BUEL JAMES WILLIAM

LIFE AND MARVELOUS ADVENTURES OF WILD BILL, THE SCOUT

James Buel

Life and marvelous adventures of Wild Bill, the Scout

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24170172
Life and marvelous adventures of Wild Bill, the Scout / being a true an exact history of all the sanguinary combats / and hair-breadth escapes of the most famous scout and spy / america ever produced.:

Содержание

J. W. Buel
Life and marvelous adventures of Wild Bill, the Scout / being a true an exact history of all the sanguinary combats / and hair-breadth escapes of the most famous scout and spy / america ever produced

PECULIARITIES OF WILD BILL'S NATURE

Wild Bill, as a frontier character of the daring, cunning and honorable class, stands alone, without a prototype; his originality is as conspicuous as his remarkable escapades. He was desperate without being a desperado; a fighter without that disposition which invites danger or craves the excitement of an encounter. He killed many men, but in every instance it was either in

self-defense or in the prosecution of a duty which he deemed justifiable. Wild Bill was a necessary character in the Far West during the period which marked his career. He was essentially a civilizer, in the sense of a vigilance posse. The law and order class found in him an effective agent for the correction of the lawless; it was fighting the desperate with one of their kind, and Bill had the cunning to remain on the side of society and to always flank his enemies.

It would require a volume to moralize upon the deeds of this remarkable man as they deserve, for his desperate encounters find a parallel only in the atmospheric changes which abate an epidemic. When Bill drew his pistol there was always one less desperado to harass the law-abiding, and his presence served to allay the hunger of cut-throats and rapacious plunderers. As a fighter, he had no equal; as a pistol shot, none could excel him; as a scout in the service of his country, there were none more faithful, daring and serviceable; with a disposition as gentle as a zephyr, but a determination stronger than the hurricane. Never a boaster; always deferential to those who might differ from him in opinion; a man of strong friendships and little enmity. Such were the marked characteristics of him whose memory is deserving of perpetuation, and whose wonderful exploits it is the purpose of the writer to describe. The half cannot be told, because of the subject's secretive disposition, and extreme dislike to reciting his own adventures. That which is herewith given is absolutely true in every particular, without a single shading

of fiction or extravagance, and may confidently be accepted as truthful history.

J. W. Buel.

LIFE OF WILD BILL

WILD BILL'S EARLY LIFE

James B. Hickok, known to history as "Wild Bill," was born near Troy Grove, La Salle county, Illinois, May 27th, 1837. His father and mother were both natives of Vermont, in which state they were married. Shortly after marriage, they went to New York, and remained in that state until 1834, when they removed to Illinois, and settled in Putnam county. Two years afterwards, however, they again removed to settle upon a more desirable homestead in La Salle county, where they resided until their death, the father dying in 1852 and the mother in 1878, at the advanced age of seventy-four years.

The family consisted of six children, four boys and two girls, as follows: O. C. Hickok, born in New York in 1830, and now living in California; Lorenzo B., also born in New York in 1832; Horace D., born in Putnam county, Illinois, in 1834; James B., the subject of this sketch; and Celinda D. and Lydia M., both born in La Salle county, the former in 1839 and the latter in 1841. Lorenzo and Horace are still living upon the old homestead. Celinda married a gentleman by the name of Dewey, and is now living in Mendota, La Salle county. Lydia married a Mr. Barnes,

and is living in Decatur county, Kansas. Thus it will be seen that all the children are still living, with the single exception of James (Wild Bill,) whose marvelous exploits it is the purpose of the writer to faithfully, but briefly, record in this pamphlet.

The names and dates of birth of the several children are given in order to correct the prevalent idea that James was much older. His most intimate acquaintances informed the writer that he was born in 1830; and the inscription on the stump which served as a head-board to his original grave, gave his age at the time of death at forty-eight years, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter descriptive of his murder.

The advantages possessed by James for acquiring an education were very limited, in consequence of which he grew up with little knowledge. He learned to read, and this single acquirement he used almost exclusively in exploring fiction literature. Nothing afforded him so much pleasure as the perusal of such novels as "Claude Duval," "The Bold Ranger," "Dick Turpin," and that class of stories descriptive of adventures in an *outre* civilization. A result of this reading is found in his life.

In 1856, when James was nineteen years of age, he left home for the west, Kansas being his proposed destination. The border troubles of that time, no doubt, influenced him to go to that (then) territory; for, from the time that he was twelve years of age, he manifested an ardent love for adventure. He made the rifle and pistol his earliest companions, and when he left La Salle county he had the reputation of being the best shot in that portion

of the state.

The first record we have of him after leaving Illinois was during his short stay at Independence, Missouri, at which place he gained some notoriety by boldly entering the midst of a dozen infuriated men and bidding them to disperse. This event, we believe, has never before been mentioned in any of the many sketches written of him, and as it was his first act of daring, it is worthy of production here. Its truthfulness, however, we cannot vouch for, not having received the details from an eye-witness.

FIRST EVIDENCE OF PLUCK

In 1856, the year in which the occurrence is said to have taken place, Independence was but a post village, and was fairly upon the border. Many teamsters stopped there, *en route* to Kansas City with produce for shipment. There were two saloons in the place, and, naturally, much drunkenness and lawlessness. On the occasion referred to, a dozen teamsters had put up in town, and shortly afterwards visited one of the saloons, where they soon became quite demonstrative under the influence of the liquor they had drank. A fight was the consequence, in which the saloon-keeper, who had almost brained one of the party, had to flee for his life and take refuge in another house. The crowd had drawn their pistols and sworn vengeance, and finally surrounded the house in which the saloon-keeper had secreted himself, and determined to kill him. Hickok, although not present during the fight, heard the disturbance and was soon on the scene. Learning that the saloon-keeper – who chanced to be a friend – was in imminent danger, with the display of the most astonishing recklessness he dashed into the crowd with his two pistols drawn, and offered to fight the entire party, or represent the object of their revenge. This bold proposition served to stop the noise of their wild threats, but meeting with no response, Hickok commanded the crowd to disperse and forthwith leave the place, finishing the command with the following characteristic remark,

"Or there will be more dead men around here than the town can bury." In thirty minutes every one of the blood-craving teamsters had left the place.

This event popularized him greatly in the immediate section, and it was here he received the name which stuck to him throughout his life and by which his memory will always be best recalled – "Wild Bill" – though why the name "Bill" was given instead of "Jim," his real name, it is difficult to understand. In our subsequent allusions to him we shall use this familiar title.

Bill remained in Independence one month, but finding the place too near civilization, and meeting daily with crowds on the road to the gold discoveries of California, he concluded to strike for the coast. In the latter part of the same year he attached himself to a train as driver, and made the overland trip to California. He did not remain long in the golden state, however, for being most agreeably impressed with the wild scenery and picturesque solitude of the plains, skirted with bold mountains, and enlivened with abundant game, he retraced his journey and brought up in the valley near the then small village of Denver, and, in company with two others, he followed trapping and hunting for three years, occasionally going as far north as Hudson's Bay.

In 1860, Bill was placed in charge of the teams of the Overland Stage Company, – which ran between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Denver, over the old Platte route, – at Rock Creek, about fifty miles west of Topeka, Kansas.

BILL'S DESPERATE FIGHT AT ROCK CREEK

It was while occupying this position that the first and most desperate fight of his life occurred, and one which we may safely say is without a parallel. The particulars of this remarkable encounter have been given to the public several times, once by a writer in *Harper's Monthly*, who claims to have heard the story from Bill himself, but whether he reported Bill correctly or not, the account in *Harper*, like that which has appeared in other publications, has but the mere skeleton of truth in it, the body being of error. The author collected the facts and particulars of this fight from Capt. E. W. Kingsbury, at present chief of U. S. Storekeepers for the western district of Missouri, who was a passenger in the overland stage which arrived at Rock Creek within an hour after the fight occurred, and saw the bodies of the men Bill had killed, and heard the story fresh from Bill's own lips. Capt. Kingsbury's version of the encounter is corroborated by Dr. Joshua Thorne, one of the most prominent physicians in Kansas City, who was Wild Bill's physician during his life, and at whose home Bill was a frequent and familiar visitor. Bill repeated the story to Dr. Thorne several times, just as he gave it to Capt. Kingsbury. Bill had very few confidants, but among that privileged class were the two gentlemen mentioned, who, by their

permission, will be frequently referred to hereafter. After the appearance of *Harper's Monthly* containing the sketch referred to, Bill was very angry and pronounced the writer of it a perverter of facts.

The correct story of the "battle," as we may very properly call it, is as follows: The country for many miles around Rock Creek, including Marysville and Manhattan, had for several years been infested by a desperate band of marauders headed by Jim and Jack McCandlas. They were horse thieves and murderers who overran the country and levied tribute from nearly every one they met. This murderous gang had killed more than a score of innocent men and women for the purpose of robbery, and yet their power was such that no civil officer dared undertake their arrest.

In 1861, the year in which the fight occurred, the McCandlas boys raised a company in that section for the Confederate service. They established their headquarters about thirteen miles west of Rock Creek, where they were collecting men and stolen horses. Early in the morning of the day in question, Jim McCandlas rode by Rock Creek station in company with four of his men. McCandlas was leading an old man, known as Parson Shapley, by a lariat which was around the old man's neck. Coming up to Bill the party stopped, and McCandlas entered into a conversation, in which he tried to persuade Bill to enter the Confederate service and to turn over all the horses at the station to him. Bill, a stranger to the sensation of fear, told McCandlas

to go to h – l; that if he did any fighting it would be on the side of the Union. McCandlas then told Bill if he didn't have the horses ready for delivery by the time of his return, "that there would be a small murder at Rock Creek station, and the stage company would have to get another man." The party then rode off.

In this connection, in order to give the reader an idea of the manner in which Wild Bill received his would-be murderers, it is necessary to partially describe Rock Creek station. The house in which Bill and his single partner, known as Doc. Mills, ate and slept, was a low-roofed log hut fronting the creek, with the rear part built against the hill. It had a front door, and a very small window in the side, near the rear. The single room was divided by an old blanket hung from the roof, behind which was a table and a bed made after the frontier style. This rude structure was one of the many sleeping places called "dugouts," so often seen in the wild West even at this day. The stables, also very rude but strongly made, adjoined the "dugout" on the east side. The arms in the house consisted of two revolvers, one shot-gun, a large bore rifle, which Bill called a Mississippi yager, and two large bowie knives.

After dinner, Doc. Mills took the shot-gun and one of the revolvers – which he usually carried – and went down the creek a short distance to shoot some quail. During his absence, and about four o'clock in the evening, Wild Bill saw the two McCandlas boys, accompanied by eight others, riding up the road towards him. Bill at once withdrew into the dugout and prepared to

defend the place. Coming around in front of the dugout, Jim McCandlas hallooed to Bill, telling him to come out and deliver the horses. To this Bill returned an insulting reply. The mounted party then left their horses and began an onslaught on the door with a log which they used as a battering ram. Bill stood behind the old blanket, rifle in hand, and revolver and knife lying on the table. It required but a few strokes to break the door, and the crowd of cut-throats, headed by Jim McCandlas, rushed in. The old yager was discharged, and the leader fell with a hole in his heart as large as a silver half-dollar. Bill seized his revolver and shot three more before any of them had reached him. The most terrible scene then followed. Every man was like a wounded lion; the six others jumped at Bill like harpies that had tasted blood. He was borne down upon the table, but his right hand was cutting right and left; the blood was gushing from his forehead, where he had been struck with a rifle, which almost blinded him; he cut two others down, and Jack McCandlas leaped upon him with an immense dirk drawn to cut Bill's throat. By a rare stroke of luck, Bill placed the muzzle of his pistol over McCandlas' heart and fired. The knife in McCandlas' hand dropped harmlessly upon Bill, and the man jumped into the air and fell dead, rolling over Bill and falling off the table to the floor. During this time the others, who had life in them, were firing their pistols at Bill whenever opportunity presented, but their numbers gave him the advantage. There was but little light in the room, and it was only the ones next to Bill that could do him any injury, the others being

fearful of killing their own party. Six of the number had now been killed and two others badly wounded. They began to retreat, and though Bill was apparently bleeding at every pore, he now pressed the fighting. The two who remained unharmed reached their horses, and, leaping into the saddle, fled as though they were being pursued by one who was shielded with the panoply of invulnerability. The two wounded ran down the hill, but one was cut so badly that he fell beside the root of a large tree, and was unable to go further. At this juncture Doc. Mills came back, and, when half-way up the hill, he was met by Bill, who grabbed the loaded shot-gun, and, placing the muzzle to the head of the wounded man, blew his brains out. The other one, whose name was Jolly, managed to elude Bill and reach Manhattan, where, in a few days thereafter, he died, but not until he had told the story of the fight substantially as here related.

After the excitement of the terrific combat was over, Bill fainted from loss of blood, and was carried into the dugout by his partner, Doc. Mills. The sight on the inside was now terrible. Six men lay dead on the floor. Jim McCandlas' body was lying across the threshold of the door, almost half submerged in his blood. Hideous gashes and large bullet-holes had opened the reservoir of blood which formed in large pools, after making small creeks over the floor. The countenances of the dead men were most revolting. Not a groan escaped the lips of any of the victims after Doc. Mills entered with Bill's half-lifeless body, which he lay tenderly on the rude bed; every one had been killed

outright. Those shot evidenced Bill's coolness and deliberate aim throughout the terrible ordeal; each was shot either in the heart or head, and the terrible dagger had been thrust with equal precision to the wells of the heart.

In less than one hour after the fight was over, the stage from Denver arrived, full of passengers, some of whom were thus introduced for the first time to the desperation of Western life. Wild Bill rallied sufficiently to tell the story of his dreadful encounter with ten of the most desperate men that ever cut a man's throat or robbed a stable. Every attention that could be shown was given Bill. He was too badly cut and shot to admit of removal, but a surgeon was sent for from Manhattan, and old Mrs. Watkins, who lived within five miles of the station, came down as soon as she heard the news, and volunteered her services to nurse him. Bill's wounds consisted of a fracture of the skull, three gashes on the breast, and a cut to the bone on his left forearm. There were seven balls in his legs and body, and there was scarcely a place on his face, limbs or body that was not black from bruises he had received. It would seem impossible that a man could survive such injuries, but, nevertheless, in six months Bill was out again, and in less than one year he was as sound physically as ever.

It is not necessary to say that the McCandlas boys never entered the Confederate army, and the manner in which they left the service they had been in so long was cause for thanks. The people of that section worshiped Bill as no other man. He had

civilized the neighborhood.

A RUNNING FIGHT WITH CONFEDERATES

After recovery from his wounds, Wild Bill left Rock Creek Station and went to Leavenworth, where shortly after his arrival, he was appointed wagon master of a train Gen. Jno. C. Fremont had ordered to Sedalia, Missouri. On the third day out and as they were about going into camp for the night, the train was attacked by a company of Confederates and several of the wagons burned and the mules run off. Bill could offer little resistance, as he had less than a dozen men with him, all of whom surrendered at the beginning of the attack. Nevertheless, being mounted on an excellent horse, he gave battle single handed, and when called upon to surrender, his reply was: "Come and take me." Knowing that Col. Jameson was at Kansas City, he started for that place, pursued by more than fifty of the Confederates, who fired their pistols at him until they were distanced, but he escaped without a scratch; not so his pursuers, for four of the more advanced ones fell victims to his unerring aim.

Upon his arrival in Kansas City Bill at once reported to Col. Jameson, who immediately dispatched two companies of his command to the scene of the first attack, and on the following day succeeded in recapturing most of the stock and repairing the damage to the wagons, so that the train was able to

proceed to Sedalia. His valor in resisting the Confederates was acknowledged by his appointment as Brigade Wagon Master with Gen. Curtis' army, and, while serving in this capacity, he engaged in the battle of Pea Ridge, where he performed most valuable service as a sharp-shooter, killing no less than thirty-five men, it is stated, from a single station.

ENTERS THE UNION ARMY AS A SPY

After Bill's complete recovery he returned to the states and volunteered his services to Gen. Curtis, who had command of the army in Missouri, as a scout and spy. He was enrolled in the early part of 1863, and at once sent upon a dangerous mission. Gen. Price was preparing to enter Missouri, and it became very necessary for Gen. Curtis to have reliable information of the intentions of the Confederate General. Bill went to Kansas City, where he was furnished a horse, and allowed to exercise his judgment in reaching the enemy's lines. Accordingly, he rode through Kansas and the Indian Territory in order to reach Arkansas from the south. He assumed the name of Bill Barnes, and enlisted in a regiment of mounted rangers at a small town south of Little Rock. The regiment was attached to Price's command, and shortly afterwards he was made one of Price's orderlies. This gave him all the facilities desired to obtain information, which he managed, in many ways, to communicate to Gen. Curtis. In 1864 Price began his retreat from Missouri and made his last stand by forming a junction with Shelby on Sugar creek, about twenty miles below Newtonia, in McDonald county. Gen. Curtis had, by forced marches, reached the creek at nearly the same time, and both forces were preparing for battle. It was

now time for Bill to leave the Confederates, but no opportunity was presented. A river, or creek, lay between the two armies, and any effort to cross would certainly be detected.

On the 23d of October, and the day Bill formed the intention of making a bold effort to cross the lines, Gen. Price directed him to carry orders to Gen. Shelby instructing him where and when to make the attack on Curtis, and how to conduct the movement. This instruction made matters worse for Bill, and he determined to take the chances of life or death in evading the Confederate army and placing the orders in Gen. Curtis' hands. He rode furiously back and lost no time in challenging a bragadocio sergeant to ride with him, for a wager, nearest the enemy's lines. The sergeant tried to back out, but the boys began to hoot him so that their respective horses were wagered as to who could cross the open space and ride down to the creek. The two started off on a dash and soon the bullets from the Union forces were whistling around them. Bill kept as far from his partner as possible, and made his horse rear and plunge in order to attract the attention of the Union forces. They rode down to the creek together, when the Union men discovered Bill and shouted to him. This aroused the suspicion of the sergeant, who attempted to draw his pistol, but Bill's eye was on him, and in a flash a ball went crashing through his brain. Bill grabbed the bit of the dead sergeant's horse and plunged into the stream, which at the time was considerably swollen. The Confederates now saw what was up, and although the Union forces commenced

a brisk fire, the Confederates seemed determined to kill Bill, the bullets falling around him like hail; but he managed to reach the opposite shore with his own and the dead sergeant's horse without receiving any injury. Bill was taken into Gen. Curtis' tent and afterwards publicly thanked for his daring and valuable services.

A RIDE WITH DEATH

Gen. Curtis continued pushing southward, and it again became necessary for Bill to enter the enemy's lines. There were three things particularly in Bill's favor as a scout and spy. First of all, he was daring beyond example; second, he was an unerring shot, and third, he could change his appearance so radically as to defy detection; add to this a native cunning and adaptability, and his success and escapes are not so remarkable.

The second time he was sent into the lines he was accompanied by Nat. Tuckett, one of the dearest friends Bill ever had. They took a circuitous route like the one adopted by Bill in reaching Price's army, and attached themselves to Kirby Smith at Austin, Texas, and soon afterwards moved north with Smith's army into Arkansas. Curtis' forces were not very strong, and while deploying down the Arkansas river they began to feel the strength of the Confederates. At length the main body of both armies came in view and stretched their lines of battle opposite each other about one thousand yards apart. A battery of ten-pounders was stationed on a small knoll to the left, which was kept playing on the Confederates, but evidently with little effect, for they did not change positions and appeared willing that the Union forces should expend their fire, for they did not return it except occasionally, apparently to let the Union forces know they were waiting for the attack. This condition of affairs continued

for more than an hour, when suddenly two horsemen were seen to leave the ranks of the Confederates and ride furiously towards the Union lines. They had not gone a hundred yards before a detachment of cavalry started in pursuit and a rapid fire was commenced at the two riders. A company of Union men was deployed to intercept the pursuers, as it was evident that the two were trying to effect their escape. On they came, the pursued and pursuers, until the two reached a ditch about twenty feet wide and ten feet deep. All but two of the pursuers had been distanced, and when the pursued came to the ditch one of them cleared it with a bound, but the other fell dead under his horse from a pistol shot fired by the two advanced pursuers. The Union forces could then plainly see that the two trying to escape were Wild Bill and Nat. Tuckett. When his partner fell, Bill turned in his saddle and fired two quick shots, and both the advanced pursuers fell dead and their horses galloped riderless into the Union lines.

This ride has been pronounced by those familiar with the facts – hundreds of whom are yet living – as one of the most daring feats ever accomplished, and Bill's escape from death one of the most remarkable of his many strokes of good fortune. The only motive he had for adopting so rash a measure was his dare-devil nature, which possibly became intensified by one or more drinks.

In accomplishing this perilous feat, Bill rode a black mare, to which he gave the name of Black Nell, and which he took great pains to train, with what success will be mentioned hereafter.

CAPTURED AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Directly after performing this remarkable dare-devil deed "Wild Bill" again concluded to re-enter Price's lines, although to return into the camp where he must now be familiarly known, was like inviting death. Some men are never so happy as when daring fate, and to approach near the dreadful summoner often becomes a fascinating adventure. It was so with Bill, for the greater the risks to be encountered, the greater his enjoyment. He loved danger, not as the soldier who would gather fame from the mouths of roaring cannons, but as one who extracts some pleasant intoxicant from the result. For the fourth time Bill disguised himself and again made a detour so as to re-enter General Price's lines from the South. He met the fleeing army not many miles from Little Rock, and, riding a mule, with the make-up of an Arkansas farmer, he offered himself as a recruit. It was but a short time before he was discovered, and upon being reported he was arrested, and on the following day tried by court-martial. The trial lasted less than an hour, as he was so well known in connection with the escapades already narrated, and upon conviction he was sentenced to be shot on the succeeding day.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.