

THE LAST OF THE JAYHAWKERS.

The Audubon of the twentieth century, as he compiles the history of the birds of Kansas, will vainly search the "Ornithological Biographies" of his illustrious predecessor for any allusion to the "jayhawk." Investigation will disclose the jay (*Cyanurus cristatus*), and the hawk (*Accipiter fuscus*): the former a mischievous, quarrelsome egg-sucker, a blue-coated cousin of the crow and an epicure of carrion; the latter a cloud-haunting pirate, the assassin of the atmosphere, whose flattened skull, rapacious beak, and insatiable appetite for blood impel it to an agency of destruction, and place it among the repulsive ranks of the living ministers of death. Were it not that Nature forbids the adulterous confusion of her types, he might surmise that the jayhawk was a mule among birds, the illicit offspring of some sudden *liason* or aerial intrigue, endowed with the most malign attributes of its progenitors. But as this conclusion would be unerringly rejected by the deductions of his science, he would be compelled to look elsewhere for the origin of this obscure tenant of the air, whose notable exploits caused it to be accepted as the symbol of the infant State, giving to a famous regiment its title, and to the inhabitants their novel appellation of "Jayhawkers," by that happy nomenclature which would induce the unsophisticated chronicler to suppose that the population of Illinois was composed entirely of infants at the breast, and that the chief vegetable productions of Missouri were ipecac and lobelia.

Convinced by his researches that the jayhawk no longer existed, he would naturally inquire whether it had once lived and became extinct, or whether it was merely a fabulous myth, the creation of vagrant fancy, flying only in a dreamer's brain.

Instances are not wanting of other celebrated birds whose origin is equally uncertain, and whose existence even has been denied. Prominent among them is the dodo, that enigma in feathers, the last of whose melancholy race was reported to have expired not earlier than two centuries ago, upon the island of Mauritius. This belief was accepted by the scientific world upon what appeared to be credible evidence; and yet its erroneousness was conclusively shown by Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a case involving the question, tried several years since before the Suffolk Common Pleas, in which the doctor introduced in testimony a bill of sale showing incontrovertibly that a dodo had been recently sold in Boston, and that consequently the species could not have been extinct. The document was as follows:

JOHN E. SMITH to ROBERT C. GREER, Dr.
 1856.
 Oct. 13. To one canary-bird.....\$2.50
 Nov. 10. To one do do 3.00
 Rec'd pay't. \$5.50

The lurid placards of modern insurance companies have familiarized the public mind with the phoenix, an Arabian fowl, reputed to live five hundred years, at the expiration of which patriarchal period, it erected a funeral pyre of sweet-scented woods and aromatic gums, perched upon its apex, fanned it into flame by the undulations of its tail and was suicidally consumed in the conflagration. It is related of a famous

wit who supposed he was dying that his physician felt of his extremities, found they were not cold, and told his patient that no man could die while his feet were warm; to which he responded that he had heard of one who did, and being asked to name him, replied, "John Rogers!" whereupon a heavenly smile lit up his wan features and he passed on to the higher life. The phoenix was another instance of the same fact, and its last hours were probably consoled by the thought that out of its ashes another phoenix would arise to repeat the experiment, be similarly calcined and reproduced, and subsequently alluded to by an American newspaper in connection with the great Chicago fire. As but one phoenix existed at one time, and he was his own successor, this bird has the honor of being the only known illustration in the animal kingdom of a sole corporation.

The reader of the "Arabian Nights Entertainments" will not fail to recall the roc—the roc upon which so many have split—the roc of ages gone by, one of whose eggs, suitably decomposed, would have made an omelette for the entire Liberal Republican party of Kansas.

Time would fail to tell of the auk, the emu, the harpy, the apteryx, and the ornithorhyncus, of whom the world was not worthy, that have wandered in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; vague, mysterious creatures, congeners of the jayhawk in its dubious origin and its wild career.

The jayhawk is a creation of mythology. Every nation has its myths, human and animal, some of which disappear as the State matures, while others continue to stand out upon its early horizon in conspicuous proportions, enlarged rather than diminished by the distance that intervenes. The infancy

and childhood of communities, as well as that of individuals, abound in legends and traditions which become crystallized by time into a mythology in which qualities become personified, and the forces and operations of Nature are symbolized as living beings, so that history, like the nursery, has its Mother Goose's Melodies whose idle rhymes were sung at the cradle of the race.

In the twilight of time the domain of fact insensibly yields to the shadowy realm of fable; the true and the false are confounded; the real is indistinguishable from the imaginary; and out of the confusion is born a brood of phantoms and chimeras, centaurs, demi gods and goddesses, heroes and monsters, phoenixes and jayhawks, that under different names have peopled the early times of every nation since the world began. In this strange procreation, beauty becomes Venus; strength, Hercules; appetite, Bacchus; manhood, in its glory, Apollo; and the elements themselves are endowed with sentient life.

The process is not, as we are apt to imagine, peculiar to the races of antiquity, but is witnessed in the history of every community, great or small, which attempts the experiment of an independent existence. The realism of later days sometimes strips these phantasms of their insubstantial vestments and reveals their native deformity, as the traveler with his lens detects upon the distant summit which seems but a deeper stain upon the forehead of the morning sky, its ragged garb of forest and its gray scalp of rock; but generally they become more respectable with age. They are accepted as facts. Poetry decorates them with its varnish. Orators cover them with a rhetorical veneer, and they are incorporated into the general literature of the country.

Had an irreverent Athenian ventured to doubt Silenus or denounce Priapus, he would probably have been received with a stormy outcry like that which greeted Bancroft when he ventured to disclose the truth about some of the paragons of early American history. And yet it cannot be denied that the popular notion of the founders of the Government is as purely mythological] as the Grecian dream of Jupiter and Minerva. With what awe in our boyhood do we contemplate the majestic name of Washington! That benign and tranquil although somewhat stolid visage looks down upon us from a serene atmosphere unstained with earthly passion. That venerable fame bears no taint of mortal frailty save in the juvenile episode of the hatchet, in which the venial error is expiated by the immortal candor of its confession. To our revering fancy, the massive form wrapped in military cloak stands forever at midnight upon the frozen banks of the Delaware, watching the patriot troops cross the icy current in the darkness before the grand morning of Trenton; or else, arrayed in black velvet small-clothes, resigning his commission to the Continental Congress at Annapolis. We learn in riper years, with grief not unmingled with incredulity, that this great man was subject to ungovernable outbreaks of rage, that he swore like a mule-driver, and that he was not only the Father of his Country, but also of Governor Posey of Indiana.

With such disheartening examples before us, it is not unreasonable to believe that the student of Kansas history a hundred years hence, as he reverts from the men and manners of that degenerate time to the first splendid lustra of his native State, will turn to Genesis vi. 4 for consolation, and say with a sigh: "There were giants in the earth

in those days." The colossal characters nurtured in the primeval convulsions of our politics will have passed into mythology. Tradition will have lent its pensive charm to the eloquence of Carney, the unquenchable fire of Crawford, Lane's impregnable virtue, Lowe's aggressive vigor, the sensitive honor of Clarke—that "tall young oak of the Kaw," whose acorns fattened the swine in Caldwell's sty—Caldwell, who proudly rose in his seat in the United States Senate in '72 and hurled back with indignation the charge that he bought his senatorial toga at a political slop-shop—ah! who could forbear to admit that there were indeed giants in the earth in those days?

This was the close of the epoch when the jayhawk flew in the troubled atmosphere. It was an early bird, and it caught many a Missouri worm. The worms did not object to the innocent amusement of the bird, but they insisted that public opinion must and should be respected.

But the bird had a mission. It could not be caught with chaff, nor would it allow salt to be put on its tail. It pursued its ministry of retribution, protection, and vengeance through many bloody years, till the worms were fain to concede the superiority of their feathered antagonist and adopt the sentiment of the popular melody, "Oh, birdie, I am tired now!"

The Border Ruffians in '56 constructed the eccleobion in which the jayhawk was hatched, and it broke the shell upon the reedy shores of the Marais des Cygnes. Its habits were not migratory, and for many years its habitat was Southern Kansas; but eventually it extended its field of operations northward, and soon after the outbreak of the war was domiciled in the gloomy defiles and lonely forests of the bluffs whose rugged

bastions resist the assaults of the Missouri from the mouth of the Kaw to the Nebraska line.

The situation was favorable. The occasion was auspicious. The new State, itself intensely loyal, had but two lines of intercourse with its Eastern sisters—one by rail and one by river—both under the control of enemies who considered the engulfing of trains through broken bridges, and the murder of unsuspecting passengers upon steamers from ambush along the shores, as honorable warfare.

To the west and south extended unpeopled and desolate solitudes, open to sudden invasion. Hostile camp-fires burned around the fistulous lakes in the forests of Buchanan and Platte, and the insolent challenge of the sentinel was heard at nightfall upon the shores of the deserted river. The memories of brutal wrongs were fresh in the memories of implacable sufferers.

The farms and plantations of that irregular triangle known as the "Platte Purchase," whose hypotenuse is the Missouri River, abounded in horses and herds, hogs and cattle—the accumulation of years of unexampled prosperity. Its fat soil nurtured magnificent orchards. Its broad fields, cultivated by a race of negroes whose average intelligence was superior to that of their lazy lords, had returned incredible yields of wheat, hemp, and corn. Money was abundant. Granary, bin, and larder were overflowing. Spacious mansions, with airy verandas and porticos, comfortable appurtenances of barns, sheds, and out-buildings, reposed in the tranquil seclusion of pastured lawns, whose ancient trees cast a venerable shade upon the blue-grass sward below.

Indifferent roads and lack of public conveyances rendered the saddle the chief dependence for local communication, and

resulted in a breed of incomparable riding horses, whose peculiar gait, known as "single-foot rack," is the poetry of locomotion. A generous diet, freedom from the worst cares of life, and much exercise on horseback during the greater portion of the year had gradually produced a race of ruddy and stalwart men, bold and turbulent by nature in youth, but rendered timid by wealth and toned down to inaction in riper years by too much fat bacon and "apple jack and honey."

Slavery, as practiced among them, had few of its most repulsive features; but its existence fixed their political convictions. So they put their sons on their best horses and sent them South with plethoric saddle bags to join the hordes of Price, while they themselves remained at home upon their plantations and avowed their unalterable devotion to the Constitution and the Union.

Amid the convulsions of the period, and with the stimulus of an unappeasable appetite for vengeance, such an inviting field could not long remain unvisited. The temptation was irresistible, and the jayhawk plumed itself for the quarry. The courts were closed. The regular armies were engaged in other directions. The authorities upon either side were too much engrossed to listen to complaints. The young men were in the brush or the camp. All the ordinary avocations of industry and the usual pursuits of life were at an end. The negroes laid down the shovel and the hoe, picked up as substitutes for the agricultural implements, mules, horses, wagons, furniture, beds, bedding, provisions, and simultaneously started for Kansas, waking the echoes as they thronged the ferries with the amazing chorus, "Oh, we're the Snolligosters, and we'll all jine de Union!" In some instances they were pursued by their former owners, assisted by their facile parti-

sans in the land of refuge, conveyed by night in skiffs across the river, and, after frightful preliminary torture, deliberately burned to death.

At this time patriotism and larceny had not entirely coalesced, and upon the debatable frontier between these contending passions appeared a race of thrifty warriors, whose souls were rent with conflicting emotions at the thought of their bleeding country's wrongs and the available assets of Missouri. Their avowed object was the protection of the border. Their real design was indiscriminate plunder. They adopted the name of "Jayhawkers."

Conspicuous among the irregular heroes who thus sprang to arms in 1861, and ostensibly their leader, was an Ohio stage-driver by the name of Charles Metz, who, having graduated with honor from the penitentiary of Missouri, assumed from prudential reasons the more euphonious and distinguished appellation of "Cleveland." He was a picturesque brigand. Had he worn a slashed doublet and trunk hose of black velvet, he would have been the ideal of an Italian bandit. Young, erect, and tall, he was sparely built, and arrayed himself like a gentleman in the costume of the day. His appearance was that of a student. His visage was thin, his complexion olive-tinted and colorless, as if "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Black piercing eyes, finely cut features, dark hair and beard correctly trimmed, completed a *tout ensemble* that was strangely at variance with the aspect of the score of dissolute and dirty desperadoes that formed his command. These were generally degraded ruffians of the worst type, whose highest idea of elegance in personal appearance was to have their mustaches dyed a villainous metallic black, irrespective of the consideration whether its native hue was red or brown. It is

a noticeable fact that a dyed mustache stamps its wearer inevitably either as a pitiful snob or an irreclaimable scoundrel.

The vicinity of the fort, with its troops, rendered Leavenworth undesirable as a base of operations. St. Joseph was also heavily garrisoned, and they accordingly selected Atchison as the point from which to move on the enemy's works. Atchison at that time contained about twenty-five hundred inhabitants. Its business was transacted upon one street, and extended west about four blocks from the river. Its position upon the extreme curve of the "Grand Détour" of the Missouri affording unrivalled facilities for escape to the interior in the event of pursuit. Having been principally settled by Southerners, it still afforded much legitimate game for our bird of prey, and its loyal population having already largely enlisted, the city was incapable of organized resistance to the depredations of the marauders.

They established their headquarters at the saloon of a German named Ernest Renner, where they held their councils of war, and whence they started upon their forays. The winter was favorable to their designs, as the river closed early, enabling them to cross upon the ice. Cleveland proclaimed himself Marshal of Kansas, and announced his determination to run the country. He invited the cordial cooperation of all good citizens to assist him in sustaining the Government and punishing its foes. Ignorant of his resources and his purposes, the people at first were inclined to welcome their strange guests as a protection from the dangers to which they were exposed; but it soon became apparent that the doctors were worse than the disease. They took possession of the town, defied the municipal authorities, and committed such intolerable excesses that their expulsion was a matter of public safety. Their incursions

into Missouri were so frequent and audacious that a company of infantry was sent from Weston and stationed at Winthrop to effect their capture, but to no purpose. They soon ceased to inquire about the political views of their victims. If a man had an enemy in any part of the country whom he wished to injure, he reported him to Cleveland as a rebel, and the next night he was robbed of all he possessed and considered fortunate if he escaped without personal violence. In some cases, at the intercession of friends, the property was restored; but generally there was no redress. A small detachment of cavalry was sent from the fort to take them, but just as they had dismounted in front of the saloon and were hitching their horses, Cleveland appeared at the door with a cocked navy in each hand and told them he would shoot the first man that moved a finger. Calling two or three of his followers, he disarmed the dragoons, took their horses and equipments, and sent them back on foot to reflect upon the vicissitudes of military affairs.

Early in 1862 the condition became desperate, and the city authorities, in connection with the commander at Winthrop, concerted a scheme which brought matters to a crisis. Cleveland and about a dozen of his gang were absent in Missouri on a scout. The time of their return was known, and Marshal Holbert had his forces stationed in the shadow of an old warehouse near the bank of the river. It was a brilliant moonlight night in midwinter. The freebooters emerged from the forest and crossed upon the ice. They were freshly mounted, and each one had a spare horse. Accompanying them were two sleighs loaded with negroes, harness, and miscellaneous plunder. As they ascended the steep shore of the levee, unconscious of danger, they were all taken prisoners, except Cleve-

land, who turned suddenly, spurred his horse down the embankment, and escaped. The captives were taken to Weston, where they soon afterward enlisted in the Federal Army. The next day Cleveland rode into town, captured the City Marshal on the street, and declared his intention to hold him as a hostage for the safety of his men. He compelled the Marshal to walk by the side of his horse a short distance, when, finding a crowd gathering for his capture, he struck him a blow on the head with his pistol and fled. He continued his exploits for some months, but was finally driven to bay in one of the southern counties, and, attempting to let himself down the side of a precipitous ravine, was shot by a soldier from above, the ball entering under his arm and passing through his body. His temporary widow took his sacred clay to St. Joseph, where its place of interment is marked by a marble headstone bearing the usual memoranda, and concluding with the following:

"One hero less on earth,
One angel more in heaven!"

The unreliable character of grave-stone literature has been the theme of frequent comment, but unless this ostensible eulogy was intended as a petrified piece of jocularity and gratuitously inscribed by the sculptor, it may, perhaps, be justly considered the most liberal application of the maxim, "*Nil de mortuis nisi bonum*," to be found in any American cemetery.