

ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

TIMES WHEN VERRILLAS MADE LIFE UNPLEASANT ON STEAMERS.

Confederate Partisans Fishing for Federal Gudgeons—Steamboat Passengers Under Fire—How the Robbery of a Widow Was Perpetrated.

One of the amusements of the period was to take a run on a steamer up to Cairo. It was generally an exciting amusement. The boats were haunted by guerrillas, who sometimes carried with them a six pound gun, and who quite often made life on the steamer unpleasant. They were skillful fishermen, and they employed the most tempting bait. One of the forms of bait used was cotton. A boat pushing along the stream would spy a half dozen or a dozen bales of cotton piled on the bank, and would at once steer for it with a view of buying it if there was an owner, or cribbing or "confiscating" it if nobody was in the vicinity. The steamer would run alongside, throw out the gangplank, and get ready to tie up to some tree, when there would suddenly be heard shrill yells, a volley of musketry would follow, and a whooping crowd of butternuts would board the boat, "go through" the safe and the passengers, take everything valuable and portable, and then decamp.

Many a Yankee gudgeon bit at this cotton bait, and was hooked beyond rescue. In time the cotton hunter grew more cautious. He edged very gingerly toward the tempting display; he came up, just touching the nose of the boat to the landing without throwing out the gangplank, so as to be ready to sheer off at the slightest sign of danger. One has often seen a wary trout thus approach a tempting worm ready to turn tail and scud away in case of anything suspicious or the sign of a hook in the appetizing appearance. There were boats in the river where the guerrillas could lie concealed until the boat was within close gunshot, and were able to send in a half dozen volleys before the imperiled craft could get out of range. One day, between Memphis and Cairo, the Hillman was proceeding leisurely up the river without any suspicion of danger. A passenger was seated in the barber's chair being shaved, when a canon suddenly opened on the boat. The first ball killed the barber and passed on without in the least interfering with the customer.

PASSENGERS UNDER FIRE.

On such occasions there was little to be obtained in the shape of provision for safety. Everything about a steamer was so frail that in place of being a protection the upper structure really added to the danger from the flying splinters. About the only thing available was to lie flat on the floor with the head or feet toward the direction of fire so as to expose the smallest possible portion of the form to the missiles of the guns. While lying there the roar of the artillery, the yells of the Confederates, the crash of the shot through the woodwork, the noise of tearing timber, the momentary expectation of being skewered by a long splinter or being bored through longitudinally with a round shot, were anything but pleasant. It seemed to the passenger hugging the floor and trying to make himself into a compass not larger than a knitting needle that the boat was an eternity in getting away from the locality. It was a time when the swiftest boat on the river apparently made no better time than that of the slowest of snails.

Boats plying on the river were subject to visitation at every wood yard. The officers expected these visits and prepared for them. They would leave a few hundred dollars in the safe for show, and the remainder of the money they would hide in the mattresses. When boarded by guerrillas they would open the safe after a little persuasion, and the robbers would take the cash contents, satisfied that they had secured all the available plunder. Many of the boats were captained by Confederates, a fact which was known to the bushwhackers, with the result that such boats were not disturbed or were occasionally halted and searched as a matter of show for the benefit of the galleries.

I recall one instance in which the robbery was on the other side. The Platte Valley was conveying a company of new troops down the river when, at a point between Cairo and Memphis, the boat made a landing to get some wood. There lived in a little log house at the point a widow with four sons all of whom were in the Union army, with the entire sympathy of the mother. The valorous recruits swarmed ashore and "went through" the premises of the old lady in a brief time. Every chicken, egg, bit of meat, everything edible, including pigs and calves, and anything and everything in the house which could be eaten or sent home as a trophy, was gobbled up and carried on the boat.

A WEAK COMMANDER.

The captain of the company tried his best to restrain the men, but, while well intentioned, he was weak. He was from the same locality as his men, and many of them called him by his first name instead of his title, and apparently had no respect for him. The officers of the boat offered such objections as they dared, and the old lady stormed, wept, avowed her Union sentiments, and asserted that this fact and that she had four sons in the Union army should protect her from ruin by the northern men. It was all useless. The men laughed at her, and scoffed at the claim that she was a Union woman.

The boat was about to cast off the lines, and the old lady was reluctantly being forced down the gangplank, when suddenly a clear voice was heard above the clamor: "Captain, form your men in line!" The voice was clear, penetrating, and filled with imperative suggestions. There was a quick cessation of the uproar. Everybody turned to look on the speaker. He was a slender man in citizen's clothing, a stranger whom nobody knew, of commanding appearance, and a stern face, whose firm lips and deep, flashing eyes showed intense earnestness.

"Fall in, men!" came from the captain after he had glanced at the stranger. The men did so at once, and then all looked at the stern civilian. "Consider your company under arrest. Let every article taken from that woman be returned without an instant's delay!" The soldiers hesitated a single moment. "Quick march, then, now!" rang out from the civilian, with an impatient stamp of the foot, as he noticed the hesitation. At once the men moved out, and ashore, deposited their plunder, and snaked back sheepishly on the boat.

"Who are you?" asked the captain, as the boat backed away from the landing. "I am Gen. Schuyler Hamilton," was the answer, "and your command shall remain under arrest till they are given an officer who can control them!"—Polito in Chicago Times.

Toys for the London Poor. London Truth undertook the distribution of 14,150 toys, sent by many people, among the hospital, workhouses and orphanages in the city. When the notion was first put in practice, six years ago, about 1,000 toys were received and distributed. The number has since grown yearly.—Boston Transcript.

IN WITCHING TIME.

In witching time when, sparkling higher, The last log crumpled in the fire, And through the midnight's creeping cold The shadows lengthen, fold by fold, And in the settle nod the sire, And the dame droops and maids draw nigher Each to the man of her desire, (So to the husband's neck the hold In witching time!)

Even as this hour, when revels tire, And the spent midnight's mood require Something to stir the sense or hold The soul in awe, these tales were told— Told, while the flickering flames expire, In witching time! —Austin Dobson.

ITALIANS AS RAILROAD BUILDERS.

Supplanting Irishmen on Great Contracts—Talk With a Contractor. Heman Clark, who is associated with John O'Brien in building a large part of the new aqueduct, is one of the most extensive railroad contractors in the United States. He employs men by the thousand all over the country and has had a long experience with laborers of all nationalities. His attention was called to the statement recently published that the Italians were rapidly supplanting the Irish in all kinds of contract work in New England. "It is not only true in regard to New England, but of all parts of the country," he said. "On all the big railroad jobs throughout the west you will find Italians in droves. In fact, I think I might safely say that at present fully 30 per cent. of the hands employed on this kind of work are Italians. On some roads they are employed almost exclusively."

"To be sure, they are not nearly as good workmen as the Irish, but they can be hired at cheaper rates—so much cheaper, indeed, as to more than make up the lack in ability. They are as a rule quiet and industrious. They live cheaply and save almost all they earn. Their one aim is to make what they consider a fortune—\$500 to \$1,000—and go back to Italy, where they can live at ease for the rest of their lives on this amount. They never think of settling here, being much like the Chinese in this respect. They are superior to the Celts, however, as workmen. The Chinese are of little use for outdoor work. On one job we had on the Pacific coast there were 5,000 of them employed. I discharged every one of them. It didn't pay them around at any wages; at least I thought so. An Irishman looks down on an Italian. He considers him far beneath him, and where the modern Romans are employed in large numbers you'll see the Irish superintending them as section bosses."

"Do you consider the Irishman the most efficient railroad laborer?" "The Irish and the Scandinavians are the best. We employ a great many of the latter. They are good hands and like the Irish are ambitious, only their ambition takes another form. They are always on the lookout for a place to settle down and buy a little farm. When they have earned enough to do this they go back to the spot and become in time good citizens. The Italian simply works for good citizens. He carries around with him or else banks it here in New York. They come to this country in droves—brought over of course by the padrones who bear almost the same relation to them that the Six Companies did to the Chinese. They are increasing every year. Except in the east they have not yet become a factor in politics. They are averse to strikes and hence employers find them useful as a sort of balance wheel in the troubles that are constantly arising between themselves and their help. For this reason their emigration is encouraged."—New York Tribune.

Intelligence of Cats.

"Talk about dogs," said the proprietor of a saloon, the other day, "when you find a dog that has the intelligence of that cat just let me know," pointing to a huge yellow cat that lay contentedly asleep near the stove. "I can talk to that cat just the same as I would to a human being, and she understands me. She will fetch and carry just like a dog, and in sweeping up at night, if I leave anything on the floor she will find it and bring it to me. I could teach her anything. My mother, up stairs, suffers with rheumatism, and she uses that cat instead of a hot bottle to keep her feet warm. Any time, night or day, she will hop up on the bed when called and stretch out her paw on mother's feet and stay there until told to go down. She will sleep there all night without moving."

Just then something as black as midnight flashed upon the counter, and with a magnificent bound sprang four feet vertically upward to the top of a cooler near.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the reporter, "what's that?" "That's Satan," exclaimed the proprietor quietly. "Ain't he a jumper! That cat can spring around among those bottles recklessly, and I never knew him to break one. But here's something curious for you." He opened a door and called in a purring voice, "Kitty, kitty, kitty." There was a miaow outside, and then a cat as white as snow came creeping into the room, and then another of the same color.

"Ain't they beauties!" said the owner, admiringly. "Look here! Did you ever see so such eyes?" placing one on the table. Curiously enough, one eye of each cat was a glowing amber in color and the other a beautiful blue.

"They have kittens outside, too, and they have the same eyes as the father and mother. I don't know what kind of cats they are. An old sea captain gave them to me. What do you think an old maid would give for those cats?"

"Go out," he continued to the cats, and the beautiful creatures crept meekly on.

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New Statue of Queen Anne. During the past week or two there has been an unique sight to be seen in front of St. Paul's cathedral. The sightseer on the bus top has had the extraordinary spectacle presented to him of a person, standing on a pedestal that was fenced in, struggling to get free from a loose wrapper that completely enveloped the person, head and all. This was, in fact, the new statue of Queen Anne, which had not then been unveiled. The winds fattered the covering to and fro and gave the odd appearance to the statue of struggling to get free. Queen Anne seemed to have become a modern Galatea. The ghastly part of the affair, however, was that a person to be hanged, the covering over the head tied tightly at the throat, the ropes around the lower part of the statue, the elevated position—the whole effect, in fact, bore a striking likeness to the chief figure at an execution. It is a relief that the late storm and the lord mayor removed the covering, allowing the great queen to stand out as the sculptor intended she should.—Lusk Sharp's London Letter.

A visit to the sewers of Paris was a feature of a press festival recently held in that city. Five hundred persons availed themselves of the singular programme.

COURTSHIPS OF BIRDS.

NATURALIST HOLDER'S VERY INTERESTING COLLECTION OF FACTS.

The Sandhill Crane's Bird Circus—Frolics of Feathered Dancers—The Humming Bird's Fight for a Wife—Other Curious Courtships.

In some of the African tribes when marriage is proposed by the dusky lover the coy maiden puts him through a course of physical sports as the protector and supporter of a family. He appears before her and her friends and goes through a series of ground and lofty tumbling that would do credit to a professional athlete—leaps into the air, strikes along to show his walking powers, and throws his limbs this way and that to show the development of muscles; finally, if he makes a good exhibition, he is accepted, and after a while the woman does all the hard work, the groom having demonstrated, however, that he can do it if pushed to the wall.

Among the cranes, especially the sandhill cranes, almost the same thing can be seen in the mating season. Usually one can approach a flock at this time they will be occupied by a most remarkable sight—a veritable bird circus. A relative of mine had a large marsh upon his estate, and here the great birds made their summer home; building their curious nests there and rearing their young. The marsh was surrounded by high grass, and it was his practice to creep through and watch the birds unmolested. The antics they went through it would be impossible to describe—now they would caper along in pairs, stepping daintily with the winning gait of the most exquisite dancers, and now they would approach a flock at this time they will be occupied by a most remarkable sight—a veritable bird circus. A relative of mine had a large marsh upon his estate, and here the great birds made their summer home; building their curious nests there and rearing their young. 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