

The St. Andrews Standard.

PUBLISHED BY A. W. SMITH.

EXTRAIS SOMMUM EST OPTIMUM.—CIC.

[12 6d. PER ANN. IN ADVANCE]

No 14.

SAINT ANDREWS N. B. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2 1862.

Vol 29

A FIGHT IN THE DARK.

By the Author of "Colin Clark," "Texans," etc., etc.

Frankly admitting that duels of every common kind, and some of a very uncommon description also, have been written upon until the very name, when seen in print, bears very much the unsavoury character of a literary nuisance, I yet venture to add another to the number, since it may deservedly be considered the crowning fight, both for its singularity and its barbarity, of all hitherto placed on record. Savage and deadly as is the general character of duelling in the Southern States of America—epidemic as it is decidedly stated to be in some places (Orleans for instance) increasing materially in the heats of summer, and declining as the weather cools—and in the face of all we have heard concerning Kentucky "gouging," and biting off of ears and noses, this "Fight in the Dark," which took place, in Florida, stands preeminent, alone. Germany cannot match it, and by its side an English duel is a mere child's play! That poor humanity should ever become excited to such an act will appear marvellous—but it is no less true. At least it is no fiction of mine—and a very sad kind of imagination must any novelist possess who could have purely invented it.

The parties in this affair were Colonel and a young man, I believe a surgeon whom he chanced accidentally to meet, one evening at a liquor-store. Whether the colonel was of the "regular army," as Webb of New York designates himself, or only one of those very numerous colonels in America who never either handled a sword or rode in the field, even at a review, my informant did not state; though from his insolent and quarrelsome disposition, I should, as an Englishman, naturally conclude he was no soldier. This, however, at least he was—one of those not uncommon characters to be met with in the South—a man who had acquired for himself a "first-rate" reputation as not only a dead shot with either pistol or rifle, but also as being equally a fast and formidable in the use of the bowie knife—whichever he might fight with was a matter of perfect indifference to him—as in any one of the three cases, his antagonist generally enjoyed some three or four chances, to the colonel's one, of losing his life. Hence, few cared to receive an insult from him, or under almost any circumstances, to offer him one. He became in his neighborhood (and as far as a man can become such, in that part of the world,) an object of once fearful, detestable, and arrogant in the extreme. Few men but wished him killed off-hand, or hoped, that at the earliest convenient opportunity he might find his match.

The young man, who, on the occasion, I am about to relate, eventually entered the field with this uninvited fellow, happened, neither by reputation nor in fact, to possess the horrible accomplishments of the colonel. He was a quiet, unassuming citizen, with no further title to the character of a duellist than may attach to the majority of his fellow men in those fighting regions.

The inn, or liquor store, in which the scene took place stood by the forest although an extensive patch of roughly cleared ground surrounded it, and the night of its occurrence having suddenly proved very rainy and dark many of those who had previously assembled there were detained beyond their time while occasional wayfarers, to avoid the storm at last, to their numbers. Among these latter were two individuals, one of whom before his entrance, was overheard, by some in the entrance, to say to his companion, with a fearful oath peculiar to certain people in the South:—

"By—major, I'll raise a fight to-night before I go!"

"No, no, colonel!" replied the other—"stop a moment. Is there any man here you have a difficulty with?"

"No—not that I know of; but what does that matter?"

"When you go into a bar for the sake of picking a quarrel with a stranger, either to kill, or be killed?"

"Kill me! ha! ha! major, don't grind coffee on my nose! you couldn't do it yourself! Let any man try, and the way I'll see him up shall be a caution, mind I tell you!"

And so saying, the colonel strode in, and made his way toward the bar, where he ordered brandy, and while drinking it, cast his eyes around upon a respectable body of men there assembled—a body commonly called, according to this kind of classical American, "a tallish kind of a crowd."

His general insolence of demeanor soon attracted attention, but for a while he failed to fix upon any particular individual as his intended victim.

Meanwhile, his friend the major—probably another such major as he himself a colonel—was observed to address him earnestly, but in a low tone of voice, though seemingly

with the intention of keeping him quiet. These efforts failed—and with more brandy came more determination. Eventually, his eye fell upon two persons, one the young man who was to be slaughtered, to whom allusion he already been made, and the other an aged one—perhaps his father. They were engaged in close private conversation the younger of the two being then speaker. The colonel seemed to listen attentively, and having drawn somewhat nearer, very soon exclaimed aloud:—

"It is not the case!"

Many turned their heads toward the speaker, with a slight expression of surprise, and being unconscious who he was addressing; his friend who now stood aloof, but kept his eyes upon him, beckoned him back, but in vain, while the individual really most interested in this commencement of the attack was so absorbed in his own discourse to hear, or to remark the exclamation at all.

By and by, the colonel a second time spoke but in a louder voice:—

"I say it's false!"

On this occasion, the young man almost involuntarily looked up, and his eyes met those of the colonel, for toward him were many eyes directed. But he seemed not yet to comprehend that his private conversation with his aged friend was alluded to. It was therefore immediately continued.

By this time, scarcely another voice in the room was heard—suspense as to the result, and curiosity concerning this unreasonable conduct, having produced considerable silence.

For the third time the colonel exclaimed:—

"I say it's a lie!" and at the same instant fixing his eyes, with an expression of perfect ferocity, on his predetermined antagonist.

Many others also looked in the same direction. The young man could no longer be deceived. He mildly but determinedly asked:—

"Is that addressed to me?"

"It is!" roared the colonel. "I say again it's all a lie!"

A steady look of utter contempt was the only answer he received; and the last gave it resumed his discourse as before.

Several now shrunk back, confident that a fight would ensue, and anxious to keep out of the way. Some minutes elapsed ere the intended murderer opened his lips for the fourth time, and then it was to denounce his victim as "himself a coward and a liar!" The latter, thereupon, deliberately rose from his seat, and advancing, with the utmost apparent composure, toward his antagonist (who probably, had no idea of such a salutation from such a man,) struck him boldly in the face with his fist, and instantly fell back, to stand upon his defence with his knife.

The colonel rushed forward, like a tiger, but his friend the major, seized him, and all interposed to prevent the immediate effusion of blood. This being effected, a challenge was immediately given by the colonel and accepted, and the morning was proposed as the period for the meeting. To the surprise, however, of some of the bystanders, the challenged party insisted on an immediate decision and that the combat should terminate only with life. "To kill or be killed," said he "is now my only alternative, and the sooner one or the other is done the better."

On hearing this the colonel furiously demanded, as instantaneous settlement of the affair, said his friends had no right to prevent it, and swore that if he did not conclude the business at the first shot, he would consent to stand as a target only the following two times. Both parties were, of course, by this period, highly excited. Different propositions were loudly vociferated by as many different parties present, until more than one case of "difficulty" of this kind appeared likely to be brought to its "sum total" before the morning sun. It was suggested that they should go out on the clearing, having two blazing fires made at a proper distance, the combatants being placed between them, so that they could see each other against the light behind—or that they should fight by the blaze of pitch-pine splinter—or decide the question at once across a table.

In the midst of all this uproar, the young man challenged was questioned, by several of the more temperate persons present, as to his knowledge of the character and of reputation enjoyed by his antagonist, the colonel. He replied, that he knew nothing whatever concerning him, and had never even seen him before—two facts which, in his opinion, highly aggravated the repeated and intentional insults he had received. They accordingly advised him on the subject of the colonel's prowess, and urged him to recommend him to adopt the following two courses—to select no other weapon than the rifle, and to defer the decision until daylight. By no other arrangement could he possibly have a chance.

All was in vain, as he firmly adhered to his previously expressed determination; and

equally vain were the painful and ever pathetic remonstrances of his aged friend.

Reconciliation, even during the space of a few hours, being thus rendered impossible, and all the already proposed modes of fighting being rejected or unattended to, a new proposition was made. It was distinctly—that in order to disarm one of the parties of a decided general advantage as a duelist—to prevent the other, as far as possible from being butted as well as wantonly insulted—and in short to place both upon as perfect an equality as possible, the following articles ought to be agreed to:—

That the landlord should give up the use of a large empty room, that extended over the whole top of his house, and allow every window to be closely blocked up with shutters or boards. That when this should be done, the duellist should be divested of every particle of clothing armed each with a brace of pistols and a bowie knife,* and then be let into the room—three minutes being given after the closing of the door, before hostilities commenced, the expiration of the time being announced to them by three rapid knocks upon the door.

Will it be believed that this arrangement was instantly agreed to? But so was. And a tolerable party immediately proceeded upstairs, some to make the needful arrangements, and others to listen to this unseen fight and wait its exciting result.

Savage as men's spirits may be, such a sense of preparation as this was enough to silence, if not to awe them. While it was passing no man spoke, but all looked curiously upon the fine muscular persons that were soon, in all probability, about to cut up each other alive.

All things being ready, the door, which had cautiously been kept closed, to prevent the interior of the place from being seen by the duellists, was opened, and they entered the room of death together. The old man, whose friend one of them was, wept in silent bitterness, but by an involuntary action, as the young man passed out of his sight, evidently brought heaven to assist the insulted and the innocent. The door was closed. The Time-keeper drew out his watch, and kept his eye steadily fixed upon it. The assembled party employed that brief period in offering and accepting (in whispers) bet of from one to five hundred and more dollars, as to the result. According to sporting phrase, "the colonel was the favorite," though the backers of neither one nor the other appeared inclined to offer very long odds.

The time-keeper closed his watch, and gave the signal, at the same moment all the lights on the landing and staircase were extinguished, in order that no ray might pass through the least crevice into the inside of the room.

Everybody expected, upon the giving of the signal, to hear the commencement of the strife; but they listened in dead silence to no purpose, not the remotest sound, even of a footstep, could be heard. And thus they waited five minutes, and ten, and twenty, and yet the combatants gave no sign. After the lapse, as near as might be conjectured, of half-an-hour or thereabouts, one pistol was discharged; and although the listeners had been in the continued expectation of it so long, yet when it did come, a sudden start of surprise ran through them, as though each man had instantly felt that he might have received the contents himself. And then followed a hasty step across the floor—a pistol report—the clashing of knives, and a brief but seemingly desperate attempt to wrestle, which quickly terminated and all again was quiet.

"It's all up!" whispered one—"I'll bet drinks for the crowd!"

"Taken!" said another—"I begin to want a julep!"

"Fifty-to-forty the colonel has killed him!" remarked a third; "he was a very nice young man, but he can't come in this time!"

And thus would they have gone on, had not the third report been just then heard, followed by a prolonged conflict hand to hand, and knife to knife, in the course of which the fourth pistol was exploded. The strokes of the knives began to grow less frequent, and more faint in sound; but ere they had entirely ceased, a heavy body dropped with a dead sound upon the floor of the room. Another instant, and there followed another fall.

Some individuals present were for opening the door immediately; but this proposition occurred on the ground that if the light were not yet over, the most able might take advantage of the appearance of the light to kill the other, even lying on the boards.

About half-an-hour was, if I recollect aright, allowed to pass in close and attentive listening to catch the most distant sound from within. None was heard; and in the expiration of that period, amid a crowd of

"The knife would, in a probability, be held between the teeth."

the most horrible and anxious faces, the door was opened and the whole party rushed in.

Toward the remotest end, and not far from the wall, lay a heap like red cloth. It was composed of the gashed and bloody bodies of the duellists! One lay across the other. They were taken up, and something like a distant murmur of applause followed—when it was discovered that the colonel was dead!

But many who best knew him spoke outright their glances, upon an examination proved that he was quite dead. Both bodies were so mangled, that it was next to an impossibility to handle them without touching the wounds.

The best of it was, however, that the conqueror of this fearful white savage was found to be still alive. He was taken down stairs instantly, stimulants were given, and he began to revive. His body was then conveyed away to the nearest surgeon's room time after midnight.

The room exhibited a spectacle not to be described. The young man eventually recovered entirely of his wounds, and was often congratulated on having rid the country of a monster whom few dared to attack.

This was not all. During his convalescence, inquiries were frequently made of him as to the mode in which the fight was managed; and he accordingly gave the following curious account, as nearly as the writer can remember:—

"When the door was closed," said he, "we were surrounded by the most profound darkness. It seemed for some moments to confound the senses, and be closed to my eyes. During the three minutes allowed before the battle might begin, my principal aim was to get away from my antagonist into another part of the room, without his knowledge, and to stand there by the wall until perhaps, he should make some movement, by the sound of which I could be directed in my attack. The crowd outside was as still as death. I held my breath, and treading so lightly that I could not hear my own footsteps, I stole toward that side of the room on which I entered. Whether he had calculated that I should naturally do so, and had therefore taken the same direction, nobody can now tell; but no sooner had I stood still to listen for him, than I found he was somewhere about me—I could hear his breathing. With the greatest caution and silence, I hastened to another part, expecting every moment either that he would run against me, or I against him. And in this kind of manoeuvring, sometimes to get away, and sometimes to approach, as I fancied, though why I know not, that an advantage might be gained, the greatest part of the silent half hour you speak of was spent.

"At length, having safely reached the opposite side, I stood still, resolved not to move again until he either approached, having perhaps found me out, or by some means or other I could discover his position in the room. Having now got beyond his reach, I felt that to be motionless on my part was the wisest step; and calculated that his passion and fury would soon lead him on to the exhibition of less caution. Nothing of the kind occurred, and yet the first ball discharged was mine. A mouse could have been heard to stir; but we were perfectly lost to each other.

"Eventually, whether my eyes had become more accommodated to the darkness, or from whatever cause, but true enough, it I perceived a pair of eyes on the other side nearly opposite me. They shone like those of a hyena in the night. I fired instantly, and rushed forward. The flash showed me the colonel crouched down against the wall, and must equally have directed him to me. He fired as he advanced, but missed. We were almost close together. The empty pistols were thrown down, and the knives used. He rushed on with great ferocity, and tried to grapple with me, but I slipped out of his arms; and for an instant, being quite separated, both stood still, listening for the place of the other. I think he must have heard me, for he fired a second time with such effect as you all have seen. Nothing but his knife now remained; I had a knife and pistol. We were so close together, that he was upon me almost as soon as his pistol-bell. The latter staggered me a little at the moment, but I met him with the knife, and from that time we never separated again.

"My object was to keep him from closing upon me, until I could be as certain as darkness would permit of using my last bait to advantage. In consequence of that, I retreated in various ways both still fighting, sometimes on the floor, and sometimes knocking ourselves with violence against the wall.

"I was growing faint. I found my strength failing, and then I fired my second pistol. The light instantaneous noise, showed both men redder than the Indian in the field of battle. I heard that he staggered, and rushed with all my strength upon him. He still fought a little, but suddenly dropped be-

fore me, and more than that I do not know."

Such is the tale, as nearly as the writer can remember, that was related to him. Should it be said that he met with a romantic, in that case, his only hope is that he may meet with another such every day of his life; though his firm and well-founded belief is that all the details are perfectly true.

Provincial Parliament.

FREDERICTON, March 25.

Skinner introduced a Bill to alter the local government of the Parish of Portland.

Cudlip's Bill relating to Water Supplies and Sewerage of St. John, agreed to.

Gilmor's Bill to exempt lumber cut on Digbyquash river from the payment of Export duty, got a three months' postponement.

Papers relating to the claim of Alexander Fraser, respecting the Bridge near Chatham, referred to a Select Committee.

Watters' Bill to abolish Fisheries draft in Carleton agreed to.

Gilbert moved his resolution for address for a copy of the Contract covering Shediac Wharf.

March 26.

Watters presented a petition from 138 inhabitants of Carleton against the passage of a bill to extend King Street.

S. H. Gilbert presented a petition against a change in the time of holding Circuit Court in Queen's County.

Watters introduced a bill to incorporate the Union Iron Works Company.

Tilley desired to go into Committee on the Revenue Bill, is now speaking, urging reasons why they should and why Fisher's proposed resolution to defer the Revenue bill—

Days should not pass. Tilley proposed to change the bill by reducing Mohawks two cents, and adding half per cent, to Railway Import.

Immediately after Tilley finished, Fisher moved his amendment—he proposes 1 cent on Tobacco, or two if it will not promote smuggling; 5 per cent, on Silks, Satins, Velvets, Jewellery, &c.; 2 1/2 on Coal, Lines, Twines and Steel; 1 1/2 on Cordage, Iron and other Ship materials. If these are not practicable, he proposes to extend Secretary's proposition and add 1 per cent to Import Duty instead of half. Either method he contends will yield more than enough.

Ryan seconded the amendment. Smith spoke against the amendment. Boyd suggested certain reductions in Members' pay, Officials' salaries, &c. Did not commit himself to Bill or Amendment.

Discussion adjourned.

Skinner's bill relating to Carleton Water Commissioners passed.

March 27.

Bill to authorise sale of certain Trinity Church Lands postponed three months.

McPhelim introduced a petition respecting Gormstown Lake; Bill in which progress was made.

McPhelim moved for an Address for correspondence, &c., respecting reimbursement of money to E. Clark, lost in letter in 1856.

Stevens' Bill to incorporate the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, agreed to.

Lindsay's Bill to amend Revised Statutes of Municipalities as relates to the Council and its officers, agreed to.

FROM THE STATES.

BANGOR, March 27.

Nearly the whole of the valley of the Mississippi is overflooded near Island No. 10, delaying operations.

Vera Cruz dates are to the 14th. English troops had left. Arrived at Havana and sailed for Bermuda.

Mexican barracks near Orizaba accidentally, blew up; 1,300 bodies taken from the ruins.

French Division left Orizaba for Tehuacan.

It is rumored that a considerable portion of Yorktown is burnt; large fire visible in that direction on Sunday night.

Gen. Johnson would have joined Gen. Jackson in Winchester battle, but not being able till Monday, Jackson thinking Federal force much reduced hazarded fatal advance alone.

Federal pickets six miles beyond Strasburg.

It is reported that Porter's mortar fleet had entered South West Pass.

Beaufort and Fort Macon still in Confederate hands.

Deeds have been sold at auction in Liverpool last month, at from £7 17 6 to £8 4s 6d per standard.