

PIONEER PERILS.

II.

THE CEDAR RIVER GANG OF OUTLAWS BROKEN UP—MRS. JOHN WEARE AND THE WOUNDED OUTLAW CHIEF—AN INCIDENT OF THE FORTIES.

The great immigration of 1849 was preceded by a period of outlawry which compelled Iowa citizens and property owners to organize in defense of their lives and property. The men who made up such organizations were everywhere known by the significant term "Regulators." The findings of the improvised court of Judge Lynch were by common consent exempt from appeal.

In the memorial volume of the late William Williams Walker, dedicated to the memory of John Weare, a pioneer of Cedar Rapids, from which extract was made in the July issue of *THE ANNALS*, occurs an interesting incident which throws a strong side-light upon the period of outlawry immediately preceding the tidal wave of immigration that set in three years after the territory of Iowa became a State. Following his custom the biographer lets Mr. Weare tell his own story in his own excellent way, which story, somewhat condensed, is as follows:

J. B.

All winter, it had been evident that we had in our midst some persons who were giving aid and comfort to the outlaws; but we were not able to identify them or put a stop to their work. In the spring, one of the "Regulators" joined the outlaws, and so learned that a party on a certain night would pass Cedar Rapids, conveying a large amount of stolen goods to their cave on the bank of the Cedar River, at the point known as "The Palisades." Plans were made by the Regulators to intercept this company, on their way through Cedar Rapids, capture the goods and the thieves and bring them to justice. We greatly desired to secure their leader, a desperate Missourian. The Regulators were stationed along the road where the outlaws were expected to pass. When the band stole into the guarded road, at a given signal they were surrounded, and nearly captured; but they fought like tigers. In the contest the leader escaped, although he was known to be wounded. All the plunder was seized and most of the outlaws were captured.



MRS. MARTHA PARKHURST WEARE.
First wife of John Weare. From a daguerrotype in possession of
Mrs. Weare's daughter, Mrs. W. W. Walker.

After seeing the gang lodged in our block house—built for defense from the Indians—I returned home, not more than half satisfied with our night's work. My wife met me at the door with the information that one of the Regulators from Marion, who had been wounded in the attack, had started home and found himself too weak from loss of blood to go on. Knowing mine was the house of a friend, he sought its shelter, and had gone to bed in our room. I made haste to go to the man, wondering who he could be. By the "Law Harry!" there lay, in my own bed the leader of the outlaws!

It swept over me in a moment, his whole audacious plan. When he knew how badly he was wounded, he made straight for my house, knowing I was not at home, and that any sufferer had but to let his sufferings be known to my wife and he would have a friend. I was greatly enraged with him, but my wife pleaded for him. She knew he would be hung by the Regulators. With all this in mind I spoke to him. He answered and, looking me straight in the eye, said, "John, you're not the man to strike even a dog when he's down."

I went right out and called a physician, and my wife, the doctor, and I took the best care we could of him. He died the next night. The doctor got a coffin from a cabinet-maker, telling him he wanted it for a woman who had died up the river, and would take it himself. In the dark of the early morning hours he brought the coffin to our house, and we put the body and all the belongings, excepting the gun and a few valuables, into it. Doctor and I drove to the little burying ground, on the way to Vinton, and dug a grave in a corner of it and covered it with brush.

These facts remained a secret for many years. I afterwards gave the gun and other valuables to the son and daughter of this man, and went with them to the place where we laid him. I think the earth has never been disturbed in that spot, and not a few persons wonder how he could have vanished and never left any trace of himself.

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