

True Republican.

Ft. Underwood, of Carter.

AN AMAZING STORY OF A FAMILY FEUD IN THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS.

From the New York Sun.

Just what began the feud between the Holbrooks and Underwoods is not exactly known. 'Squire Holbrook, before he was killed, always averred that he caught young Jesse Underwood trying to steal his horses, and shot him only to save the beasts. It is certain that when Jesse was wounded he was near 'Squire Holbrook's premises.

It is narrated of the company of Home Guards to which the Underwoods and Holbrooks belonged, that during the early part of the war they received a message from Maysville, a thriving town on the Ohio some fifty miles from the Underwood settlement, begging them to come to the rescue of its citizens. A detachment of John Morgan's command had captured the town and were making themselves free with the property of Union merchants. The Underwoods and Holbrooks nineteen in number, rode day and night until they reached Maysville, drove out the Confederates, and then plundered every store in the town belonging to a Confederate sympathizer. Thus things were made even.

THE KILLING OF GEORGE TRUMBO.

The first strictly personal trouble in which the Underwoods were engaged was in September, 1865, just after the war. Jesse and David Underwood, two of the old man's sons, went down into Bath county to attend a circus, and on their return home, stopped at a wayside grocery. Somebody called for a "Jeff Davis straight." Jesse turned and inquired, "Who asked for that kind of liquor?"

Samuel Crane acknowledged that he was the man, "and" as it was described in the contemporary account of the affray—fuss; they call such difficulties in the mountain counties of Kentucky—"made for Jesse. David got between the two. Crane raised an ale bottle to smash it over David's head, and Jesse cocked his pistol at Crane to save his brother's life; but one George Trumbo stepped in front of Sam Crane, and received the shot aimed at the latter, which killed him instantly."

The Underwoods escaped into the Carter woods, but Trumbo's relatives were well to-do, and offered a reward for Jesse's capture. The Governor also issued his proclamation, offering the usual reward of \$500 for his apprehension. On the application of the authorities of any county the Governor is obliged to offer this reward, and sometimes there will be a column of such brief proclamations in the newspaper officially designated to print them. A Sheriff's posse during five or six years made several attempts to capture Jesse. In two instances the invaders returned from the Underwood fort carrying back their dead. Every attempt resulted in the wounding of one or more of the posse. It was about this time that he was shot by 'Squire Holbrook. But this continued strife at last proved so annoying to Jesse and his brother Alfred that the former left one night for Iowa, where he remained four years; and the latter went to Texas. There his old-time neighbors were assured, he obtained great note as the leader of a band of outlaws, and there he died in due time from a too accurate pistol shot.

A REIGN OF TERROR.

During Jesse's absence things went on quietly in the Underwood neighborhood, barring an occasional charge against the old man and his sons of horse stealing; but no blood was shed. It was not until the Spring of 1877 that Jack Tabor and John Martin were arrested for horse stealing. Old George Underwood went their bail, they were released, and settled on a clearing near Fort Underwood. 'Squire Holbrook and others notified them to leave, which they did not do, but one night in June they stopped at Alex. Penlam's and the next day Alex. was waylaid and badly wounded. Old George was on his way to Penlam's house with a doctor when two shots fired from an ambush struck him. One put out his eye. The next day Penlam got out of bed as far as the door, seeking fresh air, and a shot fired from the opposite hillside laid him dead across his doorsill. The feud of the Holbrooks and Underwoods was in full strength again, for it was only the day after the assassination of Penlam that Robert Glover of the Holbrook clan was shot through the heart as he was at work in the fields; and on the 22d of June, Lewis Underwood, while gathering firewood was pierced by a rifle ball. He was shot in the stomach and lingered for two years. The case was an interesting one in a medical point of view. Through the wound the process of digestion might be often witnessed.

Perhaps it was the fault of their training that these people acted so often like brutes, but there were sometimes bright points in their natures. At any rate it is said that young Jesse loved his brother Lewis, and came all the way back from Iowa to see him before he died, and incidentally to revenge his death. But before his arrival Isaiah Masters, another of the Holbrooks was ambushed and shot dead, and divers partisans of both sides were variously wounded. Neighbors abandoned their clearings and stayed closely in their cabins, and it was given out that any doctor who attended any of the injured did so at his peril, as did any storekeeper who furnished burial clothes for the dead. This state of affairs culminated in a regular siege by the Holbrooks of Fort Underwood, a large double cabin into which all the Underwoods, men, women and children, had been hustled. For nineteen days the siege lasted, inmates and assailants occasionally exchanging rounds; and during this time the door of the fort was never opened except for a few minutes at a time

under cover of the night, to admit a breath of fresh air. The county authorities twice demanded a surrender, but old George answered that the law was not strong enough to protect him, did he abandon his stronghold. The Governor at last ordered out the militia—a company from Covington—and to them old George submitted without resistance. He and his sons were brought before justices of the peace, but no charge was made against them. Nor does it appear that the Holbrooks were molested by the law; indeed they pleaded that they were only trying to break up a den of horse thieves.

JESSE UNDERWOODS COURTSHIP.

It was at this time that Jesse reappeared. He partly sued for, partly commanded a peace, and as he was a particularly accurate shot, his request was heeded. Besides, he fell in love with the daughter of a neighbor, and during his courtship it would have been considered ill breeding to shoot him.

The people of these mountain counties of Kentucky are peculiar. It is an unquestionable fact that you can travel from Cumberland Gap to the Ohio, and that everywhere you will be hospitably received. You can carry a large sum of money with you and you will never be harmed. "I reckon we kin keep you," the householder says as you rap with your whipstall at his cabin door; and his "brile and bread" coffee without sugar, and buttermilk, he will share with you without expectation or hope of a fee. In fact your person is as perfectly safe in any part of these mountains as in Broadway, if you do not happen to get mixed up in a family quarrel. There are no murders for gain or lust; it is a poor question of give and take, and they do not understand why outsiders should concern themselves about it.

Jesse Underwood was the pride of Carter county. The accusation that he or his kin were horse stealers was always repudiated by them with scorn; they said that it was only a convenient excuse of the Holbrooks. Now the charge lies against them without protest, for they are all dead. Of Jesse an enthusiastic reporter of the *Greenup Independent* once wrote: "Of middle size, with black hair, mustache, and eyes, in which was an expression of absolute courage, a handsomer man I never saw." The reporter added that in the eyes was also a look of simple gentleness, but this may be doubted. "He wore a gray felt hat a drab vest and pantaloons, whose legs were tucked in his boots. On his belt was a Smith & Wesson six shooter, a catridge and a cap pouch, and slung over his shoulder was a powder flask. In his right hand was a double-barreled shotgun, held, walking cane fashion, by the stock, the barrels downward."

"The world has been hard upon me," he said, "I don't like to fight, I want peace. Bushwhacking is so dreadful barbarous that I hate it."

Old George promised Jesse that he would sell out and move to Iowa, and Jesse again started for the West, taking a young wife with him. Traveling overland to a point on the Ohio, where he intended to take a steam boat, he was followed by the Sheriff of Lewis count.—the old rewards for the killing of Trumbo, twelve years before, were thought to be still outstanding. They ambushed in the path of the bridal couple late one night, and as they passed opened fire on them badly wounding Jesse at the first shot. But he fought desperately, killed one of the posse outright, and wounded two others before he fell, bleeding from half a dozen shots. He was taken to the Bath county jail, a new indictment for the murder of Trumbo was framed, and he was in jail awaiting trial when, in the Spring of 1878 he escaped and made his way back to Carter. His wife was dead, meanwhile but his brother Lewis was still lingering from the wound of a year before.

THE ASSASSINATION OF THE OLD 'SQUIRE.

Jesse only left the fort thereafter to attend church meetings, but with the precaution of two revolvers and his shotgun. The hatchet was buried for nearly a year. It was on the 20th of May last that it was dug up, and the complete wiping out of the adult Underwoods was the result. On that day Elverton Underwood was shot while surrounded by his children. Two bullets passed through his body. They were fired from ambush. Jesse claimed that he traced the assassins to 'Squire Holbrook's and that the tracks of one of them were those of the old 'Squire himself. But his brother Lewis was dying, and Jesse did nothing until in September death released the boy from two years of great suffering. Then the bloody work was renewed.

The boy died Sept. 1. Sept. 5, 'Squire Holbrook and his son Milliard were shot as they were catching a horse in the pasture adjoining their house. A rifle ball passed through the old 'Squire's brain, and he fell dead. The son escaped. Sept. 8, William Underwood was shot through the heart while at work. Sept. 12, David Wilson of the Holbrooks was shot at from ambush and his left arm shattered. Sept. 15, as old George Underwood was stepping out of the door of the fort, sixteen shots were fired from behind the trees opposite. He was badly wounded in the arm and shoulder, and the women dragged him in and sent for Jesse.

THE SECOND SIEGE OF FORT UNDERWOOD.

Jessie was out in the forests and at once hastened home. Just as he was entering the door one of three shots from the bush-covered hillside opposite struck him in the shoulder, and, passing through his left lung, came out on the other side of his body. He fell across the doorsill, but the ready hands of the women dragged him in before another shot could finish him. Then began a drama unparalleled even in the history of these

mountain outrages. The Holbrook faction rose from their ambush, and rushed yelling to the door. Inside there were huddled a dozen women and children, and on two corn-husk pallets the father and son were lying mortally wounded. There was little to eat or drink in the house. Around it the Holbrooks established a cordon of sentries, and for seventeen days the door was never opened, except that a shot warned the women to close it speedily. On Sunday, four days after Jesse was shot, the women on the inside gave notice that the man was dead; but as they had before refused to allow any doctor to go to the relief of the wounded men, so now the besieging party gave notice that any man or woman, either in the house or outside, who attempted to bury the dead man, would need to arrange for her or his own funeral.

In this stress, old George Underwood did manage to get a message to the County Judge at Grayson, nineteen miles distant, asking him for protection. That official ordered the Sheriff to take a posse, bury the dead, and bring to Grayson the women, children, and the one living survivor; but so great was the terrorism that the Sheriff could not induce a single man in the county to accompany him. Then the Governor was telegraphed to, for a company of militia, but without success.

On Sunday Oct. 12th, the four women, a daughter, two nieces, and the sister-in-law of the old man, were keeping watch beside his pallet. At a knock at the door the women peered out through a loophole and saw a group of some twenty men with blackened faces in the yard. They demanded admittance, averring that Caleb White and John Martin had been seen to enter the house. They promised safety to the old man and the women, if they were allowed to enter. The old man consented, and they searched the house without finding the men, but they seized old George's arsenal. It consisted of six guns, five pistols, three bowie knives, and a sword. They laughed as they uncovered Jesse's corpse, and then asked the old man to show his wounds.

THE LAST OF THE UNDERWOODS.

Old George stood over to take off the bandage. "Let's bring this meeting to a close," said the leader, as he raised his gun and emptied a load of buckshot into the old man's body. Another at the same moment shot him through the head, and he fell forward on his face dead. Through the wound in his body a man's fist might be thrust. Then the band went away.

The father of the Underwoods, had in some time past, befriended Frank McFerran, of Olive Hill. The morning after the murder Agnes McFerran went about among the neighbors begging for assistance to bury the dead at Fort Underwood, but no one would venture. Then the girl and her father started for the house alone. They expected nothing short of death, but happily found that the besieging party having finished their work had disappeared. The scene inside the cabin cannot be described, but with the help of the Underwood women, the two bodies were given a decent burial, the cries of the mourners echoing through the stillness of the forest.

When a local Judge was asked to quash indictments against the Littles and Strongs in Breathitt, four or five years ago, he promptly consented. The explanation given at the time was simple:

"Why shouldn't they be allowed to fight it out? If witnesses testify against either party they will be killed and so the feud will widen. If all the principals kill each other, that will be the end of it, and justice will be done."

Gov. Blackburn has said to a correspondent of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, that he had been censured for not sending troops into Carter County. The truth was he had acted with all promptness, and had taken all the legal steps to suppress that disturbance that he was legally empowered to do. He had been appealed to by the authorities of Grayson to commission a local militia company to undertake the suppression of the outlawry. He refused, because he did not know of whom the company was composed, or whether it might not happen the members might not have a personal feeling in the matter themselves, and might want to have a little revenge on their own account. He concluded to send Lieut. Bryan of Covington to report Carter was now quiet, and he thought there would be no trouble about enforcing the law if the officers showed any disposition to do their duty.

Mark Twain on Babies.

A friend wonders that we have neglected to publish Mark Twain's response to the toast to "The Babies," which followed the toasting of every other class of humanity at the Grand Banquet of the army of the Tennessee. But that speech is good yet, and will be good for an hundred years hence. It will be classed among the English classics. Following is the full text of Mark Twain's response:

"The Babies—As they comfort us in our sorrows, let us not forget them in our festivities."

I like that. We haven't had the good fortune to be ladies; we haven't all been generals, or poets, or statesmen, but when the toast works down to the babies, we stand on common ground, for we've all been babies. It is a shame that for a thousand years the world's banquets have utterly ignored the baby—as if he didn't amount to anything! If you gentlemen will stop and think a minute—if you will go back fifty or a hundred years, to your early married life, and re-remember your first baby, you will remember that he amounted to a good deal, and even something over. You soldiers all know that when that little fellow arrived at family headquarters you had to hand in your resignation.

HE TOOK ENTIRE COMMAND. You became the lackey, his mere body