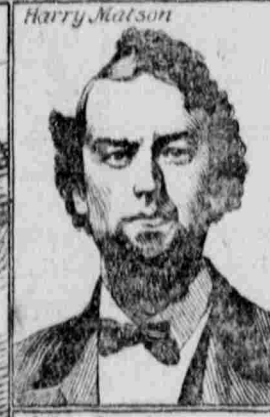
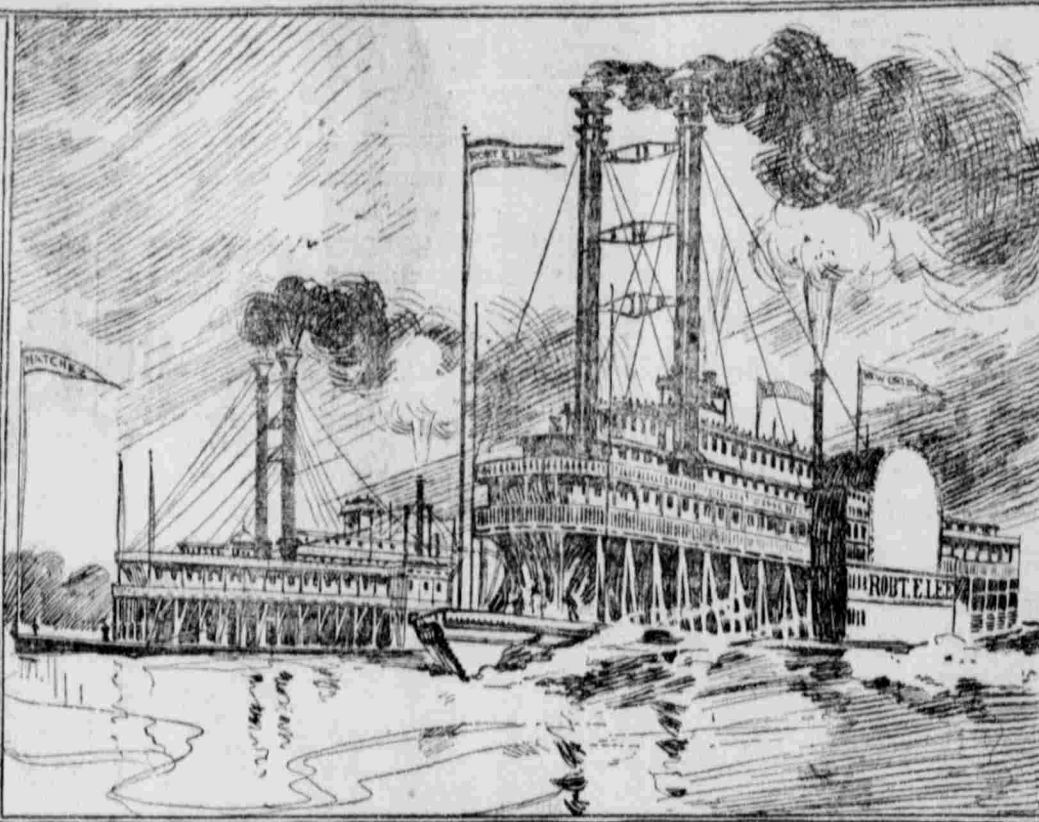


# The Suggestion For an Old Fashion River Race Between Fast Steamboats on the Mississippi

BY MAJOR JOHN E. ROWLAND.  
(Major John E. Rowland, now a prosperous business man of New York city, was for many years a clerk on the famous steamboats of the lower Mississippi river and an intimate friend of most of those daring pilots whose exploits have been related in story and verse. What he says is therefore entitled to more than ordinary consideration.)

SIR THOMAS LIPTON'S suggestion that a series of old fashioned races between Mississippi river steamboats be made a feature of the Louisiana Purchase exposition and Mark Twain's endorsement of the suggestion bring to mind one of the most picturesque phases of American life, a phase, too, in which I had the pleasure of participating. Of course to me the statement that Mark Twain was once a pilot is funny, and I am tempted to believe that the famous author's well known sense of humor is all that prevents him from correcting this very general impression. I remember having conversed upon this very subject with Bart Bowen, the captain who, according to Twain, taught him the river. It was a few years after young Clemens had begun to write funny things. I had not enjoyed the acquaintance of the future humorist, but Bowen told me that Clemens did nothing more than what was known on the Mississippi boats as "cubbing it." However that may be, it is certain that he was on the boats, that his experience there prompted his selection of the pen name which he has since made world famous, and we old Mississippi river boatmen are proud of his one time connection with us.

I think that a series of races on the Mississippi would prove interesting and attractive to the visitors to the St. Louis exposition, but I do not very well see how it is possible to reproduce one



THE HISTORIC RACE BETWEEN THE ROBERT E. LEE AND THE NATCHEZ AND FOUR FAMOUS MISSISSIPPI RIVER STEAMBOAT MEN.

of the old fashioned contests unless boats should be especially built for the purpose. Besides, owing to the fact that the multiplicity of railroads has removed the greatest incentive to rapid boat travel, I question whether there are now any more of the captains of the type of such famous old fellows as

Harry Matson, Nat Green, Truman C. Holmes, Pat Yore, T. P. Leathers, J. W. Cannon, J. M. White, W. C. Wilson, Jim Ure and J. W. Tobin. It is said that these men knew every drop of water in the river, and while this is merely a figure of speech, it is a fact, to which I have on hundreds of occasions been

witness, that they were able to take their boats safely through the channel on nights so dark that it was impossible to see the smokestacks from either end of the boat.

A later crop of daring pilots and captains embraced the names of Enoch King, Charles Pierce, Ben Thornburg, Billy Youngblood, Strother Wiley, Ben Taber and Bart Bowen.

The record of 17 hours and 30 minutes for the nearly 300 miles from New Orleans to Natchez; the R. W. McRae, the Belle Lee, the Gladiator, the Belle Memphis, the Leviathan, the Adam Jacobs, the Luminary, the Alec Scott, the Grand Turk, the A. L. Shotwell, the Robert J. Ward, the Eclipse, the Rainbow, the Atlantic, the Pal City, the Magenta, the Robert E. Lee and the Natchez. It was the last two named which in the early seventies ran the historic race from New Orleans to St. Louis, a distance of about 1,300 miles, the Lee winning by what, considering the great length of the contest, was a remarkably narrow margin.

As the old river boats no longer exist, and as the old pilots in the best sense of the word are all dead, I cannot see how it will be possible to have the strictly old fashioned races as suggested by Sir Thomas Lipton and seconded by Mark Twain. Even Bart Bowen, the man who is alleged to have taught Mark Twain the river, has long since cashed in his checks.

And by the way, speaking of checks, what a common sight they were in the old days! From the time a boat pulled out of one place until she reached the end of the route every game played with short cards for money was in full swing. Of course poker was the favorite, but other games were from time to time introduced.

But even if Sir Thomas Lipton's suggestion should involve considerable outlay of money, I believe it would pay handsomely, for, as Mark Twain explains, the race would last for a good many days, and the interest excited by advance announcements of the contest would insure business during its entire progress.

However, if the race is to be held it will be gone about as in the old days. Let the boats be stripped of everything that

might in any way interfere with the fuel for the entire trip or make it difficult for it, as they might see fit, set sail only that the first boat to arrive at the end of the route should be the winner, matter how she might get there. And it will create a good deal of a sensation.

The fame of the river race is an interesting and because of the reckless spirit of emulation which inspired the captains, but John Hay, his famous poem, "Jim Bludso of Prairie Belle," to familiarize the world with this unique phase of American life.

He wasn't no saint—then engineers. In pretty much all allusions. One wife in Natchez—under the hills. And another one here in Pike.

A riverboat man in his talk was Jim. And an awkward fellow in a row. But he never fumbled and he never lost. I reckon he never loved how.

He weren't no saint—but at judgment. I'd run my chance with Jim. "Longside of some plow gentlemen. That wouldn't shook hands with him. He seen his duty, a dead sure thing. And went for it thar and then. And Christ ain't a-going to be too hard on a man that died for men.

## Snapshots of Some Famous Women Playwrights, With Facts About Their Work, Their Fads and Their Earnings



**A MAKER OF GRAND OPERAS.**  
Miss Ethel M. Smyth is now recognized as one of the great composers of grand opera. Miss Smyth is an English girl. Her father was an artillery officer. She took a course at Leipzig, after which she began to write music. Her first opera, "Fantasio," was given in several continental cities, and her second work, "Der Wald" ("The Forest"), was presented in London and New York, in both of which places it created a furore. Miss Smyth, who writes her own librettos as well as scores, is "good to look upon," is fond of athletics, including horseback riding, and is also a devotee at the shrine of Terpsichore. The illustration, from a sketch by John S. Sargent, shows Miss Smyth singing at the piano.



**THE CREATOR OF "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY."**  
Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, the creator of "Little Lord Fauntleroy," has two fads, gardening and drawing royalties. Mrs. Burnett was born in England and removed to Tennessee when she was fourteen. Her first husband was Dr. Burnett, from whom she was divorced, and she then married Stephen Townsend, who is said to be twenty-five years her junior. Her first hit was made with "That Lass o' Lowrie's," and since then she has scored more than twenty successes. She is rather severe on her own sex and most eccentric in the matter of personal attire. Her elder son, the prototype of little Lord Fauntleroy, died several years ago.



**A DRAMATIST FROM CHILDHOOD.**  
Martha Morton is a born dramatist. From early childhood she was determined to become a playwright. Finally she entered a much rejected play, "The Merchant," in a newspaper competition. It won the first prize. Since then she has written many successful comedies. Among the more famous of her later works are "Geoffrey Middleton, Gentleman," "Brother John," "The Diplomat," "A Fool of Fortune" and "A Bachelor's Romance." Miss Morton, who in private life is Mrs. Conheim, has no fads except that she believes that women should have a say in politics. She is an excellent housekeeper and has one of the quaintest dens in the city of New York. Miss Morton is at work on a new comedy.



**A WRITER OF LIGHT COMEDIES.**  
Madeleine Lucette was the sourette of an opera-comedy when J. H. Ryley was the comedian. They became friends and then man and wife. Fame came to her when she began to write plays. Her specialty is the abnormally light comedy, almost farce, in its nature. Some of her best known plays are "An American Citizen," "Christopher, Jr.," "An American Invasion," "Richard Savage" and "The Mysterious Mr. Bugle." Mrs. Ryley is an Englishwoman, but most of her work has been done in this country. Were it not for a tendency to drop into farce in what are ostensibly comedies Madeleine Lucette Ryley would doubtless be one of the best playwrights in the world.



**A WOMAN WHO HAS MADE \$150,000 IN A YEAR.**  
Lottie Blair Parker wrote compositions at school and then went on the stage. She got to be a leading woman and wrote a one act play for a newspaper competition. This piece, "White Roses," was done at the Lyceum theater, in New York, and about eight years ago her "Way Down East" was produced. It is running yet. She also wrote "Way Down South," which, renamed "Under Southern Skies," had much to do with making Grace George a successful star. Mrs. Parker's royalties one year were in excess of \$150,000. Miss Blair that was the wife of Harry Doel Parker, who induced W. A. Brady to read "Way Down East."



**THE AUTHOR OF "MRS. JACK."**  
The star of that brainy woman, Grace Livingston Furniss, is decidedly in the ascendant. Her "Mrs. Jack" is conceded to be one of the best comedies ever written by an American. This play was written to fit Alice Fischer, who has made a fortune with the piece. Miss Furniss' "Gretchen Green" was a dismal affair, but this setback is as nothing when it is considered that most of her work has been successful. She has done some excellent work in collaboration, and it is said that her royalties are very large. But, large as they are, however, it is likely that they will be even larger next season, when, if Dame Rumor is not at fault, three new plays from her pen will be presented.



**"THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD."**  
Harriet Ford's fame will rest largely upon her coauthorship of the play "The Greatest Thing in the World," produced by Mrs. Le Moyne. It was not a pecuniary success, but it was a wholesome success nevertheless. Miss Ford early began to write. After Henry C. De Mille's death Miss Ford associated herself with his widow in the establishment of a girls' school, and their collaboration on "The Greatest Thing in the World" followed. The ladies are now at work on another play which will be produced next season. But, succeed or fail as it may, the ladies will stick to their school, which is said to pay them handsomely.

## The Enormously Increased Cost of a Cup Defender

NE cannot read the accounts of the various doings of the men charmed with getting the Reliance into the best possible shape for the preliminary and trial races which may result in her selection as the defender of the America's cup without being impressed by the difference in the cost of the cup defender of today and her predecessor of less than a score of years ago. It goes without saying that there are reasons for all this, for no man has so much money that he spends it just for the sake of getting rid of it. But it does seem a trifle absurd to spend \$275,000 for the construction and rigging of the Reliance when the old Puritan, one of the best defenders the cup has ever had, cost when in the water, fully rigged and equipped, about \$25,000.

It was thought that the adoption last year of a new rule of measurement by the New York Yacht club, the custodian of the America's cup, would have the effect of reducing the cost of cup boats. This result was expected to be arrived at through the limitations put upon the tendency toward freak construction, which, it must be admitted, had about gone the limit. But along come the Reliance and the Shamrock III, the first boats to be built after the adoption of the new rules, and they cost more than any of their predecessors, the most expensive racing yacht up to the present time having been the unlucky Constitution, into which \$250,000 is said to have been poured.

If the cup races were now what they were once and always should be—tests between a distinctively American and a distinctively European type of craft—the expense of defending the cup, to say nothing of the cost of coming over after it, would be comparatively

**PURITAN 1885.**

**\$ 25,000.**

**RELIANCE 1903.**

**\$ 275,000.**

light. But that is no longer the case. We have steadily progressed, or retrograded, toward the English type, while the Britishers have as steadily modified their models in the direction of the American skimming dish which for so many years sufficed to keep the cup safe from the aggressive British cutters which came over after it.

The result of this working toward a substantially common type has had a most disastrous effect from the strictly utilitarian standpoint. In the old days a cup yacht was also a good cruising yacht—in fact, many of the boats built for cup defense were afterward converted into schooners and used for cruising purposes, some of them being in service to this day. But the boats built since the Vigilant, the last of the cup boats to retain anything of the distinctively American model, are useless except for the specific purposes for which they were built.

The old rule with reference to the cost of any sort of sail vessel was that the hull represented half the expenditure. Now, however, the rigging of a cup yacht costs several times as much as the hull, despite the fact that the latter is very much more expensive than it was in the days of wooden bodies. This is due to the fact that where rope rigging was formerly employed nothing but wire is now used; while the masts were formerly made of Oregon pine, they are now almost invariably built of steel, being hollow except for the flanges and trussing necessary to provide the strength for withstanding the enormous strain caused by greatly increased sail area; where the topmast was set in the usual manner on the outside, it now telescopes into the mainmast, so that in a blow the "bearing over" effect of so large a piece of timber so high up may be avoided; and whereas a few years ago a couple of suits of ordinary duck were thought to

better in the matter of cost, about \$250,000 being necessary to make it ready for her first trial spin. And now comes the Reliance, which will cost about \$275,000 more than the Constitution.

It must be understood that the amounts above given do not represent the total of outlay which a defending syndicate is called upon to meet. Take the case of the Columbia as an example. This boat, along with the Pilgrim and the Jubilee, was beaten in the trial races by the all conquering Vigilant. The Columbia cost \$55,000 to build, the Pilgrim and Jubilee costing each about \$5,000 less. Yet to fit the Columbia out for a trial vessel cost about \$75,000 more; the expense being divided about as follows: Four suits of sails, \$25,000; dry docking, \$2,000; towing, \$2,000; racing construction material, \$5,000; tender, \$5,000; days at \$50 a day, \$6,250; expenses of crew for four months, including wages, \$30,000; bonus for the men, \$5,000. Naturally there were a number of small items, records of which are not obtainable by outsiders.

It is true that the expense of maintenance has not increased in proportion to the cost of construction, including rigging, but it is much larger than formerly. On the hull of a modern cup defender alone tens of thousands of dollars are now expended where a couple of thousand formerly sufficed. Instead of wood the hull is now made of steel and aluminum for the deck, the hull and aluminum for the deck, the bronze must be highly polished, and this of itself costs enough to build a good sized knockabout. The aluminum deck must be covered with a preparation, on which is laid canvas or cotton composition to insure a footing for the men, and all this costs money. The steel frame is also expensive, as compared with the iron frame of the old plan of driving in the necessary number of stout iron bolts.

CHANNING A. BARTON.