

A HISTORIC SWORD.

WIELDED BY CAPT. REID AT A HEROIC SEA FIGHT.

The "Thermopylae of the Ocean"—Seven Guns and Ninety Men Against 136 Guns and 2,000 Men—The Fight and Its Results.

There has lain upon the desk of the president for some time a plain, steel scabbarded sword, old fashioned in style and serviceable rather than elegant, slightly curved, somewhat battered and generally a weapon that looks as though it had seen service.

A day or two ago the president sent this sword to congress, and it will probably become the duty of the National museum, in which so many other valuable relics are deposited, to give it a place in which it may be seen in company with a sketch of the hero and the heroic contest that made it sacred.

The presentation to congress, through the president, by Col. Samuel C. Reid of this battle saber of his father, the late Capt. Samuel Chester Reid, who commanded the United States private armed brig of war Gen. Armstrong at the battle of Fayal, in September, 1814, is excused enough for reviving some incidents which have passed out of mind.

UNEQUAL FORCES ENGAGED.

The Armstrong was a little brig of but 240 tons, carrying but seven guns and ninety men. She was attacked in the neutral waters of the Azore islands by a British squadron, consisting of the ship of the line Plantagenet, the frigate Rota and the sloop of war Carnation, with a total amount of 136 guns and 2,000 men.

The height of heroic and romantic chivalry were displayed by Capt. Reid and his crew in the last act of this extraordinary naval drama. After scuttling his vessel to save her from capture he went ashore with his men and arms, when the commander of the squadron, Admiral Lloyd, demanded their surrender and threatened to send 500 men to take them.

The squadron under Lloyd was on its way to the island of Jamaica to join the great fleet assembled there under Admiral Lord Cochrane, afterward Earl of Dundonald, who was confidentially entrusted with the secret expedition for the conquest of Louisiana.

THE FORTUNATE RESULTS.

On the declaration of war by the United States, in 1812, England's eyes were once more turned to the coveted possession, and, after making a demonstration against Washington and Baltimore, she assembled her combined fleets, no longer needed for the blockades of the French coasts, at Negri bay, Jamaica, to carry out this great design.

The inability of counterfeiters to produce exact or indistinguishable representations of bank notes will tend, I think, to ensure that enterprise to be given up in the near future, and operations confined to alloyed coin only.

Poverty in Washington.

There is a large class of men in Washington who are in a most impetuous condition and who make heavy drafts upon the purses and patience of those with whom they manage to become acquainted.

A Fine Distinction.

Lawyer—Now you know the man isn't truthful, do you not?
Witness—I wouldn't like to say so, sir.
Lawyer—Why not? A milder way of stating it would suit you better, perhaps?
Witness—Just so. I wouldn't like to do so as to the veracity; but I know that he is decidedly untruthful.

The Rothschilds, who now control all the quicksilver mines in the world, are said to be intending extensive investment in gold mines.

THE DEAD IN THE MORGUE.

People Visit the Dismal Place Just to Satisfy Their Curiosity.

It was 7 o'clock a. m., and Joe Fogarty, the keeper of the Morgue, had just turned the key in the lock of his office door, when an elderly man and two women crossed the green extending between the Morgue and Bellevue hospital.

"Good morning, sir," said one of the women, who was young and prepossessing. "You have here, I believe, the body of a young man who killed himself last night in the hotel?"

"Yes, madam; would you like to see him?" asked Joe.
"Yes; we came here for that purpose." Joe led the way into the wooden shed called the dead house, and lifting the cover from an ordinary pine box exposed to view the body of the young man. The visitor looked at it in silence for a moment, and then the young woman said, in the same matter-of-fact tone in which she might have remarked upon the qualities of a picture:

"How beautiful he is! See!" pointing to a small red spot near the left temple, "that is where the bullet entered. Isn't it?" she asked, appealing to Joe.

"Yes," replied the latter; "you don't seem to recognize him?"
"Oh, no," she returned; "we did not expect to. Our curiosity was excited by the accounts in the morning papers. I was up early and I got up and came down and saw the body. What a mysterious affair! And he so young, too. I wonder what made him do it! Do you suppose it was a love affair?"

The young woman continued to rattle along in a composed manner, while her parents silently inspected the body. The remains of a quarter of an hour, and by the time they went away a number of other morbidly curious people had arrived. It was with difficulty that Joe got rid of them.

"Of all the pestiferous cranks in this world," said Joe to a reporter later in the day, "deliver me from these curious people who like to see nothing so well as a corpse. In the many years I have been here I have never known of a single case that was published in the newspapers that did not bring a lot of these busybodies around. In cases where there was considerable publicity I have even known them to come here without their breakfasts."

Last summer there was a case of a young woman who killed herself in a prominent hotel. Nobody knew who she was, and the papers published columns about it. We actually had to call in the police to drive the crowds away. They were all well dressed people, too, and looked respectable. Many of them, in fact, had the appearance of being wealthy. When the old farmer—whose daughter the suicide was—finally arrived, he with difficulty escaped them. They seemed to have no sense of propriety, and piled him with all sorts of questions. It was a disgraceful scene, and we had to use force to allow the poor broken-hearted man to get away."—New York Mail and Express.

Viticulture in California.

The planting, cultivation, picking and pruning of the California grape has a great many advantages over the same processes in France and other European grape growing sections of country. But these are all balanced by the low price of labor in those countries as compared to that paid by California viticulturists. In the first place, the California vineyards are entirely free from stones, and no fertilizers are necessary or are used. There is no snow at all and seldom any rain or hail from pruning time to vintage.

Dangerous Counterfeit Coins.

The inability of counterfeiters to produce exact or indistinguishable representations of bank notes will tend, I think, to ensure that enterprise to be given up in the near future, and operations confined to alloyed coin only. I think it will be carried on by persons of genius, skilled in the working of metals, and of a totally different stamp from the ordinary plaster mold fakes. It would be almost impossible to detect gold coins 10 per cent alloy. It is possible to get the weight of such exactly the same as the genuine, and the difference in the size can be made almost imperceptible. To do this it would be necessary merely to subject the coin to sufficient pressure over that employed at the mints. Such a coin will be almost impossible to detect in the ordinary run of the business.

African Hands and Feet.

Capt. Storms confirms the consulting theory of the insensibility of the nervous organization of the African natives as compared with our own. The next object he showed us was a wooden pillow, such as the Malays use, calculated to "locate the neck of any other body and hands are particularly small and delicate. I don't wonder even an American belle could pass the heavy bracelets, formed out of a section of the trunk of an elephant, over her wrist. The bangles in use are for practical as well as ornamental purpose, and are made of the very finest filigree wire, and are worn in coils on the arms and legs. A native unbraiding or ungartering himself is tantamount to the action of pulling the purse out of the pocket in Europe.—Chicago Tribune.

Settling Matrimonial Disputes.

They have a curious way of settling matrimonial disputes in Nepal, India. On a plain is a standard. When a wife wants a divorce from her husband she is given a fair start and has to run across the plain. Her better half chases her with a kookoo. If the woman reaches the standard first she obtains a dissolution of her marriage. If she doesn't go to the post at all, it is because her husband has caught her and cut her down.—New York Tribune.

In Germany the park storks are enveloped in wrappers during the winter.

BATTLE AMONG ANTS.

DETAILS OF AN INTERESTING FIGHT WHICH LASTED FIVE HOURS.

A "Hand to Hand" Struggle—"Soldiers" of Reckless Daring—Distinction Between Friend and Foe—Dragging Off the Dead After the Battle.

In the summer a year ago a swarm of black ants (Formica Pennsylvanica) built their nests between the ceiling and the roof of a shed near our dwelling, in the suburbs of Philadelphia. At a distance of a few hundred feet from the shed a second colony of the same species had also built a home in a sheltered place. Both nests were unusually populous. Battles between ants of different species fought for the purpose of capturing slaves, have been often described. But on a bright morning in August I was a witness of a fight between these two colonies of the same species, which could have been waged for no such purpose, and which gave the occasion for a greater display of forethought on the part of the combatants than is usually conceded even to the ant. The nest in the roof was the one attacked. The only approach to it from the ground was by a post and plastered wall about six feet high. A smooth plank floor fitted closely against the wall and post and was raised above the ground by a low step. This floor was the scene of the conflict.

In my repeated study of these nests and their inhabitants during the summer months the small workers were the only ones who seemed to labor. They did all the foraging, and it was unusual to see one of the larger workers outside of the entrance of the nest, which, however, they faithfully guarded. The conduct of the latter so much more kindly agreed with that of the soldier ants of other species that in speaking of them in this paper I shall call them soldiers, because they certainly performed all the duties of a soldier, and so far as could be seen, did nothing else.

When I saw them on the morning of the battle both the small workers and the large ones, or soldiers, were out on the wall, post and floor in great numbers. There was no fight then going on. A strong force of soldiers held every approach at the foot of the post and wall, smaller bodies were formed in regular lines half way up the post, and large, outstanding groups were stationed at close distances here and there upon the floor and step, and running up and down the post supporting the nest.

While I stood wondering at the unusual commotion I saw at the distance of a few feet a host of small workers, closely followed by a great horde of soldiers, streaming along a fence from the other distant nest. They must have numbered thousands. In a very short time these hostile workers had descended the fence to the ground, swarmed up the step to the door and poured in crowds upon the defensive scouts. The antagonists rushed upon each other, and with their strong jaws cut off here a leg and there an antenna, and sometimes severed the body of an opponent at a blow. The foremost soldiers of the defensive party came to the rescue, and the swarms of hostile workers were driven back toward the step.

But by this time the soldiers of the attacking party had reached the floor, moving deliberately onward in a dense black mass, crushing their smaller foes as they advanced. In a few moments the small workers were either all killed or retired from the front. The foremost soldiers of the attacking party came to the rescue, and the swarms of hostile workers were driven back toward the step.

After the general charge had been thus made and the combatants were mixed in an undistinguishable crowd, single champions were seen rushing around the floor seeking a foe. When two of these champions approached each other a mutual examination with the ends of their antennae now seemed necessary to tell foe from friend. Many such meetings were friendly, and after the salutation both would rush away at full speed. But when, by the delicate test of feeling or whatever serves them to thus distinguish, each had found an enemy, they rushed upon one another with the utmost rage, clinched both with feet and jaws, and doubling themselves up, rolled over the floor, biting and tearing each other, entirely undisturbed in their deadly work, being lifted up into the air with a pair of forceps. At one time the floor was nearly black with these rolling combatants.

As the battle progressed the superior numbers of the invaders drove the defenders of their home slowly backward to the foot of the post. Then a number of the small workers, who had been stationed upon the post, ran rapidly up to the nest. In a moment a fresh army of soldiers, numbering many hundreds, rushed from the nest, and, descending the post, passed the guards at the base and fell upon the victorious foe, driving them back slowly, but steadily, to the edge of the step. The guards at the base of the post did not appear to leave their station to engage in the general fight, and only took part in it at all when the attacking soldiers tried to pass them to reach the nest.

The fight lasted about five hours, and ended in a total rout of the attacking party. Toward the close the wounded, doubtless of the invading party, were seen dragging themselves off the field, generally carrying with them some enemy which had fastened upon them by his strong jaws in a death embrace. In many cases these attached foes were found to consist only of a pair of jaws and a head, all the rest of the body having been torn away in the fight. With bolding tenacity the head held on firmly, resisting all efforts of the wounded ants to remove it. To test the force of his grip the jaws I touched some of the unwounded soldiers with a pair of steel forceps. They bit the end of the forceps so firmly that it was not possible to detach them by pressing them against the mouth of a collecting bottle without crushing the ant itself.

When the enemy had been driven off and the fighting was over the workers came down from the nest and carried away many of the dead. But when they ceased their labors hundreds of the dead were left, and from the fact that before lifting and dragging away a body two or more of them at the same time carefully examined it with their antennae, and then with one accord either took it away or left it where it was lying—never once seeming to differ in their decision—it would seem that even after death they distinguished friend from foe.

The wounded defenders of their home tried to crawl up to the nest. The loss of legs and antennae made this difficult, and while some succeeded many failed. When the latter found the task a vain one they crept slowly out into the grass and died. For two days after the battle a strong guard of soldiers was kept at the bottom of the post. Finally these were withdrawn, and the ant colony settled down to its usual quiet routine.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Railroads.

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