Columbia Democrat.

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

H. WEBB, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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MISCELLANEOUS.

MARIE, THE MURDERER.

AN INCIDENT IN REAL LIFE.

During that disastrous period of Napoleon's career, known as the 'Hundred days,' a portion of the Province of Morbian in Brittang rose in arms, and a battle took place near Auray, between the insurgents and skirmishing parties, who were usually designated the 'Blues.' The affair was so minute a spark of civil war, that it deserved no mention in history; yet it cost the lives of some hundreds of men whose blood was poured out like water in the trenches of the deep and sunken roads which traverse that peculiar country. It was in those trenches that most of the bodies were found and the magistrate whose duty it was to clear the field of battle after the fight, exclaimed, with a sort of barbarous naivette, 'that it looked like the end of a harvest frolic, where the men were sleeping off their drunkeness.'

On the second day after the battle, just at the grey of the morning, a young peasant girl, with a sickle on her arm, took her way to her usual daily labor in the fields As she proceeded slowly along the road she looked curiously around upon the trees pierced with bullets, the hedges torn and broken, and the ground beaten and trampled by as many feet. For a great distance, the road was litterly strewn with buttons, bits of braided worsted, the remains of epaulettes, cartouch boxes, fragments of Briton caps, pierced by balls or bayonets, plashes of half congealed blood, all the horrible indications of a fierce and recent conflict. But the bodies of the slain had already disappeared During the night the peasants had given them a christian burial, and the women had traversed the battle ground with sacks upon their shoulders, alternately despoiling a dead enemy, and offering up prayers for a lost friend. Much rich booty had been obtained, and to judge by the preoccupied manner of the peasant girl, as she scrutinized the thickets on both sides of the road, she was not without expectation of gleaning some remnants of the plunder.

But her hopes seemed to grow fainter as she proceeded, and as she reached a wide marsh overgrown with thick brush wood she quickened her pace, when she was startled by a sudden movement among the rushes that bordered the morass Almost at the same instant the clashing of iron struck upon her ear, the point of a bayonet appeared glittering in the foilage, and a bloodstained figure feebly and painfully dragged itself forth from its lurking place in the marsh. The girl stopped, she uttered not the slightest sound, but she held with a firmer grasp the handle of her sickle. The imploring gestures of the wounded man, together with a few words which he uttered in the language of the country, seemed to excite her interest, and she approached a few steps towards him. He had by this time succeeded by the aid of his gun, in rising to his knee and the girl discovered by his blu jacket and the device on his buttons, that he belonged to one of those companies of marines who had fought so valiantly at the battle of Auray. As she paused with an air of indecision, the wounded man entreated her to approach, and in order to assure her that he had no power, even if he possessed the will to molest her, showed her that his leg was broken by a musket ball. Emboldened by this, the girl advanced nearer, and demanded what he desired of her.

'Where are my comrades, the blue?' was his first question.

'They are gone.'

'Gone! since when!

'They went yesterday.'

'Impossible! why surely we were victorious.'

The girl made no reply, but stood silent and unmoveable as if she had not comprehended his question. She replied in such a manner as to make him believe that he was abandoned, without hope of succor from his companions. The poor fellow had been wounded at the close of the day while pursuing the Chouans, and had passed the night in the morass, suffering the most excruciating pain, and only sustained by the hope that some lucky chance might discover his condition to his comrades. The news of their departure almost drove him to despair. He had not strength to follow them, and he dared not show himself in open lay, lest he should be assassinated by the hostile peasantry. His only hope now rested on the girl. He was a native of her own province, his father and brothers were fisherman of Lodmariaquer, only a few leagues distant, and they could save him if informed of his danger. He conjured her, therefore, to seek them, he employed supplication, tears, even menaces, but she was insensible to all. While he was talking with her she remained standing at a little distance, with her eyes greedily searching for something she could appropriate, and if they accidently fell upon the poor sailor at her feet. That look discovered to her a prize. Eagerly approaching him, she said in a low hoarse whisper:—

'If you would have me go to o Lemariaquer, you must give your watch.' As she spoke she seized the chain, but the wounded man throwing himself back, and repulsing her with all his remaining strength, cried: 'Not now, not now, when you return when you return with my father, you shall have the watch and the money.'

'Have you money too?' asked the girl.

'Yes it shall all be yours when'

'Where is the money?'

'I have it safe.'

'Show it me.'

'Promise then to save me.'

'Show me the money.'

The poor fellow drew towards him the knapsack which he had flung off, and bent over it, while his feeble hands began slowly to loosen the buckles that closed it.

The girl made one step backwards, to give force to her blow, and the next instant the sickle descended upon his head with a force that clove him to the brain. The victim never breathed again,—he stretched out his arms and fell heavily forward, with his face resting on the knapsack. The murderess only waited to be sure that life was extinct, then deliberately despoiling him of his watch money, and clothing, she quietly washed the stains of blood from her hands and feet in the pool beside her, and went on to her daily labour in the field. On her return home at night she displayed her prize to her friends, simply remarking that she had been lucky to find the body of a Blue in her way—an explanation quite satisfactory at a moment when such chances were frequent in a country filled with commotion.

On that same evening, however, the body of the unfortunate soldier was found and recognised by his family. Several circumstances conjoined to throw suspicion on the girl, and ere many days had elapsed no doubt remained of her guilt. The murdered marine was a conscript—one of that numerous class of young men who were compelled in those days to endure an opinion along with a uniform, and to wear the cockade of the governing party, whatever that party might happen to be. A native of Brittany, he had been forcibly enrolled at Brest, and when his regiment was sent into the interior of the country, he was necessarily compelled to combat on his native soil and against his own people. This peculiar position was well understood by the peasants, for it had been the fate of many of their children, and the death of the youth was lamented therefore like that of a friend.

This sympathy for the victim was of course accompanied by the deepest indignation against the murderess. There seemed such double dyed wickedness in the deed that every heart was revolted by it. He had fallen by the hand of a woman, while he was appealing to womanly tenderness, and the meanness of the motive seemed to add a deeper guilt to the heinous crime. As it always happens in those generous re-actions of feeling, when party spirit is suddenly quelled for a moment by the voice of equity, the people seemed as if they could scarcely express their indignation with sufficient force. As the laws either could not or would not punish the criminal, public opinion took upon itself the task. The girl was driven out of the community, and avoided by all, as if the taint of leprosy was upon her. No farmer would employ her to labour in his fields, no proprietor would rent her a cabin on his domain. Her only refuge was the church porch, where she crouched like an accursed thing at the door of the sanctuary she dared not enter. Every one shrank aside as her shadow fell upon them in her aimless wanderings. If she approached the fountain, whence the village drew its supply of water, the women usually assembled there would instantly hush their idle gossip, snatch up their half filled pitchers, and hurry away, exclaiming, 'Make room for the murderess!'

To set the final seal to her public reprobation, a ballad was composed, setting forth her horrid crime in coarse, but graphic language of popular poetry. Wherever the unhappy creature ventured to appear, she heard the tones of this vengeful song. Her punishment was now no longer the ordinary penalty of crime, having its limit of time and place, and demanding only the liberty or the life of the offender. Her guilt, by this new species of retribution, had become public property, its punishment was identified with the most durable memorials of public morals and manners. It was not recorded in the dusty volumes of the law, but it was sent abroad on the wings of music and poetry, to reach every ear, and to turn from her every heart. The mark of Cain was upon her brow, her fellow beings were her tormentors, withholding their hands from life, yet inflicting a daily death upon her by their loathings and scorn. In vain she sought to fly from the scene of her guilt. Her crime seemed borne on the very winds of heaven, and where ever the voice of the sheperd broke the stillness of nature, there resounded the frightful burden of that avenging song.

Once, as she wandered away from human scorn she beheld in a meadow at some distance from Auray, a child at play among the daisies. A sudden yearning filled her heart, she approached the merry boy, and seated herself beside him. For more than a year the desolate creature had not touched a human hand, or listened to the sound of a kindly human voice, and she now found a moment of inexpressible happiness in the innocent carresses of the happy child.

Too joyous to know anything of fear he nestled beside her, glad to find a companion in his sports, while she pressing him to her bosom, amused him, after the manner of a tender mother by tales and songs. The child had listened with delight, but when she had finished he looked in her face, and as if, in his simplicity he sought to repay her kindliness, he said—

'My father taught me a prettier song than yours;' and he began to sing—

O listen, Christian neighbors, to a crime of deepest hue,
Marie Marker with her sickle has killed the wounded Blue.'

At these terrible words the unhappy girl uttered a wild cry, and dropping the unconscious child from her knee, fled like a hunted wild beast into the woods. It was the final blow of the unseen avenger; her punishment was greater than she could bear, & from that hour Marie became a hopeless maniac.

When I first saw her she had been some years in this state, and I shall never forget her singular appearance. She was a large robust girl of twenty-four, with a remarkable squareness of outline, and a certain rigidity of motion, that resembled the awkward movements of an ill jointed wooden figure. There was no play of muscles visible, no tracery of veins discovered beneath her tanned and swathy skin. She reminded me of those stone images of the virgin which stand in the nicest of consecrated fountains—coarse & ill-carged statues, from which art has been unable to remove more than half the veiling granite, and which leave you in doubt whether they are specimens of imperfect human skill, or simply rude stones, which some freak of nature has stamped with half developed resemblance to humanity.

Upon a nearer view, the countenance of the murderess had a singularly austere and sinister expression. It was a face very angular in its contour, and literally seamed with cress lines which disturbed and offended the gazer's eye, while in her wild and wandering look there shone out a frightful degree of cunning ferocity. She bore in her every feature the stamp of that bastard Celtic race, in whom primitive qualities have degenerated into corresponding vices. She rarely replied to any questions that might be addressed to her, and generally seemed as strong in soul as in body, but if a single word of that frightful song reached her ears, then, as if struck by some galvanic power, the coarse statue started into life and become once more suffering humanity. She would utter terrible cries, toss her arms writhe her body in the most terrible convorsions, then suddenly springing up, would fly with the utmost speed, repeating as she ran the accusing couplet of the dreadful song, while, as her voice rose louder and louder on the air, the avenging words seemed to take fiercer and stronger hold upon her distracted feelings. It seemed as if remorse was incarnate in that hideous form: or rather, that two beings were inclosed in that rigid frame, on one of whom had been imposed the task of torturing the other, and that the outraged conscience was forever giving chase to the sinful soul. Every feature, every gesture expressed the emotions of this double character—the avenger and the victim. By turns she wept, raved, prayed and cursed, implored pity, and denounced vengeance. It was a spectacle from which the eye turned in horror' for it was like the struggle of the executioner and the criminal on the brink of the scaffold.—*The Excelsior.*

SCARED BY A GRIDIRON.

INITIATION FRUSTRATED.

A number of years since says the Cincinnati Commercial, when our city was new, and there was no splendid halls, the Masonic body held its sittings in the upper story of a wellknown public house, kept by Major S———, who was himself a high mason. As is the case now, many new members were offering, or asking admission into the fellowship and mysteries of this ancient body of bretheren.—Why it is, we cannot say, but there are many stories afloat among the people, and there ever have been that the novitiation is introduced to a seat on a *red hot gridiron* That in making a man a free and accepted brother, they must undergo a great many very interesting ceremonies besides being shown the gripe and signals of the order.

On one occasion—and it must be some 10 years ago, according to our informant of many of the particulars—the lodgement, and a young good-looking, spruce clerk of one of the stores came into the lower rooms of the building, it having been arranged to initiate him that evening. He was ordered to remain below until all was ready for his reception.—The time dragging, and his mind conjuring up what he was about to meet, he commenced walking backwards and forwards through the passage leading to the stair way of the lodge. On the right of the passway was the kitchen, and directly before him as he passed the door, was a large fire burning, it being in that season of the year requiring artificial heat for bodily comfort.

It so happened that the *Major* kept an Irish servant girl, and she was the only person left with the stranger in that part of the house.—Betty had heard of the hot gridiron operation of the Mason, and knowing that the young clerk was to be admitted that night, thought she would have a bit of innocent fun. She took a large gridiron, on which she had broiled many a steak, and placed it on the fire in full view of the young expectant of mysterious gripes—stirred up the blazing fire and returned to watch the result. Clerky continued to pass and repass the door, and ever and anon Betty saw *him* cast a wishful glance at the fire-place! The iron was growing redder every time he passed He shook his head—a sigh escaped him! Betty was in ecstacies. To place her victim still deeper in agony, she placed a small screen taken from leading to the hat as if to hide from his view the fearful instrument of *honorable* torture.

As the cunning jade was retreating, the young man with a wink of the eye, a beck of the hand, and a 'come here' of the head succeeded in arresting her progress for a moment.

'A—a—what is the gridiron on the fire for *now*,' said he, 'my good girl, will you tell me?'

'Oh, sir! but I really don't like to. I wouldn't be polite.'

'Oh! never mind I'm *exceedingly* anxious to know.'

'Why there is a Lodge up stairs to night And a—'

'Well well I know there is a lodge up stairs to night. But what is that iron in the fire for! Tell me good girl I pray you! —Tell me quickly.'

'Why—why—I—'

'Speak out. Do! I'm aching to hear!'

'Why the Major told me as how they're going to *make a Mason to night* and that's all I know about it.'

That was enough The oft told tale was true! That gridiron was for him. A change came over him in a moment. He would not be burned with an iron as hot as that by now. The putting on of hat and coat was a momentary affair, he sought the street when legs if ever did their duty

Soon after the brothers having got all things ready the Major came down for his young friend but met Betty who seeing the consequences came towards her master sobbing and crying in the most affected manner.

The Major soon learned the story of the young man's flight and also the cause and answered.'

'Never mind Betty. If he's such a fool as that we don't want him.'

One would naturally suppose that the Lodge had a fine laugh over the good joke upon the return of the Major. The inevitable conclusion is that the young clerk never offered himself again as a candidate for admission into the mysteries of free and accepted Masons and a seat on their rascally *red hot gridiron.*

INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTION

On the morning of our national birth day, the fourth of July, 1779, when the declaration of the American Independence was made—when the Committee, previously appointed to draft that instrument, made their report through their Chairman Thomas Jefferson—and by whom it was read, the house paused—hesitated. That instrument, they saw, cut them off even from the mercy of Great Britain. They saw with prophetic vision all the horrors of a sanguinary war—carnage and desolation passed in swift review before them They saw the prospect of having riveted still more closely upon their already chaffed and bleeding limbs the chains of slavery. The house seemed to waver —silence, deep and solemn silence, reigned, throughout the hall of the spacious capitol. Every countenance indicated that deep meditation was at work and the solemn resolutions were calling for double energy.—At this fearful crisis when the very destiny of the country seemed to be suspended upon the action of a moment, the silence, the painful silence was broken. An aged patriarch arose—a venerable and stately form his head white with the frost of many years. He cast on the assembly a look of inexpressible interest and unconquerable determination; while on his visage his one of age was lost at the burning patriotism that fired his. 'There is, said he, a tide in the affairs of men, a nick of time. We perceive it now before us.—That noble instrument upon your table, which insures immortality to its author should be subscribed this very morning by every pen in the house. He who will not respond to its accounts and strain every nerve to carry into effect its provisions, is unworthily the name of a freeman. Although these grey hairs must descend into the sepulchre, infinitely rather they should descend hither by the hand of the executioner, than the desk at this crisis the sacred cause of my country.' The patriarch sat down, and forthwith the declaration was signed by every member present. Who was that venerable patriarch? you ask. I answer it was JOHN WITHERSPOON, of New Jersy, whose name is found among the signers of the declaration of independence, the Magna Charta of our nation's independence. Yes, it was John Witherspoon, a distinguished Minister of the Presbyterian Church, a literal descendant of John Knox, the great Scotch Reformer.—*Speech of the Rev. S. S. Templeton.*

DANCING,

Somebody in New York has offered $50 for the best tract on dancing, not exceeding twelve pages in length, and has named for judges, Dr. Tyng, formerly of this city, now of New York; Rev. Mr. Andrews, of Troy, and Rev Wm. A. Hallock, of New York city. The questions to be discussed in the tract, are 'the propriety of dancing by church members, and the expediency of teaching it to our children. From this mode of stating the questions, we suppose that the person advertising for the tract condemns dancing as *sinful*. The readers of the Ledger will remember that, about three years ago, we treated the subject somewhat at length, showing that dancing was a natural instinct among men, monkeys, and even birds, and consequently that it was designed to be gratified, and therefore was not sinful unless abused. We still stick to our text, and are of the same opinion still, and we defy all the long faces and sour tempers to make us believe that this beautiful world was given to man for no other purpose than to 'mortify the flesh,' by rejecting all its sources of enjoyment. The crime is in the abuse and not in the use; and therefore we advise all to dance decently and moderately, and to leave canting austerity to its sulks. Did not David dance? And are we not told, 'if any be merry, let him sing songs?' The translation of the English Vulgate have translated this word into *psalms*, by which they would confine its signification to a sacred song in worship. But they interpreted every Jewish custom according to the English fashion of the seventeenth century.

But what is decent and moderate dancing? We totally exclude from this category a 'fashionable ball.' There the company is promiscuous; the female portion are dressed by vanity, in flimsy garments offering no defence against weather; the dancing begins when the company ought to be abed, and continues till daylight of the next day; the guests are crowded and packed into rooms where the atmosphere would suf-