

# THE KENTUCKY VENDETTA.

(The Times).

The Kentucky vendetta, which has already announced by telegram, was ended on June 22nd by the Sheriff's posse killing at Morehead, Rowan County, Kentucky, Craig Tolliver, with most of his gang, began ten years ago, though Tolliver was not then engaged in it. The feud broke out in 1877 between the Underwood and Holbrook families, and thirty men were killed on both sides, including all the males of the Underwood family. John Martin, who had formerly been a horse thief, was a tenant of Underwood, sharing his double log cabin. Squire Holbrook, a neighbour, one day missed two horses, and accused Martin and young Jesse Underwood of stealing them. This being a charge of the worst crime known in Kentucky, led to the feud. Old Underwood denied the accusation but Holbrook gathered his friends together and ordered Underwood to send Martin away, or there would be war. Underwood defied him and the conflict began. Several of Underwood's sons were shot from ambush during the next year, and occasionally Holbrook's men were shot. Bands of armed men patrolled the county, which is rough, rocky, and heavily timbered, and skirmishes were of frequent occurrence. The Governor of Kentucky twice ordered troops thither to end the disturbance, but they failed to effect this object, and the war continued. Underwood's double log cabin, called "Fort Underwood," was besieged by ambushed enemies. Old Underwood in 1880 was shot and severely wounded, and Jesse was killed, his body being dragged into the cabin, where the women watched it for four nights. After killing Jesse, a band of masked men appeared at the door of the house and demanded admittance. Old Underwood grasped his shot-gun and staggered to his feet, determined to sell his life dearly, wounded as he was, but his wife and the other women begged him to hear what the men had to say; and he was finally induced to listen to them. "We hear that Jesse is dead," said the ringleader; "we want to learn if it is true. If he really is dead we will go away, and there shall be no more fighting." Old Underwood was prevailed upon to pass all arms out of the door and let the men enter. When they came in the old man was sitting on the bed beside his dead son, and his little granddaughter was holding one of his hands. One of the men lifted up the sheet and identified Jesse. All tried to disguise their voices, but Underwood recognised one of them and called him by his name. With an oath the betrayed ruffian raised his shot-gun and emptied the contents of both barrels into the old man's body. He fell forward into the arms of his granddaughter, and died without a groan; and the murderers, with loud shouts of exultation, left the house and disappeared. The siege of Fort Underwood had been raised at last, but not until its last defender had perished. Hostilities were then suspended, and the women of the Underwood family, with Martin, left that section. Martin became an illicit distiller. He returned to Rowan County in 1884 and engaged in politics. He was engaged in an affray at an election in August, when Bradley, a prominent Democrat, was shot. Martin was accused of shooting him. Party feeling ran high. In December, 1884, Floyd Tolliver, a friend of the Democrats, appeared in Morehead and met Martin. They got into a political dispute, and each drew a pistol. Martin, being the quickest, fired first, and Tolliver was instantly killed. All the witnesses agreed that the killing was justifiable, but Martin was arrested and imprisoned. This aroused the slumbering embers of the original feud, the people taking sides. Craig Tolliver declared himself the avenger of his brother, and formed a party to capture Martin and lynch him. Martin was taken to Clark County for safe keeping, but by means of strategy and a forged order to the gaoler Tolliver's party obtained possession of Martin at Clark County gaol. The prisoner was handcuffed and placed on board a railway train for Morehead. At a farmer's station seven miles from Morehead the car was boarded by a mob. A rattling fire of shot-guns was directed apparently at the posse guarding the prisoner, but when the smoke cleared away it was found that nobody but Martin had been injured. His body was fairly riddled with shot and he was quite dead. Craig Tolliver had avenged his brother by the slaughter of his slayer, and a vendetta had begun as bitter in its nature as that of the Underwood and Holbrook factions, of which the same man Martin was the original cause. Sue Martin, his sister, accused Taylor Young, the county attorney of Rowan County, of forging the order which gave her brother into the hands of his enemies. This woman, by the tacit consent of Tolliver's opponents, now became their leader, concerting most of the plans for conducting the feud. Ambushes were formed, by which the prominent adherents of each faction were killed. Mr Humphreys, Sheriff of Rowan County, who favored the Martin faction, was driven into an hotel in Morehead and besieged throughout the night, the doors and windows being riddled with bullets, though he escaped harm. Nearly everybody in Rowan County having become involved in the feud, the Governor of Kentucky, Mr Knott, was compelled to notice it. He first endeavored to restore peace by inducing the leaders to visit him at Louisville, but was unsuccessful. Craig Tolliver was elected by the Democrats Marshal of Rowan County. On assuming office he announced that the Martin faction was offering rewards for the murder of its opponents. He then, on June 26th, 1885, summoned the posse to disperse an imaginary mob which he could not find, but he declared it had gone to Sue Martin's house, near Morehead, led by Sheriff Humphreys. He secured warrants for the arrest of Humphreys and others, and went to capture them. The assailants attacked the house, battered down the door, and ascended the stairs, but were received with a volley of bullets, which drove them out, Craig Tolliver being wounded. They picketed in the neighborhood. Humphreys, with a friend named Reyburn, finally ventured out, and Reyburn was shot dead, but Humphreys escaped. Governor Knott then ordered troops to the scene. They found that the Martin faction had burnt Tolliver's house two days before, his party retaliating by burning Sue Martin's two houses. The Mayor, Mr McKee, captured ten of the ringleaders, but Tolliver escaped. He was hunted down and lodged in gaol at Lexington on July 21st. Again mistaken leniency was shown, the authorities consenting to withdraw the proceedings if both Tolliver and Humphreys left Kentucky, which they did. Tolliver returned this year, and announced himself as candidate for the office of Police Justice of Morehead. He received only twenty votes, but nobody had the courage to vote against him, and he was elected. He then recommenced the persecution of his enemies. He issued warrants against his opponents, accusing them of a "Ku-Klux" conspiracy. Having captured one Henry Logan, he went with a posse, headed by his friend Marshal Mannin, to Logan's house, to arrest his two sons. The posse attacked the house, but were received with buckshot, Mannin being killed. The Logan boys afterwards emerged from the rear of the house, the posse shooting them dead. The Governor, now at last aroused, determined to arrest Tolliver with all his gang for these murders. He sent Sheriff Hogan with an armed posse of 100 men to serve the warrants, with the results already reported, nearly all the gang, including Tolliver, being killed. Morehead is a town of 500 people on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, 160 miles from Louisville. Craig Tolliver was thirty-five years old. He was a man of fine physique. The killing and capture of his gang, it is hoped, will now bring peace to the county.