

Mountain Sentinel.

"WE GO WHERE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES POINT THE WAY;—WHEN THEY CEASE TO LEAD, WE CEASE TO FOLLOW."

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EBENSBURG, THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1850.

VOL. 6.—NO. 27.

MISCELLANEOUS.

DEAF SMITH, The Celebrated Texan Spy.

About two years after the Texan revolution, a difficulty occurred between the new government and a portion of the people, which threatened the most serious consequences—even bloodshed and horrors of civil war. Briefly the cause was this: The constitution had fixed the city of Austin as the permanent capital, where the public archives were to be kept, with the reservation, however, of a power in the president to order their temporary removal in case of danger from the incursions of a foreign enemy, or the force of a sudden insurrection.

Conceiving that the exceptional emergency had arrived, as the Camanches frequently committed ravages within sight of the capital itself, Houston, who then resided at Washington, on the Brazos, dispatched an order commanding the subordinate functionaries to send the state records to the latter place, which he declared to be, *pro tempore*, the seat of government.

It is impossible to describe the stormy excitement which the promulgation of this fiat raised in Austin. The keeper of hotels, boarding-houses, groceries, and farobanks were thunderstruck, maddened to frenzy; for the measure would be a death-blow to their prosperity in business; and, accordingly they determined at once to take the necessary steps to avert the danger, by opposing the execution of Houston's mandate. They called a mass meeting of the citizens and farmers of the circumjacent country, who were all more or less interested in the question; and after many fiery speeches against the asserted tyranny of the administration, it was unanimously resolved to prevent the removal of the archives by open and armed resistance. To that end they organized a company of four hundred men, one moiety of whom, relieving the other at regular periods of duty, should keep constant guard around the state-house until peril passed by. The commander of this force was one Colonel Morton, who had achieved considerable renown in the war for independence, and had still more recently displayed desperate bravery in two desperate duels, in both of which he had cut his antagonist nearly to pieces with the bowie knife. Indeed, from the notoriety of his character for revenge, as well as courage, it was thought that President Houston would renounce his purpose touching the archives, so soon as he should learn who was the leader of the opposition.

Morton, on his part, whose vanity fully equalled his personal prowess, encouraged and justified the prevailing opinion by his boastful threats. He swore that if the President did succeed in removing the records by the march of an overpowering force, he would then himself hunt him down like a wolf, and shoot him with little ceremony, or stab him in his bed, or waylay him in his walks of recreation. He even wrote the hero of San Jacinto to that effect. The latter replied in a note of laconic brevity:

"If the people of Austin do not send the archives, I shall certainly come and take them, and if Col. Morton can kill me, he is welcome to my ear-cup."

On the reception of this answer, the guard was doubled around the state-house. Chosen sentinels were stationed along the road leading to the capital, the military paraded the streets from morning till night and a select caucus held permanent session in the city hall. In short everything betokened a coming tempest.

One day, while matters were in this precarious condition, the caucus at the city hall was surprised by the sudden appearance of a stranger, whose mode of entering was as extraordinary as his looks and dress. He did not knock at the closed door—he did not seek admission there at all; but climbing unseen a small bushy topped live oak, which grew beside the wall, he leaped without sound or warning through a lofty window. He was clothed altogether in buckskin, carried a long and very heavy rifle in his hand, wore at the button of his left suspender a large bowie knife, and had in his leathern belt a couple of pistols half the length of his gun. He was tall, straight as an arrow, active as a panther in his motions, with dark complexion and luxuriant jetty hair, with a severe iron-like countenance, that seemed never to have known a smile, and eyes of intense vivid black, wild and rolling, and piercing as the point of a dagger. His strange advent inspired a thrill of involuntary fear, and many present unconsciously grasped the handles of their side-arms.

"Who are you, that thus presumest to intrude among gentlemen without invitation?" demanded Col. Morton ferociously essaying to cow down the stranger with his eye.

The latter returned his stare with com-

pound interest, and laid his long bony finger on his lip, as a sign—but of what, the spectators could not imagine.

"Who are you? Speak! or I will cut an answer out of your heart!" shouted Morton, almost distracted with rage by the cool-sneering gaze, of the other, who now removed his finger from his lip, and laid it on the hilt of his monstrous knife.

The fiery colonel then drew his dagger, and was in the act of advancing upon the stranger, when several caught him and held him back remonstrating.

"Let him alone, Morton, for God's sake. Do you not perceive that he is crazy?"

At that moment Judge Webb, a man of shrewd intellect and courteous manners, stepped forward, and addressed the intruder in a most respectful manner:

"My good friend, I presume you have made a mistake in the house. This is a private meeting, where none but members are admitted."

The stranger did not appear to comprehend the words, but he could not fail to understand the mild and deprecatory manner. His rigid features relaxed, and moving to a table in the centre of the hall, where there were materials and implements for writing, he seized a pen and traced one line: "I am deaf." He then held it up before the spectators, as a sort of natural apology for his own want of politeness.

Judge Webb took the paper and wrote a question. "Dear Sir, will you be so obliging as to inform us what is your business with the present meeting?"

The other responded by delivering a letter inscribed on the back, "To the citizens of Austin." They broke the seal and read it aloud. It was from Houston, and showed the usual terse brevity of his style:

"*Fellow-Citizens*—Though in error, and deceived by the arts of traitors, I will give you three days more to decide whether you will surrender the public archives. At the end of that time you will please let me know your decision.

SAM. HOUSTON."

After the reading, the deaf man waited a few seconds, as if for a reply, and then turned and was about to leave the hall, when Colonel Morton interposed, and sternly beckoned him back to the table. The stranger obeyed, and Morton wrote: "You was brave enough to insult me by your threatening looks ten minutes ago; are you brave enough now to give me satisfaction?"

The stranger panned his reply: "I am at your service!"

Morton wrote again: "Who will be your second?"

The stranger rejoined: "I am too generous to seek an advantage; and too brave to fear any on the part of others; therefore I never need the aid of a second."

Morton panned: "Name your terms."

The stranger traced without a moment's hesitation: "Time, sunset this evening; place, left bank of the Colorado, opposite Austin; weapons, rifles; and distance, a hundred yards. Do not fail to be in time!"

He then took three steps across the floor, and disappeared through the window as he had entered.

"What!" exclaimed Judge Webb, "is it possible Colonel Morton, that you intend to fight that man? He is a mute, if not a positive maniac. Such a meeting, I fear, will sadly tarnish the lustre of your laurels."

"You are mistaken," replied Morton, with a smile; "that mute is a hero whose fame stands in the record of a dozen battles, and at least half as many bloody duels. Besides, he is the favorite emissary and bosom friend of Houston. If I have the good fortune to kill him, I think it will tempt the President to retract his vow against venturing any more on the field of honor."

"You know the man then. Who is he? Who is he?" asked twenty voices together.

"Deaf Smith," answered Morton coolly. "Why no, that cannot be. Deaf Smith was slain at San Jacinto," remarked Judge Webb.

"There again, your honor is mistaken," said Morton. "The story of Smith's death was a mere fiction, got up by Houston to save the life of his favorite from the sworn vengeance of certain Texans, on whose conduct he had acted as a spy.—I fathomed the artifice twelve months since."

"If what you say be true, you are a madman yourself!" exclaimed Webb. "Deaf Smith was never known to miss his mark. He has often brought down ravens in their most rapid flight, and killed Camanches and Mexicans a distance of 250 yards."

"Say no more," answered Col. Morton in tones of deep determination; "the thing is already settled. I have already agreed

to meet him. There can be no disgrace in falling before such a shot, and if I succeed, my triumph will confer the greater glory!"

Such was the general habit of thought and feeling prevalent throughout Texas at that period.

Towards evening a vast crowd assembled at the place appointed to witness the hostile meeting; and so great was the popular recklessness as to affairs of the sort, that numerous and considerable sums were wagered on the result. At length the red orb of the summer sun touched the curved rim of the western horizon, covering it all with crimson and gold, and filling the air with a flood of burning glory; and then the two mortal antagonists, armed with long ponderous rifles, took their station, back to back, and at a preconcerted signal—the waving of a white handkerchief—walked slowly and steadily off in opposite directions, counting their steps until each had measured fifty. They both completed the given number about the same instant, and then they wheeled, each to aim and fire when he chose. As the distance was great, both paused for some seconds—long enough for the beholders to flash their eyes from one to the other, and mark the striking contrast between them. The face of Colonel Morton was calm and smiling, but the smile it bore had a most mercurial meaning. On the contrary, the countenance of Deaf Smith was stern and passionless as ever. A side-view of his features might have been mistaken for a profile done in cast-iron. The one, too, was dressed in the richest cloth, the other in smoke-tinted leather. But that made no difference in Texas then; for the hers of heroic courage were all considered peers—the class of inferiors embraced none but cowards.

Presently two rifles exploded with simultaneous roars. Colonel Morton gave a prodigious bound upwards, and dropped to the earth a corpse. Deaf Smith stood erect, and immediately began to re-load his rifle; and then, having finished his brief task, he hastened away into the adjacent forest.

Three days afterwards, General Houston accompanied by Deaf Smith and ten other men, appeared in Austin, and without further opposition removed the state papers.

The history of the hero of the foregoing anecdote was one of the most extraordinary ever known in the West. He made his advent in Texas at an early period, and continued to reside there until his death, which happened some two years ago; but although he had many warm personal friends, no one could ever ascertain either the land of his birth, or a single gleam of his previous biography. When he was questioned on the subject, he laid his finger on his lip; and if pressed more urgently, his brow wrinkled, and his dark eye seemed to shoot sparks of livid fire! He could write with astonishing correctness and facility, considering his situation; and although denied the exquisite pleasure and priceless advantages of the sense of hearing, nature had given him ample compensation, by an eye quick and far-seeing as an eagle's, and a small keen and incredible as that of a raven. He could discover objects moving miles away in the far-off prairie, when others could perceive nothing but earth and sky; and the rangers used to declare that he could catch a scent of a Mexican or Indian at as great a distance as a buzzard could distinguish the odor of a dead carcass.

It was these qualities which fitted him so well for a spy, in which capacity he rendered invaluable services to Houston's army during the war of independence. He always went alone, and generally obtained the information desired. His habits in private life were equally singular. He could never be persuaded to sleep under the roof of a house, or even to use a tent-cloth. Wrapped in his blanket, he loved to lie out in the open air, under the blue canopy of pure ether, and count the stars, or gaze with a yearning look at the melancholy moon. When not employed as a spy or guide, he subsisted by hunting, being often absent on solitary excursions for weeks and even months together in the wilderness. He was a genuine son of nature, a grown up child of the woods and prairie, which he worshipped with a sort of Pagan adoration. Excluded by his infirmities from cordial fellowship with his kind, he made the inanimate things of the earth his friends, and entered by the heart's own adoption into brotherhood with the luminaries of heaven! Wherever there was land or water, barren mountains or tangled brakes of wild waving cane, there was Deaf Smith's home, and there he was happy; but in the streets of great cities, in all the great thoroughfares of men, wherever there was flattery or fawning, base cunning or craven fear, there was Deaf Smith an alien and an exile.

Strange soul! he hath departed on the long journey, away among those high bright stars which were his night-lamps; and he hath either solved or ceased to ponder the deep mystery of the magic word, "life." He is dead; therefore let his errors rest in oblivion, and his virtues be remembered with hope.

HAPPIEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE.

In all the pride and condescension of an inmate of Grosvenor-square, I looked upon Lady Motley's 'At Home.' 'Yes,' I said, flinging away the card, with a tragedy twist of the fingers—yes; I will be there. For one evening I will encounter the tedium and the taste of a village ball. For one evening I will doom myself to figures that are out of date, and fiddles that are out of tune; dowagers who make embroidery by wholesale, and demoiselles who make conquests by profession; for one evening I will endure the inquiries about Almack's and St. Paul's, the tales of the weddings that have been and the weddings that are to be, the round of curtsies in the ball-room, and the round of beef at the supper-table; for one evening I will not complain of the everlasting hostess and the everlasting Boulanger, of the double duty and the double bass, of the great heires, and the great plum puddings:

"Come on, come all,
Come dance in Sir Roger's hall."

And thus by dint of civility, indolence, quotation and antithesis, I bent up each corporal agent to the terrible feat, and "would have the honor of waiting upon her ladyship"—in due form.

I went: turned my uncle's one-horse chaise into the long old avenue, about an hour after the time specified, and perceived by the lights flashing from all the windows, and the crash of chairs and carriages returning from the door, that the room was most punctually full, and the performers most pastorally impatient.—The first face I encountered on my entrance, was that of my old friend Villars; I was delighted to meet him, and expressed my astonishment at finding him in a situation for which his inclination, one would have supposed, was as little adapted.

"By Mercury!" he exclaimed, "I am metamorphosed, fairly metamorphosed, my good Vyvyan; I have been detained here three months by a fall from Sir Peter, and have amused myself most indefatigably by humming tunes and reading newspapers, winding silk, and guessing conundrums. I have made myself the admiration, the adoration, the very worship of all the coteries in the place; am reckoned very clever at cross purposes, and very apt at 'what's my thought like!' The 'squires have discovered I can carve, and the matrons hold me indispensable at loo. Come! I am of little service to-night, but my popularity may be of use to you: you don't know a soul!—I thought so; read it in your face the moment you came in—never saw such a — there, Vyvyan, look there! I will introduce you." And so saying, my companion half limped, half danced with me up to Miss Amelia Mesnil, and presented me in due form.

When I look back to any particular scene of my existence, I can never keep the stage clear of second-rate characters. I never think of Mr. Kean's Othello without an intrusive reflection upon the subject of Mr. Copper's Cassio; I never call to mind a gorgeous scattering forth of roses from Mr. Canning, without a painful idea of some contemporary effusion of poppies from Mr. Hume. And thus, deavor to separate your fascination from the group which was collected around you. Perhaps that dominion, which at this moment I feel almost revived, recurs more vividly to my imagination when the forms and figures of all by whom it was contested are associated in its renewal.

First comes Amelia the magnificent, the acknowledged belle of the country, very stiff and very dumb in her unheeded and uncontested supremacy; and next, the most black-browed of fox-hunters, Augusta, enumerating the names of her father's stud, and dancing as if she initiated; and then the most accomplished Jane, vowing that for the last month she had endured immense *ennui*, that she thinks Lady Olivia prodigiously *fade*, that her cousin Sophy is quite *brilliant* to-night, and that Mr. Peters plays the violin *a merveille*.

"I am bored, my dear Villars—positively bored! the light is bad and the music abominable! there is no spring in the boards and less in the conversation; it is a lovely moonlight night, and there is nothing worth looking at in the room."

I shook hands with my friend, bowed to three or four people, and was moving off. As I passed to the door, I met two ladies in conversation; "Don't you dance any more, Margaret?" said one. "O no," replied the other, "I am bored, my dear Louisa—positively bored; the light is bad and the music abominable; there is no spring in

the boards, and less in the conversation; it is a lovely moonlight night, and there is nothing worth looking at in the room."

I never was distanced in a jest. I put on the look of a ten years acquaintance, and commenced parley. "Surely you are not going away yet; you have not danced with me, Margaret; it is impossible you can be so cruel!" The lady behaved with wonderful impetuosity. "She would allow me the honor—but I was very late;—really, I had not deserved it;—and so we stood up together.

"Are you not very impertinent?"

"Very; but you are very handsome.—Nay; you are not to be angry; it was a fair challenge, and fairly received."

"And you will not even ask my pardon?"

"No! it is out of my way! I never do those things; it would embarrass me beyond measure. Pray, let us accomplish an introduction; not altogether an usual one; but that matters little. Vyvyan Joyeuse—rather impertinent, and very fortunate—at your service."

"Margaret Orleans—very handsome, and rather foolish—at your service."

Margaret danced like an angel. I knew she would. I could not conceive by what blindness I had passed four hours without being struck. We talked of all things that are, and a few beside. She was something of a botanist, so we began with flowers; a digression upon China roses carried us to China—the mandarins with little brains, and the ladies with little feet—the emperor—the Orphan of China—Voltaire—Zayre—criticism—Dr. Johnson—the great bear—the system of Copernicus—stars—ribbons—garters—the order of the Bath—sea-bathing—Dawlish—Sidmouth—Lord Sidmouth—Cicero—Rome Italy—Aliceri—Metastasio—fountains—groves—gardens—and so, as the dancing concluded, we contrived to end as we began, with Margaret Orleans and botany.

Margaret talked well on all subjects, and wittily on many. I had expected to find nothing but a romping girl, somewhat amusing, and very vain. But I was out of my latitude in the first five minutes, and out of my senses in the next. She left the room very early, and I drove home, more astonished than I had been for many years.

Several weeks passed away, and I was about to leave England, to join my sisters on the Continent. I determined to look once more on that enslaving smile, whose recollection had haunted me more than once. I had ascertained that she resided with an old lady who took two pupils, and taught French and Italian, and music and manners, at an establishment called Vine House. Two days before I left the country, I had been, till a late hour, shooting at a mark with a duelling pistol—an entertainment, of which, perhaps from a lurking presentiment, I was very fond. I was returning alone when I perceived, by the light of an enormous lamp, a board by the wayside bearing the welcome inscription, "Vine House."

"Enough," I exclaimed, "enough! one more scene before the curtain drops—Romeo and Juliet by lamplight!"—I roamed about the dwelling place of all I held dear, till I saw a figure at one of the windows, in the back of the house, which it was quite impossible to doubt, I leaned against a tree in a sentimental position, and began to chant my own rhymes thus:

Pretty coquette, the ceaseless play
Of thine unsteady wit,
And thy dark eye's remembered ray
By buoyant fancy lit,
And thy young forehead's clear expanse,
Where the lock's slept, as through the dance,
Dreamlike I saw thee flit,
Are far too warm, and far too fair,
To mix with such of earthly care,
But the vision shall come when my day is done,
A frail, and a fair, and a fleeting one!

And if the many boldly gaze
On that bright brow of thine,
And if thine eye's undying rays,
On countless coxcombs shine,
And if thy wit flings out its mirth,
Which echoes more of air than earth,
For other ears than mine,
I heed not this, ye are fickle things,
I like you, very wanderings;
I gaze, and if I should share the bliss,
Pretty capricious! I heed not this.

In sooth I am a wayward youth,
As fickle as the sea,
And very apt to speak the truth,
Unpleasing though it be;
I am no lover, yet, as long
As I have heart for jest or song,
An image, sweet, of thee,
Locked in my heart's remotest treasures,
Shall linger to one of its hoarded pleasures,
This from the scoffer thou hast won,
And more than this he gives to none.

"Are they your own verses?" said my idol at the window.

"They are yours, Margaret! I was only the versifier; you were the muse herself."

"The muse herself is obliged to you.—And now what is your errand? for it grows late, and you must be sensible—no, that you never will be—but you must be aware that this is very indecorous."

"I am come to see you, dear Margaret—which I cannot without candles;—to see you, and to tell you, that it is impossible I can forget—"

"Bless me! what a memory you have! But you must take another opportunity for your tale for—"

"Alas! I leave England immediately!"

"A pleasant voyage to you! there, not a word more; I must run down to coffee."

"Now may I never laugh more," I said, "if I am to be baffled thus; so I strolled back to the front of the house and proceeded to reconnoitre. A bay-window was half open, and in a small neat drawing room I perceived a group assembled;—an old lady, with a high muslin cap and red ribbons, was pouring out the coffee—her nephew, a tall awkward young gentleman, sitting on one chair and resting his legs on another, was occupied in the study of Sir Charles Grandison;—and my fair Margaret was leaning on a sofa, and laughing immoderately. 'Indeed, Miss,' said the matron, 'you should learn to govern your mirth; people will think you came out of Bedlam.'"

I lifted the window gently, and stepped into the room. "Bedlam, madam!" quoth I, "I bring intelligence from Bedlam; I arrived last week."

The tall awkward young gentleman stared; and the aunt half said, half shrieked—"What in the name of wonder are you?"

"Mad, madam! very particularly mad! mad as a hare in March, or a Cheapside blood on Sunday morning. Look at me! do I not foam? listen to me! do I not rave?—Coffee, my dear madam, coffee; there is no animal so thirsty as your madman in the dog days."

"Eh! really!" said the tall awkward young gentleman.

"My good sir, I began;—but my original insanity began to fail me, and I drew forth with upon Ossian's—'Fly! receive the wind and fly; the blasts are in the hollow of my hand, the course of the storm is mine!'"

"Eh! really!" said the tall awkward young gentleman.

"I look on the nations and they vanish; my nostrils pour the blast of death; I come abroad on the winds; the tempest is before my face; but my dwelling is calm, above the clouds; the fields of my rest are pleasant."

"Do you mean to insult us?" said the old lady.

"Ay! do you mean to insult my aunt?—really!" said the tall awkward young gentleman.

"I shall call in my servants," said the old lady.

"I am the] humblest of them," said I, bowing.

"I shall teach you a different tune," said the tall awkward young gentleman, really!"

"Very well, my dear sir; my instrument is the barrel organ; and I cocked my sweet little pocket companion in his face."

"Vanish, little Kastri! for by Hannibal, Heliogabalus, and Holaphernes, time is valuable; madness is precipitate, and hair triggers is the word; vanish!"

"Eh! really!" said the tall awkward young gentleman, and performed an entrechat which carried him to the door; the old lady had disappeared at the first note of the barrel organ. I locked the door and found Margaret in a paroxysm of laughter. "I wish you had shot him," she said, when she recovered, "I wish you had shot him; he is a sad fool."

"Do not talk of him; I am speaking to you, beautiful Margaret, possibly for the last time! Will you ever think of me? perhaps you will. But let me receive from you some token that I may dote upon in other years; something that may be a hope to me in my happiness, and a consolation in calamity. Something—nay! I never could talk romance; but give me one lock of your hair, and I will leave England with resignation."

"You have earned it like a true night," said Margaret; and she severed from her head a long glossy ringlet. "Look," she continued, "you must to horse; the country has risen for your apprehension." I turned towards the window. The country had indeed risen. Nothing was to be seen but gossions in the van, and gossips in the rear, red faces and white jackets, gallants in smock frocks, and gay damsels in program. Bludgeons were waving, and torches were flashing, as far as the gaze could reach. All the chivalry of the place was arming and ehaing, and loading for a volley of pebbles and oaths together.

I knelt down and kissed her hand. It was the happiest moment of my life! Now," said I, "au revoir, my sweet Margaret," and in a moment I was in the lane.

This was my first folly. I looked at the lock of hair often, but I never saw Margaret again. She has become the wife of a young clergyman, and resides with him on a small living in Staffordshire. I believe she is very happy, and I have forgotten the color of her eyes.