

THE BENDERS' CRIMES.

THE OLD MAN SAFE BEHIND IRON BARS.

One of the Greatest Crimes of Modern Times.

Luring Unsuspecting Travellers Into the House, Throwing Them Into a Dungeon, and Murdering Them for Their Money.

(Special correspondence of the Philadelphia Times.)

OMAHA, Neb., August 2. The story of the crimes of the Bender family, upon everybody's lips. The greatest crime of the century is likely, in a small measure at least, to be atoned for. But the most horrible death that old John Bender could be put to would but in a slight degree avenge the sufferings of his many victims. In a jail at Fremont, in Dodge county, a man is locked up who is supposed to be the fiend that the authorities of Kansas have been looking after for seven years. There hardly seems a doubt of his identity. With him is a woman—repulsive, hard-fisted and old. She may be the original Mrs. Bender or she may be his mistress. Opinions differ on this point. When they reach Kansas the authorities will have hard work to guard the couple from the attacks of the populace, who are thirsting for their blood. In 1873 old Bender and his wife and their son John and his wife lived near Cherryvale, Labette county, Kansas. Their house was about two miles out of town. It was a rude frame structure, standing in a lot of two acres. The old woman called her self a medium. She had a way of boiling herbs and roots that were supposed to have charms and spells about them and she dealt in incantations. She was repulsive in aspect—tall, angular and scrawny, with hard, steel-gray eyes and thin, ragged gray hair straggling over her temples. The family seem to have been totally under the influence of this ungodly creature. Her word with them was law. The Benders ostensibly kept a grocery. A sign was displayed in front of their rude dwelling to attract visitors, but the stock in trade consisted principally of a sort of cheap wine. There were only two rooms in the house. One was a dining room and kitchen combined. In the other the four Benders slept.

MANY SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCES.

In 1873 a number of persons traveling in the direction of Cherryvale mysteriously disappeared. No traces of them could be found. The first disappearance that attracted public attention was that of an old man and his grand-daughter, who left Cherryvale in February, 1872, in a two horse wagon, to go to Fort Scott, but who never reached that place. All inquiries failed to elicit a clue to their disappearance until, about the beginning of March, Dr. William H. York recognized the wagon and team at Fort Scott. He ascertained that the wagon had been purchased at the fort from some person who had come from Cherryvale, and he determined to follow out the mystery. He left Fort Scott on March 5, and he traced it to a certain place. He discovered that the man was dead, and the girl was missing. The greatest efforts were made to discover the traces of him. A large reward was offered, rivers were dragged, spots fit for ambush were probed foot by foot, lonesome places were quested as a keen hound scents a trail that is cold, and still no traces of the lost man were discovered. Not a shadow of evidence rested anywhere to say that Dr. York had been murdered—not a sign anywhere told how he came to his death, if, indeed, death had overtaken him unawares. He was traced to Cherryvale, in Labette county, but no further. There all track and trace of him ceased. The excitement was at a high pitch. One day an exploring party stopped at the house of the Benders. Had they seen anything of Dr. York? No, the answer came, they had not. They knew nothing whatever concerning him. But this visit had a strange effect. The next day the Bender family disappeared, and almost as mysteriously as had Dr. York. This suspicious circumstance aroused curiosity. A man riding into Cherryvale from the country one day was impressed by the deserted appearance of the Bender place. He entered the yard. In the stable he found a dead calf. There was every indication from the appearance of the miserable creature that it had starved to death. The man walked up to the house, opened the door and looked in. Not an article of household furniture had been removed, but the just lay heavy on everything. The man went to Cherryvale and told his story. Senator A. M. York, the brother of the missing man, was there. To his suspicious mind the sudden and strange flight of the Bender family was a revelation. He had found his first clue to his lost brother. He divulged his suspicions and a band of men accompanied him to the Bender farm. The front room of the house was carefully searched, every crack and crevice being minutely looked into and subjected to the application of rods and levers to see if the flooring was either hollow or loose. Nothing came of it. No blood spots appeared. The floor was solid. The walls were solid. Next the party searched the back room. The beds were removed. In their flight the Benders had left everything untouched.

A HORRIBLE DISCOVERY.

The explorers were about to retire when they noticed a depression in the floor. A trap door was revealed. It was lifted up, and in the gloom a pit outlined itself, forbidding, cavernous, unknown. Lights were procured and some of the men descended. They found themselves in an abyss shaped like a well, six feet deep and five feet in diameter. Here and there little damp places could be seen, as though water had come up from the bottom or been poured down from above. They groped around over these spots and held a handful to the light. The ooze had smeared itself over their palms and dripped through their fingers. It was blood. Every suspicion was realized. The murderers had fled leaving behind damning evidences of their hideous guilt. But where were the bodies of the victims? For an hour the party of excited people traversed the lonely garden in the rear of that human slaughter pen, prodding the earth with a long iron rod. At all times the iron seemed to strike a fleshy matter. In a moment's time a dozen eager spades had resurrected from its shallow grave the decaying body of a human being. It had been buried face down. They turned it to the sunlight. A cry of terror went up from the crowd. It was York's corpse. Although far advanced in the stage of decomposition the features were plainly recognizable. How the murderers' deed had been done was speedily and easily learned. A terrible blow on the back of the head had cracked the skull upon the brain and the throat had been cut from

ear-to-ear. The work of discovery went on. One after another were laid bare the graves of ten murdered people. Most of the bodies were identified. Among them the bodies of two children. There were no marks of violence upon them. They had been buried alive. The murders had been committed for robbery. Travelers were asked to drink. They never left the house alive.

THE ARREST.

All traces of the Benders were lost. Where they went no one knew. A few days ago a man was seen at Richmond travelling eastward with a woman. They stopped at a house, and soon after their arrival made inquiries as to whether anything had yet been discovered of the Bender family, who formerly lived in Kansas. Their talk and actions excited suspicion, which was further strengthened by their answers to questions asked them. They appeared excited, and told conflicting stories as to who they were and where they were from; said they had lived five or six years among the Indians; that they had been up in the Niobrara country, and that they were not the Benders. Sheriff Gregg was called. He started on their track. At Schuyler he caught up with them. He passed them two or three times, and finally turned around and met them with drawn revolver. He said to the woman, "Hello, Kate," and she was considerably startled, and replied, "I am not Kate Bender." The old man didn't offer any resistance, and the officer had no difficulty in landing him and his wife in the Fremont jail. In the jail the couple had a conversation, which was overheard. The old man, who is apparently over 60 years of age, said to her: "I know if we came to Kansas that they would hang us before we were there two hours. We would not stand a ghost of a show. If I have to die, I want to die with you and be buried with you. I am going crazy. I know I have to die. I want that razor in here before I start for Kansas." "They would not let you have it. They are afraid of losing their reward," she said. He continued: "I know you'll give me away, but you cannot save yourself. Oh! my first wife. She was a good woman. You don't care for me. You mustn't think you can escape by giving me away. Don't you cry." The couple were finally separated and charged with being the original Benders. They denied it. The old man said his name was McGregor; that he was taken sick and stopped at the house of the Benders for seven weeks, and that his wife was with him. He said he knew of various murders being committed, and that he did not dare to say anything for fear of his life. The old woman told a terrible story. She said the money of the persons murdered was always divided among the Benders. "I think my husband never got any of it. The garden was full of graves and the cellar full of dead bodies. Dr. York's brother was murdered while I was there. He was a single man, I think about 35 years old. The dining-room of the house was the room which the sliding-trap was under. A person would sit down at the table to eat, and the slides were moved and the person would fall into a deep cellar. I don't know how deep the cellar was. They would kill anybody or poor, for fear they might inform on them. They killed some persons that had no money at all."

NO DOUBT OF THE PRISONER'S IDENTITY.

For a day or two it was doubtful whether the man was really old Bender. There does not seem to be any doubt about it now. A man who lived near him at Cherryvale called at the jail. His name is Hoolian, and he identified the prisoner as old John Bender.

TELLING HOW THE CRIMES WERE COMMITTED. CHILDREN BURIED ALIVE.

Fremont despatch in Chicago, Tribune August 2. Further startling developments were made in the 3d of the matter to-day. Mrs. Bender, or Mrs. McGregor, made a full and complete confession of the whole matter, even to the minutest details regarding the butcheries perpetrated on the John Bender farm during 1872 and 1873. She denies having had any personal hand in the matter, but says Kate, old John's daughter, was the leader of all the devilry. She went over her entire history from the time she became Mrs. Alexander McGregor. She was a widow at the time she married McGregor, alias Bender, who was a widower with four children, two of whom were Kate and John, Jr. They migrated from Missouri to Labette county, Kansas, and became John Bender and family. Being asked if she would be called Mrs. McGregor or Mrs. Bender, she replied: "The latter will do if you be satisfied, as you be here to see Mrs. Bender." "Were you married to Bender in Kansas?" "I was a widow, and he married me at Springfield, Ill., at the close of the war. I can't remember what year, but Squire Seaford tied the knot. His name was then Alexander McGregor and he had four children, John and Kate being of the number; but two of the boys had run off. He was a poor cuss, but he lived about several years and then was sent by the county of Dunklin county, in southwest Missouri, where sister lived. All this is true."

"You went by the name of McGregor?"

"We did take the name till the old man went to Kansas and took up a home-ten in Labette county, I believe, when he changed it to John Bender, and, after about a year John and Kate came along, and then the devil began to be played." "What do you mean by

that?" "Well, there was stealin', thievin' and killin', and all that." "Who was the first person killed by the family?" "He was a sick man named Brown. He came along one afternoon. The house was a good-sized one, and on a sign was 'Groceries' outside the door, and seen' this he stopped. We took him in, and the second night we got him up to eat supper, and, while seated at the table, John Bender let him into the cellar, where Kate or John killed him, and the next day they buried him in the garden."

"How long after this before any one else was killed?" "I don't quite remember, but not long. Two were killed, and one of them, whose name I believe was something like McGrath or McGrady, had a good deal of money; at least John told me so."

"Do you remember about a whole family being killed?" "Yes, I do. There was a man and wife and two little girls. They drove up in a covered spring wagon, and wanted to stay all night. Kate Bender said they could stay. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and while at supper that night they were dropped through the hole. Kate and the old man were below, and the man fought pretty hard, but they fixed him. I was behind the curtain that night, but did not pull the trap."

"What about the children?" "They cried bitterly that night, and the next day a man came along and see one of 'em, and they were killed that night." "How were they killed?" "They were buried alive. Old John took one and Kate took the other. They hollered awful, but finally stopped, and Kate came in and said the 'damned brats were all right now.' 'Who was killed next?' 'It was Dr. York. I remember him so well. He was such a pleasant man, with side-whiskers and moustache. It was a rainy day when he came, and they got a good deal of money when they killed him. He fought hard, too, but Kate killed him with the hatchet.' 'You all left soon after that?' 'Yes; they got 'skered,' and we all went away. After walking a few miles some men took us in a wagon, and we drove into the Cherokee or Choctaw Nation."

ASKING FOR A REQUISITION TO TAKE THE BENDERS TO KANSAS.

CHICAGO, August 4.—A despatch to the Journal from Omaha says: Governor St John was applied to a week ago for a requisition to take the Benders from Fremont to Kansas, but he has not yet complied. The old man still denies that he is John Bender. Photographs of the two prisoners have been taken. The old woman is almost a giantess, being six feet tall, and weighs 200 pounds, with an immense face and hands darkened by exposure during her life among the Sioux. She can neither read nor write. Since Tuesday of last week she has been separated from the old man, who thinks she has gone to Kansas.

THE I. R. B.

(Continued from first page.)

Reverting now to the organization of the Brotherhood, I asked my informant if he was at liberty to give an idea of the strength of the forces.

"In Ireland," he replied, taking from his waistcoat pocket a small slip of paper, "the number of actual paying members is as follows—"

Table with 2 columns: Province, No. of Men. Rows: Ulster (10,000), Munster (12,000), Leinster (10,000), Connaught (5,000). Total: 37,000.

—Before the land agitation, or one year ago, there were 15,000 or 16,000 men in our ranks in Connaught. They had about £2,500 in their treasury, too, and now they only have about £800. Where the money is gone I do not know. They have purchased no arms, and, therefore, the cash is supposed to have been spent for imitation pipes, green flags and other equally interesting 'war material' used at agitation meetings."

"What are the forces in England?" "Across the channel the strength is as follows—"

Table with 2 columns: District, No. of Men. Rows: North of England (8,000), South of England (5,000), Scotland (3,000). Total: 16,000.

—This makes a grand total in England, Ireland and Scotland of 47,000 men. Of the number in Ireland fully twelve thousand are armed with Snider rifles, purchased or stolen in England or bought in America, with American, English and Australian contributions."

"Do you have any trouble in getting these arms into the country?" "None whatever. Our arms agents have no difficulty in supplying arms as rapidly as the circles desire to purchase. The arms agents have in Dublin, Belfast, Cork and other large towns stores of arms awaiting purchase by the circles."

"Are you at liberty to say how they are smuggled into the country?" "No, that would not be advisable; but they are brought into the country constantly in such quantities as they are needed. The Snider rifle and bayonet is supplied to the men in Ireland at £1 apiece, the extra cost being defrayed by the fund of the Brotherhood."

"How large is the fund?" "Well, about £20,000 in three countries, the division of the North of England being the richest."

"Are the men in England armed, too?" "They are all armed with revolvers. It is not necessary to arm them with guns, yet, as they can be got easily if wanted. In Ireland it is different, and arms must be obtained secretly. Of course the number named above as that of those under arms in Ireland does not represent all as many are privately armed with weapons not received through the organization. It is impossible to get the exact number armed as the centres are not obliged to report the number of arms, as they are men and money."

"Have you ever had any communication with the English republicans?" "We have on one or two occasions been in negotiation with Bradlaugh and the republicans, who have shown considerable interest in our objects, but the communications have never come to anything, as the Englishmen do not mean fight."

"Have you any connection on the Continent among revolutionists there?" "No, we have not. Stephens had an understanding with Continental revolutionists, and in 1867 a number of Italian officers came to England, but they returned, and since then there has been a kind of contempt among Continental revolutionists for the Irish revolutionists. The strong Catholicity of Irish revolutionists must always be a bar to a connection with Continentals having the same aim, for the latter are mostly infidels."

"What possible hope have you of succeeding single handed in an encounter with England?" "We never intend to try it. We will never repeat the blunder of Stephens, who was forced into a rising by the importunities

of Irish friends and common patriots in America, who insisted on fighting. We can afford to wait. In fact that is our only chance. England must sooner or later be involved in a great war, and that will be our opportunity. In 1877, when a war was threatened with Russia, overtures were made in America to the Russian Ambassador, at Washington, and also to the Ambassador, in Paris, by Irish agents, offering assistance and asking for war material and officers. As no war ensued the negotiations of course came to nothing, but the overtures were not declined, only postponed."

"Are the constabulary of Ireland at all connected with the organization?" "No, taking the oath of allegiance disqualifies a member of the Brotherhood while that body remains in its civil state and with few exceptions this has applied even to members of Parliament. Of Parnell's active party in the present Parliament nearly every one of them have been members of 'our firm.' One of the exceptions is the parliamentary 'disciple of Hartmann,' who, however, took the secret oath, but when called on for dues refused to pay."

"Has Stephens anything to do with the present organization?" "Nothing. There are, however, small circles in Dublin and Cork, recruited chiefly from expelled members of the organization, which profess to be working with Stephens; but it is doubtful whether they have any connection with him."

This ended the conversation. The interview sums up concisely and truthfully the facts regarding the organization of the revolutionary party in Ireland. No one can doubt the danger that is now impending over the thousands of these men, and it would be hard to predict the result should England find a revolution on her hands while engaged in a great European war. What might not a few thousand reckless men in England do in these days of dynamite and nihilists? It is customary to laugh at such things as these, and for the purposes of the revolutionists it is as well that they should be laughed at, but it is hard to believe that generation after generation Irishmen will risk their lives and liberty for the amusement of the thing, and hundreds of them are now risking at least the latter in the endeavor to arm and organize their countrymen to meet some emergency in the future which may cost them their lives. Every week brings into Ireland quantities of military stores of every description, most of it of excellent quality. It is brought in, stored and despatched to every part of Ireland, under the very eyes of the police. One cannot travel in any of the disturbed parts of Ireland without observing one or two of the constabulary narrowly watching all the strangers who pass through—"looking for Fenians," an inspector in Mayo once told me. They know that arms and ammunition come into their towns, but how and when they would be glad to explain if they could. A consignment arrived in Cork only this week, and in due course found its way to —, from which place it was supplied with some interesting specimens. As a guarantee of good faith I forward you by this mail two rifles, both Sniders, which less than three days ago were surreptitiously landed in Ireland by the arms agents, and the remainder of which consignment is now in the hands of a Fenian military company in the province of Munster. These rifles are fair specimens of the arms of the revolutionists, and are the manufacture usually favored by them. One of them is a short skirmishing rifle in excellent condition, and to which belongs a sword bayonet, now in my possession. The other gun is a regular military rifle of the Snider pattern. Both are government rifles, as will be seen by the crown stamped upon the lock, and have either been bought at auction or stolen—the latter, I imagine, from the dates 1877 and 1879, for it was before these that the Snider rifles were adopted by the British regular army, and the Sniders abandoned and sold at auction. The Sniders are now used by the Volunteers alone, and I do not doubt the guns I send you have been stolen from some lawless volunteers. Those rifles had been taken apart when I received them and the stock of the long rifle is, you will see, sawed into two pieces for the greater safety of secret transmission, but in such a manner as not to impair its usefulness in the slightest degree. This latter gun has evidently had a precarious passage to Ireland, for it is slightly rusted, but it would have been placed in prime condition in the hands of the arms agent. I have also a new Colt's revolver, which is the kind served out to officers of the organization. All the arms bear the private mark of the Brotherhood on the stocks and would be easily recognized by friends of the cause in America.

Regarding the operations of the organization in the immediate future it may be relied upon that the object of the Brotherhood now is, and will be for some time to come, to organize, arm and finally to discipline from eighty thousand to one hundred thousand men in Ireland, and to risk from the English and Scotch organizations from three thousand to four thousand of the most determined men for action there when the proper moment arrives, but the nature of whose duty has not yet been decided upon, though it may be guessed. As soon as the organization is completed and has approached the perfection which is desired, and has sufficient funds on hand, the Supreme Council will cease to exist, and the organization will become purely military. Each county will be placed under an officer, each province under a general and the entire body under a military executive, the American organization being expected to supply officers. But even then no revolution need be anticipated, for the Irish revolutionists have no hope of fighting England alone. The organization in its changed form will simply await events.

I am sure that the Canadian scheme will never again be tried, and, indeed, the lesson of the last fiasco has not been thrown away in any sense. But whatever is done will depend upon circumstances. One thing, however, is certain, from everything I have seen and heard, and from what I know—there is no hazard whatever in predicting that whenever England becomes engaged in a war of any magnitude Ireland will be the seat of a bold and serious revolution.

The above are only a few extracts from the report in the New York Herald, which occupies a whole page of that very enterprising journal.

The population of the leading cities of the United States is to be learned from the census just taken. New York contains 1,209,561, an increase of 24 per cent. on 1870; Philadelphia, 842,000, increase 24 per cent.; Brooklyn 554,683, increase 40 per cent.; Chicago 477,500, increase 60 per cent.; St. Louis 375,000, increase 21 per cent.; Boston 352,000, increase 40 per cent.; Baltimore 330,000, Cincinnati 265,804, San Francisco 227,350, increase of 51 per cent.; New Orleans 207,328. The other six figured cities, making 18 in all thus far, are, in order—Washington (160,000), Cleveland (157,000), Buffalo (149,000), Newark (136,000), Milwaukee (130,000), Detroit (119,000), Louisville (112,000), and Providence (104,000).

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