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1 YEAR IN ADVANCE		$1 00
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THE COUNTRY DOLLAR.

A WEEKLY PAPER: DEVOTED TO LITERATURE, AGRICULTURE, MORALITY, AND FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE.

Volume I. Clearfield, Pa., December 14, 1849. Number 25.

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JOHN HILL alias NIXON CURRY;
Or the Victim of Circumstances.

A TRUE SKETCH OF LIFE IN ARKANSAS.

"Among the truest friends of the people, of all in the present Convention, may be named John Hill, of St. Francis. His energy, eloquence, and courage, fully entitle him to the proud place he holds, and as we trust, will retain—that of the leader of the Arkansas Democracy."—*Little Rock Gazette, in the days of the Convention.*

"BLOODY AFFRAY.—A desperate rencontre occurred last week in St. Francis. Two distinguished citizens were killed, and three others dangerously wounded.—The difficulty resulted from an attempt to arrest John Hill, a member of the last legislature, & formerly of the State Convention, who, it is alleged, is the notorious robber, Nixon Curry, that committed such atrocities."—*Little Rock Gazette of* 1839.

We have given the previous extracts from the oldest and most respectable journal of Arkansas, in order to satisfy every reader that the following narrative, extraordinary as some of its incidents may appear, is no tissue of fiction. Indeed while relating genuine events, and painting true scenes, we have been especially careful to avoid all vivid colors. Should this short sketch, by any chance reach the forests of Arkansas, the people there will deem its description tame in comparison with the deeds of the man. The writer, who has resided long on the frontier, has no use for fancy in portraying its exciting life. Simple memory will serve him well.

About fifty years ago there lived in Iredell county, North Carolina, a Presbyterian preacher, by the name of Curry.—He was a man in easy circumstances, of irreproachable character, and having a large family of promising sons and daughters. Among these, the favorite was Nixon, distinguished when a boy for his fearless courage and the tenderness of his heart alike. He seems, from several anecdotes of his early days, to have been a child of impulse and intense earnestness and passion. When only six years of age he had a combat at school with a bully of the playground, nearly twice his own weight, and after suffering dreadfully, at last achieved the victory, due almost to the sheer power of his endurance.

From the time he was six years old, that is to say, from the first session he attended in the country school house, had Nixon Curry been in love. His idol was a little girl of the same age, and under the tuition of the same master. The attachment appears to have been mutual from the commencement. They stood up in one class, and always managed to stand together, during the hours of recess when the other *juveniles* were amusing themselves with boisterous sports, the precocious lovers would wander amidst leafy groves, or by the mossy margins of silver rills. For ever to eternity, and wherever, the soft spell of first love, it brings with it the bright spirit of poetry, scattering thick-starred dreams and divine visions of beauty over all things. Even then they exchanged pledges and discoursed in sweet sinless whispers of their future bridal.

And thus they grew up into one delicious identity of fancy and of feeling.—Their bias for each other's society, while children, caused no particular remark.—Such attachments are common between the youth of opposite sexes in the country, and, as usual, terminate abruptly, on arrival at mature years. Far different, however, was the case with Nixon Curry and Lucy Gordon. Their passion became so evident at fifteen, that all farther intercourse was forbidden by her parents—among the wealthiest aristocracy of Carolina. Then followed stolen meetings by star-light, firmer vows and wilder love, which always increases in proportion to its crosses, and like the tree of Lebanon, sends down its deepest roots into the heart, the more it is shaken by storms.

Finally, at seventeen, when Lucy's relatives were endeavoring to force her into the arms of another, she fled with the lover of her childhood. They were pursued—overtaken; and Nixon Curry shot his rival and one of the proud Gordon's dead on the spot and found an asylum in the Allegheny Mountains, near the sources of the Catawba. Here, under the plea of necessity, he embraced the profession of a robber, and rendered his name famous by the number and astonishing boldness of his exploits. We may record it, not as a matter of merit, perhaps, but for the sake of historical truth—that the youthful bandit never was known to perpetrate murder for the purpose of plunder, though he did several to avoid arrest. At length the rumor of his felonies ceased suddenly, and notwithstanding a reward of five thousand dollars was offered for his apprehension by the Governor of the State, he was heard of no more in North Carolina.

At the first settlement of the fertile delta, bordering on the St. Francis, there came an emigrant, who called himself John Hill, and who soon succeeded in acquiring universal popularity. Although of moderate means, he was sober, industrious, generous and hospitable; and such continued to be his character, in the new country of his adoption, for twelve successive years. During all that period he never had a personal difficulty or quarrel with any human being; and yet every body was satisfied that such a peaceful life—singular for that latitude, was not owing to a want of courage, or deficiency in power to perform good services, in any sort of battle-field; for of all bear hunters that ever pierced the jungles of cane in "the great swamp," or descended by torch-light into the dark caves of the Ozark Mountains, he was celebrated as the most fearless.

He was repeatedly elected to the Territorial Legislature, where he distinguished himself by a strong, impassioned eloquence, as a chief leader in the Democratic ranks. He was next, as we have already seen, a member of the Convention that formed the State constitution; and was elected again the ensuing year to represent his county in the Senate of Arkansas.

At this period commenced his second series of misfortunes. Hill's nearest neighbors were the Strongs—four brothers of considerable wealth, more ambition, and if we may borrow the phrase of the country, "famous fighters." Notwithstanding their character so dissimilar from that of the pacific "bear hunter," a close and cordial intimacy grew up between them; and Hill, in an unguarded moment, made the eldest brother, George, a confidant as to the secrets of his previous history. It happened that this same George conceived a violent desire for political distinction, and requested Hill to resign his seat in the Senate in the illiberal friend's favor. Hill refused and the Strongs conspired for a terrible revenge. Writing back to Carolina, they procured a copy of the reward offered for the arrest of Nixon Curry, the far-famed robber; and then collecting a party of a dozen desperate men, they attempted to capture Hill in his own house. The latter had always gone armed with his enormous double-barrel shot gun, two long rifle pistols, and a knife so heavy that few other hands besides his own could wield it. The assault of the Strongs proved horrible to themselves. Hill killed two of the brothers, and dangerously wounded five of their friends, escaping unhurt himself, although more than twenty rounds of ball and buck-shot were aimed at his breast.

The excitement resulting from the affair was boundless. A requisition came on from the executive of Carolina, demanding the surrender of Nixon Curry. The governor of Arkansas published an additional reward for the arrest of John Hill, and thus betwixt the two fires, the victim's chance seemed perfectly hopeless.

Hill's conduct in the crisis was prompt and fearless as ever. Packing up hastily, he set out with his wife and children, in a common moving wagon, for Upper Arkansas, where he knew of a band of desperadoes that he believed would protect him. He was overhauled at Conway Court House by two hundred men in pursuit, all thoroughly armed, and some of them renowned "fighters." Hill saw their approach on the distant prairie, and with his dreadful double-barrel—that sure death-dealer to either man or beast, within the range of two hundred yards—instantly marched to meet his foes. This incredible bravery, joined to the fear before inspired by his desperation, affected the advancing troops with such unaccountable panic that the whole two hundred sought safety in a disgracefully rapid flight.

Several other attempts were made to capture the dangerous outlaw, all alike ending either in ludicrous or bloody failures. In the meantime Hill's character and conduct underwent a complete change. Forced to be always on the lookout, and therefore unable to follow any study business in order to support his family, he resorted to the Gaming-table. He learned also to indulge in the fiery stimulus of ardent drink, and his disposition, necessarily soured by recent events, became quarrelsome in the extreme; perhaps there never was a man, excepting only that Napoleon of duellists, James Bowie, who was so heartily dreaded. I have myself seen persons of undoubted courage turn pale merely at the appearance of Hill's gigantic form, broadly belted and bristling with pistols. He was waylaid and shot at a number of times, yet still escaped without a scar.—But this could be considered no wonder, for even brave men's hands shook when they saw him, and shaking hands generally make very poor shots.

During the September term, 1843, of the Circuit Court for Pope county, in which Hill resided, he got out of bed one morning uncommonly gloomy, and while at the breakfast table, suddenly burst into tears.

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked Lucy—that beautiful Lucy, who had formerly left her wealthy home in Carolina for the robber and the robber's cave.

"I have had a dreadful dream," answered the husband, shuddering at the recollection; "I saw George Strong in my sleep, and he kissed me with his pale lips, that burned like fire and smelled of sulphur. I am sure I shall die before sunset."

"Then do not go to court, to-day," said the wife, in accents of earnest entreaty.

"But I will," replied the husband firmly. "When a man's time is come, he cannot, he cannot hide from death; beside, it would be the act of a coward to do so, if one possess the power." Then addressing his son, a fine intelligent boy of thirteen, he continued, "Bill, you see my gun," pointing his finger as he spoke to the great double barrel hanging on buck horns over the door; "practice with that every morning, and the day you are sixteen, shoot the loads of both barrels into the man who will this day kill your father."

"Yonder comes Moses Howard; he will protect you Pa," remarked Mary, Hill's eldest daughter, a lovely girl of fifteen, who was to be married the next day to the youth then approaching.

Hill and Howard departed; Lucy with tears, and Mary blushing, both calling out as they left the gate, "Take good care of him, Mose, and be sure and bring him back to-night."

"Never fear," answered the youth, with a laugh; "Hill will never die till I kill him."

"Then he will live forever," retorted Mary, laughing also.

As soon as the friends reached the village Hill began to drink deeply, & manifested more than ordinary anxiety for a combat, insulting everybody that crossed his path; and all the youth's entreaties failed to pacify him. At last, the desperado swore that he would clear the court house; and immediately entering with a furious countenance, and a threat as to his purpose—judge, lawyers, jury and spectators made a general rush for the door.—One old drunken man alone did not run as fast as Hill wished, and he sprang on the imbecile wretch and commenced beating him unmercifully.

Howard then caught hold of his future father-in-law, (alas! who was never to be!) and attempted to pull him away.

With eyes red, and glaring like a mad dog, Hill instantly turned upon his friend, and with a single blow of his fist felled him to the floor, then following up the violent act, he leaped on the youth, and began a most ferocious battery. In vain Howard endeavored to escape, crying out in tones of beseeching horror, "For God's sake, cease! Hill, don't you know me? Your friend Mose! Remember Mary!" Hill's anger only increased, till finally, he threw his hand to his belt, and clutched a pistol. And then Howard's blood also boiled, and he resolved to fight for his life. He was of as powerful frame as the other—the only person in all Arkansas to be compared with the desperado in physical strength.

Howard grasped the barrel of the pistol as Hill cocked it, and the weapon exploded in their hands without injury. Once more they clenched, and the most dreadful struggle ensued ever witnessed in the west. The advantage shifted from one side to the other for the space of five minutes, till both were bathed in streams of their own blood. Even the bystanders, looked on through the windows of the low court house, with wonder and awe. At length, while writhing and twisting like two raging serpents, the handle of Hill's huge bowie knife, unthought of previously, protruded from beneath his hunting shirt. Both saw it at the same time, and both attempted to grasp it. Howard succeeded; quick as lightning he drew the keen blade from its scabbard, and sheathed it up to the hilt in the bosom of his friend and his Mary's father.

"The dream is fulfilled," exclaimed Hill, with a smile of strange sweetness, that remained on his features even after he was a corpse. He then sank down, & expired without a groan.

Howard gazed on him there as he lay, with that singular smile on his face, and his glazed eyes open. And then, awaking with a start, as if from some horrible vision of the night, the poor, unhappy youth, fell headlong on the body of his friend, crying in tones that melted many a hardened spectator into tears, "Great God! what have I done." He kissed the clammy lips of the dead; wet his cheeks with a rain of unavailing sorrow; essayed to staunch the bloody wound with his handkerchief; and then, apparently satisfied that all was over, sprang upon his feet, with a shout, or more properly a scream—"Farewell, Mary, your father is gone, and I'm going with him;" and turning the point of the gory knife towards his own breast, would have plunged it into his own heart, had he not been prevented by the bystanders, who now crowded into the room.

The same evening Mose Howard disappeared, and was heard of no more for nearly two years, when a horse-trader brought back word that he had seen him in San Antonio, Texas.

When the shocking news reached Hill's family, the beautiful Mary burst into a wild laugh. She is now in the Asylum for the Insane, at New Orleans.

Had we been inditing a tale of romance, we would have paused with the preceding page; but little truth compels us to record another fact equally characteristic, both as to the chief actors and the backwoods theatre of the main tragedy.

It will be remembered, that the fallen desperado had enjoined it on his son to slay the slayer of his father on the day he should arrive at sixteen. Without any charge, vengeance would have been considered by that boy as a sacred duty; for on the frontiers, the widows of the slain teach vengeance to their children and occasionally execute it themselves!

Accordingly, Bill Hill practised with his father's gun every day for two successive years, and this even before he had any rumor as to the place of Howard's refuge. He then learned that his foe was in Texas, and two months before he was sixteen he set out to hunt him up.

At the end of four months Bill Hill came back, and hanging up the double-barrel in its old buck horn rack, answered his mother's enquiring look,—"Mother, Mose is dead; I let him have both loabs. Though I cried before I *done* it, and afterwards too; he looked so miserable, pale and bony as a skeleton."

"Poor Mose!" said the mother weeping; "but it could not be helped. The son of such a brave man as Nixon Curry must never be called a coward, and besides it was your father's orders."

THE BOSTON TRAGEDY.

Additional Particulars and Disclosures in relation to the Disappearance of Dr. Parkman.

The Boston papers of Monday are filled with the details of the investigation into the circumstances attending the supposed murder of Dr. George Parkman, and which have led to the arrest of Professor Webster of Harvard University. It appears that in the early part of the month of November, Dr. Parkman called at Professor Webster's lecture room, in the Medical College in North Grove street, while the Professor was engaged in delivering a lecture before the students, and waited until the lecture was over, and the students had all left. He then asked Professor Webster for the money due him, and after some conversation, in which both parties were considerably excited, Professor Webster desired him to wait until the 23d of November, as all the tickets for the lectures, engaged by the students, had not been paid for, but would in all probability be by that time. Dr. Parkman, it is stated, left the building a good deal excited. On Thursday afternoon, November 22d, Dr. Parkman called at the residence of Professor Webster, in Cambridge, who being absent, he left word with his wife, that he wished to have her husband call at his (Dr. Parkman's) house the next morning. On Friday morning, Nov. 23d, the day after, about 9 o'clock, Professor Webster called at Dr. Parkman's house in Walnut street, the Dr. being out, he left word for him that he could pay him, if he would call at his room at the College soon after one o'clock. Dr. Parkman, Professor Webster states, called at the Medical College about half-past one o'clock, and was paid by him $483 64, which amount was to take up two notes and cancel a mortgage. Dr. Parkman gave up the notes, but had not the mortgage with him. He, however, said he would go and cancel it. This transaction, Dr. Webster says, took place at the counter in his lecture room, and that Dr. Parkman left the room thro' the door near the main entrance to the building.

Since half-past 1 o'clock on Friday the 23d, the time he was seen by a number of people to enter the College, nothing of a reliable nature has come to light as to his whereabouts. He was seen to enter the College, but no one has been found who saw him come out of out; and this fact produced an impression in the minds of a number—more strongly in that of Mr. Kingsley, Dr Parkman's agent—that he never did come out of it.

The College is built upon walls which rest upon piles, and the tide ebbs and flows through apertures underneath the basement floor, between the compartment formed by the walls. One of these compartments forms what is termed the vault underneath Prof. Webster's laboratory. There is a trap door to the compartment next to that used by Prof. Webster, situated some forty feet from the water closet. Littlefield descended through this trap-door on Friday, with a crow-bar, and knocked an aperture in the wall near the water closet, and discovered, about 4 o'clock that afternoon, portions of a human body, which had been washed by the sea. These portions were the pelvis, the right thigh and leg. Littlefield immediately proceeded to Dr. Bigelow's office, and acquainted him with the fact, as we understand, in the most excited manner, saying, "I have have found it!" and repeating these words so often that Dr. Bigelow took hold of him and told him to be quiet—that he acted like a crazy man.

Dr. Bigelow went to the City Marshal's office that afternoon, and informed Mr. Tukey of the discovery which had been made, who immediately, with some officers, proceeded to the college and found it was so. Mr. Tukey then gave directions for the arrest of Professor Webster, and officers Clapp, Starkweather and Spurr, proceeded to his residence in Cambridge in a carriage for that purpose. They arrived at the house about 9 o'clock, just as Prof. Webster was showing a visiter out. The officers met him at the gate, and told him that the college officers were met in consultation, on the subject of Dr. Parkman's disappearance, and had sent for him to attend it. He made no objection, and while on the way to Boston he conversed cheerfully and freely, and, referring to Dr. Parkman's having been at the college, and that he stopped at the doctor's house on Friday morning, and requested him to call at the college for his money between 1 and 2 o'clock, that day. The carriage was halted at the jail, and the party went into the office, and then, for the first time, Dr. Webster began to perceive that there was something strange in the proceedings of the officers, and asked what they had come to the jail for, when their destination was the college in Grove street, remarking also, that they had come out of the way. Clapp then said—"Dr. Webster, it is no use to disguise our purpose any further. You are under arrest, on suspicion that you know something about the death of Dr. Parkman, parts of whose body have been found under your laboratory. We shall look no more for the body." Upon hearing this accusation, Dr. Webster staggered backwards, as if struck to the heart, and uttered various exclamations about his family and children, and also saying —"The villian! I am ruined!" or "The villain! He has ruined me."—All who were present agree that he did not say he was "betrayed." One of the officers thinks, from some broken sentences that he caught, that the prisoner said something about some one having placed the limbs where they were found, for the purpose of obtaining the reward, and that the discovery of them there would involve the prisoners ruin.

His excitement was intense, and he exhibited symptoms of convulsions. Water was handed to him, but he could not reach it to his mouth, nor could he get any down when the glass was held to his lips.—When asked if he was willing to go to the medical buildings with them and see what they had found there, he expressed his perfect willingness to do so; but he was so weak and overpowered with his emotions, that he was unable to get up and walk, and had to be taken to the carriage by the officers of the jail. From the jail he was carried to the medical buildings.

Arrived there, and in his own room, the portions of the body that had been discovered were shown to him. On seeing them he instantly went into the most violent convulsions, and cried for water. Water was handed him, and at the first sight of it, he repulsed those who offered it with as much violence as would a person writhing in the deepest agonies of hydrophobia.—He seemed to be in a perfect tempest of internal torture. The sight of the water crazed him! He appeared wild, ghastly, filled with fear! He fairly writhed with torment! The scene was truely a terrific one to those who were compelled to behold it, and probably will never pass out of their memory. It was already eleven o'clock at night, & a supposed murderer had grown frantic on their showing him the mutilated corpse of his unhappy victim! It was a sight to curdle the coldest blood, and fill the stoutest man with terror!—Tragedies, with scenes like this in them, are often played, but rarely enacted!

In this state of convulsion and frenzy he continued for some time, and nothing could be drawn from him. He was carried back by the officers to the jail, and there confined.

After he had returned to jail the prisoner became somewhat more calm. He stated that no one had access to his apartments in the college but himself, and could not have such access but with the keys of those apartments in his possession, but also the key, a large one, of the water closet, under which the remains were found. This closet was within the laboratory, and not accessable from without that apartment; and the door was locked when the limbs were found below.

Saturday morning brought with it still farther discoveries. Officer Rice, in arranging things in the laboratory found, in a recess formed by the brick work of the furnace and chimney, a tea chest, apparently filled with specimens of minerals, but emitting a strange odor. He at once upset the chest, and found embedded in the bottom, embeded in hemlock bark, the left thigh and half roasted trunk of his body. The skin had been wholly burned or stripped off from the trunk. The thigh was only stained with the bark. All the parts found are such in size that they may very well have belonged to Dr. P.'s body. The missing portions, and supposed to have been burnt up, are the head, contents of the body, left leg and foot, arms and hands, and right foot.

Among the secondary facts, it may be stated that four bloody towels were found in the vault; a very large clasp knife, with hunting figures on the blade, was found with the trunk in the tea chest; some grapples, made of cod hooks, with lines and lead sinkers attached, were found in Dr. Webster's apparatus room. This room is in the rear of the lecture room, and connected with it by a door. On the inner side of the apperatus room is a large closet. Near the door of this closet, on the floor, commence scattered [illegible] of blood, which extend the w[illegible] the apperatus room, and every step of the stairs leading from the room down into the laboratory. Dr. Webster's official duties as a professor required of him no handling of bodies, nor was it allowable to have subjects in that part of the building. On Sunday, a pair of trousers, marked with Dr. Webster's name and with marks of blood upon them, were found in the large closet; also, under a settee in the room, a pair of slippers, marked with spots of blood; also a small saw, with a blood stain.

On Saturday afternoon, Col, Pratt, Coroner, summoned a jury of inquest, and at 4o'clock they proceeded to the college, examined the remains as they were laid out on a board, and the contents of the furnace and then passed them into the hands of Drs. Winslow Lewis, Martin Gay, and J. B. S. Thatcher, for such further examination as can be made of them.

The doctors mentioned entered upon the investigation on Sunday, and found fragments of calcined bones from each of the missing parts of the body. There was something like the appearance of a wide stab on the left side of the trunk; but it was not made absolutely clear whether the incision was made before or after death.

It is said that Dr. Parkman and Webster were classmates in college. For a quarter of a century or more, Dr. Webster has occupied a distinguished position in the scientific world, as professor of chemistry and minerology in Harvard University, of which the Medical College in Boston is a branch. Dr. Parkman was once an associate editor of the *Medical Journal*, published by Wells & Lilly. At the same time, Dr. Webster was an associate editor of a general scientific journal, published by Hilliard, Gray & Co.

Dr. Parkman was very wealthy, and been for many years largely engaged in real estate transactions, and in loaning money on mortgages. He occupied a high position, and by marriage is connected with the first families of Boston. He is brother to the Rev. Francis Parkman.—One of his sisters married the late Edward Tuckerman, Esq., and another his brother Joseph Tuckerman, the distinguished divine; a third sister is a wife of Robert Shaw, Esq., the eminent merchant.—Doctor Parkman lost his wife several years since He has two children—a son and daughter, and has left a large circle of highly respectable relatives and friends to mourn his meloncholy death. Dr. Webster has been more successful in acquiring fame as a scientific man than in making money, and was in debt to Dr. Parkman. Out of this relation sprung disputes between them.

Some of Dr. Parkman's friends, assuming that Dr. Webster had killed Dr. P. suppose that an angry altercation occurred at the interview on Friday, and that Dr. Parkman, who occasionally used very blunt language, said something which so exasperated Dr. Webster, that the latter suddenly dealt him a mortal blow with some implement at hand, and then, to conceal the rash and fatal deed, resorted to the means for disposing of the body which have been described above.

Dr. Webster has been, for upwards of twenty years, Professor of Chemistry at Cambridge. He has a wide circle of acquaintance, and has maintained throughout life an unblemished reputation. He is about 56 years of age, and has a wife and four children. He has paid a strict attention to the duties of his profession, and his conduct has been marked by uniform sobriety and steadiness. His disposition was frank and open, his manners lively and social he was esteemed by all who knew him as a good citizen, and a peaceable neighbor, and a kind and affectionate husband and father. In every moral and intelectual characteristic, he might be regarded as one who was placed beyond the suspicion of a tendency to the commission of crime.

The excitement created on Saturday morning did not last over night. The disclosures at the College formed the general subject of conversation yesterday, but there was not at any time—to our knowledge—either on Saturday, or yesterday, any indication of riot displayed. The largest collection of people at the College, at any one time, did not exceed 150 persons, and many of the visitors were most respectable citizens. The military received orders at an early hour on Saturday, to be in readiness, in their armories. This order was not confined to the Boston companies alone. Two companies of Infantry at Roxbury, received a similar order, and were "up in arms" all Saturday night.

We heard from Leverett street jail last evening. Dr. Webster had become more calm, but still manifested some excitement. He slept sound during Saturday night. An officer in his cell constantly.

From the Boston Evening Herald, Dec. 3.

FURTHER DETAILS.

The way in [illegible]ch Littlefield induced [illegible] commence a [illegible] year [illegible] relia[illegible]