

## LXI. THE OLD TIME FIDDLERS.

In the beginning of the formation of society in Marshall county, there was nothing that was more conducive to enjoyment and to cement the young people together in the bonds of good fellowship than the "old time fiddlers" who made the music for the "Hoe Downs" that were so popular during the formative society period and for a number of years afterwards. Amusements of some kind were an absolute necessity, and during the winter season, when the few amusements of the summer had passed away, the boys and girls determined that they would have an occasional dance "hoe downs" they were called to relieve the monotony of the long and dreary winters. The first and most important thing to do was to procure the services of a fiddler - not a violinist, because a violinist was considered entirely too "high toned" for the "back-woods dances" in those days. Some of the younger men who came with their parents and others for the purpose of making this part of the country their home had taken time by the forelock and had purchased fiddles and learned to play after 'a fashion before they started to "the new country," and had learned to "call" some of the figures of the country dances, so the getting things in shape for a start was not so difficult a thing as it at first appeared. The largest house in the neighborhood was selected as the place where the dance was to be held. The beds were taken down and all the furniture removed, and upon a pinch there was room enough for two sets to dance, provided they did not spread out too much. The boys and girls for miles around were invited and generally were only too glad to accept the invitation, because in that way they could become better acquainted, and many a happy marriage resulted from the acquaintances formed and the associations of these primitive country dances.

As a matter of fact, the old fiddlers, who were artists in their way and could make a whole orchestra, with a caller to spare, were very few. The writer remembers but one in all the region of country round about that could do it up to a turn. That was Charlie Cook, who lived a short distance west of Pretty lake, and who was killed a few years ago, being gored by an infuriated bull. He was not what was called a scientific fiddler, but when he "rosumed up his bow, and plucked and plonked and plunked the strings, and tuned her up, you know," and put his quid of tobacco on the other side of his mouth, and called out: "Take partners for a quadrille," everybody knew the old fiddler would do his level best. He stood at the end of

the log cabin dancing hall, and did the fiddling and calling at the same time, and you may be assured he kept the boys and girls busy moving to the figures, "down outside and up the middle," "balance all," "doe see doe," "cross over," "swing your partners," "all promenade," etc. He played pieces that the old fiddlers of these days know nothing about, such as "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "Jamie's On the Sea," "Boyne Water," "Fisher's Horn- pipe," "Arkansaw Traveler," and the like. To these inspiring strains-

"They danced all night  
Till broad daylight,  
And went home with the girls in the morning."

Charlie Cook was one of the pioneers of this 'county, having come here as an "Indian trader" in 1832, and was, therefore, probably the first white settler in the county, and;). representative of that class whose early years were a continued struggle with poverty and the hardships of pioneer life. When he first came to the county there were no white people here, and his associates were the Pottawattomie Indians, who were the only residents here then. He necessarily learned their manners and customs, and learned to speak fluently their language, which he did not forget even to the day of his death.

There was a peculiar circumstance connected with his death which is not generally known, and will bear repeating here as a mystery that has not yet been solved., In the neighborhood where he lived there was a considerable number of spiritualists, who held occasional meetings, and, through the mediums that developed among the number, claimed to be in communication with those who had "passed over." Mr. Cook was not inclined to be a "believer" and had not attended many, if any, of their meetings. However, on a certain Saturday night, he had agreed that he would attend a meeting which was to be held at the house of his neighbor, Edwin Dwinnell, about three miles distant. He told them he was going to Plymouth to do some trading, and when he returned and arranged things for the night he would go over. He rode his horse to town and when he returned, in leading him through the barn lot to the stable, an infuriated bull gored Mr. Cook in the leg, inflicting a frightful wound, which was not only dangerous but painful. Those assembled at Mr. Dwinnell's waited a long time for Mr. Cook to come, but as it was getting late the "seance" opened in the usual form. One of the mediums went into a trance, and a spirit came who was asked if it could tell anything about Charlie Cook and why he had not come as he had promised. It replied that in leading his horse through the barn- yard he was gored by a bull in the leg and was so badly hurt that he would die in three days. Those present were much excited at the information, and Mr. Dwinnell said he would saddle his horse and go over and see if it was true. He did so, and found Mr. Cook gored and hurt as stated; Three days afterwards he died. Mr. Dwinnell related this to the writer shortly after it occurred and declared that the information came to him as stated, and at the time and under the circumstances he had no other possible way of finding out about it. Mr. Dwinnell is long since dead, as are also most of those who were present on the occasion named, and the matter remains as great a mystery today as it did when it occurred.

It was Charlie Cook, or one of whom he was a type, concerning whom our own "Hoosier Poet" wrote the following charming bit of poetry:

My fiddle? Well, I kind O' keep her hand;," don't you know!  
 Though I ain't so much inclined to tromp the strings and switch the bow  
 As I was before the timber of my elbows got so dry,  
 I And my fingers was more limber-like and caperish and spry!  
 Yit I can plonk and plunk and plink, !  
 And tune her up and play!  
 And jest lean back and laugh and wink  
 At ev'ry rainy day!

My playin's only middlin -- tunes I picked up when a boy-  
 The kind o '-sort o' fiddlin' that the folks calls' , cordaroy ;  
 "The Old Fat Gal," and "Rye-straw," and "My Sailor's on the Sea,"  
 Is the old cowtillions I' , saw,  
 when the choice is left to me;  
 And so I plunk and plunk and plink,  
 And rosum-up my bow,  
 And play the tunes that makes you think  
 The devil's in your toe!

I was allus a romancin " do-less boy, to tell the truth,  
 A -fiddlin ' and a-dancin, and a-wastin' of my youth,  
 And a-actin " and a-cuttin '-up all sorts o'silly pranks  
 That wasn't worth a button of anybody's thanks!  
 But they tell me, when ust to Plink  
 And plonk and plunk and play,  
 My music seemed to have the kink  
 O' drivin' cares away!

That's how this here old fiddle's won my hart's indurin' love!  
 From the strings acrost her middle, to the schreechin' keys above-  
 From her' , aspern, over bridge, and to the ribbon round her throat,  
 She's a woin', cooin' pigeon, singin' "Love me" ev'ry note!  
 And so I pat her neck, and plink  
 Her strings with lovin' hands,  
 And, lis't 'nin ' clos't, I sometimes think  
 She kind O' understands!