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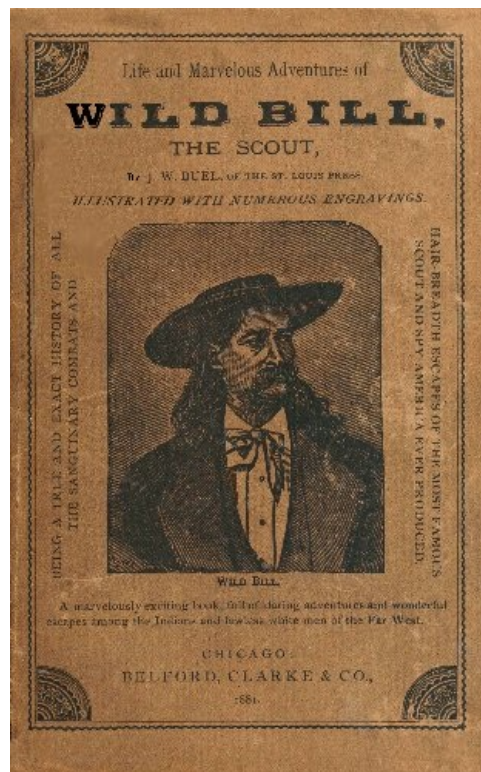
Author: James W. Buel

Release date: September 21, 2014 [EBook #46927]

Language: English

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**WILD BILL.**

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**LIFE AND MARVELOUS ADVENTURES**

**OF**

**WILD BILL,**

**THE SCOUT.**

BEING A TRUE AND EXACT HISTORY OF ALL THE  
SANGUINARY COMBATS AND HAIR-BREADTH  
ESCAPES OF THE MOST FAMOUS SCOUT  
AND SPY AMERICA EVER PRODUCED.

BY  
J. W. BUEL,  
OF THE ST. LOUIS PRESS.

*ILLUSTRATED.*

CHICAGO:  
BELFORD, CLARKE & CO.  
1880.



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## PECULIARITIES OF WILD BILL'S NATURE.

WILD BILL, as a frontier character of the daring, cunning and honorable class, stands alone, without a prototype; his originality is as conspicuous as his remarkable escapades. He was desperate without being a desperado; a fighter without that disposition which invites danger or craves the excitement of an encounter. He killed many men, but in every instance it was either in self-defense or in the prosecution of a duty which he deemed justifiable. Wild Bill was a necessary character in the Far West during the period which marked his career. He was essentially a civilizer, in the sense of a vigilance posse. The law and order class found in him an effective agent for the correction of the lawless; it was fighting the desperate with one of their kind, and Bill had the cunning to remain on the side of society and to always flank his enemies.

It would require a volume to moralize upon the deeds of this remarkable man as they deserve, for his desperate encounters find a parallel only in the atmospheric changes which abate an epidemic. When Bill drew his pistol there was always one less desperado to harass the law-abiding, and his presence served to allay the hunger of cut-throats and rapacious plunderers. As a fighter, he had no equal; as a pistol shot, none could excel him; as a scout in the service of his country, there were none more faithful, daring and serviceable; with a disposition as gentle as a zephyr, but a determination stronger than the hurricane. Never a boaster; always deferential to those who might differ from him in opinion; a man of strong friendships and little enmity. Such were the marked characteristics of him whose memory is deserving of perpetuation, and whose wonderful exploits it is the purpose of the writer to describe. The half cannot be told, because of the subject's secretive disposition, and extreme dislike to reciting his own adventures. That which is herewith given is absolutely true in every particular, without a single shading of fiction or extravagance, and may confidently be accepted as truthful history.

J. W. BUEL.

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# LIFE OF WILD BILL.

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## WILD BILL'S EARLY LIFE.

JAMES B. HICKOK, known to history as "Wild Bill," was born near Troy Grove, La Salle county, Illinois, May 27th, 1837. His father and mother were both natives of Vermont, in which state they were married. Shortly after marriage, they went to New York, and remained in that state until 1834, when they removed to Illinois, and settled in Putnam county. Two years afterwards, however, they again removed to settle upon a more desirable homestead in La Salle county, where they resided until their death, the father dying in 1852 and the mother in 1878, at the advanced age of seventy-four years.

The family consisted of six children, four boys and two girls, as follows: O. C. Hickok, born in New York in 1830, and now living in California; Lorenzo B., also born in New York in 1832; Horace D., born in Putnam county, Illinois, in 1834; James B., the subject of this sketch; and Celinda D. and Lydia M., both born in La Salle county, the former in 1839 and the latter in 1841. Lorenzo and Horace are still living upon the old homestead. Celinda married a gentleman by the name of Dewey, and is now living in Mendota, La Salle county. Lydia married a Mr. Barnes, and is living in Decatur county, Kansas. Thus it will be seen that all the children are still living, with the single exception of James (Wild Bill,) whose marvelous exploits it is the purpose of the writer to faithfully, but briefly, record in this pamphlet. 8

The names and dates of birth of the several children are given in order to correct the prevalent idea that James was much older. His most intimate acquaintances informed the writer that he was born in 1830; and the inscription on the stump which served as a head-board to his original grave, gave his age at the time of death at forty-eight years, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter descriptive of his murder.

The advantages possessed by James for acquiring an education were very limited, in consequence of which he grew up with little knowledge. He learned to read, and this single acquirement he used almost exclusively in exploring fiction literature. Nothing afforded him so much pleasure as the perusal of such novels as "Claude Duval," "The Bold Ranger," "Dick Turpin," and that class of stories descriptive of adventures in an *outré* civilization. A result of this reading is found in his life.

In 1856, when James was nineteen years of age, he left home for the west, Kansas being his proposed destination. The border troubles of that time, no doubt, influenced him to go to that (then) territory; for, from the time that he was twelve years of age, he manifested an ardent love for adventure. He made the rifle and pistol his earliest companions, and when he left La Salle county he had the reputation of being the best shot in that portion of the state. 9

The first record we have of him after leaving Illinois was during his short stay at Independence, Missouri, at which place he gained some notoriety by boldly entering the midst of a dozen infuriated men and bidding them to disperse. This event, we believe, has never before been mentioned in any of the many sketches written of him, and as it was his first act of daring, it is worthy of production here. Its truthfulness, however, we cannot vouch for, not having received the details from an eye-witness.

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## FIRST EVIDENCE OF PLUCK.

In 1856, the year in which the occurrence is said to have taken place, Independence was but a post village, and was fairly upon the border. Many teamsters stopped there, *en route* to Kansas City with produce for shipment. There were two saloons in the place, and, naturally, much drunkenness and lawlessness. On the occasion referred to, a dozen teamsters had put up in town, and shortly afterwards visited one of the saloons, where they soon became quite demonstrative under the influence of the liquor they had drunk. A fight was the consequence, in which the saloon-keeper, who had almost brained one of the party, had to flee for his life and take refuge in another house. The crowd had drawn their pistols and sworn vengeance, and finally surrounded the house in which the saloon-keeper had secreted himself, and determined to kill him. Hickok, although not present during the fight, heard the disturbance and was soon on the scene. Learning that the saloon-keeper—who chanced to be a friend—was in imminent danger, with the display of the most astonishing recklessness he dashed into the crowd with his two pistols drawn, and offered to fight the entire party, or represent the object of their revenge. This bold proposition served to stop the noise of their wild threats, but meeting with no response, Hickok commanded the crowd to disperse and forthwith leave the place, finishing the command with the following characteristic remark, "Or there will be more dead men around here than the town can bury." In thirty minutes every one of the blood-craving teamsters had left the place. 10

This event popularized him greatly in the immediate section, and it was here he received the name which stuck to him throughout his life and by which his memory will always be best recalled—"Wild Bill"—though why the name "Bill" was given instead of "Jim," his real name, it is difficult to understand. In our subsequent allusions to him we shall use this familiar title.

Bill remained in Independence one month, but finding the place too near civilization, and meeting daily with crowds on the road to the gold discoveries of California, he concluded to strike for the coast. In the latter part of the same year he attached himself to a train as driver, and made the overland trip to California. He did not remain long in the golden state, however, for being most agreeably impressed with the wild scenery and picturesque solitude of the plains, skirted with bold mountains, and enlivened with abundant game, he retraced his journey and brought up in the valley near the then small village of Denver, and, in company with two others, he followed trapping and hunting for three years, occasionally going as far north as Hudson's Bay. 11

In 1860, Bill was placed in charge of the teams of the Overland Stage Company,—which ran between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Denver, over the old Platte route,—at Rock Creek, about fifty miles west of Topeka, Kansas.

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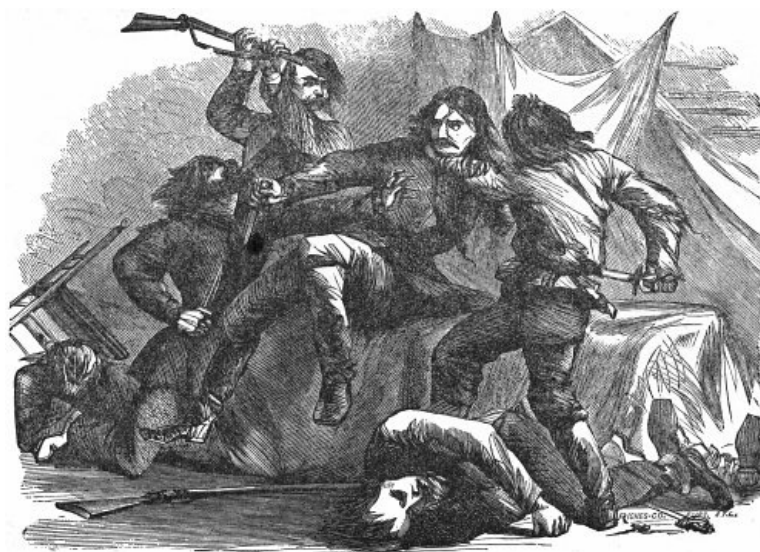
## BILL'S DESPERATE FIGHT AT ROCK CREEK

It was while occupying this position that the first and most desperate fight of his life occurred, and one which we may safely say is without a parallel. The particulars of this remarkable encounter have been given to the public several times, once by a writer in *Harper's Monthly*, who claims to have heard the story from Bill himself, but whether he reported Bill correctly or not, the account in *Harper*, like that which has appeared in other publications, has but the mere skeleton of truth in it, the body being of error. The author collected the facts and particulars of this fight from Capt. E. W. Kingsbury, at present chief of U. S. Storekeepers for the western district of Missouri, who was a passenger in the overland stage which arrived at Rock Creek within an hour after the fight occurred, and saw the bodies of the men Bill had killed, and heard the story fresh from Bill's own lips. Capt. Kingsbury's version of the encounter is corroborated by Dr. Joshua Thorne, one of the most prominent physicians in Kansas City, who was Wild Bill's physician during his life, and at whose home Bill was a frequent and familiar visitor. Bill repeated the story to Dr. Thorne several times, just as he gave it to Capt. Kingsbury. Bill had very few confidants, but among that privileged class were the two gentlemen mentioned, who, by their permission, will be frequently referred to hereafter. After the appearance of *Harper's Monthly* containing the sketch referred to, Bill was very angry and pronounced the writer of it a perverter of facts.

The correct story of the "battle," as we may very properly call it, is as follows: The country for many miles around Rock Creek, including Marysville and Manhattan, had for several years been infested by a desperate band of marauders headed by Jim and Jack McCandlas. They were horse thieves and murderers who overran the country and levied tribute from nearly every one they met. This murderous gang had killed more than a score of innocent men and women for the purpose of robbery, and yet their power was such that no civil officer dared undertake their arrest.

In 1861, the year in which the fight occurred, the McCandlas boys raised a company in that section for the Confederate service. They established their headquarters about thirteen miles west of Rock Creek, where they were collecting men and stolen horses. Early in the morning of the day in question, Jim McCandlas rode by Rock Creek station in company with four of his men. McCandlas was leading an old man, known as Parson Shapley, by a lariat which was around the old man's neck. Coming up to Bill the party stopped, and McCandlas entered into a conversation, in which he tried to persuade Bill to enter the Confederate service and to turn over all the horses at the station to him. Bill, a stranger to the sensation of fear, told McCandlas to go to h—l; that if he did any fighting it would be on the side of the Union. McCandlas then told Bill if he didn't have the horses ready for delivery by the time of his return, "that there would be a small murder at Rock Creek station, and the stage company would have to get another man." The party then rode off.

In this connection, in order to give the reader an idea of the manner in which Wild Bill received his would-be murderers, it is necessary to partially describe Rock Creek station. The house in which Bill and his single partner, known as Doc. Mills, ate and slept, was a low-roofed log hut fronting the creek, with the rear part built against the hill. It had a front door, and a very small window in the side, near the rear. The single room was divided by an old blanket hung from the roof, behind which was a table and a bed made after the frontier style. This rude structure was one of the many sleeping places called "dugouts," so often seen in the wild West even at this day. The stables, also very rude but strongly made, adjoined the "dugout" on the east side. The arms in the house consisted of two revolvers, one shot-gun, a large bore rifle, which Bill called a Mississippi yager, and two large bowie knives.



**Wild Bill "Civilizes" the Neighborhood.**

After dinner, Doc. Mills took the shot-gun and one of the revolvers—which he usually carried—and went down the creek a short distance to shoot some quail. During his absence, and about four o'clock in the evening, Wild Bill saw the two McCandlas boys, accompanied by eight others, riding up the road towards him. Bill at once withdrew into the dugout and prepared to defend the place. Coming around in front of the dugout, Jim McCandlas hallooted to Bill, telling him to come out and deliver the horses. To this Bill returned an insulting reply. The mounted party then left their horses and began an onslaught on the door with a log which they used as a battering ram. Bill stood behind the old blanket, rifle in hand, and revolver and knife lying on the table. It

required but a few strokes to break the door, and the crowd of cut-throats, headed by Jim McCandlas, rushed in. The old yager was discharged, and the leader fell with a hole in his heart as large as a silver half-dollar. Bill seized his revolver and shot three more before any of them had reached him. The most terrible scene then followed. Every man was like a wounded lion; the six others jumped at Bill like harpies that had tasted blood. He was borne down upon the table, but his right hand was cutting right and left; the blood was gushing from his forehead, where he had been struck with a rifle, which almost blinded him; he cut two others down, and Jack McCandlas leaped upon him with an immense dirk drawn to cut Bill's throat. By a rare stroke of luck, Bill placed the muzzle of his pistol over McCandlas' heart and fired. The knife in McCandlas' hand dropped harmlessly upon Bill, and the man jumped into the air and fell dead, rolling over Bill and falling off the table to the floor. During this time the others, who had life in them, were firing their pistols at Bill whenever opportunity presented, but their numbers gave him the advantage. There was but little light in the room, and it was only the ones next to Bill that could do him any injury, the others being fearful of killing their own party. Six of the number had now been killed and two others badly wounded. They began to retreat, and though Bill was apparently bleeding at every pore, he now pressed the fighting. The two who remained unharmed reached their horses, and, leaping into the saddle, fled as though they were being pursued by one who was shielded with the panoply of invulnerability. The two wounded ran down the hill, but one was cut so badly that he fell beside the root of a large tree, and was unable to go further. At this juncture Doc. Mills came back, and, when half-way up the hill, he was met by Bill, who grabbed the loaded shot-gun, and, placing the muzzle to the head of the wounded man, blew his brains out. The other one, whose name was Jolly, managed to elude Bill and reach Manhattan, where, in a few days thereafter, he died, but not until he had told the story of the fight substantially as here related. 17

After the excitement of the terrific combat was over, Bill fainted from loss of blood, and was carried into the dugout by his partner, Doc. Mills. The sight on the inside was now terrible. Six men lay dead on the floor. Jim McCandlas' body was lying across the threshold of the door, almost half submerged in his blood. Hideous gashes and large bullet-holes had opened the reservoir of blood which formed in large pools, after making small creeks over the floor. The countenances of the dead men were most revolting. Not a groan escaped the lips of any of the victims after Doc. Mills entered with Bill's half-lifeless body, which he lay tenderly on the rude bed; every one had been killed outright. Those shot evidenced Bill's coolness and deliberate aim throughout the terrible ordeal; each was shot either in the heart or head, and the terrible dagger had been thrust with equal precision to the wells of the heart. 18

In less than one hour after the fight was over, the stage from Denver arrived, full of passengers, some of whom were thus introduced for the first time to the desperation of Western life. Wild Bill rallied sufficiently to tell the story of his dreadful encounter with ten of the most desperate men that ever cut a man's throat or robbed a stable. Every attention that could be shown was given Bill. He was too badly cut and shot to admit of removal, but a surgeon was sent for from Manhattan, and old Mrs. Watkins, who lived within five miles of the station, came down as soon as she heard the news, and volunteered her services to nurse him. Bill's wounds consisted of a fracture of the skull, three gashes on the breast, and a cut to the bone on his left forearm. There were seven balls in his legs and body, and there was scarcely a place on his face, limbs or body that was not black from bruises he had received. It would seem impossible that a man could survive such injuries, but, nevertheless, in six months Bill was out again, and in less than one year he was as sound physically as ever.

It is not necessary to say that the McCandlas boys never entered the Confederate army, and the manner in which they left the service they had been in so long was cause for thanks. The people of that section worshiped Bill as no other man. He had civilized the neighborhood. 19

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## A RUNNING FIGHT WITH CONFEDERATES.

After recovery from his wounds, Wild Bill left Rock Creek Station and went to Leavenworth, where shortly after his arrival, he was appointed wagon master of a train Gen. Jno. C. Fremont had ordered to Sedalia, Missouri. On the third day out and as they were about going into camp for the night, the train was attacked by a company of Confederates and several of the wagons burned and the mules run off. Bill could offer little resistance, as he had less than a dozen men with him, all of whom surrendered at the beginning of the attack. Nevertheless, being mounted on an excellent horse, he gave battle single handed, and when called upon to surrender, his reply was: "Come and take me." Knowing that Col. Jameson was at Kansas City, he started for that place, pursued by more than fifty of the Confederates, who fired their pistols at him until they were distanced, but he escaped without a scratch; not so his pursuers, for four of the more advanced ones fell victims to his unerring aim.

Upon his arrival in Kansas City Bill at once reported to Col. Jameson, who immediately dispatched two companies of his command to the scene of the first attack, and on the following day succeeded in recapturing most of the stock and repairing the damage to the wagons, so that the train was able to proceed to Sedalia. His valor in resisting the Confederates was acknowledged by his appointment as Brigade Wagon Master with Gen. Curtis' army, and, while serving in this capacity, he engaged in the battle of Pea Ridge, where he performed most valuable service as a sharp-shooter, killing no less than thirty-five men, it is stated, from a single station.

## ENTERS THE UNION ARMY AS A SPY.

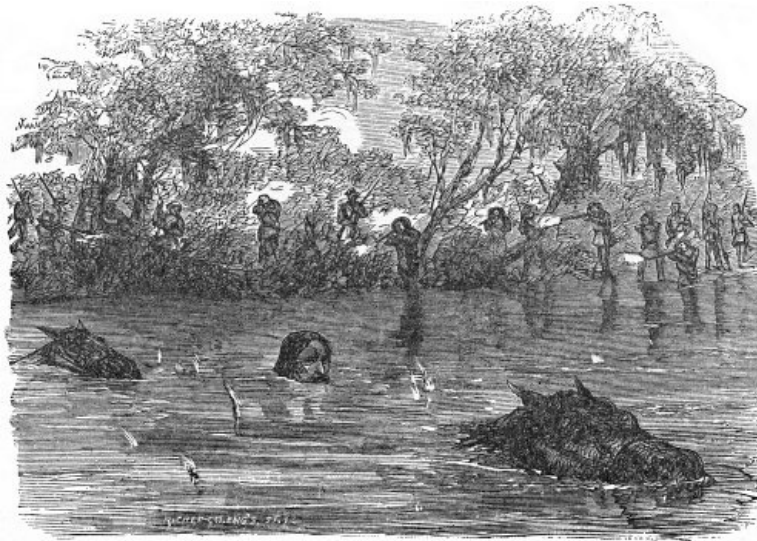
After Bill's complete recovery he returned to the states and volunteered his services to Gen. Curtis, who had command of the army in Missouri, as a scout and spy. He was enrolled in the early part of 1863, and at once sent upon a dangerous mission. Gen. Price was preparing to enter Missouri, and it became very necessary for Gen. Curtis to have reliable information of the intentions of the Confederate General. Bill went to Kansas City, where he was furnished a horse, and allowed to exercise his judgment in reaching the enemy's lines. Accordingly, he rode through Kansas and the Indian Territory in order to reach Arkansas from the south. He assumed the name of Bill Barnes, and enlisted in a regiment of mounted rangers at a small town south of Little Rock. The regiment was attached to Price's command, and shortly afterwards he was made one of Price's orderlies. This gave him all the facilities desired to obtain information, which he managed, in many ways, to communicate to Gen. Curtis. In 1864 Price began his retreat from Missouri and made his last stand by forming a junction with Shelby on Sugar creek, about twenty miles below Newtonia, in McDonald county. Gen. Curtis had, by forced marches, reached the creek at nearly the same time, and both forces were preparing for battle. It was now time for Bill to leave the Confederates, but no opportunity was presented. A river, or creek, lay between the two armies, and any effort to cross would certainly be detected. 21

On the 23d of October, and the day Bill formed the intention of making a bold effort to cross the lines, Gen. Price directed him to carry orders to Gen. Shelby instructing him where and when to make the attack on Curtis, and how to conduct the movement. This instruction made matters worse for Bill, and he determined to take the chances of life or death in evading the Confederate army and placing the orders in Gen. Curtis' hands. He rode furiously back and lost no time in challenging a bragadocio sergeant to ride with him, for a wager, nearest the enemy's lines. The sergeant tried to back out, but the boys began to hoot him so that their respective horses were wagered as to who could cross the open space and ride down to the creek. The two started off on a dash and soon the bullets from the Union forces were whistling around them. Bill kept as far from his partner as possible, and made his horse rear and plunge in order to attract the attention of the Union forces. They rode down to the creek together, when the Union men discovered Bill and shouted to him. This aroused the suspicion of the sergeant, who attempted to draw his pistol, but Bill's eye was on him, and in a flash a ball went crashing through his brain. Bill grabbed the bit of the dead sergeant's horse and plunged into the stream, which at the time was considerably swollen. The Confederates now saw what was up, and although the Union forces commenced a brisk fire, the Confederates seemed determined to kill Bill, the bullets falling around him like hail; but he managed to reach the opposite shore with his own and the dead sergeant's horse without receiving any injury. Bill was taken into Gen. Curtis' tent and afterwards publicly thanked for his daring and valuable services. 22

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## A RIDE WITH DEATH.

Gen. Curtis continued pushing southward, and it again became necessary for Bill to enter the enemy's lines. There were three things particularly in Bill's favor as a scout and spy. First of all, he was daring beyond example; second, he was an unerring shot, and third, he could change his appearance so radically as to defy detection; add to this a native cunning and adaptability, and his success and escapes are not so remarkable. 24



**Bill's Escape from the Confederates.**

The second time he was sent into the lines he was accompanied by Nat. Tuckett, one of the dearest friends Bill ever had. They took a circuitous route like the one adopted by Bill in reaching Price's army, and attached themselves to Kirby Smith at Austin, Texas, and soon afterwards moved north with Smith's army into Arkansas. Curtis' forces were not very strong, and while deploying down the Arkansas river they began to feel the strength of the Confederates. At length the main body of both armies came in view and stretched their lines of battle opposite each other about one thousand yards apart. A battery of ten-pounders was stationed on a small knoll to the left, which was kept playing on the Confederates, but evidently with little effect, for they did not change positions and appeared willing that the Union forces should expend their fire, for they did not return it except occasionally, apparently to let the Union forces know they were waiting for the attack. This condition of affairs continued for more than an hour, when suddenly two horsemen were seen to leave the ranks of the Confederates and ride furiously towards the Union lines. They had not gone a hundred yards before a detachment of cavalry started in pursuit and a rapid fire was commenced at the two riders. A company of Union men was deployed to intercept the pursuers, as it was evident that the two were trying to effect their escape. 25 On they came, the pursued and pursuers, until the two reached a ditch about twenty feet wide and ten feet deep. All but two of the pursuers had been distanced, and when the pursued came to the ditch one of them cleared it with a bound, but the other fell dead under his horse from a pistol shot fired by the two advanced pursuers. The Union forces could then plainly see that the two trying to escape were Wild Bill and Nat. Tuckett. When his partner fell, Bill turned in his saddle and fired two quick shots, and both the advanced pursuers fell dead and their horses galloped riderless into the Union lines.

This ride has been pronounced by those familiar with the facts—hundreds of whom are yet living—as one of the most daring feats ever accomplished, and Bill's escape from death one of the most remarkable of his many strokes of good fortune. The only motive he had for adopting so rash a measure was his dare-devil nature, which possibly became intensified by one or more drinks.

In accomplishing this perilous feat, Bill rode a black mare, to which he gave the name of Black Nell, and which he took great pains to train, with what success will be mentioned hereafter.

## CAPTURED AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

Directly after performing this remarkable dare-devil deed "Wild Bill" again concluded to re-enter Price's lines, although to return into the camp where he must now be familiarly known, was like inviting death. Some men are never so happy as when daring fate, and to approach near the dreadful summoner often becomes a fascinating adventure. It was so with Bill, for the greater the risks to be encountered, the greater his enjoyment. He loved danger, not as the soldier who would gather fame from the mouths of roaring cannons, but as one who extracts some pleasant intoxicant from the result. For the fourth time Bill disguised himself and again made a detour so as to re-enter General Price's lines from the South. He met the fleeing army not many miles from Little Rock, and, riding a mule, with the make-up of an Arkansas farmer, he offered himself as a recruit. It was but a short time before he was discovered, and upon being reported he was arrested, and on the following day tried by court-martial. The trial lasted less than an hour, as he was so well known in connection with the escapades already narrated, and upon conviction he was sentenced to be shot on the succeeding day.

Fortune always favors the desperately brave, and we now have to record another extraordinary visitation of good luck to Bill. Price's army had been fleeing more than a week before the victorious Curtis, whose troops outnumbered those of Price two to one. The pursuit had been continued until both armies were very much fatigued, and Price's was so nearly exhausted that he was compelled to go into camp on a small creek twenty-five miles south of Little Rock. Wild Bill's arms and legs were pinioned with thongs and he was confined in a one-room log-house with a single guard to prevent his escape. The house had but one door and one window, the latter being nearly two feet square and closed by a door made of clap-boards. Being bound hand and foot there was no avenue of escape, apparently, and Bill was forced to take a melancholy view of his situation. Night coming on, and the guard being nearly worn out, dozed off from time to time, feeling that his prisoner was perfectly secure. While meditating upon the execution announced to take place on the morrow, in which he was to be the chief character his eyes caught sight of the handle of an old case-knife which was sticking in an auger hole in one of the house logs. Changing his seat without arousing any suspicion from the guard, Bill managed to secure the rusty knife, and after long effort succeeded in cutting the cords which bound his wrists together. The dozing guard permitted him also to cut the cords on his feet, and the moment he was free Bill rushed on the guard like a tiger springing upon its prey and seizing him by the throat ripped open his abdomen in an instant. The guard fell dead from the knife thrusts without being able to give any alarm, and, seizing the musket and taking the guard's coat, which he hastily put on, Bill fled out into the darkness and made good his escape. 27

Bill traveled nearly two days before reaching the Union lines, and upon his return he appeared before General Curtis, to whom he related his wonderful escape from death, and declined to act any longer as a spy in Price's army, as his return again would, undoubtedly, have resulted in his death. 28

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## A FIGHT WITH THREE BUSHWHACKERS.

Being a scout, Bill was not permanently attached to Gen. Curtis' army, but had a wide latitude in which to range; but he was fighting Confederates nearly all the time, sometimes in company with a small force and at other times single-handed. There are very few acquainted with the many phases the war assumed who do not remember the terrorism which existed in Southern Missouri from 1864 until the close of the rebellion. The country was infested with bushwhackers, whose single purpose was the murder of defenseless persons and running off valuable stock. Their depredations were terrible, and these marauding bands were composed of the renegades of both armies, which it was difficult for either side to punish. Their haunts were chiefly among the pineries and other places difficult to penetrate with a company of men so as to present an effective front. 29

Wild Bill, usually bent on some daring purpose, concluded to enter the pineries between Rolla and Springfield on a tour of discovery. He neglected to acquaint any one with his purpose, and left Rolla by night. After an absence of three days he returned to Rolla, leading three horses. Gen. Daviess, who was in command of the post, sent for Bill and asked him how he came in possession of the horses. The tone in which the General addressed the inquiry suggested to Bill the idea that the General entertained the suspicion that the horses were stolen. With a stolid indifference which characterized the man, Bill replied: "It's none of your d—d business." By Gen. Daviess' orders, Bill was placed in the guardhouse, but he had so many fast friends, who felt satisfied that he came by the horses honorably, that on the night following, Bill appeared on the streets as usual. The General was outwitted, and, approaching Bill courteously, he received an explanation as follows: On the second day after Bill left Rolla, he met three bushwhackers in a lonely road, who commanded him to dismount. To this Bill returned the reply, "It shall be a fair fight," and commenced firing. His first three shots killed his men. All of them fired at him, but the only effect was to split his saddle bow. Bill had some difficulty in catching the three horses, but he succeeded and brought them in. On the second day after getting into Rolla, Bill conducted a detail of six men to the spot where the fight occurred, and found the bodies of the three bushwhackers. The horses were turned over to Gen. Daviess. 30

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## BILL'S BOWIE-KNIFE DUEL WITH AN INDIAN CHIEF.

During the period that Bill was scouting for Gen. Curtis, he fought a duel to the death with an Indian chief, the particulars of which are partially forgotten, and the facts, therefore, can only be imperfectly recited. The details, so far as Dr. Thorne can remember them, are as follows: It will be remembered that during the civil war several tribes of Indians were employed, chiefly for foraging purposes, by both Federals and Confederates, the largest force being commanded by Gen. Jim Lane. Gen. Curtis had received information through a friendly tribe of Sioux Indians, in Kansas, that a hostile camp of Choctaws had been pitched on the Kaw river, a few miles west of Lawrence. The chief of the Sioux, Man-to-yu-kee, (Conquering Bear,) appeared before Gen. Curtis at Leavenworth and offered to accompany any white man he might choose to send, as a spy into the enemy's camp. Gen. Curtis at once selected Wild Bill for the dangerous mission. Upon setting out on the journey, Bill had his suspicions aroused by the anxiety of the chief, and frankly told the Indian that if he betrayed him death would be the consequence. 31

The two proceeded cautiously, Bill's eyes being almost constantly on the chief, lest the treachery he suspected would lead him into a fatal trap. His fears were realized when the two had got within a short distance of the hostile camp, for the chief had misled him and then suddenly disappeared. Bill managed, with his usual good fortune, to escape the Choctaws after getting inside the picket lines, although several times they came within a few feet of his hiding places. He made his way back to Leavenworth, where, after reporting the result of his trip, he directed his steps toward the camp of the Sioux.

Bill could never discover the motive which prompted the chief to thus betray him, but he was determined to be revenged. He was personally acquainted with many of the Sioux, and one of the most trusted ones he employed to lure the chief to a lone spot where he could take his revenge. The stratagem succeeded, and, ere the chief was aware, he was brought face to face with Bill in a sequestered spot thirty miles west of Kansas City. Bill told the chief that he intended to kill him for his treachery, and thereupon threw the Indian a pistol, telling him to defend himself. The chief knew Bill to be a dead shot, and objected to fighting a duel with pistols, but, being compelled to fight, he agreed to meet Bill in a hand-to-hand encounter with bowie-knives. Each carried such a knife, and therefore no further preliminaries were necessary. The bright, long, keen blades were unsheathed, and each holding a knife aloft in his right hand advanced to meet the other. The Indian fought shy and tried to back to cover, but Bill threatened to shoot him if he left a circle which he then made. Again the two came together, their hands clenched, at the center of the circle, and, as the chief was much the stronger, he held Bill's striking hand for nearly half an hour, their knives being locked together. A favorable opportunity being presented, Bill partly tripped the chief, and the hold was loosened. For a third time they came together, but this time the result was fearful. Bill slashed at the Indian's heart, but the blow lost its full effect by striking the buckskin vest and a buckle on the suspender which the chief chanced to wear. But the buckle was cleft in twain, and the Indian's left side was cut open to the ribs. But Bill had not escaped, for the Indian, also aiming at Bill's heart, struck his arm near the shoulder and stripped the flesh down the bone two inches. 32

The combatants presented a terrible spectacle as they came together a fourth time. The blood was streaming from each and making the ground fairly muddy over which they fought. The chief was the first to strike next, but the blow was caught on the edge of Bill's knife, and, with a lightning parry and thrust, Bill cut the Indian's throat, almost severing the head from the body. 33

The wound Bill received caused him great annoyance, for after partially healing, a fistula formed, which Dr. Thorne treated for several months before he recovered the use of his arm. This fight was one of the most terrible ever man engaged in, and nothing could evidence a man's pluck more conclusively than this did Bill's.

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## INDIAN AND BUFFALO SPECULATION.

Shortly after the close of the great civil war Wild Bill engaged in a novel enterprise, the result of which was a complete financial failure, though it furnished rare amusement for a great many wealthy people. He secured six fine, full-grown buffalos, and with four Commanche Indians, he made a trip to Niagara Falls, for the purpose of treating the visitors of that fashionable and famous resort to a genuine buffalo chase. The entertainment was duly advertised and a very large number of persons was attracted to witness real Indians, bespangled with beads, paint and feathers, in pursuit of a genuine herd of wild buffalos. The chase occurred on the Canada shore, and created the greatest excitement; hundreds of gentlemen engaging in the pursuit, mounted in excellent style, and rendering efficient aid at the close in securing the buffalos, unharmed, and returning them to pens previously provided. Niagara sight-seers, perhaps, never witnessed a more interesting and exciting entertainment, but they were not willing to pay properly for the amusement. No admission fee could be charged, as the chase could not be conducted within an enclosure, and Bill had to depend upon voluntary contributions, which were so meagre as to leave him a heavy loser. He was compelled to sell his buffalos and pilot his Commanche braves back to their reservation.

34

An incident occurred at the close of the chase worthy of record in this connection. Among the many spectators was a party of English snobs, one of whom seeing Bill dressed in buckskin breeches and generally frontier style, asked him if he were an Indian or white man. The question was addressed in a cockney way peculiar to English *haute tons*, and gave such offense that Bill replied: "This is the kind of a man I am," at the same time striking the impertinent fellow a blow in the face which sent him sprawling into the street.

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## BILL'S DUEL AT SPRINGFIELD.

In the latter part of 1865, Wild Bill went to Springfield, Missouri, where he remained some time. It was while at this place that he fought a duel with Dave Tutt in the public square, and, as usual, killed his man, and came out of the encounter scathless. The particulars of this affair are as follows: Springfield became a meeting place, after the war, of Confederates and Union men. Both sides recruited their forces from this section, and though the war had ended, many of the animosities then engendered still remained. Another peculiarity of the place consisted in the excess of border ruffianism, which made the town notorious. Murders had been so frequent in that section that the value of a life could scarcely be computed for its smallness. Among the rowdies was one Dave Tutt, a man of terrible passion, strong revenge, and one withal who had his private graveyard. He and Bill had met before; in fact, had shared the smiles of the same woman, a few years previous; but Bill had won "in a square court," and Dave was anxious to meet Bill with pistols to settle the point finally. Some months passed while the two were in Springfield before any opportunity was presented for Dave to introduce a row, and when it came it was of Dave's own manufacture. It is claimed that Bill killed a particular friend of Dave's some years before, but of the truth of this we have no proof. One of the strong points of difference between the men consisted in the fact that Bill had been a Union scout and spy, and Dave had performed a similar duty for the Confederates. 35

Springfield was a great place for gamblers, and Bill and Dave belonged to the profession. One night, the two met in a saloon on the north side of the square, and Dave proposed a game with Bill, which, not being agreeable, Dave offered to stake a friend to play Bill. Thus the game was started. When Bill sat down to the game he drew out his heavy gold watch and laid it on the table, remarking that he intended to quit the game promptly at 12 o'clock. After nearly two hours playing he had won two hundred dollars, the greater part of which had come from Dave as a loan to his friend. Having broke the friend and Dave also, the latter remarked, "Bill, you've got money now, so pay me that forty dollars you've been owing me so long." 36

"All right," replied Bill, "there's your money," and thereupon passed the forty dollars to Dave.

"Now," remarked Dave, further, "I want that thirty-five dollars I won off you Friday night."

Bill's reply was very courteous: "Beg your pardon, Dave, it was only twenty-five dollars; I put the amount down in my memorandum-book at the time."

Receiving this mild reply, Dave reached across the table and took Bill's watch, with the remark, "You'll never get this watch until you pay me that thirty-five dollars."

This threw Bill into a violent passion, although he restrained himself. Rising from his chair and looking piercingly into Dave's eyes, he said: "I am anxious to avoid a row in this gentleman's house. You had better put that watch back on the table."

Dave returned an ugly look, and walked out of the room with the watch.

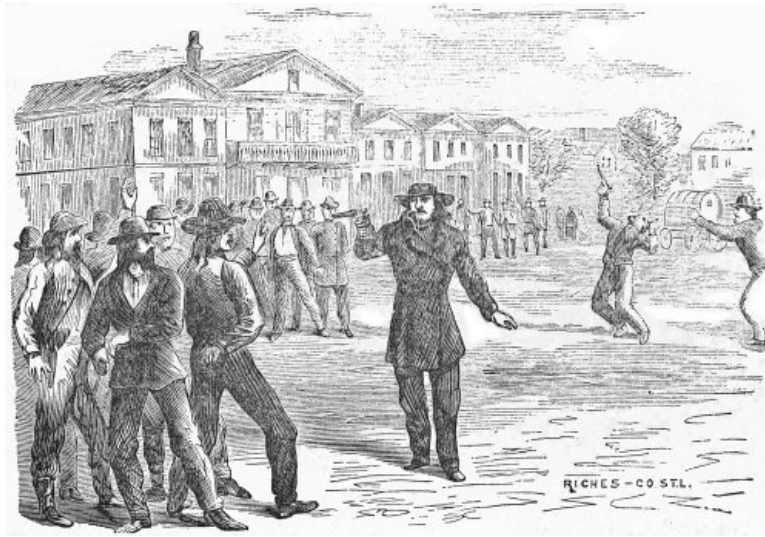
It was the only time, perhaps, in Bill's life, that he permitted himself to be thus bullied. Everyone who knew him thought he had lost his pluck. It was indeed a seven days' wonder with the people. 37

Dave kept the watch two days, during which time Bill remained in his room closely, revolving in his mind whether he should add another to his already long list of victims, or stop there and begin a life which flows in a more peaceful current. But he was not permitted to think and resolve without the advice of his friends. Almost every hour one or more of them would come to him with a new story about Dave's boasts and intentions.

On the morning of the third day after the row, Dave sent word to Bill that he intended "to carry the watch across the square at noon, and to call the hour from Wild Bill's watch." Bill sent back the following reply: "Dave Tutt will not carry my watch across the square to-day unless dead men can walk."

This reply satisfied everybody that there was going to be a death fight. Accordingly, shortly before noon, an immense crowd had assembled on the public square to see the duel.

At five minutes to twelve Wild Bill made his appearance on one side of the square opposite the crowd, where he could command a view of Tutt and his many friends, nearly all of whom were standing with their revolvers in their hands.



**“Are you Satisfied.”**

Just before twelve Dave stepped out from the crowd and started across the square. When he had proceeded a few steps and placed himself opposite to Bill, he drew his pistol; there was a report as of a single discharge, and Dave Tutt fell dead with a bullet through his heart. The moment Bill discharged his pistol—both pistols having been fired at the same instant—without taking note of the result of his shot, he turned on the crowd with his pistol leveled, and asked if they were satisfied; twenty or more blanched faces said they were, and pronounced the fight a square one. Bill expected to have to kill more than one man that day, but none of Dave’s friends considered it policy to appeal the result.

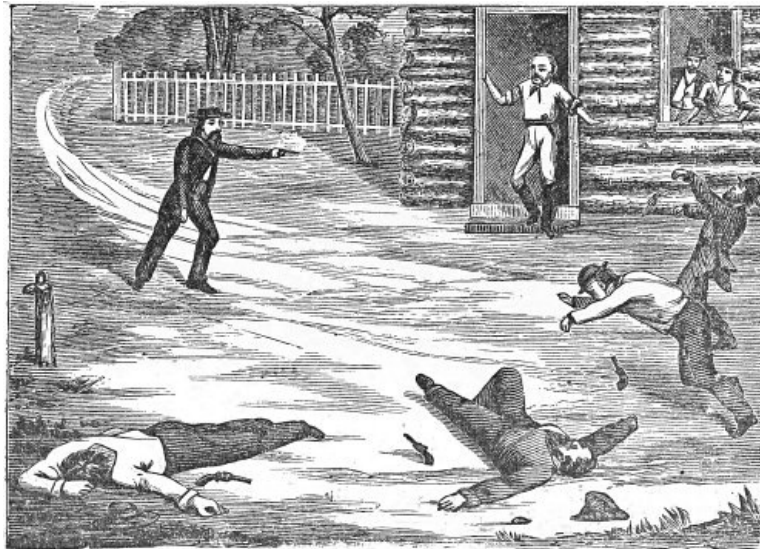
Bill was arrested, but at the preliminary examination he was discharged on the ground of self-defense. The verdict may not have been in accordance with the well defined principles of criminal jurisprudence, but it was sufficient, for all who know the circumstances believe that Tutt got his deserts.

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## A QUADRANGULAR DUEL IN NEBRASKA.

Bill remained in Springfield several months after killing Tutt, and until he was engaged, in 1866, to guide the Peace Commission, which visited the many tribes of Indians that year. Henry M. Stanley, the African explorer, accompanied the commission as correspondent of the *New York Herald*, and wrote some amusing sketches of Bill during the trip, but none of a nature which would make them appropriate in the history of his escapades. They related chiefly to his feats of marksmanship, knowledge of Indian cunning, and droll humor. 40

Upon the return of the Peace Commission, Bill made a trip into the eastern part of Nebraska, and in the spring of 1867, fought a remarkable duel in Jefferson county, with four men as his antagonists. The particulars of this fight were obtained from a gentleman now living in St. Louis, who, at the time, lived within a few miles of where the fight occurred, and heard the details from eye-witnesses.



**A Duel with Four Men.**

The origin of the difficulty was in bad whisky and ruffian nature. Bill went into a saloon—which was well filled with cattle drivers, who were half drunk and anxious for a fight—and called for a drink without inviting any one to join him. While raising the glass to his mouth one of the ruffians gave him a push in the back which caused him to drop the glass. Without saying a word, Bill turned and struck the rowdy a desperate blow, felling him outside the door. Four of the rowdy's friends jumped up from their chairs and drew their pistols. Bill appreciated his situation at once, and with wonderful coolness, said: "Gentlemen, let us have some respect for the proprietor. You are anxious for a fight, and I will accommodate you if you will consent to step outside. I will fight all four of you at fifteen paces with pistols." There was a general consent, and the crowd filed out of the saloon. The distance was stepped off, and the four men stood five feet apart, facing Bill. The saloon-keeper was to give the word "fire," and the arrangements were conducted in as fair a manner as four men can fight one. Bill stood as calmly as though he were in church. Not a flush nor tremor. All parties were to allow their pistols to remain in their belts until the word "fire" was given, when each was then to draw and fire at will, and as often as circumstances permitted. The saloon-keeper asked if all were ready, and receiving an affirmative reply, began to count slowly, pausing at least ten seconds between each count: "one, two, three—fire!" Bill had fired almost before the call had died from the saloon-keeper's lips. He killed the man on the left, but a shot also struck Bill in the right shoulder, and his right arm fell helpless. 42

In another instant he had transferred his pistol to his left hand, and three more successive shots dropped his antagonists. Three of the men were shot in the head and instantly killed. The other was shot in the right cheek, the ball carrying away a large portion of the cheek bone. He afterwards recovered, and may be living yet. The names of the four were: Jack Harkness, the one who recovered; Jim Slater, Frank Dowder and Seth Beeber.

Bill was lionized by the others in the crowd in a moment after the fight; his wound was carefully bandaged and his wants administered to; but he considered it safer to quit the county at once, and returned to Kansas, going direct to Hays City, where he remained until he recovered the use of his arm, none of the bones having been broken, and in the latter part of the same year he was made city marshal, as he was the only one capable of dealing with the lawless class which had often overrun the town and set law and decency at defiance. 43

## WILD BILL'S OPINION OF YANKEES.

In 1868, Wild Bill was engaged to guide a party of thirty pleasure-seekers, headed by Hon. Henry Wilson, deceased ex-Vice-President, through some of the Western territories. Mrs. Wilson, wife of the Vice-President, was among the party, and being of a most vivacious and entertaining disposition, added greatly to the enjoyment of the trip. Wild Bill's introduction to her resulted in a pleasing episode at the conclusion of the trip. She requested Bill to carefully scrutinize the party, and then give her his impartial opinion of Yankees. Bill replied that it was not customary for him to form rash conclusions, but if it were her wish he would deliver his opinion upon their return.

The thirty days roaming through the canyons and over the mountains furnished a most enjoyable diversion to the entire party. There was scarcely a day passed but that Bill gave them samples of his unerring aim, killing enough game with his pistol to provision the company. The ladies, who composed nearly one-half the party, never tired of praising him, listening to his stories of border life, and wondering at his marvelous escapes. Bill naturally felt elated, and could not refrain from evincing his very deep interest in the pretty girls from the states. The gentlemen exhibited equal interest in the exploits of Bill, and gave him full credit for his performances. There was one thing about the party which Bill could not comprehend, viz.: the tight-legged pants which they wore—which at that time were the prevailing fashion in the East—and gave to the wearer the appearance of skeleton legs, wrapped with checked bandages, or a grasshopper dressed in an overcoat.

Upon the return of the party, Mrs. Wilson, in bidding Bill good-bye, asked for a fulfillment of his promise. He rather reluctantly responded, "Well, madam, I always like to keep my promise, but in this instance I should like to be excused." But no excuse would answer; his disinclination only excited a more anxious interest in Mrs. Wilson to obtain his opinion.

Being pressingly importuned, Bill at length gave his opinion as follows: "If you Yankee women have as small legs as the sample of Yankee men we have here, then I have a d—d poor opinion of the tribe."

The frankness with which Bill spoke, no less than his remarks, threw the entire party into disorder. The young ladies hid their faces, and the men generally exhibited their umbrage, but Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were fairly convulsed with laughter. The sting was taken out of Bill's opinion by Mrs. Wilson exclaiming, "Well, Mr. Hickok, that is just my sentiment."

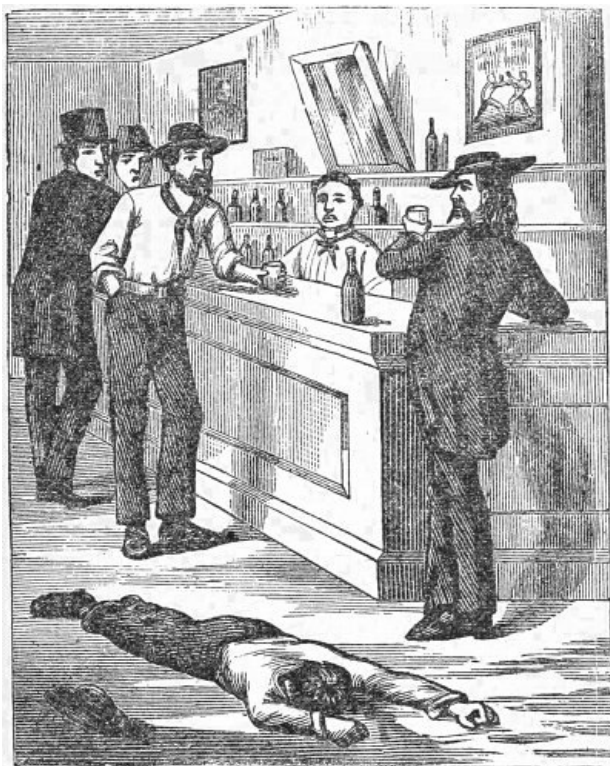
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## HOW BILL KILLED JACK STRAWHAN.

After Bill's return from the trip with the Wilson company of wealthy "Yankees," he resumed his duties as city marshal of Hays City. It would be difficult for any one not familiar with the terrorism of border life to form an approximate estimate of the condition of society in Hays City when Bill became the custodian of its peace. Saloons and gambling hells were the most flourishing branches of business, and never closed their doors. The Sabbath was ignored, and the revelry of ruffians continued day and night. The population, it is true, was not a large one, but it was an exceedingly vicious and lively one. There were, of course, many good citizens, but, to use a border expression, "they never aired themselves," yet it was through their instrumentality that Bill became marshal. Among the most violent and dangerous of the rowdy element in Hays City was Jack Strawhan, a large, double-fisted bully who boasted that he could clean out the town, and who had his record well made by killing several men.

Some months previous to the occurrence about to be related, Strawhan had visited Ellsworth, and after getting fighting drunk, he and his gang undertook to "clean out the place," as they expressed it. Capt. Kingsbury, the gentleman before referred to, was sheriff of Ellsworth county at the time, and being a man of equally desperate pluck, he called his deputy, Whitney, and Wild Bill, who was also in Ellsworth on that day, to his assistance, and after a slight skirmish arrested the gang. Strawhan was so violent and abusive that it became necessary, owing to there being no secure jail in the place, to tie him to a post, his arms being thrown around it and fastened in front. This position was a punishment as well as a secure one, and he was kept there until thoroughly sober and subjugated.

This severe treatment caused Jack to take a public oath to kill Kingsbury, Whitney and Wild Bill at the first opportunity, and every one who knew the man felt that he would keep his word.



**Death of Jack Strawhan.**

The day of fate arrived in 1869, and under the following circumstances: Wild Bill was in Tommy Drum's saloon, in company with a crowd of drinking characters, indulging, as was his wont, when Strawhan entered by a side door. Bill's eyes were always on the lookout for danger, and they caught Jack the moment he stepped upon the threshold. Bill made a pretence of not noticing his bitter enemy, but quietly grasped his pistol and kept talking, unconcernedly, as before. Strawhan thought his opportunity had come, and that Bill was off his guard, but the moment Strawhan attempted to level his pistol, Bill wheeled and shot him dead, the ball from his weapon entering Strawhan's right eye, felling him without a groan. Bill then turned back to the counter of the bar, and asked everybody in the saloon to take a drink, never giving the slightest heed to the body of the man which lay on the floor dead, with his face smothered in a pool of blood. Everyone drank. The coroner was sent for and the crowd gave their testimony. Bill was acquitted the same day, and serenaded by the authorities at night.

Whitney escaped death at Strawhan's hands, but was killed by a Texan named Ben Thompson, in 1873.

## BILL MULVEY'S LAST ROW.

Shortly after the event just related, Bill Mulvey, a notorious rough and desperado from St. Joseph, Mo., struck Hays City, and got on what we term in the West, "a great big tear." He paraded the streets with a revolver in each hand, howling like an enraged tiger, and thirsting for some one's blood. He was met by the squire and constable, both of whom endeavored to make him keep the peace, but their efforts were so far futile that he turned upon them and drove both out of the town. Wild Bill, who chanced to be in a saloon in another part of the place, where he was unconscious of the disturbance, was notified, and at once started to arrest Mulvey. Approaching his man quietly, in a most amiable tone he told Mulvey that he should have to arrest him for disturbing the peace. Mulvey had his pistols in his hands at the time, and in an instant they were leveled at Wild Bill's head, with the injunction, "March before me." Bill fully appreciated the danger of his position, but his remarkable self-possession and coolness never deserted him. Before turning to march in front of Mulvey, Bill raised his left hand, and with a look of dissatisfaction, said: "Boys, don't hit him." This remark had the desired effect, for as Bill had not shown his pistol, Mulvey turned to see who Bill had spoken to, and to protect his rear. In the twinkle of an eye, Bill whipped out his pistol and shot Mulvey dead, the ball entering the victim's head just behind the ear.

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The West was thus relieved of another desperate character, and Wild Bill received a vote of thanks from the citizens for his conduct.

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## A FIGHT WITH FIFTEEN SOLDIERS.

Bill's fortunate escape from death in his fight with the McCandlas gang at Rock Creek was no more remarkable than one of his fights at Hays City which occurred in 1870. During this year, the 7th U. S. Cavalry was stationed at that post, and many of the soldiers, partaking of the desperate nature which distinguished the place, gave the authorities great trouble. Bill's duties as city marshal caused an antagonism which finally culminated in a most desperate fight with fifteen of the soldiers, the particulars of which are as follows: On the day in question, several of the soldiers became very drunk, among them a large sergeant who had a particular aversion to Bill on account of his having arrested, at divers times, several of the members of his company. The sergeant was in Paddy Welch's saloon with several of his men, indulging in a noisy carousal. Welch sent for Bill to remove the crowd, but when he arrived the sergeant insisted on fighting Bill in the street. He confessed that he was no match for Bill in a duel, but dared him to meet him in fistic encounter. To this proposition Bill consented, and taking out his two revolvers he passed them to Welch, and the two combatants, followed by the crowd inside, stepped out of the saloon and into the street. Although the sergeant was much the larger man, he was no equal for Bill, and in a moment after the fight began the sergeant was knocked down, and Bill was administering to him a most severe thrashing. The soldiers, fourteen in number, seeing their sergeant at great disadvantage, and in danger of never getting back to camp with a sound body, rushed in to his assistance, some with clubs, and others with stones, seemingly determined to kill Bill. Paddy Welch was near at hand, and seeing the desperate position he occupied, ran into the crowd and succeeded in placing the two revolvers in his hands. In another moment he discharged a shot which killed one of the soldiers, and would have done more terrible execution but for the crowd that was on him, which prevented him from using his hands. 50

When the first soldier fell dead there was a hasty dispersion of the others, but only to get their pistols, which were near at hand, and to renew the attack. For a few minutes there was rapid firing, and three more of the soldiers fell, one of them dead, and the other two mortally wounded. The odds were too great for Bill, and though he was struck with seven bullets, he managed to escape from the crowd and get out of town. Night coming on very soon after the fight was over, enabled Bill to cross Smoky river and secrete himself several miles from the town, where he remained lying in a buffalo wallow for two days, caring for his wounds. He was hit three times in the arms, once in the side and three times in the legs. None of the wounds were serious, but he was compelled to tear up his shirt and drawers for bandages to stop the flow of blood. 51

On the following day after the fight, Gen. Sheridan ordered a detachment of cavalry to go in pursuit of Bill, and, using his own words, "to take him dead or alive," but, although the pursuit was entered into earnestly, they never found the object of their search.

After getting able to travel, which was on the third day, Bill managed to drag his sore and hungry body down to Bill Williams' ranche, where he was tenderly cared for. No one can imagine the suffering he endured during the two days he lay in the buffalo wallow. His wounds, though but flesh injuries, gave him excruciating pain. He drew his boots, which were filled with blood, and was unable to put them on again. He lost his hat during the fight, and, after tearing up his underclothes, he literally had no protection from the chill and damp of the night. When he attempted to rise from the ground, the agony he suffered was as intense as mortal could bear; but notwithstanding the pain he endured, the excessive hunger which began to oppress and weaken him, compelled him to make the effort to reach Williams' ranche, which he succeeded in doing, as before stated. 52

After remaining at the ranche a few days, Bill sent for his friend Whitney, then sheriff of Ellsworth county, he having succeeded Capt. Kingsbury, and by him Bill was taken to Ellsworth. But the constant dread of detection made it advisable for Bill to leave Ellsworth, which he did in a few days, by the kindly assistance of Jim Bomon, a conductor of a freight train on the Kansas Pacific railroad, who locked him in a box car and brought him to Junction City. At this place Bill received proper surgical attention and soon recovered.

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## A DEATH FIGHT WITH TEXAS GAMBLERS.

The removal of the Seventh Cavalry from Hays City gave Bill immunity from danger from that quarter, and though he did not return to that place, he accepted the office of city marshal of Abilene, a town one hundred miles east of Hays City, and frequently visited the latter place on business. 53

Abilene was the point from which all the cattle from Texas for the Eastern markets were shipped. Immense droves were daily brought into the place, and with the cattle came the drovers, a large majority of whom were Texan desperadoes. The town bristled with business, and crimes and drunkenness became so common that by general consent Abilene was called the Gomorrah of the West. Gamblers and bad women, drunken cut-throats and pimps, overshadowed all other society, and the carnival of iniquity never ceased. The civil officers were plastic to the touch of the ruffians, and the town was ruled by intimidation.

When Bill assumed charge of the office of marshal, the law and order class had hopes for a radical change, and yet they were very doubtful of the ability of one man to curb the reckless and lawless spirit of so many vicious desperadoes—men who were familiar with the pistol and did not hesitate to murder and plunder, and who took pleasure in “stampeding” the place.

In two days after Bill entered upon the discharge of his duties, occasion presented for a manifestation of his pluck. Phil. Cole, a gambler, and one of the most dangerous men in the West, in company with his pal, whose name cannot now be recalled, concluded to run the town after their own fashion for at least one day. They began by smashing windows promiscuously, insulting women, discharging their pistols, and other like conduct. Bill met them while they were in the midst of their deviltry, and undertook their arrest. He knew Phil. Cole by reputation, and was prepared for the fight he expected. Cole told Bill that his arrest depended upon who was the better man, and at once drew his pistol. McWilliams, Bill’s deputy, stepped up and tried to pacify Cole, and at the same time to secure his pistol, but Cole was anxious for a fight and fired at Bill, but missed his mark. Bill returned the fire, but at the moment he pulled the trigger of his pistol, Cole, in his struggle, threw McWilliams in front of him and the bullet from the pistol struck the faithful deputy, killing him almost instantly. Cole’s pal, who, until this time, seemed a mute spectator of the affray, then drew his pistol, and also fired at Bill, the bullet passing through Bill’s hat, and before Cole or his mate could fire again, Bill had put a bullet through the head of each, and the fight was ended. The death of McWilliams was most sincerely deplored by everyone, but by none as it was by Bill, and in years afterward he could not have the sad event recalled to mind without crying like a child. 54

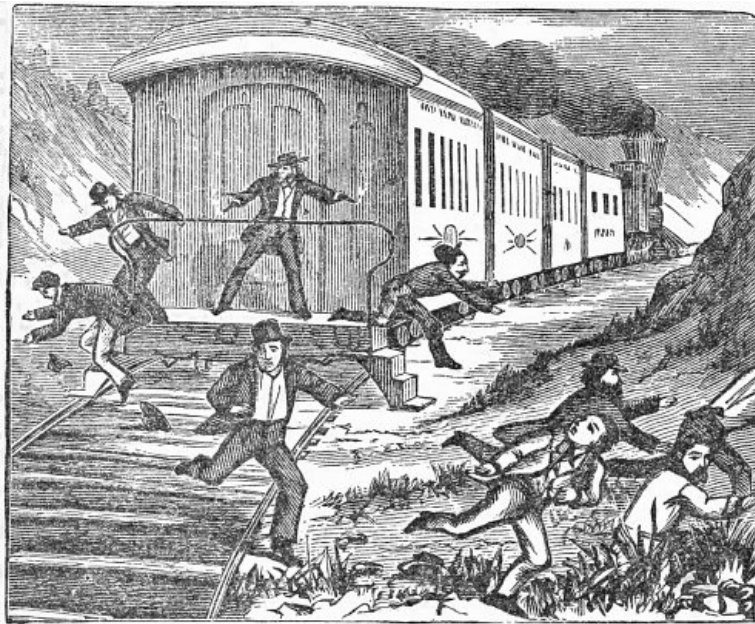
The killing of Cole was a most fortunate event for the better class of citizens of Abilene, because it at once improved the morals of the place. The men who had for years before rioted at their pleasure, defied the law and badgered decency, began to feel that to continue in the same course would be to risk their lives. Nevertheless, the death of Phil. Cole only diminished the lawless excesses—it did not entirely prevent them. Bill never had another occasion to kill anyone in Abilene, but his club fell heavily on many heads determined on vicious acts. His enemies among the Texas cattle men multiplied rapidly, and he realized that there was not a moment that he could safely turn his back to any of them. A cattle king of Texas, whose name we do not choose to mention, as he is still living, was arrested by Bill for violent conduct on the street during a spree, and, as he strenuously resisted, Bill was forced to use his club. The man paid his fine on the following day, but before leaving town he declared that he would get even with Bill before many months elapsed. 55

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## A REWARD OF \$5,000 IN GOLD OFFERED FOR BILL'S HEART.

The large and wealthy cattle raiser referred to, directly after returning to Texas, selected eight desperate characters—men who he knew would not hesitate to commit any crime for the sake of money—and offered them the sum of five thousand dollars in gold if they would kill Wild Bill and secure his heart. The proposition was made at a pre-arranged meeting, which took place in an old barn on the premises of the cattle raiser, at which each of the employed assassins was required to take an oath not to divulge the name of the man who hired them under any circumstances, except in the event of the refusal of the employer to pay over the sum agreed upon directly upon the delivery to him of Wild Bill's heart. It was a terrible contract in the eyes of civilization, but an excellent one in the estimation of those a party to it.

In a few days after the arrangement was concluded, the sum of fifty dollars was placed in the hands of each of the hired assassins as forfeit money, to pay expenses of the trip to Abilene, and the eight villains then started out upon their mission.



**Bill Drives his would-be Assassins from the Train.**

After reaching Abilene, as was customary among the Texans who visited the place, the party got on a big drunk, and, while in this condition, one of the number explained the nature of his trip to an acquaintance who, by chance, was a secret friend of Bill's. The information was very soon imparted to Bill, and the villains were foiled in the following manner: Bill decided to go to Topeka by the train, and to have the assassins made acquainted with his purpose. He knew they would follow him, because they would consider it safer to kill their man by luring him onto the platform of a train, where a knife thrust would finish their work without the knowledge of the other passengers, than to attack him in the boundaries of his official jurisdiction among his friends. Accordingly, Bill got on the evening train going east, and saw the eight villains get into the coach in the rear of the one he entered. Bill wisely concluded that no attempt would be made upon his life until a late hour, when the passengers would generally be asleep, and quietly kept his seat until about eleven o'clock, when the train was passing a dark and deep cut a few miles west of Topeka. He concluded now was the time to act; so, drawing his two revolvers, he entered the car where the eight would-be murderers sat. In an instant all was attention, but confusion soon followed, for Bill raised his pistols and commanded the assassins to file out of the car before him. They saw at once that hesitation meant death, and without attempting the purpose for which they came, every one of them hastily arose and did as Bill commanded, leaping from the rapidly-moving train apparently without a thought of the danger in so doing. Three of them were so badly hurt in the fall that their companions had to carry them off, and one of the most notorious of the party died two days afterwards of his injuries. The parting injunction which Bill gave them forced them to abandon the idea of getting his heart. Said he: "If any of you gray-backed hell-hounds ever cross my track again, I'll make blood-pudding out of your infernal carcasses." Bill would undoubtedly have attacked the men had it not been for the presence of so many passengers, some of whom would certainly have been killed in the conflict.

If this pamphlet should, perchance, be read by four men—known to be living—and one in particular, there will be a scene not wholly unlike that which transpired when Banquo's ghost arose before the startled vision of Macbeth.

## BILL THOMPSON'S FATAL SURPRISE.

Wild Bill got off the train at Topeka, and returned to Abilene the next day. A week later he went up to Ellsworth, to which place he was a frequent visitor, being attracted to that town by a woman whose name we omit to mention, by her request. This woman was the keeper of a house of ill-repute, but her beauty made her a most attractive person, and her real admirers were numbered by hundreds. She is now pursuing the same calling in Kansas City, but though still a fine looking woman, very few traces of her former beauty remain. She is wealthy, however, and what she now lacks in natural appearance, she compensates for by artificial means, and is still a leader of her kind. Bill's love for her was undoubtedly genuine, although he never asked her hand in marriage. Bill Thompson, a big bully, and handy with his pistol, was also a worshiper at the same shrine, and hated Wild Bill more inveterately than any other man on earth. This hatred was, perhaps, not so much inspired by the rivalry between them for the woman's smiles, as it was caused by the fact that on one occasion Wild Bill had arrested and severely handled Thompson, while the latter was carousing in Abilene. Thompson had repeatedly made threats which reached Bill's ears, and caused him to be watchful. A collision occurred between the two in a restaurant in Ellsworth, under the following circumstances: Bill had entered the place and called for an oyster stew. He took a seat in a small alcove, in which was a table, with his back to the saloon, a position he was never known to assume before or since. The moment the waiter was entering with the stew, Bill turned in his seat at the very instant to see Thompson enter a side door with pistol in hand. Bill slipped out of his chair and dropped onto his knees, with the view of using the chair as a sort of breastwork. The instant he moved, a ball from Thompson's pistol whistled passed his ear, and struck the plate on the table in front of him. Before another shot could be fired from the same course, Bill jerked one of the two derringers he nearly always carried, from his pants pocket, and, whirling on one knee, sent a bullet squarely into Thompson's forehead. The man fell forward on his face without uttering a sound, stone-dead; the dish of soup in the waiter's hand tumbled onto the floor and broke into fragments. Resuming his seat again at the table, merely rising from his kneeling position, Bill told the affrighted waiter to bring him that oyster stew he had ordered, but the restaurant speedily filled with morbid people, and there was too much excitement to admit of serving stews thereafter. Bill was the least excited of any, and after waiting a few moments, and seeing that he could not get what he called for, he went out of the place and took his oyster stew at another restaurant. Of course he was arrested, but as it was a clear case of self-defense, he was at once discharged.

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## MAKES TWENTY MEN ASK AN APOLOGY.

In a few weeks after the killing of Thompson, Bill again visited Ellsworth, and during this visit he met with an episode in which his influence among the desperado element was clearly evidenced. Reaching the town late in the evening, he had gone direct to the house kept by the woman just referred to, and after taking supper and playing a few games of cards with her, he retired to bed. About eleven o'clock at night, loud and boisterous noises, coupled with threats to tear the house down if admittance were refused, awakened everyone in the house. One of the girls raised a front window and asked the crowd what they wanted. The reply came that they intended to clean out the house, and to open the door quick, or they would break it down. The crowd numbered twenty of the worst men Ellsworth could produce, and as they were two-thirds drunk, everyone in the building except Bill became very much alarmed, and fearful that some fatal consequences would be the result. Bill arose from bed, and telling everyone in the house to leave the settlement of the trouble to him, descended the stairs in his night clothes, with his two derringers in his hands. A light was burning in the hall, and while the men were pounding on the door, and swearing that they would burn the house and everyone in it, Bill unlocked the door and threw it open. As he did so, he placed himself upon the threshold, and told the crowd that he would give them just ten seconds to leave the place, adding: "Or I'll turn this place into a great big slaughter-house." The surprise depicted on the faces of those twenty men was a fit subject for a painter. They all tried to apologize at once. Said the leader: "I'll take my oath, Bill, if I'd a-knowed you was here I never would a-come; we never meant any harm, and as you are a gentleman, and we're drunk, we owe you an apology. We'll leave this minute." They all added in chorus: "That's so, Bill, and we beg your pardon a thousand times."

"Then get out of here!" responded Bill.

And they went at once.

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## BILL'S FIGHT WITH PHIL COLE'S COUSIN.

About one year after the killing of Phil Cole at Abilene, Wild Bill had occasion to visit Wichita, Kansas, on some private business. He made the trip on horseback, there being no other mode of travel between the two places. Bill was acquainted with no one in Wichita, and habit caused him to make his first stop in the place before a saloon, where he hitched his horse and went in. There was no one in the saloon at the time of his entrance; so Bill took a seat expecting the proprietor had just stepped out and would be back in a short time. While he was sitting beside a table reading a newspaper, a stranger stepped in and enquired:

"Is your name Wild Bill?"

"That is what they call me," responded Bill.

"Then take that," said the stranger, drawing a pistol and shooting at Bill. The muzzle of the pistol was so close that the flash burned Bill's face and the bullet struck him at the base of the hair on the left side of his forehead and cut out a furrow of flesh and hair. Bill fell unconscious, but the saloon-keeper coming in a moment after the shot was fired, threw some water in his face and consciousness was soon restored. 63

The stranger jumped on his horse after discharging the shot and rode off furiously towards the south.

It was hardly ten minutes after the shooting before Bill had recovered sufficiently from the stunning effects of the shot to mount his horse and start in pursuit of his unknown assailant.

Bill was mounted on an excellent horse, and as he had no difficulty in ascertaining the route taken by the stranger, the ride was a fast and furious one. The pursued and pursuer, after a running ride of thirty miles, came in sight of each other, and a desperate fight was now prepared for. The stranger supposed he had killed Bill and was being pursued by some officer of justice; but Bill was urged on by his excessive hunger for revenge, and it soon came—terrible enough. When about fifty yards apart, Bill discharged his pistol at the stranger, but the ball struck and disabled the horse. There was then an exchange of shots and the stranger lay dead on the ground with a bullet in his brain. Not satisfied with killing the man, Bill stooped over the prostrate body and drawing a bowie-knife from its sheath, he cut a slice out of the stranger's head which he considered would correspond with the wound in his own. This bloody trophy Bill carried with him for years afterwards—a dried piece of flesh and hair. 64

The stranger proved to be a cousin of Phil Cole, the gambler, and from facts gathered afterwards, it was shown that he had long sought an opportunity to avenge his cousin's death. The revenge was, however, visited upon the head of the avenger.

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## HE REMOVES TO KANSAS CITY.

Bill served the time for which he was chosen as marshal of Abilene, and in the spring of 1872 removed to Kansas City. It was at this place the writer—then connected with the daily *Journal*—met him and formed an intimate acquaintance, which afforded abundant opportunity to learn his real character as a man. Bill was frequently importuned for the particulars of his marvelous adventures, and permission to write his life, but he always positively refused. The last time this request was made, he returned the following reply: "Well, Buel, I expect my life has been a little interesting, and it might please some people to read about my adventures, but I don't want a word written about me until after I'm dead. I never fought any man for notoriety, and am sorry that I've got the name I have. Since Ned Buntline made a hero out of such material as Bill Cody (Buffalo Bill,) I've thought it time to drop out of sight. I took Cody when he was left alone in the world, a young lad, and partially raised him. Well, I don't want to say anything against the boy, but his pluck wouldn't go at par. I've kept a little diary of all my exploits, and when I'm dead I'll be glad if it falls into your hands, and from it you may be able to write something interesting. When I die it will be just as you now see me, and sickness will not be the cause. For more than ten years I've been constantly expecting to be killed, and it is certain to come before a great while longer."

65

During this conversation Bill appeared to be unusually sad, and when he referred to his death it was with a seriousness which indicated that he had been notified of his tragic end by some terrible presentiment.

He was an expert poker-player, and followed no other calling while in Kansas City. The place was fairly filled with gamblers, and up to 1875 the voice of the keno caller could be heard in nearly every other building on Main street, between Missouri avenue and Fourth street. The Marble block, and houses on the west side of the square, were particularly the haunts of gamblers. Murders and rows were not infrequent, but Bill kept out of all difficulties. He was both feared and respected. His carriage was that of a peaceable gentleman, and during the three years he made Kansas City his home, he was a party to but one row, and that was of minor consequence. This difficulty occurred in the St. Nicholas Hotel bar-room, owned by Joe Siegmund, now the proprietor of a hotel in Malvern, Arkansas. A foppish fellow, half-drunk, being told that the party drinking at the bar was Wild Bill, went up to him, and, in a most provoking manner, asked Bill if he was the desperado who had been killing men indiscriminately out West. The impertinent inquiry called forth from Bill an equally insulting reply. The fellow, evidently bent on a row, then began to talk of shooting, and his ability "to lick any border ruffian that ever lived." Bill walked up to him slowly, and as the senseless fop was attempting to draw a pistol, he caught him by one ear and slapped his face until the fellow howled for mercy.

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## A PRIZE FIGHT IN A CHICAGO BILLIARD ROOM.

In 1874 Bill engaged in a battle with a tribe of Indians under Black-Kettle, in which he received a severe wound from a spear thrust through his thigh. Being very much disabled he paid a visit to his aged mother and relatives at Troy Grove, Illinois, where he remained some weeks and until the wound healed. Before returning west he went to Chicago to see his old friend, Heman Baldwin, and while there the two entered the St. James Hotel bar to play a game of billiards. While being thus engaged seven Chicago roughs began bantering him on account of the buckskin clothes he wore and challenged him for a prize fight. Bill replied to them that he was not a fighting man, and that he was at that time still suffering from a newly healed wound. They continued their insults, and finally told him that he had to fight or acknowledge that he was a coward and his reported exploits bogus. Bill's courage came to the surface quickly enough, and drawing his two pistols—both of which were presents to him from Vice-President Wilson—the fight began, one man against seven. The pistols were used as "billys," and in a few seconds the seven roughs were stretched upon the floor and completely at Bill's mercy. The injuries they received consisted of severe scalp wounds, the marks from which will be carried through life.

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## BILL'S MARRIAGE TO MRS. LAKE.

In the fall of 1874, Bill met Mrs. Lake, the widow of William Lake, proprietor of Lake's circus, who was killed by Jack Keenan at Granby, Missouri, in 1873. The meeting was purely accidental, but the consequences were matrimonial. A courtship followed, and in the early part of 1875 the two were married by a justice of the peace in Kansas City. Within a few months after the marriage Bill became afflicted with sore eyes, from which he suffered intensely, and for the period of nine months was unable to distinguish daylight from darkness. Dr. Thorne, previously noticed as one of Bill's confidants, was his physician, and succeeded in restoring his sight, but his eyes never regained their former strength, and the vision remained impaired. In the winter of 1875-76, a separation occurred between Bill and his wife, the causes of which we deem it improper to relate in this epitome of his life. Suffice it to say that those best qualified to decide, claim that no blame attaches to Bill for the termination of his marital relation. No divorce, we believe, was ever applied for by either party, but they never met after the spring of 1876. The writer has tried for two years to learn the address and whereabouts of Mrs. Hickok, *nee* Mrs. Lake, but his efforts have been without avail. The last heard of her she was living in Cincinnati.

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## MAKES HIS DEBUT ON THE STAGE.

In February, 1876, Wild Bill entered into an engagement with Ned Buntline, (Judson,) the novelist who created Buffalo Bill and his exploits, to appear as a leading character in a border play he had written for the stage. The troupe was made up in New York, and the principal actors were Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack. The business was a most disagreeable one for Wild Bill, who entered into the engagement solely under the pressure of pecuniary needs. The authorities of Kansas City had so vigorously prosecuted the gamblers that the professionals were compelled to abandon their games, and thus Bill became, to use his own expression, "severely money-bound." Buntline, with a vivid imagination running at all times through carnage and lawlessness, employed his best ability in getting up the posters heralding the appearance of his troupe. Wild Bill was posted in large, blood-red letters as having killed thirty-six men, and the most desperate man that ever set foot on the plains. His nature arose with revolt at such a publicity of his character, and after playing the role of a border bandit for two months, he peremptorily refused to appear on the stage any longer.

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## BILL'S LAST TRIP TO THE BLACK HILLS.

After leaving the Buntline troupe, Wild Bill came to St. Louis for the purpose of organizing an expedition to the Black Hills. The gold fever was at its height, and St. Louis, like all other Western cities, was very much excited over the auriferous discoveries. Bill remained in St. Louis about three weeks, at the end of which time he had succeeded in organizing a party of nearly one hundred men, which was increased to one hundred and fifty by additions received at Kansas City. The party arrived at the Black Hills in the latter part of June, Bill going to Deadwood, and the others distributing themselves among the hills, where they established ranches and began their quest for gold. 70

Deadwood was a gay place when Bill entered its limits, and the life led by its mixed citizens was exactly suited to his disposition. Every other house was a saloon, and if ever there was a gambler's paradise, it was there. The female portion of Deadwood's population was limited, but the few who were there were so active and boisterous as to compensate for ten times the same number of ordinary women. Bill was in his element, although he had no disposition to take a part in the wild orgies of the drunken, maudlin crowd which infested every nook and corner of the place. He liked the freedom the society permitted, but indulged himself only in gambling and an occasional drink.

Bill made many friends in Deadwood, and it was not known that he had any enemies in the Black Hills, but while he was surrounded by friends, he should never have forgotten the fact that his enemies were almost like the leaves of the forest. They were always plotting his destruction and laying snares along his path. The end came at last, just as Bill had himself often predicted.

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## ASSASSINATION OF WILD BILL.

On the 2d day of August, 1876, Wild Bill was in Lewis & Mann's saloon, playing a game of poker with Capt. Massey, a Missouri river pilot, Charley Rich, and Cool Mann, one of the proprietors of the saloon. The game had been in progress nearly three hours, when about 4 o'clock, P. M., a man was seen to enter the door and pass up to the bar. Bill was sitting on a stool with the back of his head towards and about five feet from the bar. When the man entered, Bill had just picked up the cards dealt him, and was looking at his "hand," and therefore took no notice of the newcomer. The man, who proved to be Jack McCall, alias Bill Sutherland, after approaching the bar, turned, and drawing a large navy revolver, placed the muzzle within two inches of Bill's head and fired. The bullet entered the base of the brain, tore through the head, and made its exit at the right cheek, between the upper and lower jaw-bones, breaking off several teeth and carrying away a large piece of the cerebellum through the wound. The bullet struck Capt. Massey, who sat opposite Bill, in the right arm and broke the bone. At the instant the pistol was discharged, the cards fell from Bill's hands and he dropped sideways off the stool without uttering a sound. His companions were so horrified that several moments elapsed before it was discovered that Capt. Massey was wounded.

72



**Death of Wild Bill.**

The assassin turned upon the crowd and compelled them to file out of the saloon before him. After reaching the street he defied arrest, but at five o'clock he gave himself up and asked for an immediate trial. Deadwood was, at that time, so primitive that it had no city officers, and there was no one legally competent to take charge of or try the prisoner. During the same evening, however, a coroner was chosen, who impaneled a jury and returned a verdict to the effect that J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) came to his death from a wound resulting from a shot fired from a pistol by John McCall, alias Bill Sutherland.

73

Having proceeded thus far, it was determined to elect a judge, sheriff and prosecuting attorney to try McCall on the following day. Languishe, the lessee of McDaniel's theatre, offered the use of the theatre for the purposes of the trial, which was arranged to take place at 9 o'clock on the following morning. Three men were sent out in different directions to notify the miners in the neighborhood of the murder, and to request their attendance at the trial.

Promptly at the time appointed, the improvised court convened, and Joseph Brown, who had been chosen sheriff, produced the prisoner. F. J. Kuykendall, the *pro tempore* judge, then addressed the crowd in a very appropriate manner, reminding those present that the court was purely a self-constituted one, but that in the discharge of his duty he would be governed by justice, and trust to them for a ratification of his acts. His remarks were greeted with hand-clappings of approval. The prisoner was then led forward and conducted to a seat on the stage to the right of the judge.

Never did a more forbidding countenance face a court than that of Jack McCall; his head, which was covered with a thick crop of chestnut hair, was very narrow as to the parts occupied by the intellectual portion of the brain, while the animal development was exceedingly large. A small, sandy moustache covered a sensual mouth, and the coarse double-chin was partially hid by a stiff goatee. The nose was what is commonly called "snub;" he had cross eyes and a florid complexion, which completed a more repulsive picture than Dore could conceive. He was clad in a blue flannel shirt, brown overalls, heavy shoes, and, as he sat in a stooping position, with his arms folded across his breast, he evidently assumed a nonchalance and bravado which were foreign to his feelings, and betrayed by the spasmodic heavings of his heart.

74

The selection of a jury consumed all the forenoon, as it was next to impossible to select a man who had not formed or expressed an opinion concerning the murder, although but few who were in the panel had heard of the tragedy until a few hours before. A hundred names were selected, written upon separate scraps of paper, and placed in a hat. They were then well shaken, and the committee appointed for the purpose drew from the hat one name at a time. The party answering to the name then came forward and was examined by the judge

touching his fitness to serve as an impartial juror. Ninety-two names were called from the panel before the jury was made up. Following are those who were selected and served: J. J. Bumfs, L. D. Brokow, J. H. Thompson, C. Whitehead, Geo. S. Hopkins, J. F. Cooper, Alexander Travis, K. F. Towle, John E. Thompson, L. A. Judd, Edward Burke and John Mann. The jurors being sworn, they took their seats, and testimony for the prosecution was begun.

The first witness called was Charles Rich, who said that he was in the saloon kept by Lewis & Mann on the afternoon of the 2d, and was seated at a table playing a game of poker with Wild Bill and several others, when the prisoner, whom he identified, came into the room, walked deliberately up to Wild Bill, placed a pistol to the back of the deceased, and fired, saying: "Take that!" Bill fell from the stool upon which he had been seated without uttering a word. 75

Samuel Young testified that he was engaged in the saloon; that he had just delivered \$15 worth of pocket checks to the deceased, and was returning to his place behind the bar when he heard the report of a pistol shot; turning around, he saw the prisoner at the back of Wild Bill with a pistol in his hand which he had just discharged; heard him say, "Take that!"

Carl Mann was one of the proprietors of the saloon in which Wild Bill was killed; was in the poker game; noticed a commotion; saw the prisoner (whom he identified) shoot Wild Bill.

The defense called for the first witness, P. H. Smith, who said he had been in the employ of McCall four months; that he was not a man of quarrelsome disposition; that he had always considered him a man of good character; that he (the witness) had been introduced to Wild Bill in Cheyenne, and drank with him; that the deceased had a bad reputation, and had been the terror of every place in which he had resided.

H. H. Pickens said that he had known defendant four years, and believed him to be a quiet and peaceable man. Wild Bill's reputation as a "shootist" was very hard; he was quick in using the pistol and never missed his man, and had killed quite a number of persons in different parts of the country. 76

Ira Ford had known the defendant about one year; "like a great many others, he would go upon a spree like the rest of the boys." Wild Bill had the reputation of being a brave man, who could and would shoot quicker than any man in the Western country, and who always "got away" with his antagonist.

The defense called several others, the tenor of whose evidence was but a repetition of the foregoing. No attempt was made to show that Wild Bill had ever seen the prisoner.

The prisoner was called upon to make a statement. He came down from the stage into the auditorium of the theatre, and with his right hand in the bosom of his shirt, his head thrown back, in a harsh, loud and repulsive voice, with a bull-dog sort of bravado, said: "Well, men, I have but a few words to say. Wild Bill threatened to kill me if I crossed his path. I am not sorry for what I have done. I would do the same thing over again." The prisoner then returned to his place on the stage.

The prosecution then adduced testimony to prove that Wild Bill was a much abused man; that he never imposed on any one, and that in every instance where he had slain men he had done so either in the discharge of his duty as an officer of the law or in self-defense. 77

The case having been placed in the hands of the jury, the theatre was cleared, with the understanding that the verdict should be made known in the saloon where the murder was committed. The prisoner was remanded to the house where he had been imprisoned during the night. At 9 o'clock the following verdict was read to the prisoner:

DEADWOOD CITY, Aug. 3, 1876.—We, the jurors, find the prisoner, Mr. John McCall, not guilty.

CHARLES WHITEHEAD,  
Foreman.

The prisoner was at once liberated, and several of the model jurymen who had played their parts in this burlesque upon justice, and who had turned their bloodthirsty tiger loose upon the community indulged in a sickening cheer which grated harshly upon the ears of those who heard it. The first vote taken by the jury resulted in eleven for acquittal and one for conviction, and the single man who desired justice was so intimidated by his fellow-jurors that he was induced to sanction the iniquitous verdict. It was even proposed by one of the jurymen that the prisoner be fined fifteen or twenty dollars and set free.

After the inquest the body of the deceased was placed upon a litter made of two poles and some boards; then a procession was formed, and the remains were carried to Charley Utter's camp, across the creek. Charles Utter, better known as Colorado Charley, had been the intimate friend of the deceased for fifteen years, and with that liberality which is a feature among mountaineers, had always shared his purse with him. Charley was much affected by the death of his friend, and incensed at the villain who had murdered him. A tepee was pitched at the foot of one of the giant trees which rise so majestically above Charley's camp. Preparations were at once made for the funeral. The following notice was printed and sent out: 78

"FUNERAL NOTICE.—Died in Deadwood, Black Hills, Aug. 2, 1876, from the effects of a pistol shot, J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill,) formerly of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Funeral services will be held at Charley Utter's camp, on Thursday afternoon, Aug. 3, 1876, at 3 o'clock. All are respectfully invited to attend."

At the time appointed a number of people gathered at the camp—Charley Utter had gone to a great deal of expense to make the funeral as fine as could be had in that country. Under the tepee, in a handsome coffin, covered with black cloth and richly mounted with silver ornaments, lay Wild Bill, a picture of perfect repose. His long chestnut hair, evenly parted over his marble brow, hung in waving ringlets over the broad shoulders; his face was cleanly shaved excepting the drooping moustache, which shaded a mouth that in death almost seemed to smile, but in life was unusually grave; the arms were folded over the stilled breast, which inclosed a heart that had beat with regular pulsation amid the most startling scenes of blood and violence. The corpse was clad in complete dress-suit of black broadcloth, new underclothing and white linen shirt; beside him in the coffin lay 79

his trusty rifle, which the deceased prized above all other things, and which was to be buried with him in compliance with an often expressed desire.

A clergyman read an impressive funeral service, that was attentively listened to by the audience, after which the coffin-lid hid the well-known face of Wild Bill from the prying gaze of the world.

A grave had been prepared on the mountain side toward the east, and to that place in the bright sunlight, the air redolent with the perfume of sweet flowers, the birds sweetly singing, and all nature smiling, the solemn cortege wended its way and deposited the mortal remains of Wild Bill.

Upon a large stump at the head of the grave the following inscription was deeply cut:

“A brave man; the victim of an assassin—J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill,) aged 48 years; murdered by Jack McCall, Aug. 2, 1876.”

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## JACK McCALL PAYS THE PENALTY.

After the farcical termination of the trial, and the burial of Wild Bill, several friends of the deceased met at Charley Utter's ranche and determined to avenge the cowardly assassination of their friend. McCall, unfortunately, heard of the meeting and its purposes, and lost no time in getting out of the country. He roamed around in the far West, and finally settled at Yankton. In the following year a United States court was established in Dakotah Territory at Yankton, and Jack McCall was again apprehended and put upon trial. George Shingle, now a resident of Sturgis City, eighteen miles south of Deadwood, was an eye-witness of the shooting, but left Deadwood to escape the excitement on the same evening Bill was killed, and therefore did not appear as a witness at the original trial, but appeared in answer to the summons which called him to Yankton, and there told the story of the murder. The result of this trial was the conviction of McCall, and in July, 1877, he expiated his cowardly crime on the gallows at Yankton.

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# WILD BILL'S REMAINS EXHUMED AND FOUND TO BE PETRIFIED.

On the third day of August, 1879, just three years after the tragedy, Charley Utter and Lewis Shoenfield, the particular friends of Bill during his life, determined to give the remains a better resting place, where the thorns and briars of the bleak mountains would not hide the spot where so brave a heart lay buried. Accordingly, early in the morning of that day they, proceeded to the grave, and, with heads uncovered, out of respect for their dead friend, they exhumed the body and took off the coffin-lid to take a last look before transferring the remains to Mount Moriah cemetery, at Deadwood. It was a sad sight to the eyes of friends. There was scarcely a perceptible change in the body, excepting a darker color of the face. The features were all preserved with remarkable naturalness. There was the shattered wound in the right cheek, made by the cruel bullet which took his life, but the countenance bore a tranquil look, as though the wearer was glad to escape a world in which there was nothing but buffet and anxiety to him. The lips wore a placid appearance—a smile of peace, the graceful contour of content. 81

The extraordinary weight of the body caused the friends to make a more careful examination, when it was found that the remains were in process of petrification. The hair still bore its silken lustre, but the flesh was so indurated as to approach the solidity of wood. The weight of the body at the interment was one hundred and sixty pounds, but at the exhumation it weighed a fraction less than three hundred pounds.

The carbine that was buried with him was in a perfect state of preservation. After clipping off a lock of hair, which is now in the possession of William Learned, musical director of the Gem theater, at Deadwood, the coffin-lid was again screwed down, and the remains taken to Moriah cemetery, where they now repose, in a lot purchased by Charley Utter. An Italian marble tombstone was also purchased by Mr. Utter, which he had erected at the head of the grave in the latter part of August. The inscription on the stone is as follows: 82

WILD BILL, (J. B. HICKOK,)

KILLED BY THE ASSASSIN, JACK McCALL, IN DEADWOOD,  
AUGUST 2, 1876.

*PARD, WE WILL MEET AGAIN IN THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS, TO PART  
NO MORE.*

GOOD-BYE. COLORADO CHARLEY.

Here let him rest, but the bivouac of an advancing empire will soon dispel the primeval sounds with which he was so familiar. The sougning of the primitive forest in which he lived such a stirring life with his trusty rifle, is mingling with the hum of a more perfect civilization, and will soon be heard no more. The forest birds are drifting westward, and their songs, which for centuries have made musical the deep solitude of that vast region, will be cadenced into the whirr of a different life. The rough sounds of a border settlement, with its dangers and privations, will give place to the melody of a maiden's voice, and other generations, like the recurring ocean waves which wash out the sand marks on the beach, will destroy the vestiges of the early settlement, and point to Wild Bill's grave as the spot where sleeps a hero-pioneer—a man whose heart was as gentle as a child's prayer, and as brave as God could make it. If he had faults they were tempered with so much compassion and affection that we lose sight of them entirely. An appreciation of the services Wild Bill rendered the civilizers and pioneers of the West belongs to those who come after us. "No man is appreciated until he is dead." 83

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## IDIOSYNCRACIES OF BILL—HIS BELIEF IN SPIRITS.

We have now described nearly all the adventures in which Wild Bill was a participant, but before closing this very brief and unvarnished recital of his life, it is eminently proper to speak of him in his private and social relations; his peculiar beliefs; his feats of marksmanship, and his companion in many vicissitudes—the dearest of all his friends—Black Nell.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Wild Bill was a fatalist—at least he believed that he was predestined to be killed. In fact, it would appear from his oft-repeated assertion, that “he would die with his boots on,” that he brooded over this belief and was frequently attacked by melancholy superinduced by that impression.

The very few intimate friends Bill had were well acquainted with his peculiar belief in spiritualism. He claimed to be clairvoyant, especially when danger threatened, and the many narrow escapes he had gave some evidences of the reality of his spiritual sight, but the manner in which he met his death furnishes a *contra* proof. 84

It was only at rare intervals he could be induced to talk of his terrible conflicts, and even when he was in the most communicative mood, the particulars of his encounters had to be extracted by the most patient and persistent endeavors.

Dr. Thorne and Capt. Kingsbury, the two gentlemen previously referred to, enjoyed the most confidential relations with Wild Bill. Kingsbury was a captain in the Second United States cavalry at the time Bill was acting as guide for that regiment, and, as the two were acquainted many years before, their intimacy became much greater during this companionship in the service. Dr. Thorne was Bill’s physician, and divided his purse with him many times when Bill was in pecuniary straits. Bill was a frequent visitor to Dr. Thorne’s house, and there were few secrets that he kept from his physician friend.

During one of the conversations had with Dr. Thorne, Wild Bill asseverated that in all his fights he was surrounded by spirits, who kept him cool and collected while they made fools of his enemies. It was to their presence on trying occasions that he gave the credit for the nerve and fearlessness he displayed.

His character, in some respects, was enigmatical. While rarely evading a fight, yet he was always sorry for its consequences. After his great fight with the McCandlas gang, at Rock Creek, he sought and found Jim McCandlas’ widow, and, finding that she was almost destitute, he contributed to her support several years and until her death. Dr. Thorne had removed eleven bullets from Bill’s body, nearly all of which had been received in the Rock Creek fight, but while enduring the pain consequent upon their extraction, he had nothing but kind feelings towards those who shot him. He had seven bullets in various parts of his body at the time of his death. 85

His conclusions were always logical, and his manner of conversation most convincing. He was a listener rather than a talker, and his answers to inquiries were usually made in conclusive gestures. He loved the society of the refined, and attributed his difficulties solely to the associations he was, in a measure, compelled to keep.

His love for children was almost a mania, and it is said that the most timid and cross infant would leave its mother’s arms for him at first sight, and at once manifest its pleasure. Another peculiarity he possessed was the serenity of his countenance during danger. In the midst of his most desperate fights there was a smile constantly playing on his lips. His wide range of travel had thoroughly familiarized him with almost every stretch of territory between Hudson’s Bay and Mexico, and from the Saskatchewan to Texas. It was impossible to lose him, as the points of the compass came to him as naturally as to a migratory bird.

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## BILL'S WONDERFUL ACCURACY OF AIM.

It may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, that Wild Bill was the best pistol shot America has ever produced. Much of his marvelous accuracy of aim was, of course, acquired by years of experience, but he was a good shot from the moment he first fired a pistol. For a long period he carried two small derringers, both of which he used effectively in many sanguinary encounters. These pistols are now in the possession of Dr. Thorne, to whom they were given by Bill before leaving on his last trip to the Black Hills. On one occasion, while visiting the Doctor, Bill was in a melancholy mood. It was during the summer season, and the visitor and his guest were sitting out in the yard on a settee. The Doctor expressed some dissatisfaction concerning the autocratic disposition of an old rooster he had, which took delight in running the other chanticleers off the place. Bill asked the Doctor to let him shoot at the rooster with his derringer at thirty paces, agreeing to put up \$5 to cut the rooster's throat without breaking its neck or touching either the head or body. The Doctor, giving his consent, the distance was measured off, and the chicken chased to the space required. Bill raised the pistol—without taking aim, as was his invariable custom—and fired. The bullet cut the rooster's throat as cleverly as it could have been done with a knife, and the neck was not broken either. To give the Doctor further proofs of his marvelous accuracy, he shot sparrows from the top branches of the high trees with his small derringer. 87

A favorite pastime with Bill was shooting at a silver dime, fifty paces, for one dollar a shot. He would place the dime in a position that the sun's rays would concentrate on it, thus affording him a good sight. He could send a bullet through the dime nine times out of ten. Another remarkable fancy shot he made at thirty paces was in driving a cork through the neck of a bottle, and knocking the bottom out without breaking the neck. He could shoot a chicken's head off at thirty or forty paces nineteen times out of twenty. He was no less proficient in the use of the rifle than he was with a pistol. In shooting with a rifle he took deliberate aim, while with a pistol he would invariably shoot before bringing the weapon up to a level with his eye.

Wild Bill had but little of what he called "book learning," but he was, nevertheless, an educated man. His extensive travels among such a variety of people gave him a thorough understanding of human nature. He had a natural mind for analyzing men and things.

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## BLACK NELL, THE WONDERFUL MARE.

During the early part of the war, Wild Bill came into possession of a young black mare, having captured her from a bushwhacker during Price's invasion of Missouri. The mare was as black as a coal, and at the proper age to enter upon the course of training Bill put her in. She was full of fire, and the exquisite symmetry of her head, neck, limbs and body, showed the pure blooded stock that was in her. Bill devoted all his leisure time for more than a year teaching the mare tricks which afterwards he used to so much advantage. The mare at length acquired such a complete understanding of Bill's wishes that her obedience was truly marvelous. First of all, no one could ride or approach the mare except Bill, and to him she was as gentle as a mother to her child. He named her Black Nell, presumably suggested by Claude Duval's Black Bess, of whose exploits he was so fond of reading.

Black Nell was usually allowed great freedom, because she was so prompt to answer the whistle of Bill; she would leave her feed and come galloping to the call with the most astonishing alacrity. While riding Nell it was only necessary for Bill to wave his hand to set her in a dead run or stop her instantly. A downward motion of his hand would cause her to drop as suddenly as if she had been shot dead, and she would lie perfectly still until the command to rise was given. On one occasion, while Bill was being pursued by a detachment of bushwackers, in passing through a prairie where the grass was very high, his life was saved by the prompt obedience of Nell in dropping down and remaining so quiet that the pursuers passed by within fifty feet without discovering him. 89

In 1867, while he was in Springfield, Missouri, he astonished a crowd of saloon-loafers by first going into the bar-room and calling his mare to follow. Nell came in, following her master like a dog, without the slightest hesitation. There was an old billiard table in the saloon, too much worn for further service, and upon this he ordered Nell to place herself. She reared up and placed her fore feet upon the table, but it was only after repeated effort and great strain that she succeeded in raising her hind feet to such a height. After getting upon the table, Bill poured out a pint of whisky into a wash-basin, which Nell drank with evident relish. At a wave of the hand she leaped from the table and out into the street, where Bill allowed her to exercise her freedom for several hours.

One of Nell's greatest accomplishments was leaping, and in this she certainly never had an equal. She had frequently leaped ditches twenty feet in width with apparent ease, and Bill had no hesitancy whatever in riding her over a six feet fence, which she could clear like a deer. This wonderful animal died in 1869, of a complication of diseases, and was buried near Kansas City. Bill mourned her loss as he would that of his parents, whom he devotedly loved, and Nell's name was never mentioned to him afterwards that he did not burst into tears. He regarded her as the dearest friend he had on earth, and to have her die almost in her prime was a blow and loss he could scarcely endure. 90

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## CONCLUSION—DOES BILL DESERVE A MONUMENT?

It has been customary among every nation to perpetuate the daring deeds of its heroes, by rearing a monument commemorative of their heroism. The general who commands armies, and by chance wins great battles, is no more deserving a monumental tribute than the man who discovers new means for the more rapid advancement of knowledge, or the man who extends the highway of civilization.

In opening the vast, illimitable resources of the great West, sturdy pioneers were as essential as the brain and muscle that propel the industries of the nation. Every new country must, of necessity, gather the vicious elements eliminated by the stern application of law, from the older communities. If there were no compensating influence, new countries could never advance, but would become the asylum for lawlessness and vagrancy. The fairest and most fertile districts might thus be withheld from the hand of industry and become as plague spots, from which would spread a disease that ultimately might destroy the nation. 91

Wild Bill played his part in the reformation of pioneer society more effectively than any character in the annals of American history. It is true he killed many men, but many men are killed in every war, and Wild Bill waged a legitimate war against the desperadoes who sought to destroy the bulwarks of law and order. The killing of men is often as necessary as the extermination of destructive wild animals. Both law and society, and the rights of man, so declare, and no man can say that Wild Bill was anything more than the stern administrator of a wholesome law. Every man he killed made society the gainer, and while he was near, the order-loving, law-abiding people felt secure in their lives and property.

When the war broke out he was among the first to enter the ranks; not as a soldier, but as one who takes the heaviest burdens and bares himself to a thousand dangers and privations where the soldier meets with one. His valuable services, no less than his unexampled bravery, have received the highest meeds of praise from his commanding officers. No danger was too great to prevent him from doing his duty; no labor was too severe to deter him a moment from carrying out his intentions. He had a mind to dissect dangerous undertakings with the precision that a rhetorician would analyze a sentence, and his failures were as few as his successes were conspicuous. Wild Bill was essentially great in many respects and callings. He was undoubtedly the greatest scout and conservator of the peace that ever crossed the plains; as a spy and strategist he has, perhaps, never had an equal. The service he has rendered the country at large, and the West in particular, cannot be estimated. Abilene and Hays City, the people of which places he served so effectively, cannot afford to withhold their respect for the memory of Wild Bill, and it would be as creditable to the people of Kansas as it would be deserving to the brave heart that was stilled by the assassin's bullet, to bring the remains of Wild Bill into their state and give it a resting place among the most illustrious of their dead. If ever a hero deserved a monument, Wild Bill is worthy a shaft that would rear its apex so high as to overlook every spot of territory between the great Missouri and the Rocky Mountains. Kansas was his home and first-love; will the people of Kansas make the state his sepulchre? 92



**Wild Bill's Grave in Mount Moriah Cemetery,  
Deadwood.**

## Transcribers' Notes

Punctuation, hyphenation, and spelling were made consistent when a predominant preference was found in this book; otherwise they were not changed.

Simple typographical errors were corrected; occasional unbalanced quotation marks retained.

Ambiguous hyphens at the ends of lines were retained.

[Contents](#): "Idiosyncraces" was printed that way; [page 83](#): "IDIOSYNCRACIES" was printed that way.

Page [83](#): "clairavoyant" was printed that way.

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