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THE SONG FISH.

One of the Many Marvels of Florida Waters.

Should you happen to be one of the thousands of visitors who come next winter to Punta Gorda to dream the winter months away in sunny content of days of soft brilliancy and nights of moonlight splendor, you will be certain to ask one of its many boatmen if he has caught a song-fish recently, and he will certainly reply, "No, nor anywheres near it."

The mystery of Florida itself clings about this fish. Every fisherman on the Bay has heard it; many have seen it, but not one has ever been brought to land.

It would seem that outside of the Bay immediately fronting Punta Gorda, this fish has not been seen or heard, and it is probably our one local possession to which we point with greatest pride.

To be exact, it is to its skeleton only that we point, there being no specimens of the fish itself on view in our homes, but very many of these skeletons are washed ashore in the course of the season to find an honored home in the cupboards of Punta Gorda.

To the eye of the scientist, able to reconstruct from a single fossil bone the bulk of the prehistoric ichthyosaurus, for example, it is an easy matter to predicate the form, the size and the family of the song-fish from these perfect skeletons.

The consensus of expert opinion in regard to this fish is that it belongs to the Ray tribe, being flat and kite-shaped of body, its spine terminating as in all Rays in a tail at least twice its body-length. The skeleton shows, however, in place of the usual whip and barb common to Sting-rays and Whip-rays, a formation of spikes at the tail part, hollow and of various lengths, horizontal to the elongated back-bone; and the idea prevails that by twisting this long snake-like tail round to its mouth, and blowing through these pipes, the song-fish produces at will those flute-like melodies that add so much to the glamour of an evening spent upon the waters of our Bay.

It is not improbable that this power of speech, as it were, is made use of by the fish in attracting its prey, but this is a mere speculation, and we are unable to produce evidence confirming the suggestion.

The effect of the song of this fish heard for the first time by a Northern ear, is indescribable. There is a siren quality in the clear soprano tones that revives old and discarded beliefs in mermaids and things supernatural. The distinguishing effect of the song is its terrible fascination, its drawing power. Invariably the visitor, unable to withstand the charm of it, springs to the side of the boat, his arms outstretched, his face ashen pale in the moonlight, intensely expressive of a mood yearning to seek the source of that melody beneath the luring waters and be at peace forever.

To safeguard inexperienced sojourners in our midst from fatalities, all our boats are fitted with strong straps; and when one hires a boat for a moonlight sail, he finds himself firmly secured to his

seat, much as a baby is strapped in a perambulator. A first experience never fails to rouse him to intense resentment at this precaution, but he is soon convinced of its necessity, and usually becomes an ardent advocate of this wise provision by his boatman.

Col. Forrester Murdered.

The news of the murder of Col. Chas. W. Forrester in Arcadia, last Friday night, was received here by telephone a few minutes after it occurred and caused a great shock. A hundred or more men were gathering for the meeting herein reported and they all got the news seemingly at the same moment. Amongst many expressions of horror, one gentleman remarked,

"If an object lesson had been given up there, as should have been done several years ago by hanging Cooper, this last murder would not have occurred."

And those who heard the remark approved of it.

At the time he was slain, Charley Forrester had just taken his seat at the supper table in the Arcadia Hotel, when some unknown person stepped up to the window that opened on a side verandah and fired a load of buckshot into his head, killing him instantly.

From the victim's chair to the window was 39 feet. Several men were sitting at the table with Forrester, and it is said that the load that killed him passed close over the shoulder and within an inch of the head of one of these men. There were 12 or 15 other people, ladies and gentlemen, at other tables in the dining room, and the appalling tragedy occurring before their eyes threw them into wild confusion and terror.

No one saw the assassin, no one can imagine his identity, and, though almost instant search was made for him by officers and others, he effected a complete escape. It is quite likely that he will never be detected, but what if he should be? Bah! What's the use? Isn't Broward governor and are we not told that Stockton will succeed him? Go, gentle assassin, and please don't kill any one else.

Charley Forrester was a prominent lawyer, a member of the firm of Forrester and Burton, and he was well known throughout this county. He was handsome and genial, but at times got drunk and then made himself disagreeable. His spleen brought on family troubles, but those who know his wife's relations do not for a moment think that any one of them had anything at all to do with his tragic taking off.

The author of the murder and his motive are absolutely unknown, and there is no one to whom any suspicion attaches.

Lake City Index:—Rumor has it that there's trouble in the Broward-Stockton camp; that Mr. Broward was willing to trade off the governorship to Mr. Gilchrist if he could get the senatorship; that Mr. Gilchrist and his friends preferred to let the people settle it, and refused to consider the proposition; that the railroad lines, except the Florida East Coast, will support Mr. Stockton and Mr. Broward. These are rumors, and there seems a heap of truth in them. These people—the three friends—are trying to fool the masses again.

DEATH OF COL. PEPPER.

An Old and Honored Citizen Gone to His Rest.

After an illness of several weeks, Col. J. C. Pepper died at his home here about 5 o'clock last Friday morning. During his illness, he received the best medical attention and the most devoted nursing by his daughters and others, but his advanced years and depleted vital forces made his recovery impossible. He himself realized that his end was near and he faced it without a tremor. Indeed, he looked forward to it with a degree of happy anticipation, his only regret being at his leaving his loved ones, for he had not a shadow of a doubt as to a glorious resurrection in a realm of infinite and eternal joy. He often spoke of his approaching death, which he regarded as a matter of course, something perfectly natural and not to be dreaded by any one having the assurance as he had of its being but the entrance into that tabernacle on high, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.

At times his sufferings were intense, but he bore them with sublime Christian fortitude. His mind remained clear until within a few hours of his death, when it occasionally wandered. His end was peaceful and painless.

Funeral services, conducted by Dr. H. Keigwin, of Arcadia, former pastor of Col. Pepper, were held in the Presbyterian church at 1:30 p. m., Saturday. The church was filled with sorrowing friends and others, whose presence attested the general esteem in which the deceased was held. Further evidence of this deep regard for him was shown in the mass of beautiful flowers, with which the casket containing his body was covered.

During the services, all the business houses in town closed their doors as a tribute of respect to the memory of the lamented dead.

The services consisted of those beautiful songs which were known as the favorites of the deceased, scripture reading, prayer, and a short but impressive discourse by Dr. Keigwin. The pastor spoke feelingly of Col. Pepper's lofty character, his deeds of usefulness and benevolence, his devotion to family and friends and his loyalty to the cause of his Master. It was an inspiring and deserved tribute to the memory of a noble man and Christian.

After the services, the casket containing the body was taken to the railway depot and placed aboard the 4 p. m. train for transportation to Col. Pepper's former home in Aledo, Ill., where the burial was to take place yesterday. The body was accompanied north by the three daughters of the deceased, Mrs. J. M. Weeks and Misses Norma and Bertha Pepper. It had previously been embalmed by Undertaker McClelland.

Thus one of the noblest and most valuable citizens of Punta Gorda and of Florida has passed to his eternal rest. He was a man of rare intellectual attainments, of wonderful memory, of fervent piety, of unflinching devotion to

Wauchula Advocate:—The Advocate has one satisfaction. It has not published any of the slanders on Gilchrist in its columns. When we are forced to publish such rot as L'Engle and Miss Neil are sending out as advertisements, we will quit the business.

Making Themselves Ridiculous.

Wauchula Advocate:—The war certain ultra-prohibition elements are making against Gen. Gilchrist is ridiculous. It is an attempt to slaughter an honest man for a scheming politician. The absurd statements made by certain preachers and officers of temperance organizations are enough to cause the people to lose respect for them. One preacher says the liquor dealers have \$380,000 to elect Gilchrist with, while the president of the W. C. T. U. says it is \$360,000. Just think of what fools these liquor dealers must be to spend nearly a half million dollars to elect a man governor when that governor will not even have a right to veto the measure that will allow the people to vote on the prohibition question. And while they accuse Gilchrist's backers of having all this money to corrupt the people, the Stockton people

are spending more money for newspaper space, traveling expenses for workers and speakers, mailing campaign matter, and in every way seemingly making a more expensive campaign than the Gilchrist people. It is all ridiculous. It is so ridiculous that it should be apparent to every voter in the State, to say nothing about the people in DeSoto county, who personally know Gilchrist. A county in which he has lived a temperance life and worked for temperance measures; a county in which every voter knows him to be a high minded, honest citizen who would not stoop to demagogism for the office of Governor.

right and truth, to his family, his country and his God.

His bereaved ones have the heartfelt sympathy of this community as well as of many friends in Illinois and elsewhere.

JOHN CHARLES PEPPER was born in Cambridge, England, September 21, 1887. He came to America with his parents at the age of six years and settled in Oneida County, New York. Received his education at Amboy Academy. He went to Illinois in 1848 and read law in Peoria.

On January 28, 1851, he was married to Miss Mary A. Martin, who preceded him into the land of rest April 20, 1893.

During the war of the '60's, he was a member of Co. H, 84th Regt. Ill. Vol., and participated in the battle of Murfreesboro. Col. Pepper lived in Mercer county, Ill., first at Keithsburg and later at Aledo, at which latter place he practiced law for forty years.

In 1896, he gave up his law practice and removed with his family to Punta Gorda, where he has since resided.

He leaves to mourn his loss, four children, — Mrs. Frances Martin, of Falls City, Neb.; Misses Bertha and Norma Pepper, and Mrs. J. M. Weeks. He also leaves two devoted sons-in-law, five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, two brothers and a sister.

INDIGNANT CITIZENS

Meet and Denounce the Slanders Concerning Gilchrist.

In response to a call, a large number of citizens assembled in the city hall on Friday night last to protest against the calumnies being circulated over the State against the integrity of our honored fellow citizen, Genl. Albert W. Gilchrist.

The meeting included the Mayor, the town clerk, collector, treasurer, members of the council, leading members of all the churches and representatives of all lines of business and industry.

On motion, Judge Geo. W. McLane was chosen chairman and R. K. Seward secretary.

By invitation of the chairman, A. P. Jordan explained the object of the meeting.

After discussion and many expressions of indignation by those present regarding the outrageous assaults circulated throughout the State against the character of Gen. Gilchrist, a motion was made and prevailed to appoint a committee to draft and present suitable resolutions expressing the sense and feeling of the meeting. Accordingly, Messrs. Seward, Jordan and C. G. Davis were appointed, and, after conferring, reported the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:—

WHEREAS, certain political factions in Jacksonville and other points in Florida have circulated broadcast and caused to be published reports to the effect that Albert W. Gilchrist, if elected Governor of the State, will be controlled by the whiskey interests and the corporations; and,

WHEREAS, These unscrupulous defamers have gone so far in their ignominious misrepresentation of facts as to deceive Ministers of the Gospel, and have hired certain pastors in the city of Jacksonville to forsake their holy pastoral duties and stomp the State, repeating everywhere the falsehoods that have been instilled into their minds; and,

WHEREAS, These political conspirators are not only assailing unjustly the honor and integrity of one of Florida's noblest men, but they would work for the State irreparable loss in encompassing his defeat; Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the citizens of Punta Gorda, cannot let pass unchallenged statements so utterly at variance with the truth; that we brand as a despicable falsehood the assertion or the insinuation that Albert W. Gilchrist may be controlled or dictated to by either the whiskey interests or the corporations; that, having been intimately associated with him in the every-day affairs of life for many years, we know him to be an honorable, high-toned gentleman, unfaltering in his adherence to the principles of truth and justice, and incapable of catering to any clique or private interests; that he is generous and charitable almost to a fault, always eager to assist the poor and worthy anywhere without ostentation; that he is ever temperate in all things, and helped to rid DeSoto of licensed saloons; that he is honored and respected, almost without exception, by every person.

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