

From the *Huntington Advertiser* of Huntington, WV, dated July 2, 1887 comes this letter about the Rowan County Feud:

The Rowan County War.

Editor Advertiser:

The writer is not surprised that your paper of last week fell into the current of popular opinion and denounced the Toliver gang, of Morehead, Kentucky, as the guilty ones in the celebrated feud which has caused the killing of about thirteen persons. Later advices appear at least to throw doubt on the subject of who is really to blame. Let us see. Here is the Cincinnati Enquirer's account of the origin of the trouble, taken from that journal of the 23d inst.:

"The beginning of the trouble dates from the August election of 1884, when Cook Humphrey, a Republican, was elected sheriff by a trifling majority. He was a young, spare-built man, fresh from the country, and unsophisticated in appearance and manner. Craig Toliver, at the head of a party of friends, declared that Humphrey should not serve as sheriff. On the evening of the election a row occurred. Pistols were drawn and used, and Solomon Bradley (Democrat), a friend of Toliver's, was shot and killed. The killing was charged against John Martin, and Toliver swore to be avenged. Subsequently Floyd Toliver and Martin got into a fight and the former (Toliver, Democrat) was killed on the street. From this time it may be said that the Martin (Republican) and Toliver (Democrat) factions were organized in deadly array, both sides determined never to yield, one to the other."

The analysis of the above is, that the Republicans, having carried the election, became more or less insolent towards the opposition, who were correspondingly depressed and sore over their defeat, and gave utterance to their disappointment, and Craig Toliver used a very foolish expression to the effect that the Republican sheriff elect should not be installed. It is probable that this was accompanied by charges of fraudulent voting on the part of the Republicans—at any rate it was not such an offense as to justify Martin, Republican, in shooting Sol. Bradley, a partisan of Toliver's. Subsequently Floyd Toliver denounced Martin for having killed Bradley without sufficient provocation and in an unmanly way, and was himself shot by Martin on the instant. So that a war of extermination seems to have been inaugurated by the Martins and their Republican following, against the Bradleys and Tolivers and their Democratic following, and signaled by the cold blooded murder of two of the latter. If this is true, and the record seems to bear it out as true, then the Tolivers were simply defending themselves and their households and party friends against the tumultuous murder of the Martins and their Republican following.

The subsequent getting possession of the person of John Martin (already a double murderer) and his killing at the hands of the Tolivers, whose brother and friend he had slain, was in the nature of retribution, and justified by the circumstances. Later, killings on both sides followed from the hot blooded feud which these had aroused, and while some of them appear to have been barbarous in the extreme, yet they legitimately came of a war of extermination such as had been initiated by the Martins and responded to, and not by the Tolivers and their friends.

A prominent citizen of Cabell Co., now sojourning near the scene of the disorder, in Rowan County, says:

"I suppose the dispatches have told you the war news; how 300 Republicans succeeded in killing four Democrats; but the war has only begun. I hear, to-day, that the Democrats are organizing a company

near — to put down the mob at Morehead who did the killing. He is more than sanguine who thinks the trouble ended.”

Our fellow-citizen, on the ground in Kentucky, evidently thinks the late killing of the three Tolivers unjustified by the facts as they are known to him. Let us wait for the facts.

BEN.