Branch: The Kentucky Riflemen

Athena Buckett, in "The Republic," Boston, 1892, relates the following incident of a British officer, who was in The Battle of New Orleans, on incident of shooting a Frenchman in the back of the French as a result of the French attack on the city, as told by me in the army of Jackson.

It is not, as it appears, in a colonel's column, but in the American's defense. I belong to the staff, en route on an advanced, and watch the French in the pith of the position of the enemy, with that half-silly eye as to see the march of the French. It was a strange sight, that Vonnegut, with some division, behind him, their heads only visible above his at distance. He couldアウラント his eye on the long line, the French, and hear the batteries in their front, to show great numbers, gathering toward us. In the conversation of General Jackson, as the Colonels and horses. But what attractive our artillery at was the picture of a tall man, standing on the front.
Branch the
Kentucky Riflemen in Battle of Americans

The Spectral Kentucky Riflemen

William Hallett, in "The Republic," Boston, 1832, relates the following incident: "A British officer, who was in the Battle of Yorktown, mentions an incident of thrilling disparity, and our description of the western hunter, many of whom joined in the defense of that city, as volunteers in the army of Jackson.

"I marched," said this officer, "in solid column in a direct line, upon the American defenses. I belonged to the staff; and as an advanced guard, I watched through my glasses the position of the enemy, with that intensity an officer only feels when marching into the jaws of death. It was a strange sight, that breastwork, with the crowds of beings behind, their heads only visible above the line of defense. He could distinctly see their long rifles lying on the works, and the batteries in rear; and their great months gazing toward us. He could also see the position of Braddock Jackson, with his staff around him. But what attracted our attention most, was the figure of a tall man standing on the breast..."
works, dressed in sassy redskin, with buckskin leggings, and a broad-brimmed felt hat that fell around the face, almost concealing the features. He was standing in one of those picturesque graceful attitudes peculiar to those natural men dwelling in forests. The body rested on the left leg, and swayed with a curved line upward; the right arm was extended, the hand grasping the rifle near the muzzle, the butt of which rested near the toe of his foot. With the left hand he raised the rim of the hat from his eyes, and seemed gazing intently on our advancing column. The cannon of the enemy had opened up on us, and tore through through our ranks with dreadful slaughter; but we continued to advance, unwavering and cool, as if nothing threatened our progress.

The sound of cannon had no effect on the figure before us; he seemed fixed and motionless as a statue. At last he moved, threw back his hat-rim over the crown with his left hand, raised the rifle to the shoulder, and took aim at our group. Our eyes were riveted upon him; at whom had he directed his glance? But the distance was so great, that in less than at each other and smiled. We saw the rifle flash, and
very rightly conjectured that his aim was in the direction of our party. My right-hand companion, as noble a fellow as ever rode at the head of a regiment, fell from his saddle. The hunter paused a few moments, without moving the gun from his shoulder, then he reloadet, and assumed his former attitude. Museing the hat upon his eyes, and again holding it up with the left hand, he gazed upon our ranks; and, as if nothing, the gun raised to his shoulder. This time we did not flinch, but cast glances at each other, to see which of us must die. Again the sight flashed, and one of our party dropped to the earth. There was something most awful in this marching on to certain death. The cannon and thousands of muskets fell playing upon our ranks, we cared not for; for there was a chance of escaping them. Most of us had walked as costly to the earth as the fallen one, not murmuring, but to know that every time that right was directed toward us, and its bullets struck the ground near, one of us must surely fall; to see it and, notwithstanding it grazed or a rock, and know when the hammer came down,
The messenger of death drove unerringly to its goal; to know this, and still march on, was awful. I could see nothing but the tall figure standing on the breastworks; he seemed to grow, phantom-like, higher and higher, assuming, through the smoke, the supernatural appearance of some great spirit of death. Again did he reload and discharge, and reload and discharge—his sight, with the same unerring aim, and the same unerring result, and it was with indescribable pleasure that I beheld, as near as I could make the American lines, the sulphurous cloud gathering around us, and shutting that spectral hunter from our gaze. In fact the battle, and to my mind, the Kentucky sharpshooter contributed more to our defeat than any other thing else; for while he remained to our right our attention was drawn from our duties. And when, at last, we became enshrouded in the smoke, the work was complete; we were in utter confusion, and unable, in the ominous, to restore order, and sufficient to make any successful attack. The battle was lost."
The Colored Troops fought valiantly.

General Jackson took occasion to compliment the colored troops, both of the battalions of the 1st firm of color, and of the battalion of the 4th firm of color. They displayed a courage and discipline in the day's, night's battle, on the 5th of December, as well as on every occasion when danger and duty called. What, except to start of the whole Troops and officers commanded? The praise of the brave colored chief, and of the whole army in contrast with this particular display.

Why not have, in the defense of their country by these troops, the colored troops in the British army recruited in Jamaica, and brought over in their opposition, served until to have failed to meet the expectations of the English officers in command? They now have to defend their brethren homes and children, from the enemies hordes of their emigration, under natural big companions, and with the suffer on.
The colored troops fought gallantly.

General Jackson took occasion to compliment the colored troops, both those of the battalion of the 23rd of color, and of the battalion of those refugees from San Domingo, about five hundred volunteers, under the command of brave and skilful officers, they displayed a courage and discipline in the trying night battle on the 23rd of December, as well as on every occasion where danger and duty called them, equal to that of the white troops, and which commanded the praise of the General in chief, and of the whole army.

In contrast with this patriotic display of solid and virtuous qualities in the defense of their country by these troops, the colored troops in the British army, recruited in Jamaica, and brought over in the expectation of the English officers in command. They were borne away from their humble homes and families, from the sunny land of their nativity, under military compulsion, and made to suffer untold
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hardships in a service in which they had no heart, and at the mercy and bidding of strangers whom they felt had no interest but a selfish one, in them, in a strange country, and amid strange scenes, and often in want and suffering from the chill and exposure of winter weather, their spirits were broken. A British officer and author, Major Hill, in his "Recollections of an Artillery Officer," has this to say:

"The unfortunate blacks forming the best India regiments, about fourteen hundred men in all, suffered most dreadfully, from the change of climate and alteration of food. Several of their fever deaths were observed bundled together, and exposed to the artillery fire of the enemy. They were asked to get under cover, to which they replied: 'No, thank you, massa; rather stay here and get killed at once. We'll see the day when we go back to Jamaica; so we die now; thank you, we ain't cold and jary; no house to stay in, no warm clothes. So wigger, him die like dog.'"
Drummer Boy of the Colored Battalion

For almost half a century after the Battle of New Orleans, a picturesque and picturesque character in the Crescent City, was Noble, a negro boy, of seventeen years of age, who was, at seventeen years of age, the drummer for the Battalion of Free Men of Color, who volunteered under Jackson, and who fought gallantly in the several actions. Noble distinguished himself by his brave conduct in the battle of the 8th of January, as to attract the attention of the officers, and to receive many compliments. His martial character was the pride of his life; and on every anniversary when the victory was celebrated in the city, he was present with the drum he beat amid the roar and smoke of the battle, to lead the procession with his part of the martial music.

A writer says: "Prior to the Civil War, each recurrent anniversary of the battle was celebrated by an elaborate civic and military parade, and on other occasions, Noble, the drummer, was in his glory. He invincibly branded the line of march, clad in non-descript military uniform, and beating a tattoo upon the very drum. He had carried so valiantly in..."
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the fore of the colored battalion of Freedmen. Behind
him came the Mayor in a carriage, followed by the
other city dignitaries, all glad to yield the place
of honor to the humble veteran.

Houel died in 1864, and his funeral was at-
tended by a great concourse of friends among the
whites, as well as from among the colored people.
His widow long survived him, and was living in
New Orleans a few years ago; we have no record of
her death.
The Lafayette at the Battle of New Orleans.
The Lafittes of Barataria; The Pirates of the Gulf.

The story of the Lafittes, the Pirates of the Gulf of Mexico, as they are popularly known in literature, has appeared and re-appeared in history and in the romance of fiction, in so many and in such varying forms of statement, that it is difficult for the reader to distinguish what is fact, and what is fiction. The cultured Louisiana historian will smile when mention is made of the historical novel, "Lafitte of Louisiana," and will tell you that the author, Miss Denny, has exploited an imaginative imagination with a certain disregard to the real occurrences which make up the life and adventures of two picturesque characters.

The brothers, Pierre and Jean Lafitte, were natives of France, born and reared in the Bayonne county, of the province of Bordeaux, the point from whence the great English flotilla was destined for the coasts of the United States, and the final invasion of Louisiana. The Lafittes came to New Orleans in 1808. Not much is known of them, until rumors were confirmed within a year or two after, that a community of seafaring outlaws had made a rendezvous of the Island of Grande Terre, in the Bay of Barataria, fifty
miles south of New Orleans, on the Gulf coast, and that the Lafitte brothers were the leaders in these acts of outrages. It was charged that they were guilty of open piracy upon the high seas, and complaints were made by the officials of friendly nations of the seizure of vessels and their cargoes, and the confiscation of the same, in violation of the laws of nations. Our government was appealed to, to break up this outrages, and to punish the violators.

When remonstrated with, and threatened, and sometimes arrested and brought to trial, the Lafitites and their men, through able attorneys and interested friends, plead that they were not pirates, nor amenable to punishment as such. They were dependent more than once, by Edward Livingston, then perhaps the ablest lawyer of the New Orleans bar, and afterwards aid and chief counsel in both military and civil proceedings, to General Jackson, throughout the campaign against the English. Many captured vessels, been commissioned as privateers by the government at New Orleans, to prey upon the commerce of England and other countries at war with France. When New Orleans was taken by the English, there was no port in the West Indies where captured prizes could be
Faction and disorder of. For two or three in this extremity, a number of such vessels and cargoes captured, were brought into Barataria Bay. Soon a trade sprang up, and New Orleans and the interior towns became ready markets for the disposal of this illicit merchandise. She Lafitte, by their superior courage and tact, became the recognized leaders of these adventurous sea-rovers, especially Jean Lafitte, the younger brother. When the

The change of government, the masters of the ships, applications for new commissions to the little republic of Carrhagena, which had recently been recognized by France. It was under these commissions, even under the flag of this little republic, the so-called "Pirates of the Gulf," defended themselves from the charges that they were high-waymen of the sea.

Whatever may be said in their defense, under the charge that they were pirates, no one denies that they, for years, carried on an extensive business as smugglers; and in bold defiance of the revenue laws of the United States, so lucrative was this trade to themselves, and so profitable...
to the people of the city and country in Louisiana,
that transactions and deliveries of goods were as open,
as though made in Philadelphia. Again and again
was our government at Washington appealed to to adopt
measures to send an armed force to break up this nest of
pirates and outlaws harbored within the territory
and jurisdiction of the United States. For some reasons
not explained, the administration was strongly
inclined, if not indifferent, to these appeals. A well-
manned ship of war, or the military forces at New Orleans,
would have been sufficient to have broken up the rendez-
vous at Brasavera and to have captured or dispersed
the entire community of guilty outlaws. This much was
due for the protection of the commerce of friendly nations, as
well as to prevent interference with the violations of our own revenue
laws.

But the piracies, under pretense of privateering, had be-
come a source of great profit to many merchants and
traders of Louisiana, and the Lafittes and their fol-
locors correspondingly popular with these influential classes.
Many interested citizens were rapidly accumulating fortunes,
and were bent on shielding them from any interference on the
part of the officers of the law; or the proceedings of the courts, in which the offenders were frequently made to appear on trial. They paid attorneys handsomely for such services. It is related that Mr. Grimes, an able lawyer who had successfully defended them in one instance, was just

enlisted to accompany one of the Lafittes to their lair at Grand Isle, to receive payment of his fee. Payment was made, followed by a lavish display of hospitality, during which some games of chance were introduced. Mr. Grimes returned to New Orleans families; but afterward insisted that these Basque men were not pirates, but were the most brilliant and accomplished gentlemen he had ever met.

Even the revenue, and other officers of the Federal government, at New Orleans and vicinity, became infatuated in their friendly feelings for the Lafittes and their associates, and seemed both to call the attention of the heads of departments to the illegal traffic now openly carried on between the outlaws and the citizens. Vessels were almost daily captured and brought in as prisoners into the Bay of Barataria. Their rich cargoes of merchandise were sold by wholesale to merchants in this trade, at prices that would...
pay them a profit of two to four hundred per cent. This mercantile trade was carried in boats, through the navigable bays and to New Orleans, or other towns, and then traded to the best advantage. The free-borders trafficked largely in slaves, ship-loads of whom they brought from the coast of Africa, negroes whom they would sell by the cargo, at Barataria, at one hundred to one thousand and fifty dollars, were readily worth five to seven hundred dollars on the plantations. It is not surprising therefore that the bold Buccaneers formed many strong ties, and gathered around them powerful friends, in commercial, civic, social, and in political circles; and also in the halls of justice where friends were most needed at times.

This smuggling and contraband trade had grown to serious proportions, and immunity from prosecution or interference not only emboldened the traffickers, but the outlaws and industrious citizens, that little attempt at concealment was made. War with England having been declared, the attention of the government was but the more directed from what was going on in far-away Louisiana. War with England broke out in
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June, 1812; but for two years, the people of Louisiana, far distant from the fields of military operations, took no part in the war. Isolated and exposed to possible attack, the people and government were indisposed to send troops a thousand miles from their homes, when they might be used for defense there. Especially was this sentiment justified by the fact that the government at Washington made little or no effort to justify or defend the country against the enemy, until the impending crisis of invasion threatened late in 1814.

It was fortunate for Louisiana, and for nation, that Governor Claiborne was the chief executive of the state, a member of the Federation during this period of emergency. He was a patriotic statesman, and a man of decisive action, though conservative. He put forth all the power of his official position to organize and arm the militia of his State, under the suggestion of President Madison. Under his administration, the frequent and repeated reports of pirates, upon the high seas, and the open and defiant smuggling carried on within his territorial jurisdiction, had become public scandals, to the reproach of the Northern States, and the Governor called the attention of the legislature to this
lawlessness, and to the fact that its organized and
continued course was, and had been for four years,
at the Bay of Barataria, in Louisiana, and but sixty
miles away from the seat of government. But there
was no favorable response from the General Assembly.
The members of that Body claiming that the suppression
of piracy and smuggling was a function of the Federal
government only. Other reasons were freely advanced
for the inaction of the General Assembly, that a number
of the members were in league with the Lafittes, and
were being enriched by the illicit traffic.

Dispairing of assistance from the general government
towards the extermination of these Buccaneers and the
suppression of their outrages, Governor Claiborne began
active measures to these ends, almost solely on his own
responsibility, as Governor. He was almost at this con-
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by an offer of fifteen thousand dollars for the capture of the Buona Vista. It is related that Lafayette deftly walked through the streets of New Orleans, and was seen leaning against a post on which the reward for his head was tacked. It was almost impossible to create a sentiment adverse to the hold and independent power of the sea.

The capture of vessels and cargoes was mainly under the Spanish flag, for his reasons. The commission as privateer by the republic of Carthagena, which had declared her independence of Spain, gave him right by the law of nations. Then again, Captain Jean Lafayette relates the story of his life; that he was, some years before, a successful merchant in San Domingo, and had sold out. On his way to Paris, the ship he was on was seized by a Spanish man-of-war, on which he and his wife were subjected to cruel outrages, and finally left destitute on an island. His wife died from the effects of starvation and exposure. He made his way to New Orleans, and had been fighting the Spaniards ever since, and would continue to do so to the end of his life.

Governor Claiborne determined to enforce the laws, and the bandits on sea and land began to feel the mailed hand of
official powers. At the time that Captain Lacky, from the fleet at Pensacola, anchored his ships outside the pass at Barataria, hoisted his pennant, and came in to Grand Isle, with overtures to Captain Jean Lafitte and his followers, of British gold, and British protection, and British honors, provided they would enlist under the British flag, for the invasion of Louisiana, Captain Pierre Lafitte, the brother of Jean, with others of rank among the outlaws, were in prison—chains at New Orleans. Lafitte had but to remember that these very British troops were just disembarked from the province of his nativity, the town where they had devastated the country as the invaders of colonies France, to revive within him the tradition of hatred of the English. He had many friends in Louisiana and it was not an impious thing to betray them. He and his men loved and admired the new republic in America, and the spark of patriotism kindled into a flame at once. There was not a moment hesitation in casting the die for the American cause. The dissembling was only for the few hours, until the English emissary had fully unfolded the designs and plans of the enemy. The emissary dismissed, Lafitte lost no time in revealing in person,
These designs and plans by Governor Claiborne, and through him, to General Jackson, then at Mobile, the information was invaluable, as the beginning and hastening of preparations to meet and repel the invaders.

The Lafittes at once tendered the armories of themselves and all their men, with all the munitions and arms at their command, for the defense of New Orleans, and to share the fortunes of campaign and battle with the soldiers of Jackson's army. They asked no conditions save that the government would pardon them of all offenses against the laws, and give to them the privilege of becoming worthy citizens, when they had proved themselves worthy soldiers. This was granted, and finally done; the sequel we know.

Pierre Lafitte settled down to a quiet life after the war, and was lost to further history. Beluche, Domingue You, and other leaders under the Lafittes, became law-abiding and worthy citizens, and lived and died respectively by the people of New Orleans. Captain Jean Lafitte, son of the boldest and most adventurous leader of the community of pirates and smugglers, could not reconcile to himself the quiet life of the citizen.
public

Lost to view for a year or two, this adventurous
Ernests of modern times, came into notice again in 1817,
as the head and leading spirit of a community little
colony planted on Galveston Island, on the Texas coast.

He and the captains of the vessels which made up his
fleet, professed allegiance to Spain, Texas being then a
part of Mexico, a colonial department of Spain.

In the turbulent and revolutionary period that resulted in the independence of Mexico, and finally
the independence of Texas from Mexican domination,
captain Jean Lafitte and his followers gave assistance to Texas in its struggles. The chaos of dispersed
conspiracies, and the confusion and conflict of
authorities, opened up new and tempting opportunities
for pirating and buccaneering, too tempting to be resisted by Lafitte and his community of followers.

Captain Jean went back to his old practices, as at
Barataria. The Galveston Islanders did not confine
themselves to the capture and expropriation of Spanish
ships. Since they extended their seizures to vessels sail-
ing under the flag of the United States. In the mean-
time, Lafitte's aggressions and exactions were not
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Satisfactory to our government, though his services at New Orleans had been recognized, and a pardon of all previous offenses given, it was decided that the colony of sea-roving outlaws should be broken up, and driven away from Sabine Island. The order was given by our government at Washington; and Lieutenant Kearney, in command of the war-ship Enterprise, was commissioned to carry it into execution. This was done; and with this episode of the chief and his adventurous comrades, passes from history and romance the famous "Pirate of the Gulf."

"As mild a mannered man, as ever sailed ships or cut a shot."

An officer of the Enterprise thus describes him: "A stout, rather gentlemanly personage, some five feet ten, in height, dress simply in a foraging cap and a blue frock of easy fit. His complexion, like that of many Creoles, was olive; his countenance was full, mild and rather impressionable; but for a small black eye, which, as he grew animated, would flash in a way to impress one with a notion, that El Capitan might be, when aroused, a very ugly customer. His demeanor was extremely courteous. He was evidently educated, and gifted with no common talent for conversation."