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Poetry.

WHEN I AM OLD.

When I am old, (and, ah, how soon Will life's sweet morning yield to noon, And noon's broad, fervent, earnest light, Till like a story well nigh told, Will seem my life when I am old.)

Miscellaneous.

THE DEAD SHOT.

A Tale of Texan Border Life.

PART I.

My word for it, reader, you should never have ventured to construct a professed romance out of incidents so wild and strange as those of this narration. It is only with the hope that you will accept in good faith the assurance given in the same spirit, that these things really did occur while I was in the country, and most of them within my personal knowledge—that I venture to relate them at all. Remember, the scene is laid in a frontier county of Texas, and if you have even a conception of the history of that Republic and the general character of its social elements, you will be prepared for a good deal. But, though you might even have visited its cities and older settlements, you would still find it difficult to realize all that is true of frontier life, unless by extended travel and experience your faith should be fortified. When you can have to say, as I can, 'what mine eyes have seen and ears heard'—on that ground alone you will be heard in audience though few—to receive as matters of course, relations which would doubtless, for the moment, shock others as monstrous in improbability, if not indeed impossibility. The man of high civilization will find great difficulty in understanding how such a deed as I am about to relate, requiring months to consummate, would have been carried through in the open face of law and the local authorities—but the man who knows this frontier will tell him that the rifle and bowie-knife are all the law and local authority recognized. Witness the answer President Houston gave when application was first made to him for his interposition with the civil force to quell the bloody 'Regulator Wars' which afterwards sprang up in this very same county—'Fight it out among yourselves and be d—d to you!' A speech entirely characteristic of the man and the country, as it then was! It was in the earlier stages of the organization of this same 'Regulator' association that our story commences.

ed. I do not mean to have it understood that the whole population at this time were men of that stamp avowedly. There were some few whose wealth to a degree protected them in the observance of a more seemingly life—though they were compelled to at least wink at the doings of their rudely and more numerous neighbors; while there was yet another, but not large class of sturdy, straight forward emigrants, who, attracted solely by the beauty of the country, had come into it, settled themselves down wherever they took a fancy,—with characteristic reckless neither caring nor inquiring who were their neighbors, but trusting in their own stout arms and hearts to keep a footing. Of course all such were very soon engaged in desperate feuds with the horse thieves and plunderers around them; and as they were not yet strong enough to make head efficiently—were one after another finally ousted or shot. It was to exterminate this honest class that the more lawless and brutal of the other associated themselves and assumed the name of 'Regulators.' They numbered from eight to twelve—and under the organization of rangers, commanded by a beastly wretch named Hinch, they professed to undertake the task of purifying the county limits of all bad and suspicious characters; or, in other words, of all men who dared refuse to be as vile as they were,—or if they were, who chose to act independently of them and their schemes. This precious brotherhood soon became the scourge of all that region. Whenever an individual was unfortunate enough to make himself obnoxious to them, whether by successful villainy, the proceeds of which he refused to share with them, or by the hateful contrast of the propriety of his course—he was forthwith surrounded—threatened—had his stock driven off or killed wantonly—and if these annoyances and hints were not sufficient to drive him away, they would publicly warn him to leave the county in a certain number of days, under the penalty of being scourged or shot. The common pretext for this was the accusation of having committed some crime, which they themselves had perpetrated with a view of furnishing a charge to bring against him. Their hate was entirely ruthless and never stopped short of accomplishing its purposes; and in many a bloody fray and cruel outrage had the question of their supremacy been mooted, until at last there were few left to dispute with them, and they tyrannized at will.

Among these few was Jack Long, as he was called, who neither recognized nor denied their power, and indeed never troubled himself about them one way or the other. He kept himself to himself, hunted incessantly, and nobody knew much about him. Jack had come of a 'wild turkey breed' as the western term is for a roving family, and though still a young man, had pushed on ahead of the settlement of two territories, and had at last followed the game towards the south, and finding it abundant in Shelby county, had stopped here, just as he would have stopped at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, had it been necessary to pursue it so far. He had never been in the habit of asking leave of any power where he should settle, and of course scarcely thought of the necessity of doing so now, but quietly set to work—built himself a nice log cabin, as far off from every body as he could get. And the first thing that was known of him, he had his pretty young wife and two little ones snugly stowed away in it, and was slaying the deer and the peats right and left.

Honest brotherhood had made several attempts at feeling Jack's pulse and ascertaining his availability; but he had always seemed so impressively good natured, and put them off so pleasantly, that they could find no ground for either disturbing or quarreling with him. What was more, he was physically rather an ugly-looking 'customer,' with his six feet four inches of brawn and bone; though the inclination, just discoverable in his figure, to corpulence, together with a broad, full, good-humored face, gave an air of sluggishness to his energies, and an expression of easy simplicity to his temper, which offered neither invitation to gratuitous insult nor provocation to dislike. He was the very impersonation of inoffensive, loyal honesty slumbering on its conscious strength; and these men, without exactly knowing why, felt some little disinclination to waking him. He had evidently never been roused to a knowledge of himself, and others felt just as uncertain what that knowledge might bring forth as he did, and were not specially zealous of the honor of having it first tested upon their own persons. So that Jack Long might have been left for many a day in quiet, even in this formidable neighborhood, to cultivate his passion for marksmanship, at the expense of the dumb, wild things around him, but for an unfortunate display he was accidentally induced to make of it.

Happening to fall short of ammunition he went one day to the store for a fresh supply. This cabin, together with the blacksmith's shop and one or two other huts, constituted the 'county town,' and as powder and liquor were only to be obtained there, it was the central resort of the Regulators. Jack found them all collected for a great shooting match, in preparation for which they were getting drunk as possible to steady their nerves. Hinch, the Regulator captain, had always been the hero of such occasions—for, in addition to his being a first-rate shot, it was known that it would be a dangerous exertion of skill for any man to beat him—for he was a furious and vindictive bully and would not fail to make a personal affair of it with any one who should mortify his vanity by carrying off the prize from him. In addition, the band of scoundrels he commanded was entirely at his service in any extreme, so that they made fearful odds for a single man to contend with. Everybody else in the county was aware of this state of things but Jack Long, and he either didn't know or didn't care. After they had fired several rounds, he went lounging listlessly into the crowd which had gathered around the target, exclaiming in admiration over the last brilliant shot of Hinch, which was triumpantly the best. The bully was as usual blustering vehemently, taunting every one around him, and when he saw Jack looking very coolly at the famous shot, with no grain of that deferential admiration in his expression which was demanded, he snatched up the board, and thrusting it insultingly close to his face, roared out—

'Here! You Jack Long shanks—look at that! Take a good look! Can you beat it?' Jack drew back with a quiet laugh, and said good-humoredly—

'Pella! You don't brag on such shooting as that, do you?'

'Brag on it! I'd like to see such a moon-eyed chap as you beat it!'

'I don't know as I'd be very proud to beat such bungling work as that.'

'You don't, don't you?' yelled the fellow, now fairly in a rage at Jack's coolness: 'You'll try it, won't you? You must try it! You shall try it, by G—d! We'll see what sort of a swell you are!'

'Oh, well,' said Jack, interrupting him as he was proceeding to rave for quantity—'Just set up your board, if you want to see me put a ball through every hole you can make!'

Perfectly astounded at this rash bearing of the lion—for it was difficult to tell whether contempt or simplicity dictated Jack's manner—the man set up the board, while he walked back to the stand, and carelessly swinging his heavy rifle from his shoulder, fired seemingly quick as thought. 'It's a trick of mine,' said he, moving towards the mark, as he lowered his gun; 'I caught it from shootin' varmints in the eyes—always takes 'em there. It's a notion I've got,—it's my tun.' They all ran eagerly to the target, and sure enough his ball, which was larger than Hinch's, had passed through the same hole, widening it!

'He's a humbug! It's all accident! He can't do that again!' shouted the ruffian, turning pale, all his lips looked blue as the board was held up. 'I'll bet the ears of a buffalo calf against his that he can't do it again!'

'If you mean by that to bet your own ears against mine, I'll take you up!' said Jack, laughing, while the men could not resist joining him. Hinch glared around him with a fierce chafed look, before which those who knew him best quailed, and with compressed lips silently loaded his gun. A new target was put up, at which, after long and careful aim, he fired. The shot was a fine one. The edge of the ball had just passed the centre. Jack, after looking at it, quietly remarked:

'Plumbing out the centre's in fashion; I'll show you a knick or two, Captain Hinch, about the clear thing in shootin'. Give us another board there boys!'

Another was set up, and after throwing out his gun on the level, in the same rapid careless style as before, he fired; and when the eager crowd around the target announced that he had driven the centre cross clear out, he turned upon his heel and with a pleasant nod to Hinch, started to walk off. The ruffian shouted hoarsely after him:

'I thought you were a d—d coward! You've made two good shots by accident, and now you sneak off to brag that you've beat me. Come back, sir! You can't shoot before a muzzle half as true!'

Jack walked on without noticing this mortal insult and challenge, while Hinch laughed tauntingly loud and loud,—peering with exulting bitterness, as long as he could make himself heard, as 'a flash in the pan'—a dunghill cock, who had spread his white feathers, while the men who had been surprised into a profound respect for Long, and were now still more astonished at what they considered his 'backing out,' joined clamorously in hooting his retreat.

The fools! They made a fatal mistake, in supposing he left the insult unresented from any fear for himself. Jack Long had a young and pretty wife at home, and his love for her was stronger than his resentment for his own indignity. His passions were slow, and had never been fully roused—none of them at least but his love, and that presented her instantly, forlorn and deserted, with her little ones, in this wild country, should he throw away his life with such desperate odds; and seeing the turn the affair was likely to take he had prudently determined to get away before it had gone too far. But had any of those men seen the spasms of agony

FOREIGN NEWS.

BY THE CANADA.

The French in Italy.—A letter from Rome, dated the 9th, states the measures of defence on the one hand, and those of attack on the other, are being carried out with unremitting zeal in and around that unfortunate city, and the destruction of property rendered necessary by them is absolutely frightful. Not only have hundreds of charming villas and casini in the neighborhood of the city walls or gates been set on fire and blown up during the last few days, but the interior of the town now commences to suffer from the unsparing orders of the military engineers; and this morning the magnificent Theatre of Apollo, with the adjacent houses bordering the Tiber, from the bridge of St. Angelo to the Arcodi Parnio, are to be sacrificed and demolished, as forming a dangerous point for attacking the fortress of St. Angelo, in case the enemy should succeed in effecting an entry within the city walls. The villas of Quattro Venti and Panfilo Doria, near the Porta San Pancrazio, have taught the Romans, and experience, what a tremendous sacrifice of blood becomes necessary to a hostile force out of such suburban strongholds, when once they have gained admittance into them. The Roman prisoners are sent to Civita Vecchia, and embarked for Corsica.

The Nouvelliste says, in a postscript dated Civita Vecchia, the 15th, that Garibaldi had made a sortie at the head of 1400 men, who had been annihilated (anéantis;) that the French fight with unequalled valor, and that a breach had been opened.

Another account says that only 600 of 1400 who sallied, had been killed; and a journal adds that a movement had taken place in Rome itself against Garibaldi, and that several persons flying from the city had taken refuge in the French camp.—The following sortie of Garibaldi, on the 9th, has not been alluded to in the French general's despatch:

The Piedmontese Gazette of the 16th states, from Rome 10th, that the firing had recommenced on the 9th, at 6 P. M.; that Garibaldi had, on the same day, made an impetuous sortie, and succeeded in retaking the famous Casino de Quattro Venti, which he immediately proceeded to demolish. The battle lasted till 8 in the evening, and was interrupted by a heavy shower of rain. On the 10th, the firing was resumed, and lasted till 10 A. M. By a decree of Gen. Avezzani, all projectiles thrown into Rome by the enemy, are to be brought to the chief of the section of artillery, and if in a serviceable state, they will be paid a bajocco and a half (about a sou) per pound weight.

Nouvelliste, of Marseilles, states that M. Castelnau, captain of the staff, had been