

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson

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TERMS:

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MISCELLANEOUS.

THE DUELLISTS.

I have witnessed many duels, but we usually settled these matters with a word—better method, by the way, and more worthy a soldier than you could pistols bring. Any paltrion may pull a trigger, but it requires the firm hand and steady eye of a man to manage the steel. However as I was saying, when I was at Jena they called each other out as merrily as beaux and belles to a dance. It was but treading on a toe—the crush of an elbow—nay, an accidental look that fell on them when they wished not observation, and the next day, or by St. Andrew, the next hour there was the clash of steel, and the stamping of feet on the green sward—the kindling and flashing of fiery eyes—and plunge and parry, and cut and thrust, till one or both lay stretched at length—a pass through the body—a gash open in the cheek—the skull cleft down; not a hand off and the blood bubbling and gushing forth like a rill of mountain water. There were more than on these fellow devils, I should say, who, when they found among them some strange student, timid or retired whose character they were unacquainted with, or whose courage they doubted—would pass the hint out of mere sport, brush his shirt; charge the offence upon him—demand an apology too humble for a hare—and dismiss him from the adventure with an opened shoulder or day-light through his body.

There was among us one fellow named Mentz, who assumed, and wore with impunity, the character of the dead bully. He was foremost in all the deviltry. His pistol was death, and his broad sword cut like the scissors of fate. It was curious to see the fellow fire. One, two, and three—and good bye to his antagonists. His friendship was courted by all—for to be his enemy, was to be in a bloody grave. At length grown fearless of being called to account, he took pride in insulting strangers and ever women. His appearance was formidable. A great curly giant, with shaggy black hair, huge whiskers and grim mustachios, three inches long, twisted under his nose. A sort of beauty he was, too, and among the women—Lord help us—wherever those mustachios showed themselves, every opponent abandoned the ground. It was at last really dangerous to have a sweetheart for out of pure bravado, Mentz would push forward, make love to the lady, frighten her swain, and either terrify or fascinate herself. Should the doomed lover offer resistance he had no more to do but call a surgeon, and happy enough he considered himself if he escaped with the loss of an arm or an eye. He had killed four men who had never injured him, wounded seven more, and fought twenty duels; He once challenged a whole club, who had black-balled him anonymously, and was pacified only by being re-admitted, though all the members immediately resigned, and the club was broke up.

At last there came a youth into the university—slender, quiet and boyish-looking, with a handsome face, though somewhat pale; and his demeanor, though generally shy, was noble and self-possessed. He

had been but a short time among us, however, before he was set down as a cowardly creature, and prime game for the 'devils broke loose'—as the gang of the Mentz termed themselves. The coy youth shunned all the riots and revels of the university insulted no one, and if his mantle brushed against that of another, apologized so immediately, so gracefully, and so gently, that the devil himself could not have fixed a quarrel upon him. It soon appeared, that the lovely girl loved this young stranger. Now Mentz had singled Gertrude out for himself and avowed his perference publicly. Arnold, for thus was the new student called, was rarely if ever tempted to our feasts but once he came unexpectedly on casual invitation. To the great surprise and interest of the company Mentz himself was there, and seated himself, unabashed, at the table though an unbidden guest. The strongest curiosity at once arose to witness the result for Mentz had sworn that he would compel Arnold on their first meeting, to leg pardon on his knees for the audacity of having addressed his mistress. It had not appeared that Arnold knew any thing of Mentz's character, for he sat cheerfully and gaily at the board, with so much the manners of a high-born gentleman that every one admitted at once his intelligence, his grace and his beauty, and regretted the abyss on the brink of which he stood.

"What ho!" at length shouted Mentz, as the evening had advanced, and the wine began to mount, 'a toast, come, drink it all; and he who refuses it is a poltroon and a coward, I quaff this goblet, full to the brim, to the health and happiness of Gertrude de Saale, the fairest of the fair;—who says he knows a fairer, is a black liar, and I will write it on his forehead with a red hot brand.'

Never before had Mentz betrayed his brutal soul so openly in words, but the guests who knew that he was heated with wine, passed over his coarse insult with shouts of laughter, and drank with riotous confusion to Gertrude, fairest of the fair. As the gleaming goblets were emptied, and dashed rattled down again upon the table, Mentz arose, and with the bloated importance of a despot, gazed around to see that all present had fulfilled his orders. Every goblet was emptied but one, which stood unopened—untasted. On perceiving this, the ruffian leaned forward, fixed his eye on the cup, struck his brawny hand down fiercely on the table, which returned a thundering clash and rattle, and then repeated with a voice husky with rage—

'There is a cup full. By St. Anthony, I will make the owner swallow its measure of molten lead if it remains thus one instant longer.'

'Drink it, Arnold—drink it boy, keep thy hands out of useless broils,' whispered a student near him, rather advanced in age.

'Drink, friend,' muttered another drily, 'or he will not be slow in doing his threat, I promise thee.'

'Empty the cup, man,' cried a third, never frown and turn pale, or thy young head will lie lower than thy feet ere to-morrow's sun-set.'

It is Mentz, the duellist,' said a fourth, dost thou not know his wondrous skill. He will kill thee, as if thou were a deer, if thou oppose him, he is more merciless than a wild boar. Drink, man drink.'

These good natured suggestions were uttered in hasty and vehement whispers, and while the students were thus endeavoring to avert the bloody catastrophe, the furious beast again struck his giant hand down violently on the table, without speaking as if words were to feeble for his rage.

During this interesting scene, the youth had remained motionless, cool, and silent. A slight pallor, but evidently more of indignation than fear, came over his handsome features, and his eyes dilated with emotion rested full and firm upon Mentz.

'By the mass, gentleman,' said he at

length 'I am a stranger here, and ignorant of the manners prevalent in universities, but if yonder person be sane, and this no joke.'—

'Joke!' thundered Mentz, foaming at the lips.

'I must tell you that I came from a part of the country where we neither give nor take such jokes or such insults.'

'Hast thou taken leave of thy friends, said Mentz, partly hushed by astonishment, and art thou tired of life, that thou hurriest on so blindly to a bloody pillow, boy? Drink as I have told thee, to Gertrude the fairest of the fair!' and his huge round eyes opened like those of a bull upon a daring victim.

'That Gertrude de Saale is fair and lovely,' cried the youth rising, 'may not be denied by me, But I demand by what mischance I find her name this night, common at a board of rioters, and polluted by the lips of a drunkard and a ruffian!'

'By the bones of my father,' said Mentz in a tone of deep and dire anger, which had ere then appalled my father, your doom is sealed. Be your blood on your own head; but,' said he observing that the youth, instead of cowering, bore himself more loftily 'what folly is this? Drink, lad drink, and I hurt thee not. I love thy gallant bearing, and my game is not such as thou.'

He added this with a wavering of manner, which had never before been witnessed in him, for never before had he been opposed so calmly and so fiercely; and for a moment he quailed beneath the fiery glances darted at him from one whom he supposed meeker than a dove; but ashamed of his transient fear he added:—

'Come to me, poor child bring with thee thy goblet—bend at my foot—quaff it, as I have said, and out of pity I spare thy young head.'

What was the astonishment of the company, on beholding Arnold, as if effectually awed by a moment's reflection, and the ferocious enmity of so celebrated and deadly a foe; actually do as he was commanded. He rose—took the cup—slowly approached the seat of his insulter, knelt and raised the cup to his lips. Murmurs of 'shame!' 'shame!' 'poltroon!' 'coward!' came hot and thick from the group of spectators, who had arisen in the excitement of their curiosity, and stood eagerly bending forward with every eye fixed upon the object of their contempt. A grim smile of savage triumph distorted the features of Mentz, who shouted with a hoarse and drunken laugh: 'Drink deep—down with it to the dregs!'

Arnold, however, touched the rim to his lips, and waited a moment's silence with an expression so scornful and composed, that the hisses and exclamations were again quelled. When every sound had ceased to a dead silence.

'Never,' he said, 'shall I refuse to drink to the glory of a name I once loved and honored: Gertrude, fairest of the fair!—But he added suddenly rising and drawing up his figure with dignity that silenced every breath, 'for thee thou drunken, bragging, foolish beast—I scorn—I spit upon—I defy thee—and thus be punished thy base brutal insolence and thy stupid presumption!'

As he spoke he dashed the contents of the ample goblet full in the face of Mentz, and then with all his strength, hurled the mazy goblet at the same mark. The giant reeled and staggered a few paces back, and amid the shining liquor on his drenched clothes and dripping features, a stream of blood was observed to trickle down his forehead.

Never before was popular feeling more suddenly and violently reversed. The object of their vilest execration flashed upon them with the immediate brightness of a superior being. A loud and irrepressible burst of applause broke from every lip, till the broad and heavy rafters above their head, and very foundations of the floor shook and trembled. But the repeat

of joy and approbation ceased, for although this inspiring drama had so nobly commenced, it was uncertain how it might terminate. Before the tyrant recovered from the stoned and bewildered trance into which the blow, combined with the shame, pain, astonishment and drunkenness had thrown him, several voices, after the obstreperous calls for silence, usual on such occasions, addressed the youth, who stood cool and erect, with folded arms waiting the course of events.

'Brave Arnold—noble Arnold—a gallant deed! the blood of a true gentleman in his vein.'

'But can'st thou fight?' cried one.

'I am a simple student and an artist by profession, I have devoted myself to the pencil, not the sword.'

'But thou can'st use it a little, can'st not?' asked another.

But indifferently, answered the youth:

'And how art thou with the pistol?' demanded a third.

'My hand is unpractised,' replied Arnold I have no skill in shedding human blood.'

'Fore gad, then, rash boy, what has tempted thee to this fatal extremity?'

'Hatred of oppression,' replied the youth 'in all its forms; and willingness to die rather than submit to insult.'

'Die—die then thou shalt, and ere to-morrow's sun shall set,' thundered Mentz, starting up in a frenzy, and with a hoarse and broken voice that made the hearts of the hearers shudder as if it were the howl of a dog or demon. 'I challenge thee to mortal combat.'

'And I accept the challenge.'

'It is for thee to name time, place, and weapon; but, as thou lovest me, let it not be longer than to-morrow night, or I shall burst with rage and impatience.'

'I love thee not, base dog,' replied Arnold, 'but thou shalt not die so inglorious a death. Will fight thee, therefore, to-night.'

'By the mother of heaven, boy,' cried Mentz, more surprised, 'thou art in haste to sup in hell; and the ruffian lowered his voice, 'art thou mad?'

'Be that my chance,' answered Arnold. 'I shall not be likely to meet, even in hell a companion so brutal as thou, unless, which I mean shall be the case, thou bear me company.'

'To-night then be it,' said Mentz, 'though to-night my hand is not steady, for wine and anger are no friend to the nerves.'

'Dost thou refuse me, then?' demanded the youth with a sneer.

'By the mass, no; but to-night is dark the moon is down, the stars are clouded, and the wind goes by in heavy puffs and gusts. Hear it even now!'

'Therefore,' said the youth apparently more coldly as his fierce rival grew more perceptibly agitated—'therefore will we lay down our lives here, in this hall, on this spot, on this instant, even as thou standest now.'

'There is no one here who will be my friend,' said Mentz, so evidently sobered and subdued by the singular composure and self-possession of his antagonist, that all present held him in contempt and no one stirred.

'No matter,' cried Arnold; 'I will myself forego the same privilege.'

'And your weapon?' said Mentz,

'Are here,' cried Arnold, drawing them from his bosom 'A snare pair never drew blood. The choice is yours.'

The company now began to fancy that Arnold had equivocated in disclaiming his skill as a duellist, and from his invincible composure thought him a more fatal master of the weapon than the bully himself. The latter himself also partook of this opinion.

'Young man,' he cried in a voice clouded and broken but stopped and said no farther.

'Your choice,' exclaimed Arnold, presenting the pistol. Mentz seized one despatchedly, and said: 'Now, name your distance.'

'Blood thirsty wolf,' said Arnold, 'there shall be no distance.'

He then turned and addressed the company:

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'Jeem ths not either savage nor insane, that I sacrifice myself and this brutal wretch thus before your eyes, and to certain and instant destruction. For me, I confess I have no value in life. She whom I loved, I have sworn to forget and if I existed a thousand years, should probably never see again.—This ruffian is a coward, and fears to die, though he does not fear daily to merit death. I have long heard of his baseness, and regarded him as an assassin. The enemy of the human race, and of God a dangerous beast whom it will be a mercy and a virtue to destroy. My own life I would be well rid of, but would not fling it away idly when its loss may be made subservient to the destruction of vice, and the relief of humanity. Here, then, I yield my breath, and here, too, this trembling and shrieking caravan shall close his course of debauchery and murder. My companions, farewell; should any one hereafter chance to meet Gertrude de Saale, tell her I have flung away a life which her falsehood made me despise; and now, recreant,' he said in a fierce tone, turning towards Mentz, 'plant thy pistol to my bosom.—I will plant mine to thine. Let one of the company tell three, and the third number be the signal to fire.'

With an increased paleness in his countenance, but with even more ferocity and firmness, Arnold threw off his cap, displaying his high brow and glossy ringlets—his lips were closed and firm—and his eyes, which glistered with a deadly glare, were fixed on Mentz. He then placed himself in an attitude of firing, broadened his exposed chest full before his face, and, with a stamp of fury and impatience raised the weapon. The brow-beaten bully attempted to do the same; but the pistol held loosely in his grasp wavered by accident or intention, went off before the signal. Its contents passed through the garments of Arnold, who levelled the muzzle of his own and said calmly—'On your knees—base slave—vile dog, or you die!'

Unable any longer to support his frame the unmasked coward sunk on both knees and prayed for life with right earnest vehemence. Again, wild shouts of applause and delight and peals of riotous laughter stuned his ears. As he rose from his humiliating posture Arnold touched him contemptuously with his foot. Groans and hisses now began to be mingled with divers mingles. Mentz covered his face with his hands, and rushed from the room. He was never subsequently seen among us.

ANECDOTE OF JOHN ADAMS.

We find in Whitney's History of the town of Quincy, Mass, the following anecdote of the boyhood of the elder Adams, which may provoke a smile, as well as illustrate the economy and simplicity of those easy times in New England. The public school in Quincy was taught for many years by a Mrs. Belcher. It was a custom with her to carry her corn to mill herself, except when some of her scholars lent her a helping hand. John Adams, (one of the number) afterwards President of the United States, was a favorite among the rest, and when he carried the corn, she gave him as a reward three coppers, and charged him at the same time to keep his money to buy land with. It is unnecessary to add how well he profited by early instruction.

'Pa,' said a little white haired urchin as he was eyeing some bank notes his father was counting, 'why do they put the picture of farmers, mechanics, and working men on bank bills?'

'I don't know, my son.'

'Well I do pa, I've just found out. It's because they have to suffer more than other people when the banks fail.'

It should seem that indolence itself would incline a person to be honest, as it requires infinitely greater pains and contrivance to be a knave.