



BY JAS. CLARK.

HUNTINGDON, PA., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12 1850.

VOL. XV, NO. 7.

THE WILKINSON'S BLUFFS: A TALE OF LOVE, MURDER AND SUICIDE.

The facts I am about to relate are not the less true, because they wear the air of romance, and resemble many of the ground works of the fictions which fanciful writers weave from their imaginations. Not only the incidents of my story are familiar to the people of this venerable town, but there are now living here, descendants of those who played prominent parts in the events which I shall relate.

At the period of my story, which was shortly before Burr's attempt to raise an expedition against the Spanish possessions in Mexico, this country presented some of the most sublime and romantic scenery in the world. The valley of the Red River rivalled in richness and variety of views, the famous Vale of Avoca, and far exceeded it in grandeur and sublimity. The dark waters of the Red River meandered without a murmur, through a country beautifully diversified in hill and dale, now gently stretching through broad prairies and spreading out into broad lakes, then gathering its waters within narrow banks, and rushing like a torrent down a precipice madly foaming along some high bluff, and then boldly pushing its onward course through a dark primeval forest, where the sound of civilization had not aroused the slumbering echoes, or disturbed the wild beasts in their lairs. Amid all this rich and beautiful scenery, there is not a more attractive and romantic spot on Red River than Wilkinson's Bluffs, near the town of Natchitoches. These Bluffs ascend to an immense height from the River, and are perfectly perpendicular. The river moves in a quiet and steady current at the foot of the heights, and the scenery around is full of sombre sublimity and impressive grandeur.

On top the bluffs, and not far from their edge, there stood, at the time of my story, a plain and rough, but strongly built house, the domicile of a Frenchman of the name of Jean B. Villemont. This Villemont was about forty years of age, and was a man of strong passions and terrible wrath. He had emigrated from France a few years before; bringing with him his wife and a lovely daughter, just fifteen, and fresh and blooming as a May flower. Shortly after his arrival at Natchitoches, his wife died, and thus was the principal restraint removed from his passions. At this remote period of the settlement of Louisiana, there existed all through the frontier portion of the State, organized bands of robbers, who kept the settlements in continual terror by their violence and depredations. The individuals constituting these bands, were well known to the colonists, few of whom had the boldness to incur the awful revenge which usually awaited those who informed upon these malefactors. No settlement suffered more from these depredators than Natchitoches, which at this time was the principal trading point of the Northwest portion of Louisiana.

A man of the evil passions and restless character of Villemont could not long resist the inducements which were offered to join the robbers of Red River (who were then commanded by a celebrated Spaniard.) He applied for admission into their society, but found much opposition from the fraternity. The ground of this opposition was the fear that the secrets of the band might leak out through the beautiful daughter of Villemont, at whose shrine all the young colonists were accustomed to worship. This opposition was, however, so far satisfied, that it was agreed to admit Villemont on condition of his giving earnest of his valor and determination by disposing of some of the numerous enemies of the band. He willingly accepted the condition, and took a most horrid oath to destroy whomsoever the Chief might designate.

"Name him!" exclaimed Villemont, grasping his knife, and grinning with ferocious desire to prove a valor which had been called in question—and if he were my own father, brother or son, this knife shall find his heart!

"The man you are to kill is Auguste Prudhomme," slowly and oracularly pronounced the grim captain of the robbers. At the mention of the name of Prudhomme, the face of Villemont grew deadly pale—his eyes began to wander and his lips to quiver.

"What! do you tremble?—do you hesitate!" exclaimed the Spaniard, with fury flashing in his eye.

But the struggle was over. The lingering humanity, the hesitation, the doubt, had passed away from Villemont's face, and an expression of savage ferocity and determination darkened his countenance.

And who was Auguste Prudhomme, and how had he rendered himself the

object of the hate and revenge of the Robbers of Red River!

Auguste Prudhomme was one of the bravest and most gallant of the young Frenchmen who had remained in Natchitoches after the cession of Louisiana to the United States. His courage, skill in arms, coolness and sagacity, had given him a leading position among the colonists, and thus had he been compelled to take a decided part in exposing and punishing the perpetrators of the numerous murders and robberies, which occurred so frequently in that neighborhood. The robbers, however, feared as well as hated Prudhomme. His undaunted bravery & great strength kept them in continual awe, and eluded many attempts which had been made to waylay and assassinate him.

But, it was not fear that caused Villemont's face to grow pale, at the idea of destroying young Prudhomme. Amid the desolation which evil passion had left in the moral sentiments of Villemont, there grew a single flower of humanity, a single virtue, linked to a thousand vices. It was love of his daughter—his gentle, beautiful Eugenie—the only memento of affection of her whose virtues, whilst she lived, held in restraint the savage inclinations of the passionate husband. Eugenie had long been the belle, the adored of the young men of Natchitoches. Among others who had yielded to her charms, was the gallant and handsome Prudhomme. A warm and mutual affection soon grew up between them, and they became affianced lovers.

Rarely did a day pass over that the lovers did not meet in Villemont's little hut, near the bluffs, and spend the swift flying hours in delightful interchanges of vows and pleasant dalliance of love. The absence of the father, who was seldom at home, afforded the lovers frequent opportunities for these delicious interviews. Villemont, however, was not ignorant of the attachment of Prudhomme to his daughter, nor could he be considered as entirely insensible to her happiness.—But his passions, his misanthropic hate of the world, and brutal selfishness, prevailed over all the natural feelings of the father, and he cheerfully prepared to execute the command of his chief. Two of the boldest of the robbers volunteered to accompany him.

It was 12 o'clock at night. The two lovers were sitting together in the little parlor of Villemont. The night was mild, and the windows were up. Presently, Francois arose, and was preparing to take leave of Eugenie, when, looking out of the window, he perceived three persons creeping stealthily along the edge of the woods in the direction of Villemont's hut. Accustomed to danger to constant exposure, and ambuscades, Prudhomme's suspicions were aroused; and shuddering himself with a slight curtain, which hung by the window, he watched the movements of the suspicious individuals. He observed that they came to a stand, and seemed to be holding a consultation. By their gestures, they plainly indicated that their purposes had reference to some individual in the hut. "We are in danger, my beloved," remarked Prudhomme, turning to his beautiful betrothed, "we must prepare for it!"

Eugenie, as heroic as she was lovely, rushed towards the mantel-piece, and took from it a rifle. Prudhomme drew his sword, and thus the lovers prepared to make a gallant defence. They had scarcely prepared for the encounter, when there was a knock at the door. No answer was given. Another, and another knock, and still there was no response. Then there was a pause of nearly a minute, which was followed by blows of a battering-ram against the door. This force prevailed and soon the door was broken through, and three savage men came rushing into the room. Awed by the heroic attitude of Prudhomme and Eugenie, the ruffians stopped, and seemed to hesitate for a moment. Soon, however, one of them sprang forward, nearly on the point of Prudhomme's sword, and in a voice of passion exclaimed.

"How came you here—how dare you violate the sanctity of my house?" It was Villemont.—Though disguised in robber's garb, Eugenie did not fail to recognize her only parent—her father. Her heart sunk, her lovely frame trembled, and but for the left arm of her lover, which encircled her waist, she would have fallen to the floor.—Quickly, however, was she aroused, when perceiving one of the robbers aiming a pistol at Prudhomme, she raised the rifle and shot him dead. Almost at the same moment she was struck down, by her father. Prudhomme stooped to raise her prostrate form, when Villemont and the other robber rushed upon him and levelled him with the floor, by blows of their guns.

Seizing the insensible form of his daughter, Villemont directed the other robber to take that of Prudhomme, and thus they dragged the lovers to the edge of the bluff, a few yards from the house. Casting a glance down the fearful descent, Villemont threw his eyes towards the sky with a hellish laugh, as if defying the vengeance of Heaven, and gave the body of his daughter a push down the awful abyss. Quickly the robber followed the example and threw the body of Prudhomme over the bluff. The father cast a look down the fearful precipice. The white figure of his daughter was discernible in the waters below, and her arm appeared to wave him towards her. It was then the pang of remorse, the gleam of conscience flitted across the dark soul of the murderer—the weakness of humanity came over him; darkness seemed to close around him. Casting an imploring look to Heaven, with a terrific scream he rushed to the edge and leaped down the precipice.

Several days afterwards, three bodies were taken out of the river at Clouterville, 30 miles below the bluffs. They proved to be those of the murderer and suicide, and his innocent victims. They were buried in the same grave, in the cemetery of this little village.

As for the robber companion of Villemont, he led a life of bloodshed, violence and drunkenness for a few years, until one day he was mortally wounded in a drunken broil. On his death-bed he confessed his participation in the terrible scene we have attempted to describe and furnished the facts upon this "other true tale" is founded.—N. O. Delta.

Love of Children.

Great men—men of distinction in civil policy, in literature, or in military art—usually exhibit a remarkable love of children. DANIEL WEBSTER is said to frequently delight himself by the innocent prattle of little boys and girls—PARRICK HENRY, we are told, was in the habit of spending most of his leisure hours in the society of the young of his own household—and the celebrated Sir THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON, of England, history informs us, displayed a fondness for children, amounting to an absolute passion. We have been much interested in a biographical notice of him, in which this beautiful trait of character is eloquently portrayed, and the eminent virtues of the man made to shine with greater lustre by reason of that disposition of heart which caused him to "delight in children, and they with their instinctive perception of those that like them, to delight in him." The following extract is in point, and will, we are quite sure, strike a responsive chord in the bosom of every reader:

"He was lying one day and very fatigued and tired, on a sofa; one of his sons was lying on another; their eyes were alike just opened, though each supposed the other to be asleep. Presently, the great, giant-like man—the man that swayed the Senate, was looked up to by thousands as a leader, and who seemed born for authority and command—slowly and quietly rose up from his position—trod softly and stealthily across the room—placed a chair—lifted the feet of the young sleeper and as they seemed to be hanging uneasily from the sofa, laid them gently on the chair, and then crept back again as carefully as he had gone, and lay down to his own repose! All had been seen, though he thought not so. It would never have been mentioned—it might not have been remembered by him—had it been a thing known only to the father. It was the irresistible impulse, the gushing out of irrepressible affection. I dare say he turned from the lad with a glow on his heart and a prayer on his tongue; a prayer whose answer he had already, though unconsciously, secured; for the impression of that act on the heart of the son must have given such sacredness to the wishes of the father as could not fail, I should think, to have done more for the youth's virtues than any mere perceptive teachings could have secured."

FIFTY GIRLS MARRIED IN ONE HOUSE.—There have been ten operatives married every year from a single boarding house in this city during the last five years! The matrimonial thermometer always runs up to ten, in hot or cold weather, and makes that the sticking point. One would suppose it would be an object for many single young ladies to become inmates of a house so prolific in double-blessedness.—Lowell Courier.

A New York letter of Saturday evening, published in the Philadelphia American, says—about 120 officers of various grades have been discharged from the Custom House to-day, in order to meet the reduced expenses for collecting the revenue.

Obedying Orders.

Many years ago, there lived in Western Pennsylvania, General—, a revolutionary worthy, who had done the State some service. He united with the courage and chivalry of the soldier, an impetuous and positive temper which brooked no contradiction of his word, or disobedience of his orders. Ploughing one day on his farm, one of his horses became restive and unmanageable whereupon the testy Cincinnatus struck him so violently on the head that the animal fell lifeless at his feet. On seeing a favorite steed, lately full of life and spirit, stretched on the ground, his rage was changed to regret and self reproach; but knowing nothing better to be done he disengaged the harness and went to the house. He sent for a fellow who did jobs about the neighborhood, to go into the field where he would find the horse, and skin him forthwith and take his hide to the tanners.

"What! Old Roney dead inquired the man.

"Dead or alive, what's that your business?" exclaimed the General, with characteristic violence; "go do as I bid you, and never ask me questions."

The man accordingly went to his business, and after a considerable time returned for his pay.

"Well, Jake, what do you ask?"

"Why, only 75 cents, General."

"Seventy-five d—ls! I'll not pay it."

"But stop a bit, General, it isn't much considering all the trouble. I don't ax for the skinning alone, but then such a work as I had to catch—"

"Fire and furies!—catch him—was Roney alive?"

"Aye, General, alive and kicking; and a pretty hot chass I had to give him 'round the field, before I got a chance to knock him down."

"What! you infernal scoundrel, did you kill him?" exclaimed the veteran bursting with rage.

"Yes, sir; you know I could not skin him alive!"

"You diabolical villain, I'll kill you!"

"Oh! don't General, don't," cried Jake, effecting a retreat; "there's no law as far as I know, against killing your horse, though it might be murder if you kill me. Besides, you know, I always obey military orders."

A Judicial Anecdote.

Pedro, I, eighth king of Portugal, was remarkable for his steady and impartial administration of justice; of which the following is a remarkable instance:

"An ecclesiastic, in a high fit of passion, killed a mason, whom he had employed, for not executing something agreeable to his mind.—The king disembodied the knowledge of the crime and left it to the cognizance of the proper courts, where the issue of the business was, that the priest was suspended from saying mass for a year. At this punishment the family of the deceased were highly offended.

"The king caused it to be hinted to the mason's son that he should kill the priest, which he did; and having fallen into the hands of justice, he was condemned to suffer death; but as no capital punishment could be executed without the king's consent, this was laid before him among the rest; upon which he asked what was the young man's trade! It was answered that he followed his father's trade; then said the king I shall commute this punishment by restraining him from meddling with stone or mortar for a twelve-month. But after this he punished capital crimes in the clergy with death; and when they desired that his majesty would be pleased to refer their case to a superior tribunal, he answered, very calmly, that is what I mean to do; for I send them to the highest of all tribunals, to that of their Maker and mine."

PREDERMINATION.—"Do you believe in predestination?" said a captain of a Mississippi steamer to a clergyman, who happened to be traveling with him. "Of course I do."

"And you also believe that what is to be, will be?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it!"

"Why?"

"Because, I intend to pass that boat ahead in fifteen consecutive minutes, if there be any virtue in pine knots and loaded safety valves. So don't be alarmed, for if the bilers ain't to burst, they won't."

Here the divine began putting on his hat, and looked very much like backing out which the captain observing he said:

"I thought you said you believed in predestination, and what is to be will be."

"So I do, but I prefer being a little nearer the stern when it takes place."

A CHINESE ADVERTISEMENT.—The following advertisement is copied from a Chinese paper:

"Achen Tea Chin Chin, Sculptor, respectfully acquaints masters of ships trading from Canton to India, that they may be furnished with figure-heads, of any size, according to order, at one-fourth the price charged in Europe. He also recommends, for private venture, the following idols, brass, gold and silver:

"The hawk of Vishmoo, which has reliefs of his incarnation, in a fish, boar, lion and turtle.

"An Egyptian Apis, a golden calf and bull as worshipped by the pious followers of Zoroaster.

"Two silver mammosits, with gold ear-rings, a ram, an alligator, a crab, a laughing hyena, with a variety of household gods, on a small scale, calculated for family worship. Eighteen months credit will be given, or a discount of fifteen per cent, for payment of the sum affixed to the article. Direct China street, Canton, under the marble rhinoceros, and gilt hydra."

AN UGLY EDITOR.—Prentice, of the Louisville Journal, whose supremacy as the ugliest specimen of nature's handiwork extant, we believe is indisputable, seems desirous of dividing his empire with his neighbor of the Democrat, whose claims to a share in the honors, he thus advances:

"We went to the menagerie, on Saturday, and after a while observed a general rush of all the little boys and girls towards a certain point near the entrance. At first we did not know what to make of it, but we soon found that the little folks were gathering around our neighbor of the Democrat under the impression that he was an Orang Outang. It was amusing to listen to their questions and remarks. 'Which part of him is his face?'—said one. 'Isn't the ugly thing making mouths at us?' said a second. 'What did they cut his tail off for?' said a third. 'I wonder why such a nasty beast was created?' said a fourth. 'He never was created at all—he was only gussed at,' said a fifth."

JOHN RANDOLPH.—It was readiness which made John Randolph so terrible in retort. He was the Thersites of Congress, a tongue stabber. No hyperbole of contempts or scorn could be launched at him, but he could overtop it with something more scornful and contemptuous. Opposition only maddened him into more brilliant bitterness. "Isn't it a shame, Mr. President," said he one day in the Senate, "that the noble bulldogs of the Administration should be wasting their time in worrying the rats of the Opposition." Immediately the Senate was in an uproar, and he was clamorously called to order. The presiding officer, however, sustained him, and pointing his long skinny finger at his opponents, Randolph screamed out, "Rats, did I say!—mice, mice!"—Whipple's Lectures.

A SCENE IN COURT.—"I call upon you," said the counsellor, "to state distinctly upon what authority you are prepared to swear to the mare's age!"—"Upon what authority?" said the ostler interrogatively. "You are to reply, and not repeat the question put to you." "I doesn't consider a man's bound to answer a question afore he's had time to turn it in his mind." Nothing can be more simple, sir, than the question put. I again repeat it. Upon what authority do you swear to the animal's age?" "The best authority," responded the witness gruffly. "Then why such evasion? Why not state it at once?" "Well then if you must have it—'Must! I must and will have it,' vociferated the counsellor, interrupting the witness. "Well then, if you must and will have it," rejoined the ostler with imperturbable gravity, "why then, I had it from the mare's own mouth." A simultaneous burst of laughter rang through the court.

WHO IS HIT.—"What can the Portland Transcript mean by instituting such inquiries as the following. Isn't this a free country?"—"What is pleasanter or more perfectly agreeable than to see a friend who owes a little bill, which he never has money to pay, going off on expensive excursions, rides, to parties of pleasure, or to places of amusement. It's a satisfaction to know that they have the means of enjoying themselves, even though you don't yourself. Would it not be a good idea for our legislature to exempt two thirds of every man's income for this purpose?"

TERRIFIC.—In London, there are 12,000 children regularly under training to crime, 30,000 thieves, 6000 receivers of stolen goods, 23,000 persons picked up in a state of drunkenness, 50,000 habitual gin drinkers, and 150,000 of both sexes leading an abandoned life.

Be Careful how you Speak.

Hush!—why should you speak against the character of a female? It is all she has to depend upon in this world. Just give the impression wings that she is not so good as she should be, and it will fly to every nook and corner of the town. The story you whisper will return in tones of thunder, to astonish even yourself, who was the first guilty wretch to repeat so base a story. A word has often proved the ruin of a virtuous soul—a word thoughtlessly spoken, it may be, but reported by an evil mind. Suppress any thought, which, if uttered, might injure the character or feelings of another. A thought may be stifled at its birth, but a word spoken may never be lost. Weigh everything you utter, so that none may misconstrue your language or receive a wrong impression.—Above all, never, even in jest, whisper words, which if true, would throw a blight upon a spotless reputation.

DEATH IN THE MINES.—The Pottsville Emporium of yesterday says:

On Monday morning last, Mr. James Begley and his brother, with one other miner, went to work as usual in the North America Mines, near this borough and had been but a short time in the mines when the two brothers were suffocated by black damp, and fell. Their companion made his escape and gave the alarm, when measures were immediately taken to rescue the Begleys, but when reached, some seven hours after, were both dead! James Begley leaves a young wife, his brother was single.

THE PRESENT YEAR.—A German newspaper has recently published a prophecy by a Benedictine Monk, who died in 1847, the purport of which is that the present year, 1850, will be one of unusual prosperity. The different sects of Christianity will in that year accord. The Sultan will be poisoned, and his empire will become christian. Russia will suffer much from a warlike nation in the east. A German prince will found an eastern empire. Grain, fruit, lentils and other vegetables, will be so plentiful that the barns will be unable to contain them.—The disease of the sweet potatoe will every where cease, and old men will not remember such a year of fruitfulness. The wine of this year will surpass that of the year of the comet.

NEWSPAPERS.—The reading of a good and well conducted newspaper, even for the short space of one quarter of a year, brings more sound instruction, and leaves a deeper impression, than would be acquired, probably, in the best schools in twelve months. Talk to the members of a family who read the papers, and compare their information and intelligence with those who do not. The difference is beyond comparison.—Irish Paper.

Virtue is the queen of labor; opinion the mistress of fools; and contention the overthrow of families.

Beauty eventually deserts its possessor; but virtue and talents accompany him to the grave.

A year of pleasure passes like a floating breeze; but a moment of misfortune seems an age of pain.

Love labour; if you do not want it for food you may for physic.

If a man spends five dollars foolishly one day, what ought he to gain the next?—Wisdom.

A Yankee has invented a new kind of ink, called 'the love letter ink,' which is a sure safeguard against actions for breach of promise of marriage, as the ink fades away and leaves the sheet blank in about four weeks after the letter has been written.

I hope you will be able to support me," said a young lady while walking out one evening with her intended, during a somewhat slippery state of the sidewalks.

Why yes," said the somewhat hesitating swain, "with a little assistance from your father." There was some confusion, and a profound silence.

Father what does the Printer live on?"

Why child?"

Because you said you had't paid him for four years and you still take the paper."

Wife, spank that child."

"I say, PETE, some Whig stole half my pig last night."

"How do you know it was a whig, Bill?"

"Because, if it had been a loco he'd have taken the whole of it."

We left then.

"I won't cover your heel, I'll be darned if I do," as the ragged stocking said to the novel reading young lady.