

DOWN SOUTH IN DIXIE.

Some of the Fishermen who Live on the Lower Mississippi.

CRAFT ALWAYS GOING DOWN STREAM.

A Community that Extends Over a Thousand Miles of the Father of Waters—Jugging and Blocking.

Of those curiously aboriginal types of character which flourish upon the banks of the Mississippi none is more instinctively indigent and virile individuality than that of the fisherman. You may find them from St. Paul to the Gulf, but the further south one goes the more they take on the characteristics of the great stream and put off the leading-strings of conventionality.

But one must get below St. Louis at least to find the genuine "old salt." A writer in the Chicago Tribune thus describes him. He is as different as the Chesapeake oyster-man differs from the New Bedford whaler as the man-of-war's man. The lower river fisherman is just himself. There is no other criterion by which he may be measured.

Take the fisherman all in all—as a class, now, remember—and he may not measure up to that nice moral sense which splits difference between two-edged and two-edged. On occasion he may appropriate such articles of minor importance as a blanket or a tent fly, a few lines, or a hatchet that catches his fancy. But then he expects that you will do the same thing if he gives you the opportunity.

His language would be positively shocking if one happened to be a little rigorous about the elimination of profanity from the form of every day speech. He is unskilled to a degree which would place him in the category of the most abandoned tramps. But, on the other hand, he will divide his last pound of corn-meal or give you his buffalo fish or catfish if you happen to be hungry.

The lower river fisherman adapts his life to the necessities of his calling. Perhaps he lives in a cabin in some isolated spot, hidden in the woods close to the river, and a few miles from the town which he catches. Maybe there is no town within twenty-five miles of him. You find his Jonnie boat tied demurely up under some protecting point on a lonely stretch of river, and wonder how he lives here. Well, he is fishing for some plantation back over the levee which may be two or three miles away through the woods and cane.

The simplest way of fishing and the one generally followed by the professional fisherman is by means of set lines. These sometimes have as many as 400 or 500 hooks on them, each hook upon a line of its own, two or three feet long and dangling from the main line at intervals of as many feet. These set lines are anchored at one end to a tree and run down the river or quarter across the current at a very moderate angle. A float at each end shows where the line is and enables the fisherman to draw it to the surface when he wants to "run it."

In traveling long distances "jugging" or "blocking" is a favorite pursuit. To block down the river 500 or 600 miles is no uncommon thing for a fisherman. The blocks, if made of wood, are cut from well-seasoned pine. They look like the corks which the boys use in pursuing the agile sunfish in his lair, except that they are as large as a sink and taper down almost to a point at one end. Into this small extremity a staple is attached, and attached to this is a line, the length of which is regulated by the depth of water in the river, the object being to keep the hook about a foot of the bottom. Armed with a number of these—and it must always be an odd number, for the superstitious fisherman would never go out with an even number—the fisherman will anchor his blocks in stream, and, when he gets into the current, drops his blocks in a line across the river. Then he floats along behind in his skiff.

When the channel cut catches sight of the tempting morsel drifting by he darts at it, strikes as viciously as a salmon and plunges violently off with the hook fast in his mouth, and the big block tagging on behind and exhausting his strength. If it is a six or eight-pounder cat the chances are he will bite more ferociously than a forty-pounder. The block goes under a sudden plunge that throws the spray ten feet in the air, and produces a concussion that can be heard a quarter of a mile on the water. It reappears in a moment one hundred feet from where it went down, and its coming up is as vigorous as its going down. As the fish were suddenly loosened, the released block shoots clear of the water, and when it falls back it lies perhaps as idly as though the game were gone. If the first wild fight has not released him—that is, if the hook has a firm hold on the back of his mouth, and the fish, when the fish is only resting, and presently he starts off again, towing the big block across the river, and now and again carrying it under with a convulsive plunge. The fisherman follows as fast as he can until he overtakes the block, and drawing the gullied fish to the surface, and striking the gullied fish into him can transfer the suffering creature to the boat or to a line to tow astern like a captive in a Roman triumph. When there are half a dozen blocks drawn at once on a crossing, and the whole fleet is going away from the current, jugging is very lively work and has an excitement only comparable to the whipping of a fresh trout stream.

But while blocking is the pastime largely of the peripatetic fisherman, it is also often resorted to by those who have a fixed place of residence. Thus a fisherman who has set lines out frequently makes it a habit to block over a certain stretch of river several times a day. But because he can only float his blocks with the current this has the serious objection of necessitating a long pull up as often as one floats down. Very often a fisherman who has a steamer and who will have himself and outfit taken to Memphis or Cairo by steamer and then "block the river" all the way down, spending a month in the boat cutting, and because most of them have been in the river a number of times they know it intimately. They know, too, their professional fellows. It is no uncommon thing to find one who has acquaintances scattered over 1,000 miles of river, who can tell the owners of the fish docks at all the river towns, knows the value of each crossing and bend, and has a phenomenal memory for the fish he has caught at each place. This acquaintance comes from the roving spirit which all have.

The river imbues those who live near or upon it with the desire to "move on." It is so easy to move, and there is such seduction in the moving (which requires no effort) that it is not astonishing that men are loath to be still. The owner of a home on land, however humble, is debarré from the temptation of seeking a new field for his activities when the mood seizes him. But the man who has merely to untie a rope or pull up a stake and at once move house and all is not to be considered as anchored to any locality. His means of transportation are always at hand, and he has a pass which entitles him to travel when he will. It is, too, a pass with no time privileges, and it never expires, nor does it have to be paid for, even in advertising.

But of course there is an end to all things, even to the Mississippi, and a Johnny boat cannot float on forever. It dare not go below New Orleans. It does not, in the case of the fisherman, often venture below Bayou Sara, for the river becomes too deep for his tackle, and the fishing is not to be relied upon. However, the Johnny boat of the river is a legal tender on the river, can always be sold, and so when its owner reaches the end of his journey he disposes of it, adds the results to the savings which he has accumulated, pays his dock passage back on some steamer to St. Louis, Cairo or Memphis, buys or builds another Johnny boat, and is soon afloat again.

After killing a man. The Horrible Sensation of Having Taken Another's Life. "It is a dreadful thing that human life must be sacrificed," said Major C. O. Bates in the rotunda of the Lincoln Hotel last evening. There was an ominous look between him and Colonel Bob McReynolds as the latter spoke. Somehow it just looked out and reached the ears of the Journal that there was some unwritten history as to the Nebraska militia upon the frontier. A word or two of kindly condolence elicited the following from Colonel McReynolds, who, as correspondent of the Call, has kept very silent heretofore. But in the seclusion of a comfortable corridor of the Lincoln Hotel, where Major Bates, Colonel Bratt and Colonel Bills, of the Second regiment, sat listening, told the tale of an incident of Indian warfare that let us see how long to the original inhabitants of the land we possess.

Said Colonel McReynolds: "It was very nearly three o'clock when Major Bates and myself left Pine Ridge agency. All day Indians had been swarming about the agency like so many bees around a hive. Each one was armed with a Winchester and had on his person no less than one hundred rounds of ammunition. The wildest excitement had prevailed all day, so that when we left the agency at the late hour, on route to Rushville you can believe we were on the alert.

"From Pine Ridge the road led over a plain for nearly five miles; then began the range of mountains known as Pine Ridge. The Major and myself had spurred our horses for a couple of miles on the agency trail, and were on our way to follow a circuitous road that led over these Pine Ridge mountains, when suddenly from behind the rocks ahead there confronted us two Brule Sioux, with Winchesters ready for action. Major Bates instantly uttered an alarm. This caused one of the enemy to skulk behind the other, both with Winchesters leveled upon us. I was fairly panic-stricken myself, and scarcely knew what I was doing; but Major Bates, with his cool-headedness, drew his Winchester to his shoulder and fired. The report echoed up and down the valley, and caused the smoke cleared away from the two forms motionless upon the brow of the little hill ahead. My horse, frightened at the report of the gun, was struggling in a frightful manner, and it was all I could do to restrain him. Finally, when I got him quieted, I rode to the spot where the enemy had been, placed the scalping knife in his belt, and returned.

OUR LITERARY BUDGET.

The Magazines Trenching on the Domain of Newspapers.

DEVELOPMENT IN A NEW DIRECTION.

The Thinking of the Present Day to be Done Very Rapidly—It is News that the World Now Wants—Selections.

The thinking of the world as reflected in the great magazines is done very fast these days, and conclusions are arrived at and announced with a rapidity that twenty or even ten years ago would have been thought unsafe. More and more the magazines seem to be seeking the views of news, or the words might be turned round, and their articles might be styled the news of views. Take the May number of The Nineteenth Century, for example. The first two articles are on the New Orleans outbreak and the Clitheroe decision. Our own newspapers have hardly done anything on the former, and have hardly begun discussing the latter, and here are magazine articles of ten or a dozen pages on each. Rather curiously, too, both of these leading articles are by women. How long ago it is that Mr. E. J. Phelps, the late Minister to England, was writing in Harper's on the Behring Sea question? Was it one month or two? The discussion was at its height, and Mr. Phelps' contribution was as distinctly timely as would have been an exhaustive editorial in a morning newspaper. Already—we believe it was in The Forum—Mr. Bayard, late Secretary of State, had been heard from in support of Mr. Blaine's policy in the Italian affair. The month hardly passes that the North American does not present its readers a lengthy opinion from some prominent man on some topic of fresh interest, whether it be Edison's phonograph, the tariff, or the census returns, or Napoleon Bonaparte, or something else.

We need not multiply instances. The magazine field is certainly developing in a new direction. It was bound to. The fact is, the world is bound very closely together these days, and the newspapers print daily so much history that if there is to be any thinking at all about it that thinking has to be done at once, or to-morrow the history is superseded by new history, and yesterday becomes as ancient as last year, and last year as the tenth dynasty. The newspapers have to live fast to keep pace with the world, and the magazines have to keep pace with the newspapers. What's the news? is the question nine men out of ten ask one another on meeting, and "What's the news?" is the question the readers ask of their magazines as well as of their newspapers. This demand will not be evaded or denied, and therefore the magazines must seek for the news of opinion, spur on to quick conclusion this great man or that one. His grandfather, his father even, would have wanted to see original copies, Blue Books, or what not, before committing himself to decision. The descendant, reading his daily paper, makes up his mind, and in a couple of days has his article ready for the compositor.

It has certainly given the modern magazines a freshness of interest the old ones had not. It has brought betimes to the knowledge of the world opinions of men whose opinions are best worth knowing, and if errors of fact or judgment have been committed as the result of quick decision, they have been of little consequence, because the full light of discussion was immediately turned on them.

Literature on The Gypsies.

The Gypsy Lore Society was founded, it seems, three years ago, but it counts only some seventy members. It is a society of the kind which are scattered beyond seas—in Hungary, India, America, and elsewhere. Yet the two handsome volumes of its quarterly Journal contain much curious matter that should be interesting not only to the Romany eye, or amateur gypsy, but to the student of ethnology and folk-lore generally. Nothing certain was known till the other day of Brazilian gypsies; here one may read how their ancestors were banished from Portugal in 1718; how in the New World they turned from horse-dealing to the slave trade, and how they mingled with the negroes in the veins of Brazilian gypsies. Nothing at all was known of gypsies roaming in the country south of Mount Atlas, gypsies speaking these same languages as their European kinsfolk, and like them fortune tellers and workers in metal. Who knew before that the Lithuanian gypsies possess, like those of Alsace, a legend of the founder of their race having stolen one of the four nails with which Christ was to be crucified? Of "Sheila," indeed, the tinkers' talk, Mr. Leal published some specimens as far back as 1870, but it was reserved for Dr. Kum Meyer to show that it is "an Irish secret language of great antiquity; that in Irish MSS. we have mention and record of it under various names, and that, though now confined to tinkers, its knowledge was once possessed by Irish poets and scholars, who, probably were its original framers." Much ink has been spilled over the question whether John Bunyan was or was not of gypsy birth. Mr. James Simson, of New York, is the chief upholder of the former view, and the Rev. John Brown, of Bedford, of the latter; but neither of them were aware that at Luncheon on March 4, 1876, was christened Nicholas, some of James Bowdoin, an Egyptian rove. This, if not conclusive, is certainly in Mr. Simson's favor; whilst against Mr. Brown's main contention, that the had been Bedfordshire "Broms" of the twelfth century, it may be urged that Bosville is an old and honorable Yorkshire name, and yet Charles Bosville, buried near Doncaster in 1709, was beyond doubt a gypsy potentate. So, too, was Matthew Baillie, grand uncle to Mrs. John Bowdoin, of Bedford, of the latter; but neither of them were aware that at Luncheon on March 4, 1876, was christened Nicholas, some of James Bowdoin, an Egyptian rove. This, if not conclusive, is certainly in Mr. Simson's favor; whilst against Mr. Brown's main contention, that the had been Bedfordshire "Broms" of the twelfth century, it may be urged that Bosville is an old and honorable Yorkshire name, and yet Charles Bosville, buried near Doncaster in 1709, was beyond doubt a gypsy potentate. 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