

# FEUDALISM IN KENTUCKY

## MANY LIVES SACRIFICED IN A POLITICAL QUARREL.

### BAD BLOOD RESULTING FROM THE ELECTION OF A REPUBLICAN SHERIFF—A WOMAN'S THIRST FOR VENGEANCE.

MOREHEAD, Rowan County, Ky., July 7.

—In the first week of August last began in this county perhaps the bloodiest, longest, and bitterest feud which has ever marked the criminal history of Kentucky. Thus far nearly a dozen lives have been taken and, with the exception of one male and one female, two families have been exterminated.

Bad blood, so to speak, has existed among the members of several clans of Rowan County for several years past, but until August, 1884, it was confidently believed an outbreak would never again occur. About this time the regular election for Sheriff occurred, and, to the surprise of those most dearly and nearly interested, the fact was apparent toward the close of the day that the Republican nominee would defeat his opponent, the nominee of the Democracy. At Farmer's Station, where those most concerned were congregated, an unusual enthusiasm led to a most extraordinary consumption of whisky, "moonshine" as well as "regular." The votes seemed all to have been cast, and but little doubt could be entertained of the election of Cook Humphreys, Republican nominee, a fact that led to a trivial dispute and the instant collection of partisans representing both factions. The representatives of the two factions were not drawn in line against each other, but mingled freely together. Suddenly, after the loudest of talking and amid more or less pushing and crowding, a pistol shot was heard, and one Sol Bradley, a Democrat, fell mortally wounded. The Democrats declared that John Martin, a Republican and friend to the Republican candidate for Sheriff, had killed him, while the Republicans affirmed most positively that a shot intended to murder one of their number had hit Bradley by mistake. The result of this, the beginning of all subsequent conflict, was the inauguration of a feud which is now in existence stronger than ever before. Upon one side were arrayed John Day, an ex-Sheriff; Sam Gooding, defeated candidate for Sheriff, and a deputy under Day; Alvin and Jeff Bowling, all Democrats, and on the other side Cook Humphreys, Sheriff-elect; James Cary, County Clerk, and H. M. Logan, a merchant, all Republicans. The Democrats declared Humphreys had not been elected and swore he should never serve; the Republicans said their candidate had been legally elected and bade defiance to any one who dare attempt to interfere with his assuming the duties of his office. Feeling ran higher and higher until one day in December last a friend of the defeated Democrat named Floyd Toliver, accompanied by an acquaintance, appeared in Morehead within a mile of which place the Martin family lived. The two Democrats on observing John Martin, who chanced to be in Morehead on that day, accosted him rather sharply, whereupon he walked away and went to a hotel kept by Judge Cary, a friend. Toliver and companion followed, and upon again meeting Martin a war of insults followed, the result of which was killing number two. This time Martin was first to fire, his shot killing Floyd Toliver, whose companion, however, escaped uninjured. All witnesses agreed that the difficulty was forced upon Martin, whose action was pronounced strictly justifiable. He was arrested and taken to the jail of another county for safe keeping, where he remained for several weeks. Meanwhile the Toliver family, abetted by Gooding and Day as well as others, talked up such a state of feeling that the lynching of Martin seemed very probable, and indeed was openly boasted about, but inasmuch as he was confined in the jail of another county, whose law-abiding people would not tolerate an attempt of this sort, a different plan was formulated by the director-general of the enemies of Martin. This plan was the preparation of a forged order of delivery for the body of Martin, to obtain which it was necessary to send an order in writing demanding the surrender by the jailor of Clark County, whither he had been remanded for "safe keeping" of his person to the authorized agent or agents of Rowan County. Persons affecting to be such agents and purporting to bear such lawful order, did apply of the jailor of Clark County and obtain the body of John Martin upon presentation of what was supposed to be a genuine demand in writing from the authorities of Rowan County. The prisoner was made to go in handcuffs to the evening train of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, which bore the party toward Morehead, a town seven miles east of Farmers' Station, where the original trouble began. At Farmers' the train was stopped, several men sprang on board, and appearing before the posse having Martin in charge a general firing followed, at the end of which it was discovered that nobody had been hurt except the handcuffed prisoner, who was riddled with lead. He soon died. Alvin Bowling was accredited with having manoeuvred this infamous affair, but inasmuch as he was only a laborer in a saw mill glad to earn less than \$2 a day, there are those who suspect he was incited by another party. The county authorities declared the order of delivery to be a forgery, and Miss Sue Martin, a young sister of the dead man, openly avowed that Z. Taylor Young, the County Attorney of Rowan, uttered it. More ill-feeling followed, talk deepened into threats, threats into counter-threats, and these very quickly into action.

One day Z. T. Young, the County Attorney, came into Morehead with a hole in his apparel. "I was shot at from ambush," he said; "they want to murder me."

"Nonsense," spoke Miss Martin, "that man was never shot at; he merely desires to excite our enemies. He is the devil of it all."

And this latter statement must have carried weight, for all went smoothly for the time being. Meanwhile a young man named Baumgarten, whose reputation for quiet courage was greater than that of any man in Eastern Kentucky, had been chosen as a Deputy by Sheriff Humphreys.

"We'll have peace now certain," said County Clerk Curry to his neighbors, "for they all know Baumgarten is a leader, and they're all afraid of him; yes, we'll collect our revenue now to a dead moral certainty."

And it did look that way, for Baumgarten went to work in earnest, his official career lasting, however, very briefly. "Bang" went a shot from the roadside one day, and poor Baumgarten's last writ had been served. Of course no one knew who had assassinated him, and it was daylight too.

About this period or perhaps before Alvin Bowling, of the so-called Toliver faction, had killed the Town Marshal of Mount Sterling, for which he had been incarcerated at that place. Mount Sterling is the county seat of Montgomery, the home of ex-United States Senator Cerro Gordo Williams. For this or some other reason Jeff Bowling, a mere stripling, but notwithstanding a youth whose accuracy of aim was not excelled by Simon Kenton, and whose estimate of human life would compare with that of the dead outlaw, Jesse James, came to Kentucky from Missouri. He was much concerned about his brother Alvin, and gave unmistakable signs of an intention to continue the feud. Accompanied by the ex-Sheriff, John Day, young Bowling "engaged" Sheriff Humphreys and his friend John Pearce. The latter two attempted their arrest, using a shotgun and a Winchester rifle, the Democrats trying their hands with pistols only. Nobody was hurt in this encounter, at the conclusion of which Humphreys and Pearce retreated to Judge Cary's hotel, with the aid of whose son they soon barricaded the place, correctly anticipating trouble. Soon after midnight the party in the hotel were warned of danger by a rifle shot from the outside. It glanced close by the only lamp that had been left burning.

"The devils are trying to set fire to the house by hitting the lamp," cried Judge Cary.

"Shall I put it out?" asked his wife.

"Heavens, no," cried the Judge, as eight shots in rapid succession rattled by the lamp.

And so the firing was kept up until daylight, when it ceased, and the parties engaged in it retired, having shot more than 100 rounds, to the injury of the house only. Up to this period, or eight months after the beginning of the vendetta, the State authorities had never interfered, but the bombardment of Judge Cary's house could not be ignored, and Adj.-Gen. Castleman, after a consultation with Gov. Knott, went to Kowan County alone and unarmed. He saw the leading spirits of both parties and secured their promise to go with him to Louisville and there meet Gov. Knott, who earnestly desired a peaceful and early settlement of all difficulties. Young, Gooding, and Day represented the Toliver faction, Cary and Logan the Martin faction. Two conferences took place and the result was a mutual agreement to keep the peace, all signing a paper to that effect written by ex-Chief-Justice Hargis, of their own county, at Gov. Knott's request.

Peace was now proclaimed and all parties went home. Morehead hadn't a town Marshal, however, and pretty soon her Democratic constituency found one in the person of Craig Toliver, whom the Republicans declared was a resident of a contiguous county, Morgan. They argued that his presence meant no good, and expressed the belief that County Attorney Young had imported him to again renew the factional fight. No trouble occurred, however, until late in June, when Pearce, who had formerly aided the Humphreys crowd, made a statement that Miss Sue Martin had offered him \$50 to kill Z. T. Young and \$25 apiece for all the rest of the Toliver faction whom he would murder. Miss Martin, who is now the recognized leader of the Martin faction, ridiculed this statement and pronounced it a ruse of Young's to again foment strife.

Thus matters remained until June 23 last, when Town Marshal Craig Toliver claimed to

have received information that a mob was gathering at Farmers' Station. He went there and learned that they had gone. Led by the Sheriff to the home of the Martins, near Morehead, Toliver now procured warrants of arrest, and on Friday morning summoned a body of men and went to the Martin mansion, where he saw Cook Humphreys and one other man. Calling on his allies the Marshal attempted to arrest the Sheriff. This was outside of the precincts of Morehead, and as a matter of course the Marshal had no right legally to execute his warrants. His companions were Jeff Bowling and four other youths, one aged 16 and said to be the best shot in Rowan County. This posse, with Toliver in the van, guns cocked and fingers on their triggers, walked boldly up to the Martin house. They were within a few feet of the door when Miss Sue Martin, who, by the way, is a robust young woman of 28 and of handsome face and physique, suddenly appeared, saying:

"Well, what is it?"

"We want Cook Humphreys," answered Toliver.

"He isn't here," retorted the girl.

"Yes, he is!" cried Toliver.

"Well, if he is come and get him," replied Miss Martin, shutting the door quickly as she disappeared within.

Toliver and party charged, he leading. They reached the stairway and rapidly ascended. When at the top step a door opened suddenly, a voice cried, "Get out of here!" and the quick firing of shotguns sent the Marshal and his party to the floor below. The shooting ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and, strange to say, Toliver was the only man hurt, his left hand, jaw, and body having been perforated with buckshot. The attacking party retired. Later, Humphreys and a friend named Rayburn attempted to leave the house for the bushes, supposing their enemies had gone. A half dozen quick shots convinced them of their mistake, and as the second volley sounded Rayburn stumbled and fell on his face a corpse, Humphreys escaping. This was on Sunday, June 29, and when the militia, who had meanwhile been ordered out by the Governor, arrived on Tuesday they found Rayburn's corpse unburied, the people being afraid to go near it.

Last Monday night the two homes of Miss Martin were burned to ashes. Thursday night the home of Toliver was burned likewise.

The troops are under Major Lewis W. McKee, and number 100 good men. They found the County Judge had run off when they arrived, but after a search he was discovered and induced to issue warrants for the arrest of all concerned, although his fear almost prevented such action on his part.

The entire county is now virtually in the feud, and there is no chance for the soldiers to leave before October, after the Criminal Court shall have tried the 10 parties now in custody, of whom Cook Humphreys is one.

The relation of the feud to politics and of the politicians to feudalism in Kentucky will be related hereafter.

E. F. M.