

# The Bloomfield Times.

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## The Bloomfield Times.

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### Two Escapes.

CONCLUDED.

ONLY two windows looked out upon the garden from the back of the guard-house. From one of those windows I had just now let myself down, and the other was partly shuttered up. I did not dare, however, openly to cross the garden. I dropped upon my face and crawled in the furrows between the rows of vegetables until I came to the ditch. Here the water rose nearly to my waist, but the banks on either side were considerably higher; and, by stooping, I found that I could walk without bringing my head to the level of the road. I thus followed the course of the ditch for some two or three hundred yards in the direction of Toulon, thinking that my pursuers would be less likely to suspect me of doubling back toward prison than of pushing forward toward the country. Half lying, half crouching under the rank grasses that fringed the bank above, I then watched the gathering shadows. By-and-by I heard the evening gun; and, a minute after, something like a distant sound of voices. Hark! was that a shout? Unable to endure the agony of suspense, I lifted my head and peeped cautiously out. There were lights moving in the windows of the guard-house, there were dark figures in the garden, there were hasty trappings of feet on the road above! Presently a light flashed over the water only a few yards from my hiding-place! I slid gently down at full length, and suffered the foul ooze to close noiselessly over me. Lying thus, I held my breath till the very beatings in my heart seemed to suffocate me and the veins of my temples were almost bursting. I could bear it no longer—I rose to the surface—I breathed again—I looked—I listened. All was darkness and silence. My pursuers were gone by!

I suffered an hour to go by, too, before I ventured to move again. By that time it was intensely dark, and had begun to rain heavily. The water in the ditch became a brawling torrent, through which I waded unheard, past the very windows of a guard-house.

After toiling through the water for a mile or more, I ventured out upon the road again; and so, with the rain and wind beating in my face, and the scattered boulders tripping me up continually, I made my way through the whole length of the winding pass, and came out upon the more open country about midnight. With no other guide than the wind, which was blowing from the northeast, and without even a star to help me, I then struck off to the right, following what seemed to be a rough by-road lying through a valley. By-and-by the rain abated, and I discerned the dark outlines of a chain of hills extending all along to the left of the road. These, I concluded, must be the Maures. All was well so far. I had taken the right direction, and was on the way to Italy.

Excepting to sit down, now and then, by the wayside, I never paused in my flight all the night through. Fatigue and want of food prevented me, it is true, from walking very fast; but the love of liberty was strong within me; and, by keeping steadily on, I succeeded in placing about eighteen miles between myself and Toulon. At five o'clock just as the day began to dawn, I heard a peal of chimes, and found that I was approaching a large town. In order to avoid this town I was forced to turn back for some distance, and take to the heights. The sun had now risen, and I dared go no further; so, having pulled some turnips in a field as I went along, I took refuge in a little lonely copse, in a hollow among the hills, and there lay all day in safety. When night again closed in I resumed my journey, keeping always among the mountains, and coming, now and then, on grand glimpses of moon-lit bays, and tranquil islands lying off the shore; now and then, on pastoral hamlets nestled up among the palmy heights, or on promontories overgrown with the cactus and the aloe. I rested all the second day in a ruined shed at the bottom of a deserted sand-pit, and in the evening feeling that I could no longer sustain life without

some fitting nourishment, made my way down toward a tiny fishing village on the coast below. It was quite dark by the time I reached the level ground. I walked boldly past the cottage of the fishermen, meeting only an old woman and a little child on the way, and knocked on the cure's door. He opened it himself. I told my story in a half dozen words. The good men believed and pitied me. He gave me food and wine, an old handkerchief to wrap around my head, an old coat to replace my convict's jacket, and two or three francs to help me on my way. I parted from him with tears.

I walked all that night again, and all the next, keeping somewhat close upon the coast, and hiding among the cliffs during the daytime. On the fifth morning, having left Antibes behind me during the night's march, I came to the banks of the Var, crossed the torrent about half a mile below the wooden bridge, plunged into the pine-woods on the Sardinian side of the frontier, and lay down to rest on Italian ground at last! My story would be too long to give in full all the details of how, though comparatively safe, I still pursued my journey by the least frequented ways—how I bought a file at the first hamlet to which I came, and freed myself from the iron ankle—how, having lurked about Nice till my hair and beard had grown, I begged my way to Genoa—how I worked my passage on board a small trader from Genoa to Fumicino, touching at all the ports along the coast—and how, coming slowly up the Tiber in a barge laden with oil and wine, I landed, one evening in March, on the Ripetta quay, in Rome. In so large a city, and at so great a distance from the scene of my imprisonment, I was personally safe. I might hope to turn my talents and education to account.

Outcast that I was, I slept that night under a dark arch near the theatre of Marcellus. The morning dawned upon a glorious day, and I crept out shivering into the sunshine. Lying crouching against a bit of warm wall, I caught myself wondering more than once how long it would be worth while to endure the agonies of hunger, and whether the brown waters of the Tiber were deep enough to drown a man. It seemed hard to die so young. My future might have been so pleasant, so honorable! The rough life that I had been leading of late, too, had strengthened me in every way, physically and mentally. I had grown taller. My muscles were more developed. I was twice as active as energetic, as resolute, as I had been a year before. And of what use were these things to me? I must die, and they could only serve to make me die the harder.

I got up and wandered about the streets, as I had wandered the day before. Once I asked for alms, and was repulsed. I followed mechanically in the stream of carriages and foot-passengers, and found myself, by-and-by, in the midst of the crowd that ebbs and flows continually about St. Peter's during Easter week. Stupefied and weary, I turned aside into the vestibule of the Sagrestia, and covered down in the shelter of a doorway. Two gentlemen were reading a printed paper wafled against a pillar close by.

"Good heavens!" said one to the other, "that a man should risk his neck for a few pauls!"

"Ay, and with the knowledge that, out of eighty workmen, as many as six or eight are dashed to pieces everytime," added his companion.

"Shocking! Why, that is an average of ten per cent!"

"No less. It is a desperate service."

"But a fine sight," said the first speaker, philosophically; and with this they walked away.

I sprang to my feet, and read the placard with avidity. It was headed, "Illumination of Saint Peter's," and announced that eighty workmen being required for the lighting of the dome and cupola, and three hundred for the cornices, pillars, colonnade, and so forth. In conclusion, it stated that every workman employed on the dome and cupola should receive in payment a dinner and twenty-four pauls, the wages of the rest being less than a third of that sum.

A desperate service, it was true; but I was a desperate man. After all, I could but die, and I might as well die after a good dinner as from starvation. I went at once to the administrators, was entered in his list, received a couple of pauls as earnest of the contract, and engaged to present myself punctually at eleven o'clock on the following morning. That evening I supped at a street stall, and, for a few jocochi, obtained leave to sleep on some straw in a loft over a stable at the back of the Via del Aroo.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of Easter Sunday, April sixteenth, I found myself, accordingly, in the midst of a crowd of poor fellows, most of whom, I dare say were as wretched as myself, waiting at the door of administrator's office. As the clock struck the hour, the folding-doors were thrown open, and we passed in a crowd, into a hall, where two long tables were laid for our accommodation. A couple of sentinels stood at the door; an usher marshalled us, standing, round tables, and a priest read grace.

As he began to read, a strange sensation came upon me. I felt compelled to look across the opposite table, and there—yes, by Heaven! there I saw Gasparo!

He was looking full at me, but his eyes dropped on meeting mine. I saw him turn vividly white. The recollection of all he had made me suffer, and of the dastardly blow he had dealt me on the day of our flight, overpowered for the moment even my surprise at seeing him in this place. Oh, that I might live to meet him yet, under the free sky, where no priest was praying, and no guards were by!

The grace over, we sat down and fell to. Not even anger had power to blunt the edge of my appetite just then. I ate like a famishing wolf, and so did most of the others. We were allowed no wine, and the doors were locked upon us, that we might not procure any elsewhere. It was a wise regulation, considering the task we had to perform.

The dinner lasted long, and when no one seemed disposed to eat more, the tables were cleared. Most of the men threw themselves, on the floor and benches and went to sleep, Gasparo among the number. Seeing this, I could refrain no longer. I went over and stirred him roughly with my foot.

"Gasparo! You know me!"

He looked up suddenly.

"Devil's mass! I thought you were at Toulon!"

"It is not your fault that I am not at Toulon! Listen to me. If you and I survive this night, you shall answer to me for your treachery!"

He glared at me from under his deep brows, and without replying, turned over on his face again, as if to sleep.

"Ecco un maladetto!" (There's an accursed fellow!) said one of the others, with a significant shrug, as I came away.

"Do you know anything of him?" I asked.

"Nothing, but that he is said to be a wolf and a blasphemer."

I could learn no more, so I also stretched myself upon the floor, as far as possible from my enemy, and in a very few moments fell profoundly asleep.

At seven, the guards roused those who still slept, and served each man with a small mug of this wine. We were then formed into a double file, marched round by the back of the cathedral, and conducted up and inclined plane to the roof below the dome. From this point, a long series of staircases and winding passages carried us up between the double walls of the dome; and, at different stages in the ascent, a certain number of us were detached and posted ready for work. I was detached about half way up, and I saw Gasparo going higher still. When we were all posted, the superintendents came round and gave us our instructions. At a given signal every man was to pass out through the loop-hole or window before which he was placed, and seat himself astride upon a narrow shelf of wood hanging to a strong rope just below. This rope came through the window, was wound round a roller, and secured from within. At the next signal a lighted torch was put in his right hand, and he was to grasp the rope firmly with his left. At the third signal the rope was to be unwound from within by an assistant placed there for the purpose, he was to be allowed to slide rapidly down over the curve of the dome, and, while thus sliding, was to apply his torch to every lamp he passed in his downward progress.

Having received these instructions, we waited, each man at his window, until the first signal should be given.

It was fast getting dark, and the silver illumination had been lighted since seven. All the great ribs of the dome, as far as I could see; all the cornices and friezes of the facade below; all the columns and parapets of the great colonnade surrounding the piazza four hundred feet below, were traced out in lines of paper lanterns, the light from which, subdued by the paper, gleamed with a silvery fire which had a magical and wondrous look. Between and among these lanterns were placed at different intervals all over the cathedral on the side

facing the piazza, iron cups, called padelle, ready filled with tallow and turpentine. To light those on the dome and cupola was the perilous task of the sanpietrini; when they were all lighted, the golden illumination would be effected.

A few moments of intense suspense elapsed. At every second the evening grew darker, the lanterns burned brighter, the surging hum of thousands in the piazza and streets below rose louder to our ears. I felt the quickening breath of the assistant at my shoulder—I could almost hear the beating of my heart. Suddenly, like the passing of an electric current, the first signal flew from lip to lip. I got out and crossed my legs firmly round the board—with the second signal, I seized the blazing torch—with the third, I felt myself launched, and lighting every cup as I glided past, saw all the mountainous dome above and below me spring into lines of leaping flame. The clock was now striking eight, and when the last stroke sounded, the whole cathedral was glowing in outlines of fire. A roar, like the roar of a great ocean, rose up from the multitude below, and seemed to shake the very dome against which I was clinging. I could even see the light upon the gazing faces, the crowd upon the bridge of St. Angelo, and the boats swarming along the Tiber.

Having dropped safely to the full length of my rope, and lighted my allotted share of lamps, I was now sitting in secure enjoyment of this amazing scene. All at once I felt the rope vibrate. I looked up, saw a man clinging by one hand to the iron rod supporting the padelle, and with the other—Merciful Heaven! It was the Piedmontese firing the rope above me with his torch!

I had no time for thought—I acted upon instinct. It was done in one fearful moment. I clambered up like a cat, dashed my torch full in the felon's face, and grasped the rope an inch or two above the spot where it was burning! Blinded and baffled, he uttered a terrible cry, and dropped like a stone. Through all the roar of the living ocean below, I could hear the dull crash with which he came down upon the leaded roof. Echoing through all the years that have gone by since that night, I hear it now.

I had scarcely drawn breath, when I found myself being hauled up. The assistance came not a moment too soon, for I was sick and giddy with horror, and fainted as soon as I was safe in the corridor. The next day I waited on the administrator, and told him all that had happened. My statement was corroborated by the vacant rope from which Gasparo had descended, and the burnt fragment by which I had been drawn up. The administrator repeated my story to a prelate high in office; and while none, even of the sanpietrini, suspected that my enemy had come by his death in any unusual manner, the truth was whispered from palace to palace, until it reached the Vatican. I received much sympathy, and such pecuniary assistance as enabled me to confront the future without fear. Since that time my fortunes have been various. I have lived in many countries, and known many strange adventures; but never, before or since, found myself in such terrible company as on the dome of St. Peter's, that memorable Easter Sunday night, where I made my second escape from death.

### A DESPERATE FIGHT.

THE celebrated fight between Adam Poe and the Shawnee chief, Black Father, has been spoken of in the histories of early Kentucky, but I believe the particulars of that combat have never been given correctly to the public.

The fight was remarkable not only on account of the well known powers of the parties engaged, but for the exceeding stubbornness with which it was conducted, and the many different phases it assumed before being brought to an end.

They literally fought on the earth, in the air and under the water.

Adam Poe, one of the first settlers of Kentucky, had often expressed a desire to meet the chief of the Shawnees in a hand-to-hand combat, and these boasts having reached the ears of Black Father, he declared his intention of seeking out the daring white man.

This, for two reasons, he actually did, but circumstances combined to keep them apart for that time. Finally, however, the opportunity came.

Adam Poe and his brother had been out hunting, and were returning towards sundown, bearing a buck on a pole between them.

When passing a thicket a shot was fired

at them, the ball lodging in the head of the deer, which was next to Adam Poe.

To drop the burden and rush for the ambush was but the work of a second, Adam taking the right and his brother taking the left hand side.

The thicket proving much larger than either thought, they became more widely separated than was intended, and Adam was upon the point of returning to where the deer had been left, when at a distance he discovered the gigantic form of the Shawnee chief, who was just in the act of firing upon him.

Adam had time to reach cover before the shot was made, and then began a series of tactics, such as were rarely witnessed in these wilds, for two of the most noted warriors of the day were each striving to gain an advantage over the other.

Foot by foot they drew nearer to each other, leaping from tree to tree, from stump to stump, or rock to rock, as the case might be.

Imperceptible to each other, perhaps, they gradually "worked" round, until both stood on the verge of a high bluff bank overlooking the river facing each other, but some twenty paces apart.

Here, from behind separate trees, the wily foemen strove to obtain a shot; and at last, Adam, thinking he saw his chance, fired at the exposed hip of the chief.

He missed his aim, and like an unchained lion, the gigantic Indian rushed from his cover and bore down upon the nowise daunted white man.

Half-way they met, the Indian wielding his tomahawk, having cast aside his rifle, while Adam laid his hopes and prospects upon the keen blade of his hunting knife.

With a shock they both met midway, and then began a struggle such as is rarely witnessed between two of the human kind.

Poe was not quite as tall as the Shawnee but he was fully as strong, and much more active; and so the fight was about upon an equal footing.

For many minutes they struggled back and forth upon the grassy level, now closing in the attempt to throw each other, and falling in this, again resorting to blows, dealt with tomahawk or knife.

By this time both were wounded in several places, the chief probably the more severely of the two.

At length in making a savage stroke with his weapon the grasp of the redskin slipped, and the light ax went whirling far into the river.

In an instant the Indian grappled, and a struggle, fiercer than any that had yet taken place, ensued, each putting forth every effort until, approaching to near the precipice, they missed footing, and went tumbling into the stream locked in a deadly embrace.

At the point where they fell, the stream was very deep, and the current swift and strong.

The advantage now laid with Adam. He was a practiced swimmer, while he quickly discovered that his opponent could not swim at all.

The Indian, aware of this, in turn strove to regain the shore, but was thwarted at every point by Poe, who would jerk him back into deep water, and then both would go under together.

Finally, falling further out than heretofore, the combatants were caught by the current, and quickly borne some distance from land.

The fight was now all in the white man's favor, and would have been quickly ended, but for an unlooked for and unfortunate circumstance. Adam's brother suddenly appeared upon the scene, and taking in his brother's peril, as he thought, at a glance, ventured upon the hazardous experiment of finishing the chief by a shot.

The ball sped, but not truly, for it struck Adam in the shoulder, almost paralyzing the left arm.

His situation now became desperate indeed.

He could force the Indian beneath the current, but he could not hold him there and seeing that his own strength was rapidly departing, he determined to "out-wind" the enemy.

With this object he suddenly threw his arm about the savage's neck, and together they disappeared beneath the surface.

Adam's brother, standing upon the bank unconscious of the harm he had done, witnessed this sudden disappearance in dismay.

Long he waited for the re-appearance of one or the other, until, at length, becoming thoroughly alarmed he leaped into the stream and swam for the spot.

He reached it not a moment too soon. Adam had out-winded the Indian, and in doing so, had nearly drowned himself.

They reached the shore in safety but Adam never recovered from the great exertion.