

Sodom and Gomorrah
of Today

OR THE

History of Keystone
West Virginia



1912
PRICE \$1.00



Birdseye View of Keystone--Looking West and showing railroad yards.

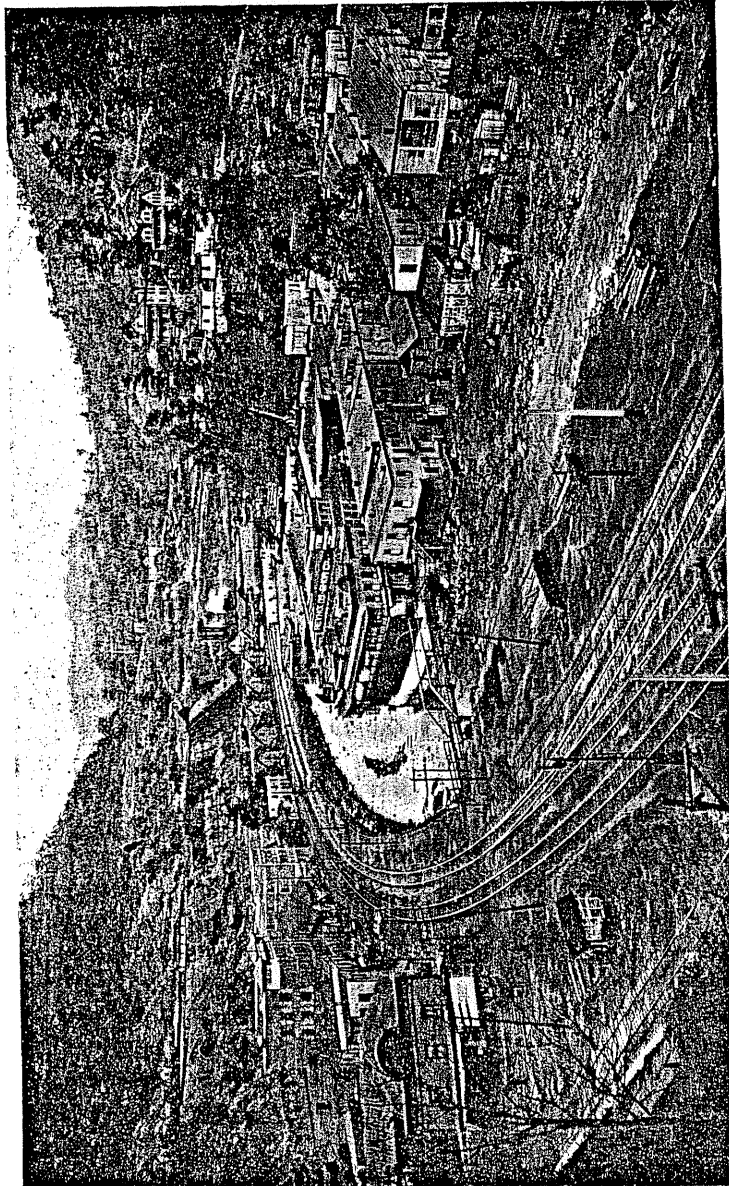
Preface

And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not I will know.—Genesis 18:20-21.

My object in writing this book is to give to the public true facts of things that have happened in the town of Keystone, W. Va., things that are going on at the present time and a true account of conditions in the town as I have found them during my stay of six months in the place, during which time I have been gathering data for this book. It gives me no pleasure to speak as I do in the following pages of some of the people in this place, for all those that I have met have been very kind to me, but when I undertook this work I resolved to "hew to the line, let the chips fall where they may." The Holy Bible says that what a man soweth, that shall he reap, also: "be sure your sins will find you out." Therefore if anyone should feel aggrieved at what is said in the following pages they must remember that they are reaping what has been sown.

I make no claim of literary merit in this work. I have tried to make this book a straightforward account of the things I write about. I have no apology to offer for anything that is contained herein. I regret that facts are as bad as told. If this book should be the means of somehow, some time, causing a revolution in conditions of this town and causing the cancerous evils to be wiped out then I will feel that my work was not in vain. With this hope I send the following pages for the public perusal.

VIRGINIA LAD,
The Author.



Eirseye view of Keystone---From West end of town looking East.

Keystone, W. Va.

Who has not heard of Keystone?

Very few there be that have not heard of the place for the town has an almost nation-wide reputation. I remember years ago when I was only a boy not yet in my "teens" hearing people speak of Keystone and how bad the people were there, how people were killed and other crimes committed. It was a common saying at home that when a man violated the law and escaped the officers that he had gone to Keystone.

I often wondered if conditions could be quite as bad as they had been pictured. After six months spent in this place during which time I have had my eyes and ears open, gathering data for this book I have reached my own conclusion but for the reader I will leave them to draw their own conclusions after reading this book. To an ordinary visitor to this place it does not appear to be very much different from the ordinary coal mining towns. The people are very kind to strangers and visitors are liable to be misled by surface indications. But let us probe beneath the surface a little and what we will find will be rather shocking to the modesty of many. It was one fair Sunday morning that I left my home amid the "green fields of Virginia" for the town of Keystone. After getting on the train I presented my ticket to the conductor who said, "Keystone?" then wisely shook his head. After an all-day's journey I reached my destination during a rain while the smoke from the coal operations hung like a heavy pall over the town. I have often thought since what a fitting introduction to the town.

SITUATION OF THE TOWN.

Keystone is situated 24 miles west of Bluefield on the

main line of the Norfolk & Western Railway, in the southern part of the county of McDowell, and on the Elkhorn river. The town is very much like other coal mining towns. The streets are narrow, buildings very much congested and residences are of all descriptions. Houses are jammed together while every conceivable place is used for building purposes. Some of the streets are paved while the sidewalks are of concrete. In walking up main street you may look up and there on the side of the mountain almost directly overhead are residences stuck back in the mountain side. The buildings are mostly frame, some of them which were built in late years being brick. There is no restrictions in regard to the negroes for they live in all parts of the town and white people everywhere will find that their next door neighbor is a family of negroes. The principal work is coal mining and railroading. The Norfolk & Western recently moved their yards from Vivian to this place and naturally quite a little railroad work is done here. The population of the town in 1910 was 2047, but it is about 2500 at the present time as the railroad men who have moved here have swelled the number to about that figure. The town is incorporated but the corporate limits would break the back of a snake to follow them. This was done for political reason and while some of the citizens live almost in the heart of the town yet they find at election time that they cannot vote on account of being out of the corporation.

A fair estimate of the complexion of the population, is about as follows, 40 per cent negroes, 30 per cent foreign, and about 30 per cent white Americans while only about 10 per cent of the whites are pure, undefiled men and women of good character.

The town boasts of a large brick hotel, which I can testify as being modern in every respect and far above the average for hotels in the coal fields, two motion picture shows with vaudeville, as good as you will find in the large cities, a newspaper, owned and published by negroes, a bank, a negro

cornet band, a beautiful, modern, Methodist church, a Baptist church, a Jewish synagogue, a large, commodious building for colored school children and under construction a modern, brick building for white children, numerous stores of all kinds, two white and two colored drug stores, two white and two colored doctors, several white and two or three negro lawyers, about 15 or 20 saloons, about the same number of restaurants and a large number of houses of ill fame.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS.

The town is incorporated and had for its first mayor, Mr. C. E. Harmon, familiarly known as "Red Fox." He held the office for 8 or 10 terms, but his administration could not be termed a success. It is true that moral conditions were better then than now, for there never has been a time in the history of the town that moral conditions were worse than they are today. Harmon kept the disreputable women pretty well in the bounds of propriety when they came out into the town and no flirting or any lewd display were allowed. He also prohibited them from having dances without a permit and did not allow them on the streets after ten o'clock at night. He had the town pretty well in hand except about election times when he would loosen up and cater to the negro, for the negro was and is now in the majority. At the expiration of his term of office and after his successor had been elected he destroyed all the records of his office and the incoming Mayor could not tell what had transpired during the former terms. A suit was brought against him in connection with this and the case was compromised with Harmon paying to the town about \$500. Harmon was also proven guilty during the hearing of the contested seat of Congressman Jas. A. Hughes, in the last Congress, of taking a large number of negroes from Keystone to Matewan and there voting them where they had no moral or legal right to vote.

I saw Mr. Harmon, during the last primary election, he being a candidate for the legislature of West Virginia, although he lives in Tazewell county, Virginia, and has no legal right to vote in West Virginia, much less hold office in the state, working among the negro voters whom he would take by the arm, place his arm around their neck and endeavor to persuade them to vote the way he dictated. He received a large majority in the primary and will doubtless be elected to the legislature. He, at one time was the political boss in Keystone and for a long while carried the voting strength of the town in the hollow of his hand but since moving to Tazewell he has lost, to some extent, his political prestige.

Harmon was succeeded as Mayor, by Ferd Thomas, who held the office for two terms. During the administration of Thomas he was led by the nose by the petty politicians and machine men. He drank considerably and also gambled and whenever they wanted anything in Keystone that did not meet the approval of Thomas, they would succeed in getting him drunk and then get his consent. Thomas was also in the mercantile business and on account of his habits he got too far in debt and after he was beaten for the nomination for another term as Mayor he secretly left town and has not been heard from since by Keystone. When the second term of Thomas expired he did not have the support of the political machine and they nominated another man for the place. This nomination did not meet with the approval of the majority of the white people and they nominated Dr. G. T. Epling, on a reform ticket. Thomas, with his political strength, got behind this ticket and Epling was elected. He was pledged to carry out the reform movement which had been started by his nomination but he had hardly been elected before he joined hands with the "gang" or the political machine and began the building of a giant political machine which he could control. In order to do this he played to the negroes and made A. L. Calhoun, a wealthy negro and member of the Council ever since the town was incorporat-

ed, his first lieutenant, or right hand man. At this time the present Alhambra hotel was under construction. Mr. J. E. Lambert, present manager of the Princeton Lumber Co., was superintending the work and had some trouble with a negro and kicked him out of the building. Epling was instrumental in having a warrant issued for Lambert and had him brought before him for trial. He fined Mr. Lambert, \$20, and gave him a fifteen minute reprimand for kicking the negro, telling him the negro was as good as he was or any other white man. Some white people that were standing around promptly contributed the \$20, and paid the fine to show their indignation at such procedure. Epling afterwards came and returned the money saying that he did not care anything about the fine but wanted to make himself solid with the negro voters.

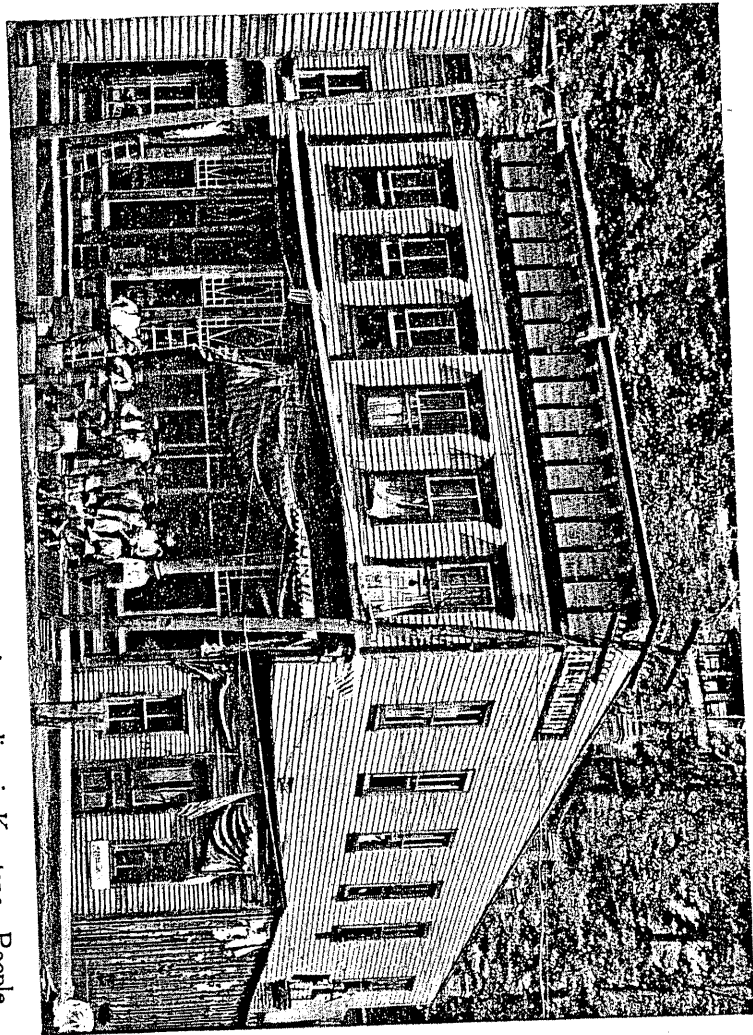
Right then trouble for Mr. Epling's administration started. Epling drank considerable and often to excess. He catered to the negro and it has often been said that Calhoun was the power behind the throne during Epling's administration and that if you wanted anything accomplished in Keystone that it was not necessary to see the Mayor but to see Calhoun. Epling was often found in company with this negro and they could be seen holding secret conversations whenever they would meet.

During the administration of Epling, there was organized by A. L. Calhoun, what was known as the Union Political and Social Club, of which Calhoun, was President, Epling was made Secretary and Treasurer. This club was a negro organization composed of criminals and jonaah negroes with a few white people mixed in, among them was the mayor. They had a club room where women from the tenderloin section visited and it is common knowledge that Mayor Epling attended dances in this hall and danced with these disreputable women, both white and colored. This club served drinks on Sunday and thereby brought their downfall. Some people, whose name I was unable to learn had warrants issued for members of this club, charging them with dis-

pensing liquors on Sunday. The warrants were issued by John Belcher, a justice of the peace and a posse led by T. L. Felts, of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, visited this club on Sunday, Aug. 16, 1908. The officers entered the club room and ordered drinks which were served by Arthur Cheatham, the illegitimate son of A. L. Calhoun. The room was filled with about seventy-five people, both white and black, and about equally divided as to sex. The officers paid for their drinks then informed the entire crowd that they were under arrest. The principal members of the club were taken before Squire Belcher for trial. The negroes in the meantime appealed to Dr. H. D. Hatfield, the political boss of McDowell county, and present Republican candidate for Governor of West Virginia, for help and Dr. Hatfield, appeared the day of the trial and requested that Squire Belcher dismiss the case, Hatfield arguing that it was done for political purposes and would ruin the Republican party of the county. Squire John Belcher, knows no favorites when it comes to dispensing justice. He is faithful to his trust, true to his oath and honest in his efforts and therefore refused to dismiss the cases but sent them on to the Grand Jury.

A. L. Calhoun, was tried for running the Club and was sentenced to the penitentiary for a number of years. At his first trial Calhoun, failed to appear and an affidavit was procured in court, stating that Calhoun was physically unable to attend court. Calhoun was at that time riding over the county in the interest of the Republican party. At the time of his second trial Dr. Epling's term as Mayor had expired and he had been elected to the Legislature. Calhoun, at this trial, asked for a continuance on the ground that the books of the Club were in the hands of a secretary and treasurer (Dr. Epling) and that the said secretary and treasurer was a member of the Legislature of West Virginia and could not be summoned to appear as a witness. Capt. R. R. Smith, was the prosecuting attorney in these trials and he refused to listen to the pleadings of the machine crowd of

Calhoun's Saloon and house of ill fame.--This is one of the lowest dives in Keystone--People attending services at the Methodist church are compelled to pass this place.



politicians and fearlessly prosecuted the case. He was ably backed by Judge Jas. A. Strother, who presided at these trials. These two men stood shoulder to shoulder and in the face of the pleading and threats of the political gang they did their sworn duty and prosecuted the case fearlessly. After Calhoun was sentenced to the penitentiary the case was carried to the state Court of Appeals and this court affirmed the sentence of the lower court. The Governor was then appealed to through the influence of Dr. Epling and other members of the machine of McDowell county, Gov. W. E. Glascock was persuaded to pardon Calhoun before he had ever begun serving of his sentence. At the last primary election, Squire Belcher, Judge Strother and Commonwealth's Attorney, R. R. Smith, the three men who so bravely and honestly did their duty in the above case, were defeated for the nomination.

Epling's two terms as Mayor were probably the worst in the history of the town. In addition to the many things that he did he was often beastly drunk. Epling was succeeded as Mayor by C. C. Hale and has held the office for three terms, including the present term. He was elected to the present term at an election held on the first day of last February. His opponent was W. E. Stuart, whom he defeated by a majority of 29. This was a rather novel campaign. Hale and Stuart were partners in business, yet rival candidates for the office of Mayor. The campaign presented some rather amusing features. Money was spent lavishly and each night a brass band was hired by one of the candidates to parade the street while the opposing candidate would hire the same band for the next night to parade in his interest. The most amusing feature to me was that the same crowd, with a few exceptions, would be in both parades. They would assemble in the center of the town and inquire which candidate they were supposed to yell for that night and the next night would see them repeat the same performance. The parades would wind up at some saloon and it was a

grand time for jonahs, old soaks and booze artists of which the town is well supplied.

PRESENT MUNICIPAL OFFICERS OF THE TOWN.

C. C. Hale is the present Mayor. He is also bookkeeper for the Hoster Brewing Co., and is financially interested in several enterprises. E. R. Snyder, bookkeeper for the Keystone Coal Co., and superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School is Recorder. M. W. White, is Sergeant, Fred Moore, formerly a coal inspector is Chief of Police, while the police force consists of about four white men and ten or twelve negroes. The Council is composed of Sol Hyman and I. L. Shor, Jews, C. P. Graham, postmaster and Dr. G. N. Marshall and H. L. Lord, negroes.

CHARACTER OF MUNICIPAL OFFICERS.

Mr. C. C. Hale is a large man, a fine specimen of physical manhood and a bachelor. His hair is tinged with gray and he appears to be about fifty years of age. What I will say of him and some of the others is by no means a pleasant duty but I resolved to state the truth no matter who it hurts and to handle the facts without kid gloves. Mr. Hale is employed by the Hoster Brewing Co., as bookkeeper. He drinks whiskey and often to excess. It is no uncommon sight to see him staggering drunk. While sitting, with some friends in the hall of the Alhambra hotel, a door opened and a man came out of a room filled with men where gambling was being carried on and stopped before us. I could plainly see that he was beastly drunk and I was informed by one of my friends that it was the mayor. He also gambles and on a recent Sunday spent the entire night in the Alhambra hotel gambling.

M. W. White, the present City Sergeant, was formerly chief of police. He never set the world on fire with any display of nerve and it was always a noticeable fact that he

could never be found when trouble was brewing. He is a negro lover and can always be found in company with one of the negro policeman, Joe Parsons, a negro deputy sheriff, is generally to be found accompanying him. He is agent for the Bluefield Brewing Co. He is lazy and inefficient and appears to be willing to let things run in the same old rut just so long as he is allowed to hold office and draw his pay.

Fred Moore, is a young man who was appointed Chief of Police immediately after the election and there was hopes among the best class of people that he would reform the town and the people were preparing to get behind him and give him the moral encouragement and assistance to help him do this. The first night of his services he rounded up fourteen and locked them in jail, plainly showing that there could be work done by the police. For a while he gave evidence of making a good officer but soon the "gang" had him and he is now content to sit idly by and see all kinds of gambling, all manner of vice and other evil carried on under his very eyes. It is a noticable fact that whenever anything happens that requires the services of a policeman, although Keystone has more than a plenty of them, that you can never find one when needed.

Sol Hyman and I. L. Shor, of the council, are Jews and prominent merchants of the town. C. P. Graham is the postmaster. Dr. G. N. Marshall is a negro saloon keeper, his saloon being connected with a disreputable house. H. L. Lord, is also a saloon keeper and owner of a low dive. Snyder and Graham are well respected gentlemen, although Graham is holding office contrary to Section 214 of the Postal laws and Regulations.

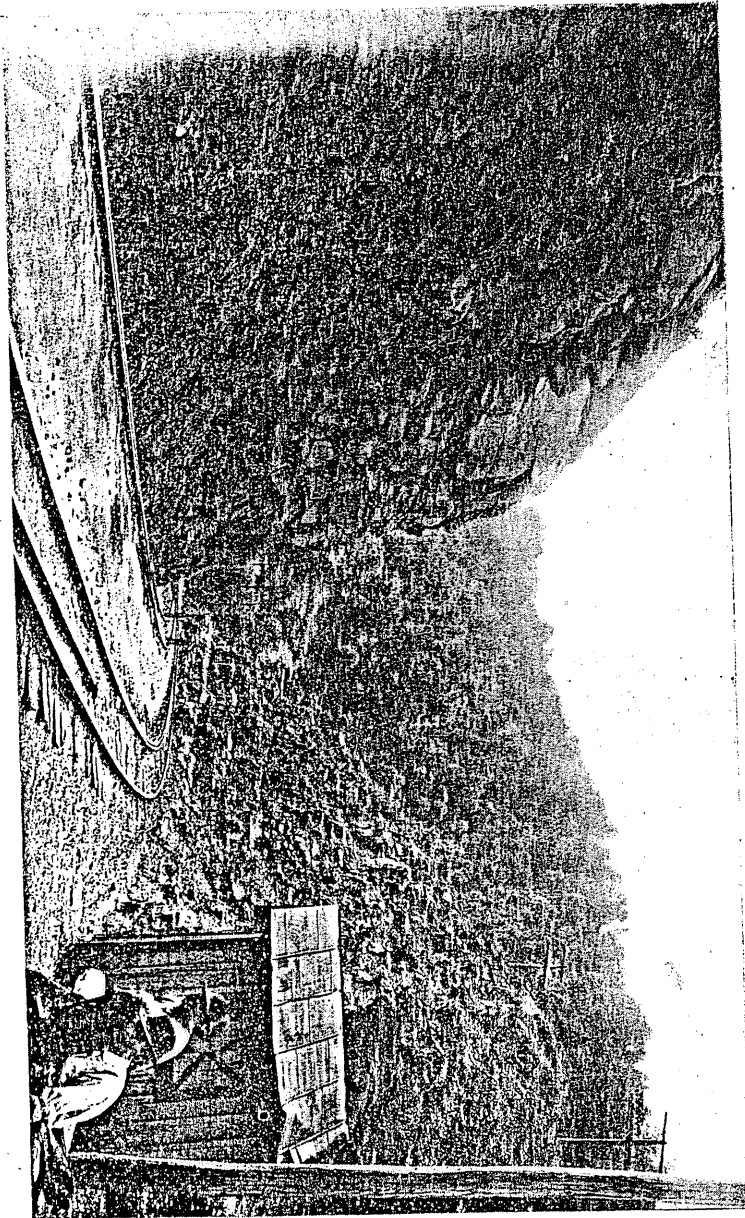
The police force is a disgrace to anything calling itself a corporation. About four or five white men who are broken down and have made a failure of life or too lazy to work have succeeded in having themselves appointed policemen. One of these was boasting to me sometime ago of making \$7.50 in one night. He stated that a saloon keeper gave

him \$5 to watch a Hungarian dance which was held in the wine room of the saloon and he then made \$2 by arresting two "Hunks" while he shot a man "craps" and won 50 cents. Here we have an officer who has sworn to suppress gambling in all its forms bragging about winning money by "shooting craps." I wonder how long he would last on the police force of one of our large cities if he should walk around boasting of "shooting craps." There are about ten or twelve members of the force who are negroes or in other words "jonahs" who are of the lowest class of the colored race. I heard a negro say the other day that it would be a disgrace to any man to have a paper served on him by any member of the present force as they were a class too low for any decent man, be he white or black, to even transact business with. Yet these low class negroes are put in office by white officials and they have the authority to arrest a white man.

In thinking of this I am reminded of the days just after the close of the Civil War as described in the "Clansman" when negroes were put in office by white men who had declared martial law over our fair southland and I wondered how long it would be before a Klu Klux Klan was organized here in Keystone to rid the place of negroes who have authority over the white man. Some time something is going to happen that will awaken the indignation of the white people and sometime the colored force of the Keystone Police Department will be missing. Who will be to blame? Not those that take the law in their own hands. Not the negro. Those white men who for the sake of the petty offices that they hold and who have built up a political machine with the influence of the negro gained by appointing them to the police force will be to blame and they should be the ones to suffer for it. How bad the town of Keystone needs a few good men and true who have the backbone and a little sand in their craw to take charge of affairs for a while.

John, 3-20.—For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reproved.

"Dead Man's Cut."--Place where many men have been robbed and a great many killed.



APPROACH TO KEYSTONE.

Bounding Keystone on the East is "Dead Mans Cut" which is a narrow cut through which runs the Norfolk and Western Railway. It is situated about midway between Keystone and Northfork and the place derived its name from the number of men who have been found dead in it. From the first beginning of the town this cut has been noted for the number of men who have been held up and robbed and the number who have been found murdered therein.

In the early life of Keystone this was a very dangerous place for a traveller to pass through alone and today a man is taking his life in his hands if he attempts to pass through this cut alone after dark. Every pay day this cut claims a victim, who after being murdered is robbed and his body then is placed upon the railroad to be mutilated by the first passing train. Traveling men who have been visiting this section for any number of years can tell of a narrow escape or relate happenings by the score that have taken place in this cut. Only a few weeks ago a man was found the next morning after pay day by the side of the railroad with his body badly mutilated. He was seen the night before with \$30 on his person but when examined after found his pockets were turned inside out and not a cent could be found. No effort was made to find the one that murdered him although a brother of one of the policemen was suspected of the crime. No one claimed his body and it was taken by the section crew and buried in a grave that was hastily dug by the side of the track. It was told by the watchman at this cut who has been watching here for a number of years that if six more men were killed in this cut that it would be one for every railroad tie that is laid therein.

At one end of this cut is a graveyard called "Jonah's Cemetery" where a majority of the victims have been buried together with the paupers of the town. During the flood which partially destroyed Keystone the bodies were washed from the graves and today in walking over the place

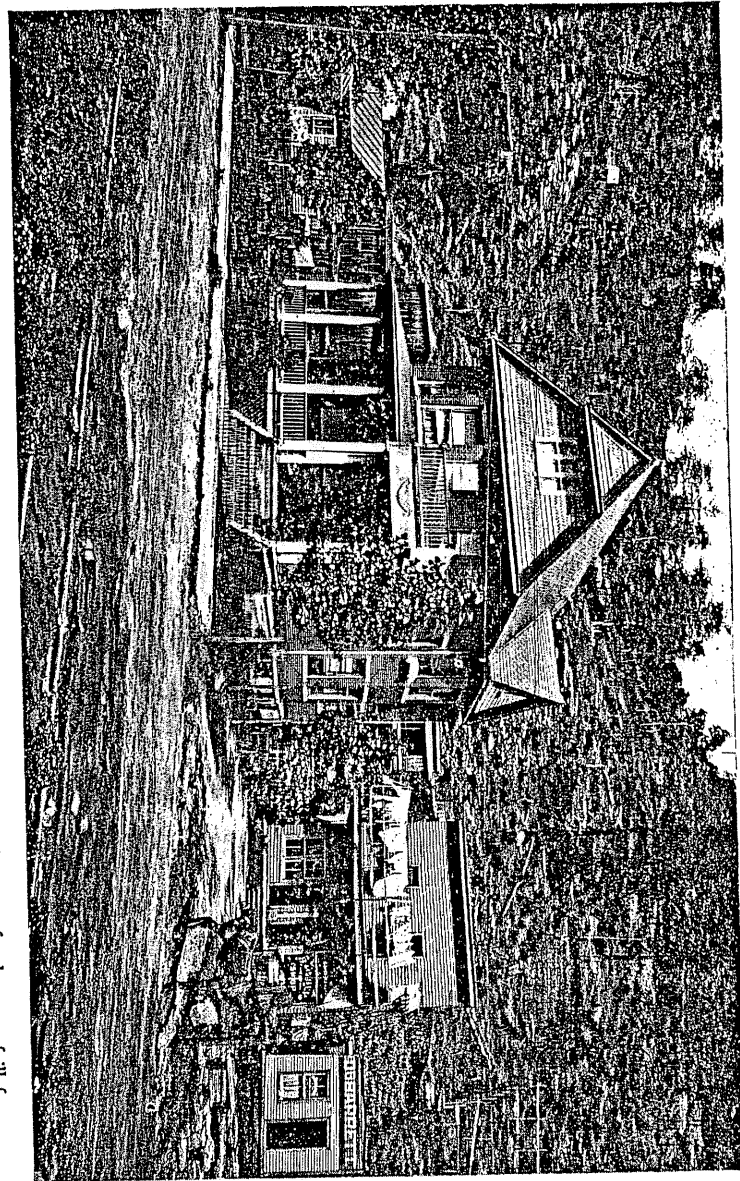
may be found human bones exposed. This graveyard is situated beside Elkhorn river and the water is gradually washing it away.

On our way toward Keystone we will find on the right hand side of the railroad a house of ill fame where a foul murder was committed one night. This house is being run at the present time by a negress and both white and colored women will be found in here while the place is visited by a low class of white men and negroes. Some of the women in this place have children whom they are raising amid this awful traffic, surrounded by all the wickedness that one can imagine. Will not this nation of our, of which we are so proud, remove from such surrounding these innocent babies that they may be raised in better surroundings and not be raised for the purposes of recruiting the ranks of the criminals.

Farther on we come to a place on the left hand side of the railroad, where three houses are joined together. In the first one is a negro restaurant and house of ill fame containing negro women, the second is a negro saloon and one of the noisest and most disorderly places in town, while the third house is a house of ill fame containing white women. All three of these houses are owned and operated by three negro brothers, one of whom is a lawyer. I visited this place as well as others places of ill fame but this was one of the most repulsive places that I entered. I found here four white girls, one of them appeared to be about forty years of age, while the others were young women. They were engaged in drinking beer and using the vilest language that I had ever heard, while one of them, a very beautiful young girl, was expecting soon to become a mother. The people that visit these houses are negroes, foreigners and a low class of white men. I have heard a negro man in conversation with another say that he had spent the night with one of these white girls in this place.

Just below this place will be found the finest brick residence in Keystone now occupied by the negroes that own the

"Mary Miller Mansion"---A fine brick residence built by Mary Miller, proprietress of a house of ill fame.



buildings that I have just described above. This house was built by Mary Miller, a large negro woman, who was the proprietress of a house of ill fame and it is now called the "Mary Miller Mansion." From the money she accumulated in this nefarious traffic she was able to build this beautiful residence, modern in every respect, but before it was completed her guilty, sin-stained soil was called before the bar of God to receive punishment for the deeds done while here on earth. This house is now used for a private residence and is considered the prettiest and most modern house in town.

At the first crossing of Elkhorn river, on the West end of the bridge we find the "Blue Front" saloon and house of ill fame. This place is run by Dr. G. N. Marshall, a negro and member of the Council. This is a very disreputable place and many crimes have been committed here. The saloon is patronized by "jonah" negroes and a number of idle loafers who have no visible means of support are to be found hanging around the front of this place all the time. We will make a short turn here and go down into famous "Cinder Bottom" where lewd women hold forth and rule in all their grandeur. This street is composed entirely of houses of ill fame of both white and colored. The cleanest and best conducted house that I visited was the one conducted by Mrs. Trixie McCloud. I had a true friend and a gentleman during my visits to these houses of shame and we were unanimous in the opinion that this was the most decent house that we visited. This house is well patronized and I saw here merchants, clerks, railroad men, and a few foreigners. Some married men with whom I was acquainted were found here and they appeared to be very much in the good graces of the girls yet I know these men to have good and obedient wives at home. Another large house that we visited is one conducted by Lizzie Grady, a large negress, who I imagine would weigh about 300 pounds. She is called by all the girls "Miss Lizzie" I found here all white girls except one that being the daugh-

ter of Lizzie. One of these white girls appeared to be about 14 years of age and looked to weigh about 75 pounds. She was a little slim, frail, slip of a girl hardly out of the cradle, yet she was here to satisfy the lust and passion of men. Another beautiful girl confessed to me that she was living happily at home until a railroad man came into her life and caused a separation from her husband after which she came to this house of ill fame. During my short stay in here this girl fell into the ill graces of "Miss Lizzie" and it made my blood boil to hear this large negro woman talk to this white girl in the manner that she did. The girl sought to please her and talked to her in an humble manner. I thought of the dear old mother who had gone to the very gates of death to give this child birth, who had fondly kissed and carressed her, who had labored that she might live and who had so fondly watched over her with that motherly pride and watched her grow to young womanhood. How her blood would boil if she could hear a negress talk to her daughter in such a manner.

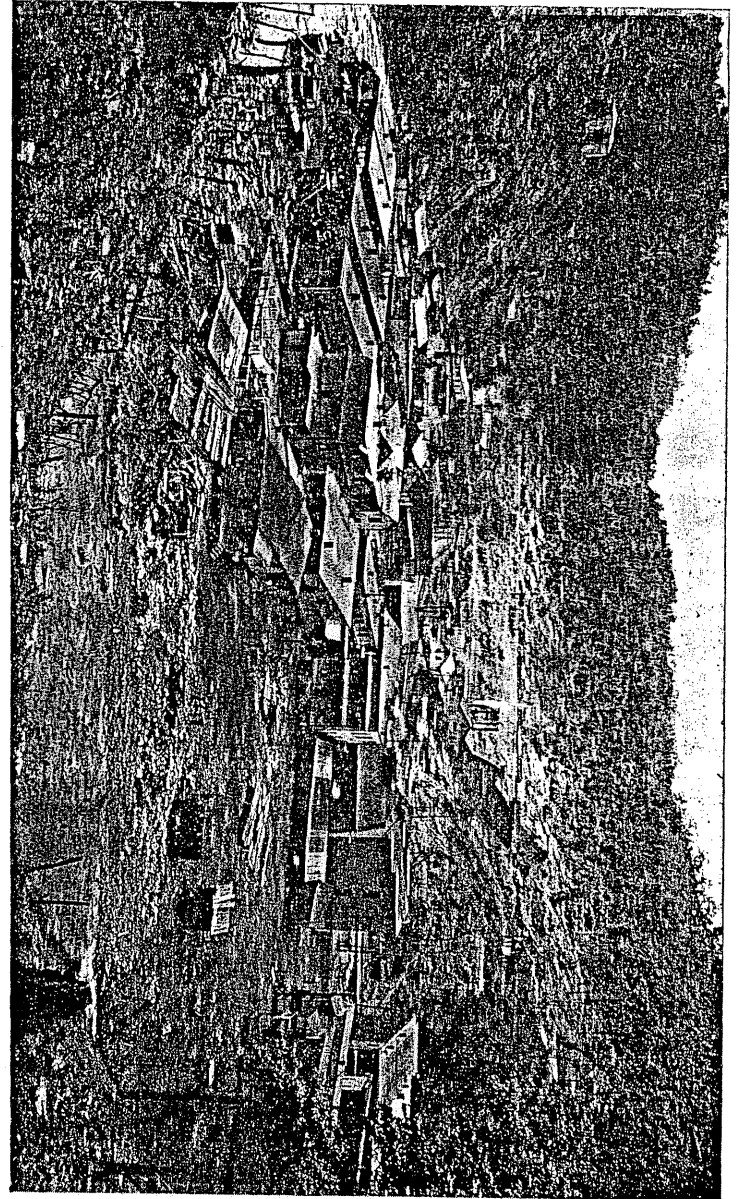
I learned that these girls paid to this negro woman \$48 per month for their board and lodging. Another of the inmates was from near my home. She had been married but for some reason she had separated from her husband and came here. She told me that she was not in a house of this kind because she liked to be but that she had several little ones at home to support and she found this the only means of supporting them. I learned that she really had the little children but they were being supported by her old mother while she was here from choice. Morris Kirby, was the proprietress of the next house that I visited. She has been married, her husband being dead, and has two boys who she sends to an adjoining state to attend schools. Yet during the holidays these boys live with all the surroundings to be found in all tenderloin sections. This house has the reputation of a prize ring as about every other night they have a fight here. I heard the Mayor during the trial of a man for fighting in this house say that he was going to run this woman

from town but she is still here and no one has the least idea that the Mayor will live up to his declaration. I visited the other houses and found about the same conditions everywhere. Some were rather decent places while others both whites and negroes mix and the most depraved women of both races can be found in them. Some of the women were in these houses from choice, while others had made one bad step and had been driven from home and had become an outcast. Others had been married but had received attentions from other men which had caused trouble at home and the result had been a divorce and they had come to these brothels to spend their days in blackest sin and the ravages of disease.

There is no house in this Red Light district that is safe from disease and a visitor to this section who has anything to do with the inmates of these houses runs a great risk of living a diseased life ever after. At one house was a woman that told me she was 26 years old and had been seduced when only a girl of 16 by a doctor, who afterwards drank himself to death. She was by far the most beautiful woman that I found in this section and no doubt if she had led a virtuous life that she could have been favored with many admirers, yet I was told after I had left there that her present admirer and one who spent many nights with her was a negro, a member of the police force, and I afterwards heard a doctor say that these two parties had suffered from the worst case of syphilis that he had ever treated. In these houses can be found all manner of disease and in the face and on the neck of nearly all of the inmates can be found scars where these secret diseases have left their mark. I have seen some of these women on the street, barely able to lift their feet, and with misery and suffering plainly written in their countenances which I am sure is the result of these diseases.

The women from these houses are to be found on the streets at all hours of the night and especially at the motion picture shows. They are very finely dressed, with beautiful faces and graceful figures and you would hardly believe that

Birdseye View of "Cinder Bottom" the Notorious Tenderloin Section.



they were inmates of houses of prostitution. A few women to be found in these houses are supported by only one man while the others seek those they can get and are not so particular as to their race or color. While these houses of prostitution are to be found in large numbers in "Cinder Bottom" they are by no means confined solely to any one section as they are to be found in all parts of the town. In the West end of Keystone, in the shadow of a colored church and in a short distance of the white Methodist church, where church attendants are compelled to pass are some low, disreputable dives conducted by negroes, containing some white and colored women, where vice and gambling and all kinds of traffic is carried on under the very eyes of the municipal authorities. Many houses of ill fame will be found conducted under the name of a restaurant. White and colored women will be found with rooms in these places. Only recently I saw on the porch of one of these restaurants on Main street a white woman sitting on the lap of a negro. Women will be found scattered over the town who have no visible means of support yet these women will be found to be the "affinities" of some married men. Another shocking thing is the large number of white men that visit negro women. The result of this is being shown in the offspring of the colored race as it is quite a hard matter to distinguish between some of the colored women and the white race.

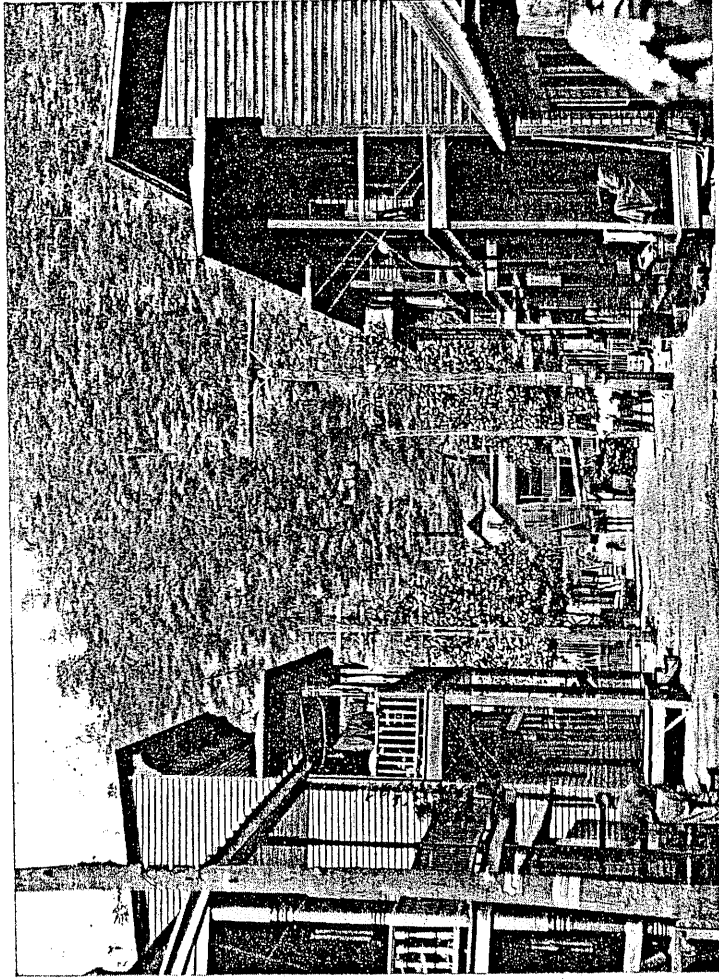
Some of the white married women will be found to have "affinities" and many who could be of good character and highly respected are fond of the secret company of men other than their husbands. Do not think that all the people of Keystone are bad but the percent of good ones is mighty low. Yet these that are of good character are as pure and virtuous as ever trod God's green sod and too much praise cannot be given them for holding themselves above and free of all this blackness that is spread over this town.

CRIMES OF KEYSTONE.

It would be impossible to mention all the crimes that have

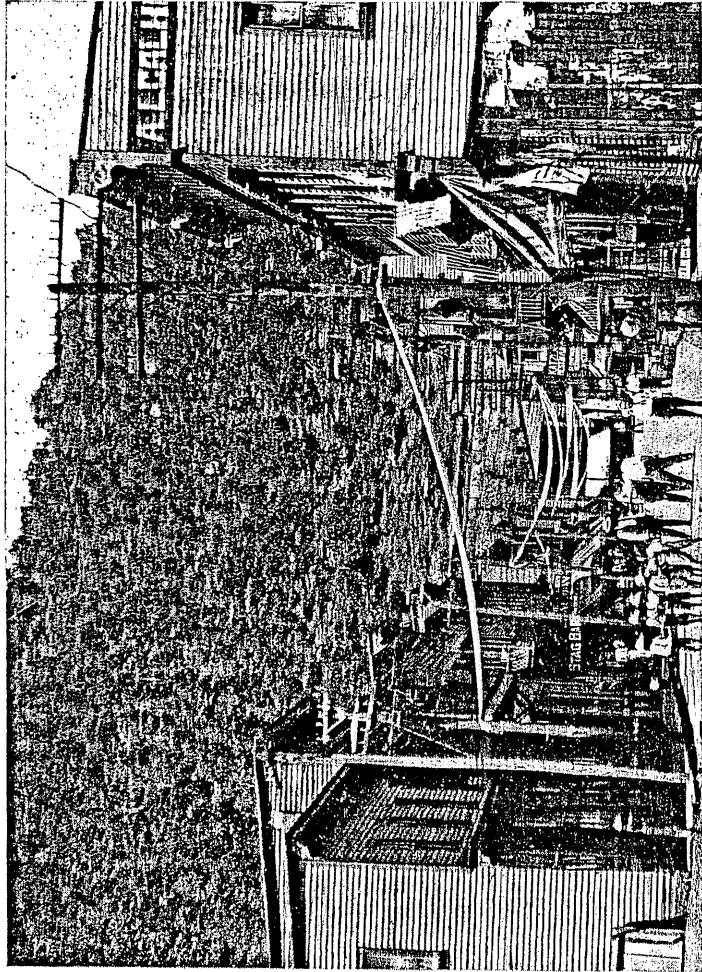
been committed in this town. Scores of murders, highway robbery, theft, and all manner of evil has been committed here. Surely this is modern Sodom and Gomorrah combined. Only a few nights ago a negro man shot another, the cause being a white woman of "Cinder Bottom." Another crime that was committed several years ago was the murder of a white woman of the Tenderloin section by a negro. The negro became mad at this woman by the name of Mrs. Gent, threw a hatchet and struck her on the head, fracturing the skull, then threw a lamp at her which exploded and destroyed the house. The woman was rescued from the building and taken to the hospital where she died the next day. The negro was arrested and sent to jail to await the action of the jury but I could not learn what was ever done with him.

Some time ago a man was killed and his pocket emptied and his body thrown down the side of the railroad bank. The coroner rendered a verdict that the deceased came to his death by falling and breaking his neck. Of course it is not supposed that a bullet hole in the center of his forehead had anything to do with his death. Still another man was held up in the center of the town on the bridge that spans Elkhorn river and his money taken from him. A few months ago some railroad men were out during the night pretty much intoxicated and decided to do some highway robbing. After holding up and relieving some Italians of their money they endeavored to make a division of the funds and disagreed and two of the party killed the third member, carried his body to a car door, placed him within to leave the impression that he was hurt and died after reaching the car. A young man back in Virginia, who has traveled this section to a great extent, told me that he became somewhat intoxicated in Keystone and while waiting on a train that he sat down on some cross ties that were piled just below the passenger station and soon fell asleep. On awakening sometime afterwards he found that he had been robbed of his shoes, which had been taken from his feet and also the hat



Street scene in "Cinder Bottom." --- Tenderloin section composed entirely of houses of ill fame.

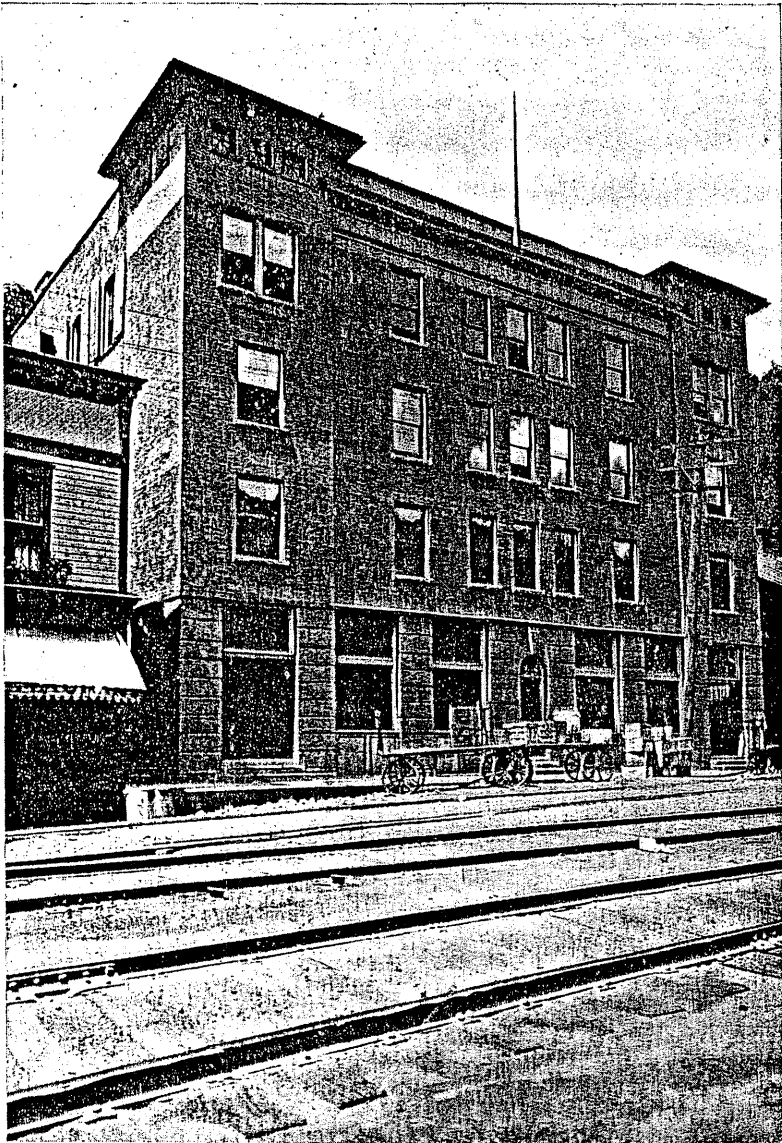
from his head. Robberies in the Tenderloin section are a very common occurrence and a few there be that go into this section with money on their person that are not robbed before they leave. Men have been known to go into some of these worst dives and have disappeared as if the earth opened and swallowed them. This being the division point of the railway company men are located here who draw good salaries. A large number of these men are fleeced every month of their earnings by gamblers, who do nothing but hang around town on the lookout at all times for victims who they can "skin" in a card game or by any other means. All kinds of gambling devices are found here, slot machines, dice boxes, pool tables and every other kind of machine that can be used for the purpose of separating a man from his money. I understand that it is contrary to the law to operate a slot machine but they are here in all bars and public places. Pool tables are used for gambling and I have seen boys that were so small that they could hardly reach over the top of the table playing pool. I understand this is contrary to law but boys of all sizes can be found in these pool rooms. Every Sunday large numbers of men may be seen going in and out of the hotels where up stairs gambling is carried on every Sunday in the year. The Mayor can be found engaged in many of these games and it is common knowledge that for a number of years he had rented two rooms in this hotel which was used for gambling purposes. Poker joints may be found in many other parts of the town and the gambling habit is not only confined to the white alone for there is several negroes here who run poker joints and never pretend to engage in honest work. Today I heard two negroes talking and they stated that they had been there for two years and had not done a day's work in that time. Surely some crooked work is going on. Still another bad feature is the wine the Tenderloin section visit and "drum" their trade. Many rooms connected with every saloon where the women from women can be found in these wine rooms almost every night, drinking and carousing with young men who delight in as-



Street Scene in Keystone---From extreme West end of town.

sociating with them. Some of the women get so drunk they have to be assisted home. I have seen women, both white and colored, on the streets so drunk that they could not walk without assistance. One of the inmates of a house of prostitution was arrested while drunk for some crime, by several of the negro policemen. She refused to go and the negro policemen attempted to carry her. They brought her down the main street to the jail, while she was screaming and kicking and part of the time she was about half naked.

Every effort is made by the authorities to suppress the news of the crimes of this place and after a few days nothing more is heard of anything that has happened. Very little effort is put forth by the officers to apprehend a criminal. One of the worst crimes to happen here was the inducing of a virtuous, young girl of Appalachia, Va., to Keystone under the pretense of a position as a waitress, by a proprietress of a house of ill fame for the purpose of using her for immoral purposes. The innocent girl was taken to the house and turned over to this friend who soon told her where she was and what was expected of her. The girl rebelled and was taken to an upstairs room and locked up. Several men were sent up to visit her but the girl succeeded in repelling them. The father, in the meantime, had suspected something wrong and had wired the chief of police who searched the Red Light district until he found her which was just in time to save the girl of her honor and virtue. The Federal authorities took this case in hand and under the "White Slave" law they sent the woman to the penitentiary for a number of years. I give here the press report of this crime, taken from a daily paper:



Alhambra Hotel.

RESCUED A GIRL BARELY IN TIME.

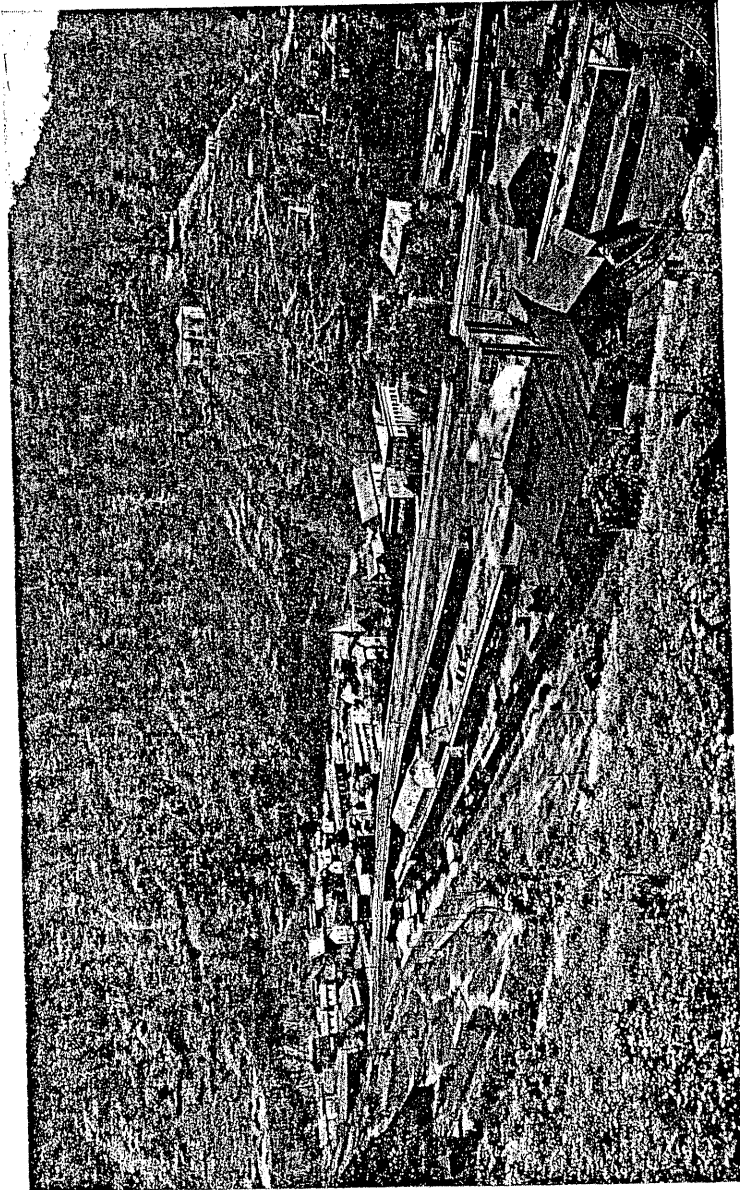
Plot of Two Women at Keystone, W. Va., to Destroy a Virginia Victim is Frustrated—Conspirator Held For \$10,000 Bail.

Bluefield, W. Va., September 28.—Special.—Ada Nichols was arrested today at Keystone, W. Va., charged with enticing Estelle Wells, sixteen years old, of Appalachia, Va., into a life of shame at Keystone. Kate Moss, alleged to be a go-between, also was arrested as accessory. The Moss woman, it is charged, wrote glowing letters to the girl, offering high wages as waitress. She accepted, came to Keystone, was stripped of her clothes and suffered untold indignities, but resisted unsuccessful assaults. Her father became suspicious and wired the chief of police of Keystone who made the arrest in the nick of time to save the girl. The Nichols woman was bound over to the Federal court under ten thousand dollar bond. She will be tried October 17th.

Keystone is noted as a hotbed for vice of this kind where all races mix and this is not the first arrest of this kind.

A former proprietor of the Alhambra hotel was also arrested by a Federal agent for engaging in the "White Slave" traffic. He was tried in the Federal court at Cincinnati and there was no question as to his guilt but through the agency of several of the town officials who went to Cincinnati to testify in his behalf he was acquitted of the charge.

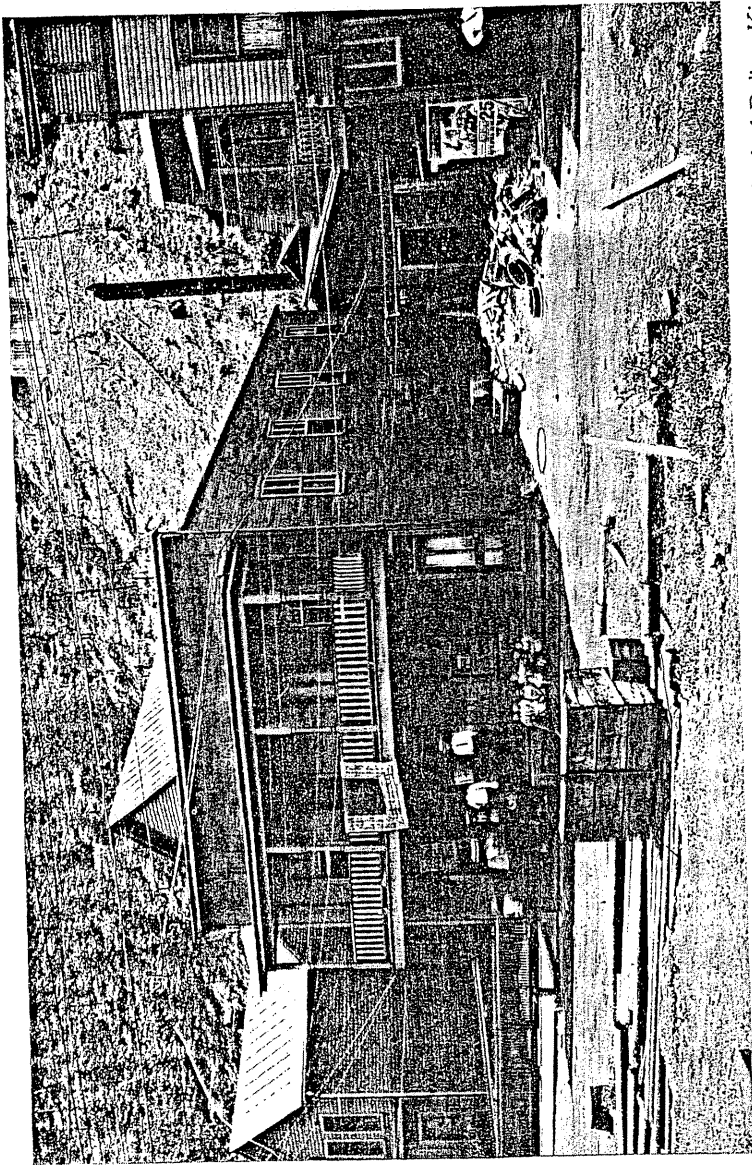
Everything is wide open here on Sunday except the saloons. The law, which by the way is a state law and not a municipal one, is very strict on a saloon keeper if he should



Birdseye view of Keystone--from center of town looking East.

be caught in his saloon on Sunday. While it is no hard matter to find something to quench the thirst, for it must be remembered that this place is no Sahara Desert, you will not find any saloons doing business on the Sabbath. Stores of all kinds are open, motion pictures are operated on Sunday and on my first trip to Keystone I attended church and found a congregation of about a baker's dozen while at the next door was a motion picture show in operation and I saw there a full house. Baseball is another game that is played on the Sabbath, there being hardly a Sunday that there is not a game played.

While engaged today in preparing this work I learned of another shocking thing that happened in town last night. A highly respected white woman, the wife of an engineer, while engaged in sweeping her porch found a note tied to a stick of wood which was written and placed there by a negro who conducted a barber shop directly across the street inviting her to visit his shop and using other indecent and insulting language. The negro then stood in the window of his shop and partially undressed exposing his nakedness to sight. The lady in question, sent down the street to a motion picture show for help and Mr. C. B. Hoover responded and after hearing the story of the woman and witnessing the indecent actions of the negro, went in search of an officer. He met M. W. White, the city seargent, who went to the house of the lady and himself saw the actions of the negro. He then proceeded to the shop of the negro, got him, closed the shop and left. Everybody was under the impression that he had arrested the negro and spirited him away to avoid a riot. Great was the indignation of the citizens this morning when they learned that the officer had not arrested the negro but had advised him to leave town. Has the time come to pass that a respectable lady cannot sit in her home, attending to her household affairs, without being insulted by a negro brute? Is it safe for a husband to leave his wife for a day in this "land of the free and home of the brave?" Here we have the spectacle of an officer, who has raised his hand to Al-



Mayor's Office and City Jail--Reading from right to left, C. C. Hale, Mayor; Fred Moore, Chief of Police; Kid James, negro policeman and A. L. Calhoun, former political boss of Keystone.

mighty God and swore that he would arrest offenders, prosecute the guilty, and defend the homes and lives of the citizens, witnessing with his own eyes the unlawful actions of a negro and instead of arresting him and placing him in jail as he should have done, he advises the negro to leave town. I repeat again is it safe for a husband to leave his wife in this place alone even for a day? A statement was in the morning paper, written by some friend of the seargent's which was very misleading. The husband of the woman, wrote the following correction, which is a true account of the affair and I will give it here in full:

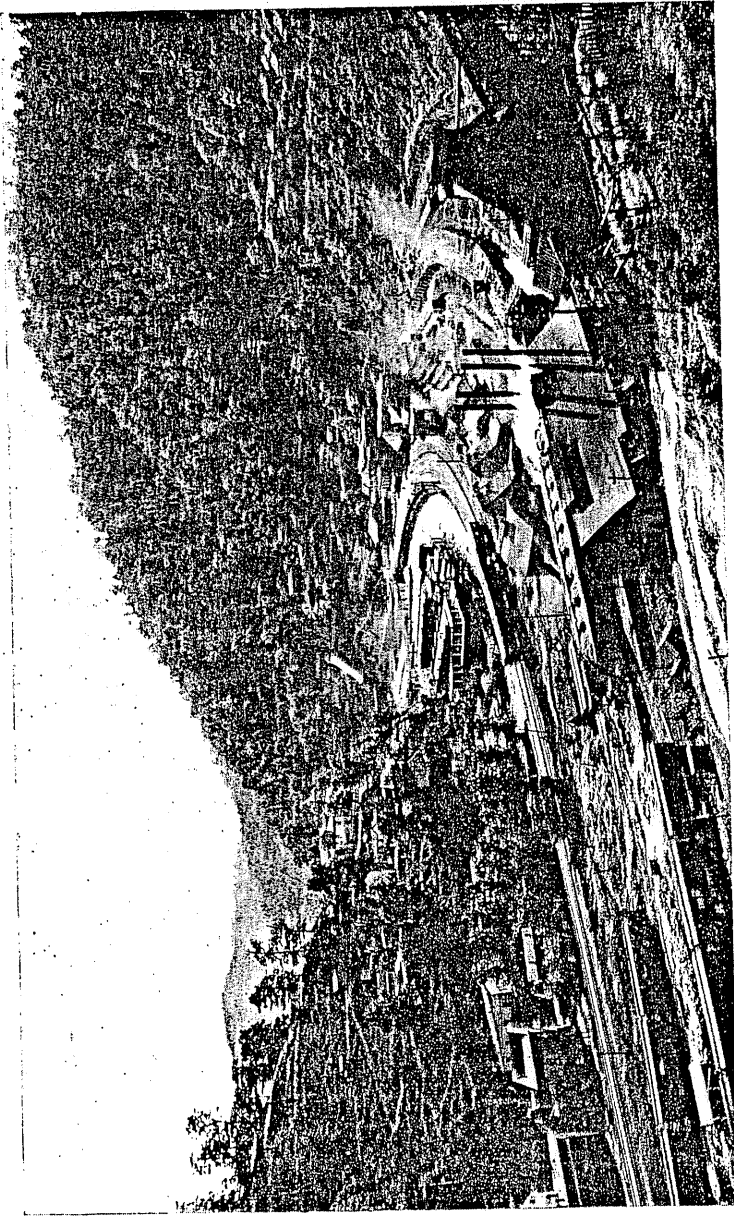
**GIVES THE FACTS ABOUT THE OCCURRENCE
AT KEYSTONE.**

**Husband of Woman Who Was Insulted Was Unable to Find
Trace of Negro Barber.**

Editor Daily Telegraph,
Bluefield, W. Va.,
Dear Sir:

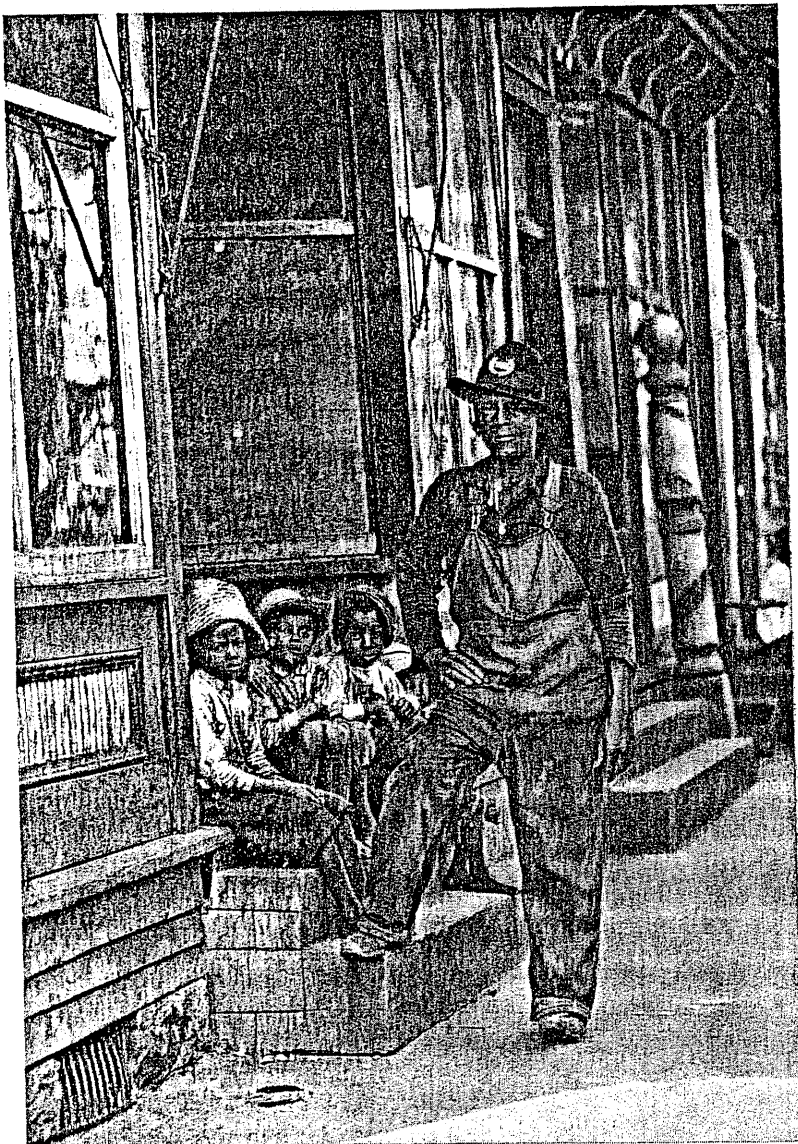
In the issue of the Daily Telegraph of this morning you published under the caption "Keystone Officers After Negro Barber," in which the facts are not stated as they actually exist.

The facts are that my wife while sweeping off the back porch about 8 o'clock on the night of July 3rd., found a note attached to a block of wood in which statements were made from which the inference could be clearly drawn that the writer of the note intended to offer insults to my wife. No name was signed to the note and my wife, of course, was greatly alarmed. She read the note while standing at the front window of our sitting room, and while she was reading it her attention was attracted by a rapping on the glass front of the negro barber shop across the street opposite my resi-



Birdseye view of Keystone---From center of town looking West.

dence. She looked in the direction from which the sound came and saw a negro barber, whose name she afterwards learned was W. W. Cole, attempting to attract her attention, and holding up a block of wood similar to the one my wife had found, and to all appearances another note was tied to this block of wood. My wife was greatly frightened and at once went down to the house of a neighbor and related the matter to the daughter of the neighbor and showed her the note which had been found on the porch. The young lady called in her brother and told him about the matter and showed him the note. He then went and related the matter to W. M. White, the sergeant of the city of Keystone. Mr. White requested several citizens of the town to go with him and he requested my wife to go up stairs in my residence and stand again at the window for the purpose of ascertaining as to whether or not the negro would make any further signs. Mr. White and some other men stood at one of the windows in my residence in a room in which no light was burning so that what happened in the barber shop across the street could be seen by them without any one in the barber shop being able to see Mr. White or any of the men with him. The window at which my wife stood, at the direction of Mr. White, was in a room in which a light was burning. My wife did not stand in front of the window for more than a few minutes before the negro Cole again commenced holding up the block of wood to which a note seemed to be attached, and waved the same at my wife. My wife, of course, did not reply to any of his attempted signals. Cole then departed himself in a manner which cannot be described in an article intended for publication. It is enough to say that it was insulting beyond the power of words to express. Mr. White then went over to the negro barber shop and made the negro open the door and let him in. The light in the barber shop was turned out a short time after Mr. White went in. He took charge of the negro, and some other officers of the town among them were one or two negro officers, appeared on the scene a few minutes later. What disposition they



One of Keystone's "Finest."--W. T. Mansfield, negro member of the Keystone Police Department.

made with the negro I am unable to say. It is a fact that he is not under arrest at the present time.

The facts above set out were related to me by persons in whose veracity and integrity I have the utmost confidence. At the time the incidents happened I was out on the road discharging my duties as wreck car engineer for the Norfolk & Western Railway Co. I did not arrive in Keystone until about 12:30 the morning of the fourth, which was some little time after the incident, above set out, happened. I knew nothing of the matter until I reached Keystone when I met two of my friends on the outskirts of the town, who told me what had happened. I was greatly shocked to find that my wife had been subjected to such a horrible experience. I met Mr. White, the sergeant, on the street before I reached home and asked him to tell me as to whether or not the negro was under arrest. I was unable to obtain any information from Mr. White for some time as to what had been done with the negro. Later on he told me that he had made the negro leave town. I made some efforts myself that night to ascertain where the negro was, but I was not successful.

Yours very truly,
S. H. SNYDER.

Keystone, W. Va., July 6, 1912.

Since the above occurrence public feeling became so strong against the sergeant for his actions in the case that he began a search for the negro and after some days absence from the city he wired here that he had arrested the negro in Columbus, Ohio, and was awaiting extradition papers. He then came home and announced that he could not obtain extradition papers for so small an offense. The public is of the opinion that he never had the negro under arrest but that he did this in order to escape any further criticism.

POLITICS IN KEYSTONE.

The political situation here is very much one sided as the

Republican party is very much in the majority. It will remain so as long as the present political machine of McDowell county can retain its grasp. I have often heard of machines, steam-rollers and etc., and the writer has had quite a little experience in the political line in Virginia but I must confess that the politicians of McDowell county has the Virginia politicians "skinned a block." They could give the politicians from Virginia cards and spades and then beat them at the game. The huge machine that is in operation is a smooth running piece of machinery, it has its parts well balanced and every part well oiled and such things as steam-rollers fade into insignificance when compared with the machine of McDowell county.

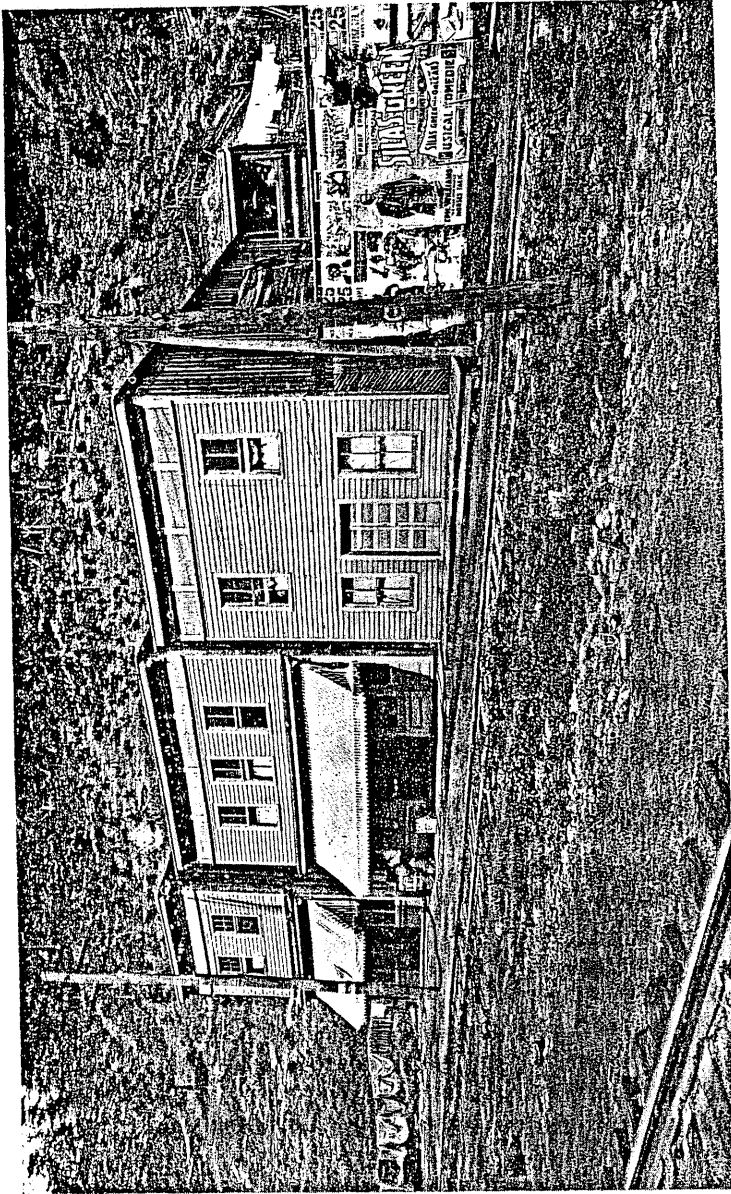
Unless you are a member of the ring or in their favor and can "speak the language of the tribe" it is absolutely useless for you to aspire to any office. Money is used in enormous quantities at every election for the purpose of paying workers, purchasing votes or any other use to which it can be put, whether lawfully or unlawfully. The price of votes range anywhere from fifty cents worth of tobacco or a pint of corn liquor to ten dollars. If you should be so rude as to try and oppose the machine, then they will quietly work around and have you discharged from your position. They can always arrange to have this done and if no other means will serve their purpose they will circulate a popular petition. If you should hold a public position, and state that your service is unsatisfactory to the public and ask for your discharge.

For a number of years, A. L. Calhoun, a wealthy negro and the owner of the majority of the property of the town of Keystone, was the political boss of the town. Very recently he was arrested and served thirty days in jail for renting his rooms over his saloon to Lizzie Grady to be used for a house of prostitution. Since this time he has lost his grip to some extent and at the last election he was a candidate for member of the Council of which he has been a member since the incorporation of the town, but he was so unfortunate as to be on the losing side and this helped to break his grip to a large extent, yet he has a large following and is sought by

white politicians. I have seen some of the best known men of the town walk up to him and place their arms on his shoulder. At every meeting or convention the negro will be found in large numbers. They are always invited to speak at all public speakings and they engage in all the caucusses of the leaders and they are always represented on the election boards.

A rather amusing thing happened in a meeting of the Council a few nights ago when a negro applied for license to conduct a restaurant. During the last municipal campaign he had been paid two dollars to vote for them who are in power at the present time. Before they would grant the license they made the negro return the two dollars. I heard one of the judges in a previous election say that he had stolen seventy votes in one election and that if the machine wanted the thing done again that they could just leave it to him and that he would do it.

Many men who have moved here and were Republicans in other states refuse to support the party in this county and state. They say that as long as they are in West Virginia they will refuse to vote or support the Democratic party. This is not said through any political prejudice for the writer has always been affiliated with the Republican party but as long as I stay in West Virginia I will refuse to vote the Republican ticket for the political pill here is too bitter and refuses to go down. One curse to the Republican party in this state is their opposition to the "Jim Crow Law," the object of which is to compel the railways in the state to furnish separate cars for the whites and blacks. It is a national disgrace that the negro is permitted to ride in coaches with white ladies. The negroes always endeavor to get in the first class car and rush back into the coaches where the white women are riding. They come from the mines in their dirty clothes, the grease almost frying from their faces and with repulsive odor caused from excessive perspiration, they crowd into the cars and seat themselves near, or sometimes beside the white ladies. Their presence is very objectionable and repulsive to any white person with any degree of refine-



Harper's Saloon and houses of ill fame---One of the most disorderly places in Keystone---Owned by a negro.

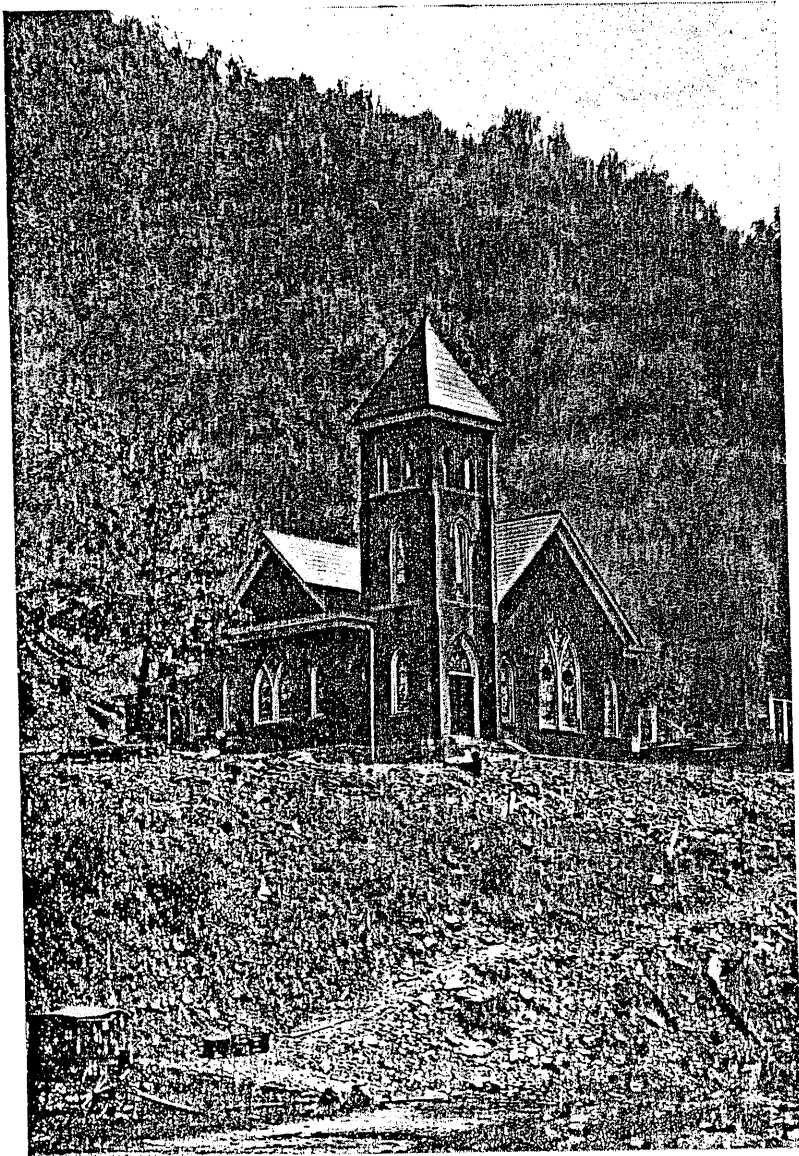
ment. These same political leaders that are fighting this law for fear that they will lose their political strength with the negro, will take the Pullman, in order to get rid of the presence of the negro. The last platform of the Democratic party in the state contained a plank favoring this law and a large number of the white republicans of the state supported the Democratic candidates on this account. These white republicans, with any decency and self respect, do not want to see their mothers, their wives or their fair daughters, have to sit in a seat with a burly negro.

The whiskey interests play a large hand in politics in this town and county. In the preceding administration the Mayor was a bookkeeper for a brewery, the Recorder was an agent for a brewery and the Chief of Police was also agent for a brewery. At the present time the Mayor is bookkeeper for a brewery, the City Seargent is agent for a brewery and two members of the Council are saloon keepers. Some whiskey ring, eh? Looks as if the Anti-Saloon League might do some effective work here.

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE AND JAIL.

The Mayor's office is situated in about the center of town in a ramshackle building the rear of which is used for a jail and very much resembles a hog pen. I attended court here one night. The Mayor stands behind the stand and smokes a cigarette while the witnesses are heard. The prisoner is defended by a black negro lawyer and negroes are packed and jammed into the place until you are almost suffocated. To be incarcerated in this place called a jail is punishment sufficient for almost any crime.

As I have stated the Methodists and Baptists are represented here and should do good work for surely the field is sufficiently large and the harvest is ripe but denominationalism is playing "hob" with the churches here and the christian people are always at odds. Each church appears to be envious of the other and the war goes merrily on. I attended



Methodist Episcopal Church.--Rev. J. R. Brown, Pastor

for some nights a revival at the Methodist church, the preaching being done by a woman and the best woman preacher I have ever heard. I witnessed here the presentation to the pastor in charge of a check for \$75, and the pastor was told that it was sent him by some friends. With tears streaming down his cheeks the pastor accepted the check and never asked from where it came. The fact of the matter is that the check was sent by a political candidate whom the preacher had very strongly advocated during the campaign and by several saloon keepers and gamblers. I believe this preacher is trying to do what is right and "walk in the straight and narrow path," but to a sinner it is rather strange that he is always found in the company of men identified with the whiskey interest and gamblers. A young preacher stated in church in Keystone one night that if the people wanted him to do so and would back him up that he would "clean up" Keystone but not a person answered. I also stated to a gentleman that if I had a certain sum of money that I could have the town reformed but he informed me that the money that the opposition could raise would defeat my plan.

SANITARY CONDITIONS IN KEYSTONE.

The sanitary conditions here are very bad. The Elkhorn river divides the town with its dirty, black water and all the refuse is dumped into this and the majority of the time the water is not sufficiently high to carry it away. The houses are jammed together, hog pens and stables are at the back doors of some of them. Outouses are badly located and there does not appear to be any effort on the part of the authorities to have the people keep their premises clean. The water supply which is owned by the municipality is excellent. The water comes from artesian wells and then is pumped into large concrete tanks on the mountain side.

THE DANGER FROM FIRE.

The buildings in the congested business section of the town



Rear view of Keystone as seen from passing trains, showing congested buildings and unsanitary conditions.

are of frame with only a few buildings of brick and I have often wondered why it was that the town has not been destroyed by fire. The insurance rate is only ten percent which shows that the insurance companies consider it a very unsafe risk but strange to say there has never been a serious fire in the business section. The section known as Burke addition was swept by flames and part of "Cinder Bottom," the Tenderloin section was burned but the main part of the town has never suffered from a serious fire. The water pressure is very strong and the town has a very good volunteer fire company which has so far succeeded in doing good service but I fear that one of the days that a fire will break out that will be more than the fire company can manage that will sweep the entire town from the face of the map. In 1901 there came a tremendous downpour of water, the Elkhorn river overflowed its banks and the storage dams on the side of the mountain burst and washed away part of the town but with the exception of these things the Lord has been very merciful. But those that recognize the workings of the Almighty Father are wondering how soon that he will rise in his wrath and destroy the town as he did Sodom of old. Everybody that believes in God in this place are looking for some great calamity to befall the place for wickedness has reigned here so long that they realize that it has been only through the mercy of God that he has not destroyed the place before this.

CONCLUSION.

You will probably ask, why do these good people remain in Keystone? The answer is this. The men have good paying positions here and as long as they had to come here the wives have said as did Naomi of old, "Where thou goest I will go." The women have come here to be with those they love not because they liked the place. When they leave here for a visit to any other point they are ashamed to tell strangers that they are from Keystone. Recently a man asked me where I lived and I told him "Keystone." He then asked, "Where is

Keystone?" My answer was that it was ten miles from nowhere and a half mile from Hell. Surely if there is one place on earth that is near the awful pits of Hell then this place is the one. With its debased, debauched officers and its rotten government, with evil running riot over the entire town, with all manner of lawlessness being carried on under the very eyes of the authorities, with gamblers ruling the place and last but by no means least the most notorious Tenderloin section to be found outside of our largest cities, where the lowest women of the underworld cater to the lust of man, where men are trapped into the very worst kind of diseases which in turn transmitted by them to their wives although they may not marry for sometime after visiting one of these women for the medical profession will tell you that this disease, while apparently cured, is liable to reappear any time and that it can be transmitted to the third and fourth generation. Allow me to give this final warning. Young men, if you ever visit Keystone, for the sake of your morals, for the sake of character and for the sake of your health, do not visit this Red Light section. Should you do so and contract one of these secret diseases you will ever regret it in after years even if you should not pay for it with your own life. I have a good friend, a man who is succeeding in business and is a married man, that before his marriage contracted the syphilis in a house of ill fame in this town and about twice a year this disease reappears. This man has suffered such mental as well as physical pain, to say nothing of the money that he has spent, that it has driven him to the very verge of insanity. He told me that he was tempted to commit suicide and end it all. Take warning and do not risk the future happiness of your life in order to satisfy a little sexual lust. Not long ago I saw the body of a white woman, an inmate of one of these low dives, who had died from one of these diseases carried from the house by four negroes and buried beside the river with not a soul to shed a tear and not a white person in attendance.

PEERING INTO THE FUTURE FOR A BRIGHTER DAY.

Do these people of good moral character want to stay here? No, a thousand times no. They are looking ahead when they shall have accumulated enough money to purchase themselves a home or perhaps a farm, then they are patiently waiting for the bright day to dawn when they can shake from their feet the black mire of this dirty place and with songs of joy on their lips leave old Keystone never to return. They are anxiously praying and waiting for that day to come and may the Heavenly Father hasten the time.

I was filled with joy when the time came at last that I could step aboard the train for my return to the "green fields of Virginia." I was homesick to see again all the beauty of nature, to drink the pure water from the bowels of mother earth, to sit beneath the shady trees and hear the birds sing their sweet carols and last but not least to rid my mind of all the blackedness and sin, and degradation that it has contained and once more to fill it with pure sweet thoughts and get in sweet communion with nature.

Reader, what do you think of Keystone. I have not exaggerated nor drawn with too much color the picture of conditions in Keystone. Much has been left out that could have been said, which if told would have been the same old story over again. After all has been said I must confess that "the half has never yet been told."

MISCELLANEOUS.

(Bluefield Police Court.)

Robert Jones was charged with loitering upon the streets at a late hour. He said he had been at Keystone for a long time and was so anxious to escape that he rode the trucks to Graham and walked into Bluefield. The Judge expressed his sympathy and let him off with \$2.50.

JUSTICE.

Three men went out one summer night,
No care had they or aim,
And dined and drank, "Ere we go home
We'll have," they said, "a game."

Three girls began that summer night.
A life of endless shame;
And went through drink, disease and death,
As swift as racing flame.

Lawless and homeless, foul they died;
Rich, loved, and praised the men;
But when they all shall meet with God,
And Justice speaks—What then?

Romans, 14-12—The night is far spent, the day it at hand:
let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put
on the armor of light.