie, and it was determined to search this. It was a wild scene as we rode up. The sky was dull and leaden, and the cold wind that swept across the barren prairie, covered with a thin crust of snow like the frosting of a cake, was penetratingly damp and chill. A savage crowd was grouped about. They had built a fire of boughs that smoked and steamed rather than gave warmth, and physical discomfort added to the vindictiveness of ill-temper. They has brought out the old man and exhausted threats in the endeavor to make him reveal the whereabouts of his son, of which he was undoubtedly ignorant. There he stood by the fire, dwarfish, ignorant, and degraded, in ragged and grimy garments, an old slouch hat pulled down over his uneasy, ferret eyes, nervously chewing tobacco, but otherwise apparently impassive to any feeling or fear. He never once looked toward the shaft, on whose mound men were at work with ropes and grapling irons. Several boughs of trees were drawn up, and then there was a cry, "He's got him!" A vigorous young man, who had been handling the irons, was drawn up with his face pale and his hands, and garments stained and wet and then a chill—

"Colder than the rude and ruffian air"—

stirred through the crowd as slowly appeared a naked corpse, with the hook caught at the knee, and dripping and muddy from its foul sepulchre. There was a gaping, purple wound in the forehead, where an axe had done its work, and it was apparent that the murderer had brained his victim at the campfire, stripped the body and placed it in a wagon, and driven to the mouth of the shaft and cast it in. It was a dangerous sort of crowd when the body was drawn up, and for a moment or two it was a question whether the old man would not have his firmness or knowledge tried by the question of a rope. But he was obviously ignorant, and finally the crowd trooped off to town, leaving him to make his way home. Parties were organized for the pursuit, and the country was hunted over in every direction for a circuit of more than a hundred miles. Two of the most detemined struck the trail of the murderer, and followed it to the town of Marsfield, 160 miles. They found that a man resembling Killian had purchased cartridges for his pistol, and traced him to the cabin of a pariah woman, such as infest occasionally the hamlets of the West and South. Just at dusk they burst in the door and found him sitting by the smouldering fire with his head in the lap of his Delilah. He sprang up, and had his pistol half drawn when a bullet crashed into his brain.

The events by which the other two sons vindicated the fame of the family may be told more briefly. Ben's exploit was almost an exact imitation of that of his eldest brother. He got into a dispute with a negro at a circus in Granby, and there was a prompt appeal to pistols. Neither, unfortunately, was killed, but the bullet struck one of the innocent spectators, a respectable storekeeper, who tumbled from his seat, a victim to the danger of attending a circus in Granby, almost as perilous as witnessing a battle. It was evident from the position of the combatants, the bullet must have come from Ben Killian's pistol, but he also escaped the penalty of the law by the tough swearing of his friends. Ben was lame, but from the number of his fights and shooting affrays was considered the most dangerous of the family. The fourth son, Tom, who was not full witted and not of age when he committed his murder, did so with the avowed purpose of imitating his brothers in killing his man. He procured a pistol and went to the cabin of a neighboring farmer who lived alone. He found him sitting on the stoop reading the county newspaper. He walked up to him, deliberately produced his pistol and shot him through the head. After taking his watch and ransacking the house he went as deliberately home again. There was no difficulty in discovering the murderer, and this time justice was strong enough to secure a verdict of imprisonment for life, and a short time ago the last of the Killian family was consigned to the Missouri penitentiary.

The story is a painful one, and in no degree above the level of a record of degrading and brutal ferocity, but it is not exceptional in its type, although extraordinary, and the observer who studies the results of the war should not omit the examples of this sort of recklessness and savagery among a rude and primitave people which were engendered by it. The case of the Killian family might very likely be more than paralleled in the border states, but it is the only one I know in which every male member of a family was a murderer, and as such it has been set down in an actual record of facts.

Amusement Notes.

Interesting Items About the Players.

Sneltaker's troupe is in Baltimore.

The Rankins will have a new play next season.

Tony Denier is already advertising for talent for next season.

The Harrisons jump from here to Pittsburgh.

Robert McWade is in Portland, Oregon.

The Harrisons will take "Photos" to San Francisco, where they are great favorites.

"Uncle" Bob Hooley, of Chicago, has an interest in the Big Four minstrels now in California.

In Knoxville, Tenn., the sale of seats to Tony Denier's pantomime was the largest ever known there.

Johnny Clark, the prize fighter, is dancing in variety theatres and is said to be a big card.

Fanny Delano is resting, as her three months old child requires all of her attention.

Frank McNish, the Leland sisters and Lester & Allen will travel with Tony Pastor's summer troupe.

Tommy Mack will have a big house and Le Fatten is giving a good show. He will sing several entirely new songs.

W. B. Curtis, now a well-known actor, who is traveling in the "Samuel of Posen" company, was once once a call boy at McVicker's theatre, Chicago.

M. B. Leavitt denies that his burlesque troupe has disbanded. So much the worse for the country through which it travels.

Miss Minnie Palmer has engaged John R. Rogers to act as her manager for five years. He will organize a strong company and they will visit England.

John E. Owens, who has been in California for some time, will return East shortly and will produce "That Man from Cattaraugus."

W. J. Chapelle, a well known agent, now with Gilmore & Benton, goes in advance of Shelby, Pullman & Hamilton's circus.

Charles H. King, the banjoist, who has often been here, had his shoulder broken at the burning of the Bijou theatre in Fort Wayne, Ind.

The "Little Four," who were advertised by Harry Miner, were not seen on Tuesday night. Was the house too little?

Augusta Oxley, the juggler, and Little All Right, both of whom were here with Sneltaker, will travel with the Barnum London circus.

Mr. J. S. Clarke's reappearance as *Doc for Douglass* and *Toodles*, two very different roles, at the Walnut, Philadelphia, in which he is without a rival, will be the dramatic event of next week.

Recently Barlow, Wilson, Primrose & West's minstrels performed in Salem, Mass. The house comfortably held 1100 people, but they crowded in 1800 and the police then compelled them to stop selling tickets.

Smith & Mestayer, managers of The Tourists, will put a troupe on the road headed by Emerson Clark and the Daly Brothers. They will produce Mestayer's play entitled "Pour Pendre Conge; or, Seeing Switzerland."

Baird's Minstrels did well in Boston last week, although Haverly's "mokes" were in the city also. They have Billy McCallister, R. G. Allen, Ripley & Reed and several other well known people.

Tony Pastor is playing "The Pirates of Penn Yann." The police are represented by the following well known comedians: Ferguson, Mack, Reynolds and Dan Collyer.

It is said that J. W. Collier, of the Banker's Daughter company, recently had a quarrel with Lizzie Hudson, an actress in his company, at Richmond. He struck her a blow in the face and she left the troupe.

Haverly's Fifth Avenue theatre, New York, is nightly filled to overflowing, and "Olivette" has become the pronounced sensation of the day. Miss Catharine Lewis has added to her laurels in the piece.

Louis James, now with Lawrence Barret, and J. N. Gotthold, of "The Galley Slave" combination, are spoken of as likely to head a company to star in a new play by Bartley Campbell, to be produced next season.

Miss Ella Mayo, the young vocalist, who died at her home in New York last week, was a great favorite in the profession. She was soon to have been married to Tony Hart, of Harrigan & Hart. She was but 19 years of age.

Miss Rosewald, of the Abbott troupe, is to sing the soprano solos in Handel's "L'Allegro," which is to be brought out by Dr. Damrosch's choral society in New York this month. This beautiful work is scarcely known in America.

Ward & Webb's minstrels were in Reading on Tuesday night. The troupe includes George H. Edwards, Pettit & White and others. [One of the team of Pettit & White was reported dead over a year ago, but the manager of this troupe probably never heard of it.]

One day last week Buffalo Bill was invited to an entertainment given in his honor by the directors of the New York Catholic protectory. A large number of guests were present who partook of a substantial dinner. Before his departure Buffalo Bill presented the institution with $200.

Mr. John T. Raymond has brought out at the Park Theatre, in New York, a new play, written for him by Mr. Gunter. It is called "Fresh the American," and is described as a fantastic comedy. It appears to be altogether nonsensical and boisterously funny, and if not too thin may make a temporary success.

Frank Murtha, manager of the Windsor theatre, New York, engaged an Italian and a monkey for the court scene, in "Under the Gas Light." He contracted to pay the Italian twenty five cents a night, and to give the monkey a pint of beer. One night the monkey revolted, and would not go on until they gave him his beer in a tomato can.

Thomas W. Keene was a member of the wonderful stock company at the California in 1877. No less than seven persons who were members of that company are now stars. They are John McCollough, Thos. W. Keene, C. B. Bishop, Wm. Mestayer, Alice Harrison, Louis Harrison and Ellie Wilton. In such a school talent was an essential before a pupil could stand well up in the class.

Fanny Davenport having shelved "An American Girl," has bequeathed the grand wardrobe used for Anna Dickinson's latest failure, to her new role of *Camille* and *Mabel Renfrew* in "Pique." In the "Lady of Lyons," the lovely Davenport dresses in the characteristic costumes of the *directoire*, of which the St. Louis press speak in the highest terms. Miss Davenport has grown so stout that instead of her *Camille* dying with consumption malicious persons say she dies of dropsy.

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