

THEFT OF THE DAVY JONES

True Tales of the SECRET SERVICE By an Ex-Operative

EDITED BY WM. J. BACON

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BRITAIN 1908 BY W. G. CHAPMAN

"IT SEEMS preposterous," said Captain Dickson, "that thieves could steal and get away with a full-grown steamboat and that, too, on an inland river. But this is just exactly what a gang of river pirates did in the case of the Davy Jones, a stern-wheel steamboat that once belonged to the Government service and which was employed with other boats of the Government fleet on the Mississippi River in looking after the levees, keeping the channel clear and the Government lights burning, and the numerous other matters that the Government has assumed in connection with the navigation on that stream."

Captain Dickson was a retired marine service officer and I had known him for many years. He had no thought of publishing his reminiscences, but when I could get him under the influence of a warm fire in his cozy parlor, a pipe and a glass—never more than two in an evening—of his favorite sherry, I always got something that was worth publishing and I used to tell him so. And as the principals in the affair were so hidden in the telling and the locale of the events was usually so far away he did not object. I prefer to tell it in his own words.

The boat had been operated by the Government until it had been considered unsuitable for its needs, and then it was sold to a curious old river man named Hank Parlow, who employed it as a trading boat, towing a large flat boat with it, and picking up such odd jobs of towing and freighting as chances threw in his way.

I was in the office of the surveyor of customs at a certain Mississippi river city one day when Parlow came to have his license renewed. The surveyor introduced him to me. He was a peculiar character, and when it came to paying the fee for the license, Parlow drew forth a greeny French from some indeterminate place of concealment about his person, and paid the amount from a 20 gold piece. He asked for his change in gold, but the surveyor, to his surprise, in the office just then he accepted the silver and bills with some showing of reluctance and bowed himself out of the office.

After he had left, the surveyor told me that Parlow was a miser and was reputed to be worth many thousands of dollars. His fortune, so the rivermen said, had been stolen from him by the boat Davy Jones, and it was thought to be all in gold, as Parlow invariably had every bit of silver and every bill that fell into his hands converted into gold coins at his first opportunity.

I didn't see Parlow again until some weeks later, when he came into my office and told me that his boat had been stolen from him. He was frenzied with grief and chagrin and swore, with many blasphemous and long-winded oaths, that he would kill the thieves on sight if he could find them. I doubted if the case was one in my jurisdiction, but I wired the particulars to the department at St. Louis, and received instructions to go on search for the vessel and endeavor to capture the rogues. It seems that there had been considerable complaint from the port where I was then stationed, of thefts of goods and other articles from steamboats, and as the work was attributed to gang of river men, the department would be glad to have me round up the gang and put them where they would do no harm.

Parlow offered to pay all expenses, and he told me that a friend of his, a saloon-keeping fisherman named Wastrow, owned a fast cabin gasoline boat that would be put at the disposal of the department. He said that the Davy Jones to points along the river and its tributaries, as I felt sure that the boat could not remain long at any port of the Mississippi.

The next morning when I opened my office, I found a dirty sheet of paper among the letters in my mail box. Examining it, I discovered pencil writing

on it and after some difficulty I deciphered this message:

The Davy Jones is up at Francis River.

It was not signed and the writing showed that its author was in no sense a scholar. I was pondering over it when Parlow came in to tell me that the gasoline launch was ready for my departure whenever I wished to set out. I had not really intended going on a cruise, as I thought the boat would be found in a day or so, but the anonymous letter had put the idea in my head. I showed the note to Parlow and he became highly excited.

"That's just what I thought they'd do. They've run out there in the swamps to pick the boat to pieces so that they can find my gold. There ain't no gold aboard it, but them thieving river-rats think there is, and this ain't the first time they've tried to get at it. I questioned him about it and learned from him that the St. Francis River flowed into the Mississippi from the Arkansas side a short distance above Helena, Ark., and that the country it flowed through was wild and little inhabited. The Mississippi was at a flood stage just at this time, and Parlow said that the thieves could run the boat far back into the woods, through any bayou or slough, and have every opportunity to reach the boat to piece without fear of being disturbed or discovered."

He was for setting out on the instant for the St. Francis in pursuit of the thieves and he seemed to have absolute faith in the dirty note that purported to tell where the thieves had gone. I, too, for some unaccountable reason, seemed to pin some faith to the note. I arranged to leave that same afternoon on the launch, and instructed Parlow to lay in supplies of food and gasoline and make preparations for a cruise of several days.

We left about 1 o'clock and made rapid time down the river. I had often seen the Mississippi River during a flood but I had never fully understood its irresistible force until this trip down it in the 30-foot launch. We traveled at the rate of a race horse. Parlow wanted to run after nightfall, and while I was more in favor of tying up, he and Wastrow assured me that traveling was absolutely safe and, as they were experienced rivermen and seemed to understand the boat and the river, too, I consented and turned in making a bed on the locker seat of the forward cabin. My bed was a little cramped and the situation was a novel one, but I soon dropped asleep and didn't wake until it was broad daylight next morning.

Parlow and Wastrow had taken turns at the wheel, and both had secured some sleep. When I awoke, a most agreeable odor of coffee and frying ham saluted my hungry nostrils. Parlow was at the wheel and Wastrow was pottering about a little oil stove back in the distinctive engine-room, just putting the finishing touches to an excellent breakfast for which we three did ample justice. It was a rainy day, and there was a stiff wind which kicked up good sized white caps all about our boat.

We were running up the St. Francis River. I was informed, and on glancing I saw that we had indeed left the Mississippi, both by the narrowness of the stream and the color of the water. The flood was out over the woods all both banks, and never a speck of land did we see during the entire morning. We ran in close to the willows and trees that stuck up out of the water, and I, submerged beneath the stream, and I was often made apprehensive of the boat coming to grief by the swift of bushes and limbs against its sides and both banks, and never a speck of land did we see during the entire morning. We ran in close to the willows and trees that stuck up out of the water, and I, submerged beneath the stream, and I was often made apprehensive of the boat coming to grief by the swift of bushes and limbs against its sides and both banks, and never a speck of land did we see during the entire morning.

The interior of the boat assumed a business-like appearance after breakfast. Parlow brought out three new packing rifles and set about cleaning and oiling them. When he had finished this sugges-

tive task, he offered one of them to me, but I declined it, as I had a heavy Army revolver in my holster that had been with me so long and had proven so faithful when and where necessary required its use. I preferred to remain true to it.

The boat was kept close to the eastern shore line and my companions told me that they intended running up one side

of the tree in which hung the broken hub. I saw what he referred to, and as we ran close beside it I saw that it was a mass of paint and splinters of wood, as if something had rubbed against it. Then I realized the purpose of these signs and did not need the excited explanation that the rivermen gave me. We slowed the engine down until its muffled

ahead of us. The drift was disordered and willows and saplings were broken off here and there. As we proceeded, the rivermen gripped their rifles nervously and peered about through the open window of the cabin with baleful glances of panthers. They swept every bit of the channel on both sides with eyes that overlooked nothing, and at the discovery of a new sign of the boat's having passed that way, they would nudge each other and exchange glances that boded no good for the thieves. Parlow was especially noticeable for the steady glitter of his eyes, and I read murder in them as plainly as I have ever seen it in look of others on the front page of a yellow journal.

We must have traveled a mile or more, when, just as we darted around a clump of willows and saw a stretch of open water loomed far ahead, there was a muffled report far down the lake, and a rifle ball sang over our heads. I had been under fire before, but it happened so suddenly that I ducked involuntarily. But not so with Parlow and Wastrow. They seemed to halt the attack with fiendish delight, and I saw them stick their heads out of the open windows and sight carefully down the barrels.

Our course was changed slightly, and as the prow of the boat swung to the right in obedience to the rudder, I saw that the Davy Jones tied up to a gigantic cypress tree at the farther side of the lake. We headed directly for it, and there was several minutes of silence from the launch, and one bullet plumped into the woodwork of the cabin and sent a shower of splinters about my ears. Over the bowed heads of the two rivermen I could plainly see the steamboat, and on its lower deck I saw three men, each firing at us with a repeating rifle. We were now less than 50 yards from the launch, and I saw that my companions had replied to their fire. Our progress was slow, and we made an excellent target, as the sudden crumpling of bullets through the woodwork and the splintering of glass indicated.

As coolly as if he were giving some direction about the running of the launch, I heard Parlow murmur to his companion: "You take the one on your right side and I'll take care of the one on mine. You say when."

Parlow immediately grunted his understanding, and although he didn't say "when," he said something that caused two fingers to curl about two triggers. There was a loud report from the launch, sounding like a single shot, and I saw two of the men on the steamer crumple up like a sere leaf, stagger a step or so, and fall into the water. The third man turned to run, but he had only gone far enough to permit of the firing back of a lever and a hasty taking of sight before I saw him pitch headlong into the water. A muffled crack from Parlow's rifle.

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It made me turn sick to hear them speak so lightly of killing three of their fellow men. We ran along, and in a few minutes the launch was within 100 yards of the steamer. Parlow looked apprehensively about the boat, and I followed his gaze, which finally settled on the brick foundation for the boilers. I saw a glint of light come into his eyes, and somehow I jumped to the conclusion that the treasure, whatever it might be, was concealed in that brickwork.

Wastrow had not noticed this. The boat was in the wildest confusion. It was evident that the launch was working and picking it to pieces. The launch cabin and the boiler room had been absolutely wrecked. The launch was now a mass of splinters and wreckage, and every place of concealment laid bare. Parlow grinned maliciously at the wreck of his boat, and I saw that he felt the knowledge of the three men that lay out upon the forward deck, stiffening in the dirge which had now turned to a dirge.

Parlow examined the corpses and said that he knew all three of them; they were

PARLOW DRAGGED IT OUT WITH SOME DIFFICULTY.

of the river and down the other, inspecting every possible break in the timber through which the Davy Jones could have been run, and if they failed finding it on the up river, they would run down the opposite side. They felt sure of locating it then.

It was close to noon when we turned a sharp bend in the river, which brought me to 30 miles from the Mississippi. On the farther shore there was a depression in the tree line, which Parlow and I noticed, and that if it were followed up one would probably find a lake back in the timber. I looked at it

and what they had discovered, although I strained my eyes, as I asked what it was.

Parlow pointed with his long, skinny arm at a tree limb which had been broken half off near the trunk and which dangled down, hanging by a strip of bark. I saw, even at that distance, that the break was white and fresh. My companions seemed to attach the greatest weight to it, for they gesticulated and pointed at it, talking excitedly all the while.

We were now approaching it closely, and I suddenly saw Parlow grab up his rifle and point it at a streak on the trunk

of the tree in which hung the broken hub. I saw what he referred to, and as we ran close beside it I saw that it was a mass of paint and splinters of wood, as if something had rubbed against it. Then I realized the purpose of these signs and did not need the excited explanation that the rivermen gave me. We slowed the engine down until its muffled

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It was close to noon when we turned a sharp bend in the river, which brought me to 30 miles from the Mississippi. On the farther shore there was a depression in the tree line, which Parlow and I noticed, and that if it were followed up one would probably find a lake back in the timber. I looked at it

curiously, and was on the point of asking some question when Wastrow, who was steering, became glibly excited and called Parlow to his side. He pointed across the river at the mouth of the slough and seemed to be endeavoring to show some object to his companion. Parlow saw it in an instant, and the boat's prow was headed for it. I couldn't make

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WILL SPELLING EVER BE SIMPLE?

Serious View of Changes Proposed by Great Britain's Reform Board.

Chicago Record-Herald.

DISPITE the shouts of laughter which greeted the second list of reformed words issued last January, the Simplified Spelling Board of America has continued its work and has ready a new and third list of words which it will soon submit to the public. More than that, it has succeeded in arousing the interest of conservative Britishers, noted for their respectability and attitude toward the established language—spelling, political or social. Dr. Charles P. G. Scott of New York, secretary of the board and former president of the American Association of University, in a recent visit to Europe set forth the merits of their cause in such persuasive fashion that a simplified spelling society has been organized in London with an office opposite the British Museum. The president of the London society, which will do its best to get the English of the British Isles to drop the first "B" from the "lax," is Professor Skeag of Cambridge. The list of vice-presidents includes such notables as Sir James Murray, editor of the Oxford Dictionary; Sir William Ramsay of University College in London; Dr. Farnivall, Shakespearean scholar, and Andrew Carnegie, William Archer, dramatic critic, who evinced strong interest in the subject while visiting America, is secretary of the London society, which Andrew Carnegie has generously aided in a financial way.

The movement has a counterpart in France, where the Academy of public instruction, Dr. Doumergue, has issued orders that simplified spelling be introduced in the public schools this year. The reform movement has received the approval of the French Academy, jealous guardian of the purity of the French language, in 1893, long before the American board issued its first list of revised spelling, but it was not until this year that changes advocated by the academy received government sanction. And even now the reform will not be obligatory. The French reform provides for the suppression of "H" in Greek group of words, substitution of "r" for "y" in analysis, etc., substitution of "c" for the syllable "t" in words like confidential, and extension of "m" as sign of the plural in words ending in ou, eu and au. It also provides for suppression of "H" in words like theater, substitution of "r" for "th" in words like phenomenon and elimination of the double n in words like payanne.

It looks as though the movement,

since it is not merely local, but reaches not only England and has advocates in another country, will bear fruit for future generations, even though its prophets be ridiculed by today's people. After all, as the American board explains in its announcement, many many spellings to which men are most loyal are truly mis-spellings. Every writer knows that printers are capable of any and every form of corruption, so far as copy is concerned. The board has even saved famous scholars from deception by fabricators of false antique manuscripts. One of these, Mr. Simondese, offered to a wise man a manuscript of Homer written on lotus leaves. Mr. Simondese wished to reap exceeding high reward for his discovery of a genuine codex of very early date, but he was deceived as all of the 12 judges were satisfied as to its genuineness, had not the 12th discovered that it was a faithful copy of Homer's Iliad, written by a German critic Wolff and that "the manuscript produced the whole of the printers' errors in the edition."

Newspaper men who have had good stories ruthlessly ruined will readily accept the statements of the board when it inserts blame on old-time printers for inserting needless letters, such as "B" in doubt, redoubt, debt; "n" inisle, his and island; "C" in accent, action, scissor and scythe. These were words in the second list issued in January. When they came an announcement explaining the reason for all changes made. With regard to words of the third list, a statement that the board aims to remove certain anomalies and irregularities which were never a part of the language has already been made.

Caxton, the board avers, was responsible for insertion of "r" in the good old English word ghost. He followed the Dutch fashion and his action led to addition of the same letter to the words against which he was fighting. The reason for all changes made, with regard to words of the third list, a statement that the board aims to remove certain anomalies and irregularities which were never a part of the language has already been made. Caxton, the board avers, was responsible for insertion of "r" in the good old English word ghost. He followed the Dutch fashion and his action led to addition of the same letter to the words against which he was fighting. The reason for all changes made, with regard to words of the third list, a statement that the board aims to remove certain anomalies and irregularities which were never a part of the language has already been made.

is derived from bacon. The board, which has been derided as academic and pedantic in suggesting that the old form be restored, was merely evidencing its utility for today's people. The new simplifications in the third list are of the same character as those in the first list issued in March, 1908, and in the second list, given to the public in January.

Even the weight of President Roosevelt's influence was not enough to turn popular approval toward the list here before given out. After he had publicly expressed himself in favor of reform, Congress resolved that the Government printing office should adhere to the standard of orthography prescribed in generally accepted dictionaries of the English language. In its own justification the Simplified Spelling Board has explained that its first list of 300 words contained only such words as were already spelled in two or more ways by high authorities and was in no sense a suggestion of new spellings. Milton, Bunyan had already accepted the forms prescribed by the board and they had been offered as alternatives by recognized authorities which had kept the ending, crumb and thumb merely gives to modern writers the privilege of spelling those words as they were spelled by Milton and Ben Jonson. Even before the simplifiers got busy no one thought of writing dummy and nonsensical with a "B." There is really no reason why one should retain the double (G) ending. Once upon a time leg and peg had it, but leg is the only common word in the English language which has kept the ending here. The board seems to have the best of the argument so far as logic goes, but language is a growth, and slow one at that. Though they may be gradually brought to accept changes, no man nor body of men can, by official decree, thrust upon a race of people changes of speech, oral or written, for which the people are not ready. In the meanwhile, paragraphers are making ready to be their whitest over the third list.

In Defense of the Kiss. Louisville Courier Journal. Science presumes too far when it thinks it may stop a kiss by threatening the performers with a tuberculous germ. The germ is a blundering brute, and his physicians can no more accomplish the downfall and extinction of the kiss than a woman with a broom can sweep the clouds out of the heavens. If there is anything—something that cannot be abolished—that should be glorified, idealized, and exalted, it is the kiss. Do you know, and you rob literature of some of its greatest beauty, history of its finest romance; you simply take the bloom right out of everything that has been worth while, and you leave a disease-breeder, and think to what depths sinks the tale of Leander, who swam the Hellespont to kiss the fair Hero. And Romeo and Juliet, Paolo and Francesca, Ulysses and Calypso, Dante and Beatrice, Aucassin and Nicolette, and all the other kissers who ever kissed, become but gross traffickers in germs. If the kiss is unromantic, what is there in life that is romantic? For the sake of the sentiment of the thing, which is the greatest thing in the world, the tuberculous experts should take down their signs and recall their warnings.

A Nervy Woman Shoots

Buffalo (Wyo.) Cor. New York World.

Mrs. Frederick Graf, a ranchwoman living near here, subjected Herbert Arnold, a wealthy cattleman, to unique and cruel punishment because he had made an attempt to molest her 14-year-old daughter.

Armed with a six-shooter, which she uses with extraordinary skill, and a quirt, the enraged mother, accompanied by a cowboy who is employed on her ranch, drove to Arnold's ranch resolved to make him pay dearly for his daughter's assault upon her child. On her arrival there she learned that Arnold, in company with two men friends, had started by wagon for Sheridan. She promptly set out in pursuit and, overtaking him near Sheridan, commanded him to halt.

Report of the Secretary of Agriculture. Tangible evidences of the beneficial results of the gigantic movement in agricultural instruction and improvement of the unprecedented uplift of the farmer, and the betterment of country life are found in the wonderful increase in diversification and