

## ROWAN COUNTY DIVERSIONS.

### NO LAW AGAINST MURDER IN KENTUCKY.

Rowan County is one of the group of counties in the northeastern corner of Kentucky. Its surface is mountainous, much of it being covered still with an unbroken forest. The county contains about 500 square miles, and the inhabitants numbered before the present feud began nearly 3,000. The element which enters most largely into the population can be judged from the fact that there is not a church or a school-house in the county. The character of the people can be illustrated also by the customs which prevail, one of them being that when a gentleman happens to spit so that some of the saliva accidentally hits the face of a bystander the latter is expected, without asking for an explanation, to whip out his shooting-iron and "let daylight" through the offender.

For nearly a year the county has been the scene of deeds which rival anything in the annals of outlawry and bushwhacking. In 1881 the County Sheriff was found to be a defaulter, and the "best people" determined to elect a new man to the office. They selected one Cook Humphries, a Republican, who had the reputation of being unwilling "to stand any nonsense." Election came in August and Humphries was chosen, and the same day the feud began also, which is still unsettled. The scene opened with a dispute over an election bet, which resulted in a fight into which a number were drawn. Among these were Squire Bradley and his son "Sol," and when the smoke lifted and the dust settled it was found, in the language of the free and breezy West, "necessary to bury 'Sol.'"

From that time the trouble dates. People seemed instinctively to divide into two factions, known as the Tolliver and Martin factions. There was no appeal to the courts, such methods of seeking protection being beneath the dignity of a Rowan County gentleman. The settlement to which each faction looked was the annihilation of its rival. When one side had the misfortune to lose an adherent by a well-directed shot it would retire from the scene for a few days to hunt up reinforcements and then return to wreak vengeance on its rival. So the shooting has gone on until a baker's dozen or more have become the victims of somebody else being quicker than themselves in drawing the pistol. The two leaders, Martin and Tolliver, were persuaded once to try and settle the dispute over a glass of liquor at a bar, when the former deliberately shot the latter. Afterwards Martin was taken from jail on a forged order and riddled with bullets.

When the Governor first threatened to send troops to the locality, one Pierce, a local "terror," was asked what he would do. "No?" said he, "why, — it; we'll suspend habeas corpus, acknowledge the rights of Kentucky as a belligerent, and open fire on any outfit they send."

This is a brief outline of the situation. It justifies fully the Louisville Courier-Journal's plaintive saying: "In Kentucky we have no law against murder." If the facts were not well vouched for it would be hard to believe that such a state of barbarism exists a few miles south of the Ohio River. There it is, however, and the courts and the Government of Kentucky appear powerless to deal with the situation.—E.C.