

Blighted by Judge Lynch.

Trees That Died After Men Had Been Hanged Upon Them.

"Of course lynching will kill a tree," repeated the Danville tobacco buyer with some asperity. He had made the remark in purely incidental fashion in connection with some other curious natural phenomena and seemed rather surprised when the statement was questioned.

"Of course," he went on, "I'm not discussing lynching from an ethical standpoint while I am this far north, but as far as that particular feature of it is concerned no one would question it in my part of the country. Ask any one through Virginia, especially the southern part, and he will tell you the same thing. A tree always dies after a man has been hanged on it. You can call it a barbaric superstition if you choose and a fitting corollary of lynch law, but the fact remain that it is true so far as my observation goes, and that includes several cases.

"The first function of that sort I ever attended was down in Roanoke. There were three men lynched there in pretty rapid sequence about seven years ago. An incident of the business was that the militia lost their heads one night and fired on a mob around the jail, killing and wounding eleven very highly respected citizens. The three men were all hanged, however, to a large tree in the court house square. In the course of a little while the tree died and finally had to be cut down. Now, I will say this for that particular case, the tree was badly hacked by relic hunters and that may have had to do with its dying.

"But there was another case in which I had a hand. I will say with regret (being this far north), where the tree was not injured, and died, all the same this was also near Roanoke. The man in question, having confessed when he was caught was duly hanged to a small but promising hickory tree on the bank of a creek just outside of town. The tree was apparently healthy and was not molested in any way but it died. I have frequently seen it since when I was fishing along the creek.

"There was another case over in Clinch Valley that simply bears out the theory. Clinch Valley is just about the toughest spot in the whole side-real universe and I may say, merely as a personal view, of course, that lynching about 95 per cent of its population would improve it immensely. This trip they got five negroes, three men and two women. The five were hanged on two trees and both the trees died.

"I don't see why any one should strain at swallowing a theory of that sort," he continued, "for I had a considerably tougher story than that told me last summer while I was in Boston. Now, I don't know anything about the facts in the case, but give it to you as it was told me by the captain of a steam launch that took a party of us across the bay. I was stopping with some friends down at Nantasket and we made the run down from the city one afternoon in the launch. You know, Boston Bay is all full of islands, but they mostly stay where they are put. There was one point on the trip, rather nearer to Nantasket than to Boston, where a small stone monument sticks up out of the water. It was pointed out to me as making the spot where an island had been, but where there was now a good fifteen feet of water. The story was this:

"Some time, perhaps as far back as the Colonial days, there was a certain dealer in contraband who did business with the honest merchants of New England. The pirates were flourishing in the Spanish Main at that time, Black Beard, Sharky, Ben Thurlow and that lot, and they drifted up the coast close enough to worry Boston considerably. There was one in particular that had made way with a good deal of Boston shipping, but was never caught nor fully identified. Finally, in desperation, they cast about for some to even up on and gathered in this skimmer of the seas and dealer in contraband off whom they had all made a great many more or less honest dollars. Their logic was beautiful in its simplicity. There was a monstrous expensive pirate loose on the high seas. This dealer in contraband was loose in the same latitude. There was no one else whom they could convict of piracy, ergo, the pirate must be the dealer in contraband. And, on the strength of this reasoning, they hanged him on this island in the bay.

"The gentlemanly advocate of free trade who was the victim of this logic did not fall in with their reasoning a little bit. He

protested his innocence, and on the scaffold he made an impressive address. He declared that in token of his innocence of the particular crime charged against him, God would speedily destroy the island whereon he was hanged. No particular attention was paid to it at the time, but sure enough, before the smuggler's prophecy had time to be forgotten, this island began to disappear. It sank gradually into the water till it was almost awash, and by that time public attention was so turned to it that a monument was erected on the site of the gallows. That did not stop it, however, and the island quietly disappeared under the water till now a fair sized ship can sail over it, and only the top of the monument is visible at high water.

"Now, when you get a story of that sort from cold and calculating New England, perhaps you may be willing to listen to another incident, something in the same line, but if anything stranger, that happened down in the Shenandoah Valley considerably after the war. The story was told to me by Zachariah Flick, who at the time was on the police force in Roanoke and was one of the jury in the murder case in question.

"There had been a pretty hasty murder committed between the Waynesboro and Luray, and for some reason suspicions fell on a man named Henderson, a prosperous merchant. He was tried and convicted by the jury on which Flick served, but the conviction was on purely circumstantial evidence. That did not bother the jury or the judge, either, and he sentenced Henderson to hang. Henderson protested his innocence and swore he knew absolutely nothing about the case, but in his speech on the scaffold he made a queer prediction. Said he: 'God knows I am innocent and He knows by whom this murder was committed. Within three years from this day He will blast a line of trees from

the foot of this scaffold to the door of the murderer.'

"Well, nobody paid much attention to this at the time, but in about a year some of the cedar trees close to the jail began to turn brown and die. That was not so queer either, but the blight seemed to extend away from the jail in a straight line across country, killing tree after tree in single file like a man blazing a trail through a wood. That line of dead trees reached out like a finger for a mile and a half across country and stopped with a big cedar right at the gate leading to the house of a man who had never been suspected in any way in connection with the case. The thing caused so much talk that he was arrested, and subsequently confessed. Now as far as I am concerned, if such a thing as that had happened to me, I should have confessed whether I was guilty or not. Anyhow, the dead trees are there now, and are one of the sights of the Shenandoah Valley.

"Those are curious stories," remarked a Western railroad man who had been listening, "but when you come to think of it, they are no more curious than a happening I was mixed up in out in Kansas a good many years back. I was a cub telegraph operator at the time, 'OS'ing' for the railroads and I had the day trick at a little station called Raleigh about fifty miles beyond Topeka. We had a hanging on in the county jail, rather a mixed up case of a tramp named Smithers, who was convicted, largely on circumstantial evidence, of having killed a mail carrier on the outskirts of town. He was due to hang of a Friday and I recollect I was feeling pretty sore because I couldn't get up to see it. It seems, the tramp's lawyer, appointed by the court because the hobo did not have money enough to pay an attorney, had taken a good deal of interest in the case and had been working hard out of sheer philanthropy to get a stay of execution because he thought he was on the track of some new evidence that would clear the poor devil. But up to the morning of the hanging he had not got hold of anything tangible and had gone up to Topeka to see the governor.

"There was a commercial wire ran through my office, but there was never much doing on it, for Raleigh and I did not know the men on it as well as on the railroad wire. It was a vicious morning, wet, blustering and cold, just the sort of a day for wire trouble and we had it wholesale. The hanging was scheduled for noon, and about 11 I heard some one calling 'R

L' on the commercial wire. That was my call, and I opened my key and said 'Who? 'TK,' said the man on the other end. That was Topeka, and he seemed to be in a awful rush. What he had was a message, addressed to the sheriff, saying, 'Stay of execution granted, papers by'— Then the wire went down and I couldn't get a dot nor a dash out of it. I saw, anyhow, what the message was driving at and I grabbed a teamster I knew who happened to be loafing in the station out of the wet and sent him chasing out through the storm up to the jail.

Pretty soon the sheriff came down on horseback to see if I had got the rest of the message, but I tried the railroad wire and that had gone up, too, so we were up against it. I told the sheriff that the message was doubtless from the prisoner's attorney or from the Governor, as the case might be, calling of the hanging and announcing that the official papers were coming by train. The first train for Topeka was due about 1.45 p. m. The Sheriff said he guessed it was safest to take that view of it and he would put off the hanging till the train came in, anyhow. I tried the wires several times, but couldn't raise anything except Raleigh, which wasn't what I wanted.

"Finally, about 12.10 the commercial wire came up all right and 'T K' commenced to call so fast he fairly stuttered. When I answered, he said, 'Reprieve for Smithers, stop the hanging if you can quick.'

"I told him a few choice things about himself and assured him I had stopped the hanging on the strength of his interrupted message over an hour before. Then he was wilder than ever, insisted he had sent no message, that I was stringing him and wasting time while an innocent man was hanging. It took us a good while to get ourselves straightened out, but I finally convinced him that I was in earnest, that I had got a message, that I had stopped the hanging and that the Sheriff was in the office waiting further explanations. Thereupon Topeka said that the Governor had granted a reprieve and Smithers's lawyer, was coming with it on a special engine. But he declared he had been trying to get a wire into Raleigh for an hour and could not do it.

"Sure enough, in a little while a light engine boiling in at a sixty mile clip with the lawyer aboard, all coal dust and anxiety, asking if he was in time. It seems when he wanted to wire that the reprieve

had been granted the wires to Raleigh were all down, and he had got the division superintendent to send him down on an engine ahead of the passenger. Then my interrupted message began to look spoon-like. I knew I had not dreamed it, and Topeka swore he hadn't sent it. I didn't get any sort of an explanation for about three years. Then a man I was rooming with in Kansas City who also knew the story, told me that the message I had received was from the operator in the commercial office at Crawford. It seems this fellow, whom I only knew slightly, had a 'wire spite' against me, as operators frequently have. The wire was bad that morning, anyhow, and Topeka, who had been wrestling with the wad of slow commercial stuff till he was tired, finally said '2ms' and shut the key. That was code on that line for 'two minutes to smoke' and the Crawford man figured he would improve the time to put up a job on me, have a little sport and probably get me in to trouble. There was a repeater in his office, so he cut off the Topeka side and called me, saying he was 'TK.' I wasn't familiar enough with his sending to notice and took his message without questioning it. Just then the wire went down.

"Now, that explained simply enough how I happened to get the message, but I would like somebody to tell me what prompted that Crawford operator to fake a message of that sort, know nothing of the real message on which a man's life depended, which was held back on account of a bad wire. I may add that the reprieve didn't do Smithers any large amount of good. The fresh evidence his lawyer was working on proved to be entirely valueless, and Smithers was hanged two months later on a bright sunny Friday when the wires were working all right."

ST. VITUS CURED.

THE STORY OF A BRIGHT YOUNG GIRL'S RECOVERY.

She Was First Attacked with La Grippe, the After Effects Resulting in St. Vitus' Dance—Friends Despaired of Her Recovery.

From the Acadier, Wolfville, N. S.

The mails from Wolfville to Gaspereau are carried every day by an official who is noted for his willingness to accommodate and the punctuality with which he discharges his duties. His name is Mr. Merriner Cleveland and his home is in Gaspereau, where he resides with his wife and granddaughter, Miss Lizzie May Cleveland, a bright girl of fifteen years. A few months ago the health of their grand daughter was a source of very great anxiety to Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland, and the neighbors who learned of the physical condition of the little girl gravely shook their heads and said to themselves that the fears of the fond grand-parents were by no means groundless. When the news reached the ears of an Acadian man, a short time ago, that the health of Miss Cleveland had been restored, he hastened to interview Mr. Cleveland as to the facts of the case. When he explained his errand both Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland appeared only too eager to give him the information sought and it is in accordance with their wishes that we give to the public the facts of this remarkable cure. Early in December, 1898, Miss Cleveland was taken ill with a severe attack of la grippe and fears of her recovery were entertained. Careful nursing, however, brought her through this malady, but it left her system in a completely run-down condition. This showed itself principally in the weakness of the nerves. In January symptoms of St. Vitus' dance began to show themselves. At first these were not very prominent, but it was not long before she was rendered altogether helpless by this terrible malady. In a short time she lost all control over the movements of her hands and feet. For weeks she had to be carried from room to room and unable to feed herself. Her grand-parents naturally became very much alarmed and having tried other remedies without effect, determined to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a trial. Developments showed that their confidence was not misplaced. When three boxes had been used the condition of the patient had improved considerably. Then Mr. Cleveland bought six boxes more and continued their use as before. The sufferer rapidly began to recover. When she had consumed the fifth box Mrs. Cleveland reduced the dose to one pill a day and by the time the sixth box was gone a complete cure was effected. Miss Cleveland is now as vigorous and healthy as could be desired. Her grand-parents are persuaded that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are alone responsible for her cure and are devoutly thankful for the results which, under Providence, they have produced.

Sold by all dealers or sent post paid at 50c. a box or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont. Do not be persuaded to try something else said to be "just as good."

"My man," urged the Rev. Mr. Goodley, "can I not induce you to come into church?" "Oh! now, boss, I—er—" the poor tramp stammered. "I hope you have no prejudice against the church," the good man continued, eagerly. "No unpleasant recollection of your past suggested—" "Oh! No. I ain't got no grudge agin' the church. Mine wuz a home weddin'."



LITTLE POUTS!