THE REIGN OF THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

At Baxter Springs, Kan., Winter of 1866 and 1867.

By ROBERT MORRIS PECK, Alias "Number 27."
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IX.

About the time of the finding of the murdered cattlemen a man named Abe Henderson, with whom I was intimately acquainted and who was afterwards for several years a salesman in a grocery store in Baxter Springs and a few years ago in the grocery business in Webb City, Mo., came to Baxter Springs looking for a claim. He met Lee, who offered him his claim so cheap that, after going out and looking the place over, Henderson bought it. Besides paying Lee cash for his claim, farming tools, etc., Henderson engaged Lee, paying him in advance, to break some more prairie on the place, while Abe went back to his old home to settle up his affairs and move to the new claim.

As soon as Henderson was gone, instead of doing the "breaking" he had already been paid for, Lee again sold off the farm implements and everything else that was movable and also tried to resell the claim, but before he had succeeded in the latter deal he became alarmed at the inquiries our Vigilantes were making, and he and his wife slipped away so quietly that our men lost track of them for some time.

The subsequent career of the Lees was related to me from what I considered a reliable source shortly after its happening, but in giving the story now from memory after the lapse of so many years I may err in minor details, but think the main features were about as I here tell them.

Several months after Lee and his wife disappeared our Vigilance Committee officials (or was it Judge W. M. Matheny, whom we had elected the first Mayor of Baxter Springs?) received a communication from a similar organization in the interior of Missouri, making some inquiries concerning Lee and his wife, and the correspondence that followed developed the facts that follow:

On leaving our part of the country Lee, with his wife dressed in a man's clothes—a disguise, as was afterwards discovered, that she was often in the habit of assuming—had gone out into Missouri, the pair pretending to be farm hands looking for work.

They had secured work with a young widow, who, with her old mother, was living on their farm, but had no one to work the place. The Lees had also discovered that the young widow had quite a sum of money in the bank in a neighboring town. In a short time, as a means of getting to handle the widow's money, Lee persuaded her to marry him, his old wife, of course, concurring in the plot.

After marrying the young widow Lee began persuading her that he could make a fortune by taking that money out of the bank and investing it in Texas cattle, which he could buy cheap over in the Indian Nation.

The young woman rather favored the project at first, but her old mother bitterly opposed it, and seemed suspicious of Lee's real design, which was probably to get hold of the money and "skip."

He soon found that the old lady's influence over the daughter had caused her also to become very suspicious of him, so much so that she had finally told him that she would not under any circumstances draw that money from the bank and place it in his hands for speculation.

Blaming the old lady for the failure of his scheme, Lee became very much exasperated at her interference, and resolved to kill her out of revenge as soon as a good opportunity occurred, and then "skip the country."

His opportunity soon came. The unsuspecting old lady had expressed a desire to visit and spend a few days with a neighboring relative, who lived a few miles away, and Lee cheerfully offered to hitch up the team and take her where she wanted to go and go after her when she wished to come home.

Deluded by his apparent kindness, the old lady got into the wagon and they started, but instead of taking her to her relative's home Lee turned off the road after following it a piece and went to a shallow pond, not far away, drove out into the water, which was only about two feet deep, then dragged the poor old woman out of the wagon and held her head under water till she strangled to death. Leaving the body in the pond, after remaining away a reasonable time, he returned to the house and reported that he had taken the old lady to see her kinsman, and had promised her to come after her in a couple of days.

This would give him two days in which he seemed to hope to be able to persuade, force or frighten the daughter, his new wife, into compliance with his wishes in drawing the money from the bank—or a part of it at least—which he probably hoped to secure before leaving.

But "the best laid plans of mice and men aft gang aglee." The very man—kinsman of the old lady and daughter—to whose house Lee had said he had taken the mother safely, came over that day on an errand direct from his home, and the daughter was astonished and alarmed to hear him say in answer to her inquiry that neither Lee nor her mother had been to his house.

Lee became alarmed when he saw the man coming, and he and his old wife, who was still masquerading in men's clothes, found it necessary to leave immediately, without any further effort to secure the money. Knowing now that the murder would soon be discovered, they decided that they would stand a better chance of escape by separating, each going in a different direction and agreeing to meet again at a designated place in a distant part of the country.

The old lady's daughter and her relative, in anxious alarm, followed the tracks of the wagon Lee had driven to the pond, and there found the body in the shallow water.

News of the shocking tragedy was soon spread thru the neighborhood, a local Vigilance Committee took up the trail of the fleeing Lees—each going in an opposite direction from the other—sent a party to follow each fugitive, and soon succeeded in catching both, tho they had reached quite a distance from the scene of the recent murder.

The Lees were both known to some of the pursuers, and were easily identified when caught. When brought back to the vicinity of their crime they were not allowed to communicate with or even see each other.

Lee maintained a dogged silence. The proof was so clear concerning the murder of the old lady that the Vigilantes had no hesitation about hanging him on that score, but they suspected him of other crimes, and tried to get him to confess. He realized that "the jig was up" with him, as he expressed it, but altho the men strung him up and let him down several times in an effort to extort a confession of other crimes, he obstinately refused to "cough up" anything as to his own or his wife's former guilt, and died game.

When the woman also refused to make any confession of other crimes and continued to reiterate her innocence some of the Vigilantes began to think that possibly this might be Lee's only crime, and that maybe she was not really a particeps criminis; but by resorting to a little ruse they finally succeeded in wringing a full confession from her.

They told her (they had already discovered that she was Lee's wife) that her husband had made a confession of a number of crimes, and they had then hung him. This she refused to believe at first, but when they led her out where she could see and recognize his body as it dangled from the limb of a tree she broke down, and told them of Lee had committed.

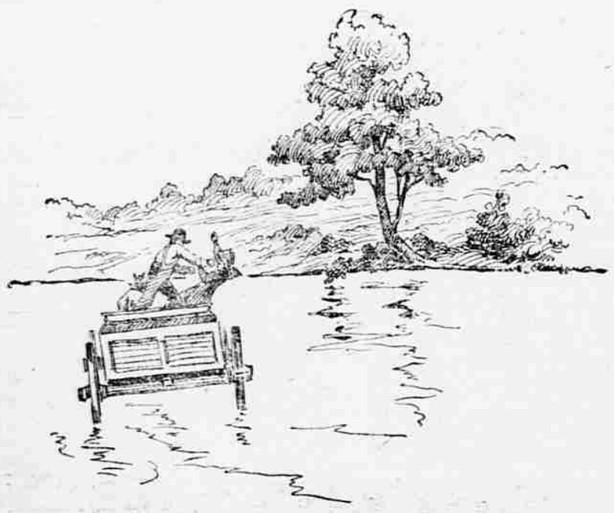
She said that the old lady's murder was the thirteenth that she had assisted or aided and abetted Lee in perpetrating. She seemed to be a firm believer in the superstition of the evil luck ascribed to the number 13, saying that if they had only killed the daughter as well as the old lady at the same time it would have made the number 14, and thus she believed they would have bridged over the fatal "hoodoo" that had brought them to their doom.

She expressed no remorse or contrition for their fiendish deeds, only a deep regret at being overtaken in their bloody career, and detailed with apparent indifference the brutal murders she had participated in, among the lot giving a minute account of how she and Lee had murdered the two young men on Rock Creek for their little herd of cattle.

Getting up in the night, when sure that the young men were asleep, she and Lee, choosing silent weapons, had armed themselves, one with an axe, the other a hatchet, and then, stealthily creeping up to their sleeping victims, at a given signal each had killed them.

As soon as she finished her confession of horrors the Vigilantes swung her up alongside of her mate—a well-matched pair.

(The end.)



THE MURDER OF THE OLD WOMAN.

Yountville' Veterans' Home.

Editor National Tribune: About the year 1883 California purchased from the trustees of the Yount estate a plot of 1,000 acres of land for a home. No site could have been better chosen. It is known as the Yountville Veterans' Home. It should have been named for some hero of the civil war. The buildings erected from time to time now number about 115 structures, built in close proximity. The style of the buildings is very pleasing. There is no waste room. The annual expense of the Home is some $200,000; the income about the same. Pathways and avenues intersect the grounds in all directions, bordered with flowers, trimmed shrubbery and trees.

The scene is one of enchantment. In the distance rise the notched hills, giving to the landscape a variegated perspective of rare loveliness. There are about 1,100 veterans at present in the Home. Among them are many cases of sad decrepitude, induced by 20 years of labor, accident or disease, but along with these are stalwart men who look strong enough to swing a sledge. The management of the Home is excellent. The largest liberty is allowed the veterans, abundance of nourishing food, clothing and bedding, games, books and music. The Surgeons are skilful. The Home is under command of Gen. Woodruff. Col. J. J. Lyon is Quartermaster.

The hospital is ably managed by Dr. Bolston, and is in reality the abode of silence. Most excellent food is served. The management of the hospital employs a mixed corps of male and female nurses. To the man nurse the care of the invalid is an occupation bereft of all novelty. The young woman nurse, however, ministers to the sick with a deftness and tenderness characteristic of the mother. There is no canteen at which to gratify the social instinct.—George W. Bell, Yountville Veterans' Home and Hospital, Napa County, Cal.

The Ex-Prisoners of War.

Joseph C. Underwood, Union City, Ind., says that if people in general only knew the suffering endured by those who entered the Confederate prison hells they would be ready to grant any reasonable request on the part of those who suffered so much. They would even cry aloud for Congress to do the right thing and give a liberal pension.

Youngest Veteran.

Eben Foster, 209 North Second street, Stillwater, Minn., read in The National Tribune of Aug. 18 the claim of John Boyles, of Wilkinsburg, Pa., to being the youngest soldier of the civil war. Comrade Foster was born June 14, 1849, in Athens County, Ohio. He was mustered into the 92d Ohio Sept. 30, 1862, and was mustered out at Columbus, O., at the close of the war. He was in the Fourteenth Corps, and was with Sherman on his march to the sea, and finished up with the Grand Review at Washington, D. C.

ST. CLOUD, IN FLORIDA.

Settler From the North Who Is Impressed With Place.

(From the Oil City Derrick.)

St. Cloud, Fla., Aug. 29.—I have had a number of letters from friends in your picturesque city among the hills asking about St. Cloud, and would like space in your valuable paper for a reply.

St. Cloud is a colony town in the middle of Florida, of 2,000 inhabitants, situated on a plain; is not a year old, but a great big, overgrown youngster, with the wealth, ambition and opportunities of any city its size. Going ahead in its knee pants for want of time to make a change, consequently it don't look the grown-up city it would if dressed in a grown-up garb, which is being fitted out up-to-date, and will be put on as fast as many hands can do the work.

It is the rainy season now. It has rained almost every day since the 1st of July, and sometimes it pours. They call it "cloudburst" up North. The rainy season comes in a time when all vegetation rests except those adapted to the wet. No, St. Cloud is not under water, but as clean as a new pin after its God-given sanitary bath, ready to go on in health and prosperity for another year, with an occasional rain, as the moon decrees.

There are still good opportunities to invest in real estate, and properties are being taken fast. "Will anything grow there?" is often asked. I will answer with a smile. I should say it will. If one don't want a twig or seed to grow, better not let it get into the ground, for it is a sure go if they do in the growing season and no delay about it. You see it in a few days; wonder what it is; lift your hat, scratch your head, and think and exclaim: "Oh, my; can that be the seed I planted in so short a time?"

It is the greatest place on earth to raise chickens; yes, and children, too. No frozen toes or staying out of school on account of cold or deep snow; no big store bills for heavy clothing or big gas or coal bills in Winter. All that is saved or spent for luxuries in St. Cloud.—Mrs. Ralph Livington.

St. Cloud a Happy and Well-Contented Colony.

The National Tribune: I cannot express the sorrow I feel by reason of the defeat of Comrade McElroy for Commander-in-Chief of the G. A. R., nor my detestation of the means by which his defeat was brought about. Men in the heat of a political contest or in fierce rivalry in business may at times resort to questionable means to attain their ends and the offense be condoned, but for a comrade of the G. A. R. to traduce the character of another who has gone thru the same fiery ordeal of war as himself—well, it may be forgiven, but can never be forgotten. Since coming to St. Cloud I have found the situation better in most respects than I expected to find them and in some much better. There is no sickness among the veterans that I have heard of, but I have heard of many who have recovered their health after coming here. I have found no water standing on the ground within the limits of the town. I find most of the townsite well elevated and dry, so much so that I should think it would remain so during the wettest season. Drainage will make the lowest spot dry. I find the soil productive where cultivated, and I predict that when our town has three more years of life to its credit it will be the happiest and most-contented colony of veterans to be found in the wide, wide world. Very truly yours—J. H. McQuaid, St. Cloud, Fla., Oct. 2, 1910.

Fulfills All the Promises.

The National Tribune: After three months of actual residence in the G. A. R. colony of St. Cloud I wish to assure you and your vast army of readers that the colony fulfills all the promises of its organizers, the Seminole Land and Investment Company. In my 87th year, a Mexican War veteran, accustomed from birth to the rigors of New York State climate, I find the genial atmosphere of central Florida the renewer of youthful vigor, a welcome escape from Winter's hardships, while in no wise objectionable as an enjoyable Summer residence. During the last month or longer the town is fast filling up. Many arrivals now every day of substantial settlers, who come for a permanent home. In every direction are seen new structures rising, probably not now less than 70 or perhaps 80. As they are scattered over two square miles of territory at the south shore of our beautiful lake, it is easily seen that they mean a very large addition to our population. My own home on the highland corner of Vermont avenue and 11th street, 100 by 150 feet, is within 500 feet of an orange grove, well laden with yellowing oranges and grapefruit. My soil is of the same character. My 20 acres, six miles southwest, near Lake Tohopekaliga, is "muck." I claim as good land as any in the State, part of a late rice farm, ready for the plow, not a tree or bush in the way. For my $400 I got full value, all the land company offered. Business is lively; a large school going and soon to move into a fine brick edifice; Presbyterian Church (concrete), nearly complete; the post office, in its brick building, now selling and paying money orders. St. Cloud is a hustling town where there was no population 18 months ago.—Calvin J. Mills, St. Cloud, Fla.

"A Booster for St. Cloud."

The National Tribune: They call me a "booster for St. Cloud," and proud I am of it, for when I am boosting St. Cloud I am boosting John McElroy, the most highly esteemed and honored man of our Nation to-day, who by his trials and efforts has made it possible for hundreds of the old soldiers and their families to have homes here in St. Cloud, this beautiful land of sunshine and flowers, where they can spend the remaining days of their lives together in peace and happiness, enjoying the full 365 days of the year. No, it was not John McElroy's defeat that caused my heart to ache, but it was the undermining way which they took to defeat him; not only that, but to try to injure our town of St. Cloud, with which I am so well pleased, and which is to-day the most prosperous of anything of the kind in the United States. Yes, the reports against our town are untrue and without foundation; they are as black lies as ever fell from human lips. I know, for with my husband and son we were the first family to build on our lots and live in St. Cloud, a town of which I am very proud to-day. The Land Company has not only done everything they agreed to do, but have done more. The men who have had charge of the business here have done everything as satisfactorily for the old soldiers and everyone else who has come here as possibly could have been done. I am ready to stand by every word I say any time or place, and if anyone doubts it let them come to me. Yours sincerely—Mrs. G. W. Penn, St. Cloud, Fla., Oct. 4, 1910.

Census Enumerator.

C. S. Woodward, Quartermaster of Cyrus Hall Post, 138, Shelbyville, Ill., noticed in The National Tribune that Comrade Samuel F. Emersson, Skowhegan, Me., claims two records to his credit as census enumerator, and asks if anyone has two. Comrade Woodward can go him one better. He took the census in 1880 of the town of Shelbyville, Ill., and in 1900 he took half the town, and in 1910 he took the same half.

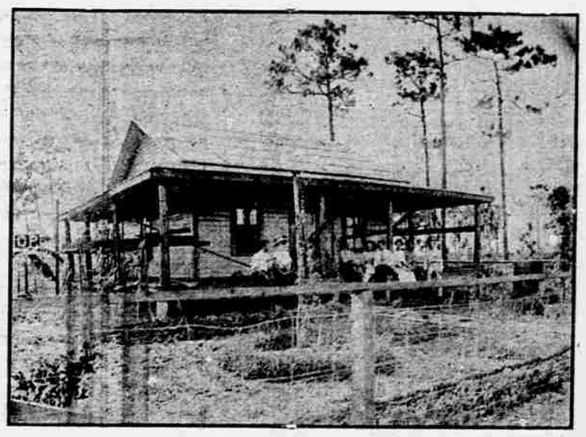
A Patriotic Family.

C. C. Rowe, Dover, N. H., had a brother and his father in Co. F, 8th Me., with him. The brother starved in Andersonville, and the father was in Libbey, and came home only skin and bones. Another brother, who was in the 1st Me. Cav., died in Washington.

Everything O. K. at St. Cloud.

The National Tribune: As far as the people of this town are concerned, none have been washed away, nor are any of the veterans starving and dying like sheep, even tho a politician did say so at Atlantic City. He has never been here, and merely vented his falsehoods from hearsay. I came here on July 25, and the only deaths I know of were two from drowning while bathing in the lake, Mr. and Mrs. Wright. I understand the party who maligned us at Atlantic City gets the highest pension given to anyone, besides holding a fine Government job. To say that his conduct is dishonorable is putting it mildly. Thousands of the comrades have investments here, and a large majority are more than pleased with conditions and have heard a great deal of talk off and on about St. Cloud. I have heard it said that it was wet land. This is all bosh, for in the rainy season all land in Florida is wet land, but it don't stay wet. I know it is that way here at Tampa. I have had talks with a good many visitors to St. Cloud, and the real practically sensible ones are all enthusiastic over the prospects in the matter of fruit raising and trucking. I hope some day to run up and see the old boys, for I understand they have built up a fine town and are having a good time. The climate of Florida is all that can be hoped for anywhere in America for those who suffer from lung and throat troubles and the aches and pains common to old age. One can go out of doors every day in the year, and the Winters are as delightful down here as the Springs are in the North. Yours very truly—E. Severy, Co. I, 16th Conn., Tampa, Fla., Oct. 24, 1910.

HOME OF J. O. McNEW AT ST. CLOUD, FLA.



HOME OF J. E. OLIVER AT ST. CLOUD, FLA.

It would seem to us that a man who has occupied as high a place as this politician has would keep his mouth shut if he could not commend a project in which so many are so vitally interested, as thousands are in St. Cloud. In conclusion I wish to tell our old comrades of Co. K, 74th Ohio, and other friends that St. Cloud is O. K., and will grow with each coming year and be the crowning work in the life of John McElroy, whose reputation, too, will grow with the years, while his defamers will take a place with those who deserve oblivion. Yours very truly—David Baker, St. Cloud, Fla., Oct. 1, 1910.

About the Rainy Season.

The National Tribune: I have been living in Tampa for the past six years,

MISCELLANEOUS WANTS.

H. C. Bond, Kuttawa, Ky., a colored man, aged 85 years, wants to locate his two brothers. He says: "When my master died we were scattered. Joseph Bond fell heir to me. My brother Enouch went to the iron works and from there ran away to Canada. When his master went there and saw him, Enouch made him a present of a gold-headed cane. I do not know whether he goes by the name of Hillman or Bond. I know nothing of brother Richard, only that his name was Bond."

H. E. Houghtoiling, Oxford, Nebr., wants to hear from anyone connected with the Eruptive Hospital No. 3, Louisville, Ky., in the Summer of 1864. He would like to hear particularly of the doctor in charge or his wife, a refugee from Alabama. Her maiden name was Nancy Drake.

I. W. Wagner, Dunellen, N. J., wants the address of any comrade or officer of Cooper's Battery, B, 1st Pa. L. A. Especially those who knew Charles G. Higgins. This is for the benefit of his widow to help her get a pension.

Wm. Rector, Fruita, Mesa County, Colo., (care Z. M. Morrow), wants the poem beginning "South Mountain towered to our right, Far off the river lay, And over on the wooded heights, We held their lines at bay."

Jos. B. Price, Tryonville, Pa., wants the song which is a burlesque on the battle fought on Lake Champlain Sept. 11, 1814, one verse of which begins, "Backside of Albany is Lake Champlain, A little pond half full of water."

George Perkins, Chillicothe, Ohio, would like to hear from any of the name of Perkins who served in the United States Army, as he intends to compile a history.

Robert Weller, 152d Ill., Packwood, Ia., wants someone to give him the particulars of the accident to the 152d Ill. at Tullahoma, in June, 1865. The men were drawn up in line for guard duty and standing at shoulder arms when they were struck by lightning and their guns soldered together.

F. W. Hobson, Liberty, Tenn., wants to know the whereabouts of Samuel S. Craddock, 5th Tenn. Cav. When last heard from he was at the Soldiers' Home, Johnson City.

F. W. Hobson, Liberty, Tenn., says that William Corley enlisted in Allison's Squadron of Cavalry, C. S. A., was captured and sent to some prison in the North, from which place he enlisted in the U. S. Navy. He was honorably discharged at the close of the war, and his widow now wants to get a pension. If anyone can give Comrade Hobson information as to the prison and other circumstances of Corley's enlistment it will help her.

Augustus Pummel, R. R. 1, Waverly, Ohio, care Rev. Jacob Emrich, wants the following information: The name and address of the Major commanding Hospital Corps, U. S. A., at Falls Church, Va., Sept. 20, 1898, and just prior to removal to Camp Meade, Pa.

The address of Lieut. Dr. Newlove, with Hospital Corps at Athens, Ga., and Post 15, near Pinar del Rio, Cuba, last heard of at Columbus arracks.

b The address of Acting Surgeon Ferris, of Hospital Corps, U. S. A., Falls Church, Va.

Address of Lieut. Dr. Yard, detailed to hospital duty from 15th Pa. Supposed to have lived in Scranton, Pa.

P. W. Longstreth, Gratiot, Ohio, wants the address of T. J. Hays, Co. G, 114th Ohio. Last heard from in Oklahoma, and the address of Nathan Eucland, Co. H, 114th Ohio, last heard from in Southern Iowa.

T. J. Young, 2530 Clement Ave., Alameda, Cal., wants the address of Capt. F. K. Shawhan, Co. D, 123d Ohio, and the address of Lieut. Ransom Griffin, 116th Ohio.

David Kintzel, Warsaw, Ind., wants information of his brother, Frederick E. Kintzel, who served in the 101st Ohio.

Wm. B. Battice, R. D. 62, Seneca, Ill., wants the song containing the lines, "But the Yankees made them cry, big pig, little pig, root hog or die," also the song, "I'm the best looking Irishman on the Canal."

Dr. J. W. Lang, 13th Ind. Cav., Marengo, Ind., wants the song containing the words, "He's the bird that catches the worm because he wakes up Early."

Henry Gordon, Plum Run, Pa., wants any information as to J. W. Golden, of Co. F, 29th Pa. He and Golden left the army together June 17, 1865, while lying in camp at Washington, D. C. They left without discharges, and Comrade Gordon has never been able to get one since.

Pharaoh Burke, 18th U. S., Mt. Vernon, O., wants to hear from any of his old regiment.

Harry Forrer, 181 Manhattan Ave., Jersey City, N. J., wants to find someone who can recall George M. Forrer, Co. A, 16th Pa. Cav. He enlisted Feb. 23, 1865, and deserted July 30, 1865, because he was sick and could not get care in camp. His widow desires to have the charge of desertion removed in order to get a pension.

George Betts, 519 West 50th St., New York, N. Y., served in the 7th U. S. from 1872 to 1877 and in the 17th U. S. from 1878 to 1883. He wants information as to Christopher Betts, from whom he has not heard since 1865, when he was Sergeant in the 70th N. Y. He was also in the 7th N. J.

Franklin A. Bushey, M. D., Greencastle, Pa., wants someone to tell him what relation Capt. Thomas P. Turner, the commandant of Libbey Prison was to C. Beverly Turner, who was the clerk and inspector of the prison, and usually called Maj. Dick Turner.

Mrs. Charles G. Higgins, 8 South Delaware Ave., Atlantic City, N. J., wants the address of any survivor of the 1st Pa. L. A., better known as "Cooper's Battery."

D. Grace, 415 Noyes Ave., St. Joseph, Mo., would like to hear from any of his old comrades of the 22d Ind. Battery.

F. H. Vunk, Vancouver, Wash., wants the address of John Clark, Sergeant, Co. B, 1st Wis. Cav., who is the author of "The True Story of the Capture of Jefferson Davis," mentioned in The National Tribune of Oct. 13.

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Dr. J. E. Cannaday, 54 Park Square, Sedalia, Mo.

References: Third National Bank, Sedalia, Mo.

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