

WESTERN SENTINEL.

BY ALSPAUGH & BONER.

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A THRILLING SKETCH.

THE DOCTOR'S BRIDE.

"We doctors sometimes meet with strange adventures," once said to me a distinguished physician, with whom I was on terms of intimacy.

"I have often thought," I replied, "that the secret history of some of your profession, if written out in detail, would make a work of thrilling interest."

"I do not know that I exactly agree with you in regard to detail," rejoined my friend; "for we medical men, like every one else, meet with a great deal that is common place, and therefore not worthy of being recorded; but grant us the privilege of you novelists, to select our characters and scenes, and work them into a kind of plot, with a striking denouement, and I doubt not many of us could give you a romance in real life, comprising only what we have seen, which would equal, if not surpass, anything you ever met in the way of fiction. By the bye, I believe I never sold any of the most strange and romantic adventures of my life!"

"You never told me of any of your adventures," I replied; "but if you have a story to tell, you will find me an eager listener."

"Very well, then, as I have a few minutes to spare I will tell you one more wildly romantic, more incredibly remarkable, if I may so speak, than you probably ever found in a work of fiction."

"I am all attention."

"Twenty-five years ago," pursued the doctor, "I entered the medical college at F—, as a student. I was then quite young, inexperienced, and inclined to be timid and sentimental; and well do I remember the horror I experienced, when one of the senior students, under pretense of showing me the beauties of the institution, suddenly thrust me into the dissecting room, among several dead bodies, and closed the door upon me; nor do I forget how my screams of terror, and prayers of release from that awful place, made me the laughing stock of my older companions."

"Ridicule is a hard thing to bear; the coward becomes brave to escape it, and the brave man fears it more than he would a belching cannon. I suffered from it till I could bear it no more; and wrought up to a pitch of desperation, I demanded to know what I might do to redeem my character, and gain an honorable footing among my fellow-students."

"I will tell you," said one, his eyes sparkling with mischief, "if you will go at the midnight hour, and dig up a subject, and take it to your room, and remain alone with it till morning, we will let you off, and never say another word about your womanly fright."

I shuddered. It was a fearful alternative, but it seemed less terrible to suffer what might be concentrated into a single night than to bear, day after day, the jeers of my companions.

"Where shall I go and when?" was my timid inquiry; and the very thought of such an adventure made my blood run cold.

"To the Eastern Cemetery, to-night, at twelve o'clock," replied my tormentor, fixing his keen, black eyes upon me, and allowing his thin lips to curl with a smile of contempt. "But what is the use of making such a coward as you to perform such a manly feat?" he asked disdainfully.

His word stung me to the quick; and without reflection, and scarcely aware of what I was saying, I rejoined, boldly:

"I am no coward, sir, as I will prove to you by performing what you call a manly feat."

"You will go?" he asked quickly.

"I will."

"Bravely said, my lad!" he replied in a tone of approval, and exchanging his expression of contempt for one of surprise and admiration. "Do this, Morris, and the first man that insults you afterward makes an enemy of me!"

A gain I felt a cold shudder pass through my frame at the thought of what was before me, but I had accepted his challenge in the presence of many witnesses—for this conversation occurred as we were leaving the hall, after listening to an evening lecture—and I was resolved to make my word good, should it even cost my life; in fact, I knew I could not do otherwise now, without being driven in disgrace from college.

I should here observe, that in those days there were few professional resurrectionists; and as it was absolutely necessary to have subjects for dissection, the unpleasant business of procuring them devolved upon the students, who, in consequence, watched every funeral eagerly, and calculated the chances of cheating the sexton of his grave, and the grave of its victim.

There had been a funeral that day of a poor orphan girl, who had been taken to the grave by every few minutes, and she was considered a favorable subject for the party whose turn it was to furnish the next subject, as the graves of the poor and friendless were never watched with the same keen vigilance as those of the rich and influential. Still, it was no trifling risk to exhume the bodies of the poorest and humblest—for not infrequently persons were found on the watch over these, and only the year before, one student, while at his midnight work, had been mortally wounded by a rifle ball, and another, a month or two subsequently, had been rendered a cripple for life by the same means.

All this had been explained to me by a party of six or eight, who accompanied me to my room—which was in a building belonging to the college, and rented by apartments to such of the students as preferred a bachelor's hall to regular boarding; and they took care to add several terrifying stories of ghosts and hobgoblins, by way of calming my excited nerves, just as I have before observed old women stand around a weak, feverish patient, and croak out their experience in seeing awful sufferings and fatal terminations of just such maladies as the one with which their helpless victim was then afflicted.

"Is it expected that I should go alone?" I inquired, in a tone that trembled in spite of me, while my knees almost knocked together, and I felt as if my very lips were white.

"Well, no," replied Benson, my most dreaded tormentor; "it would be hardly fair to send you alone, for one individual could not succeed in getting the body from the grave quick enough; and you, a mere youth, without experience, would surely fail altogether. No, we will go with you, some three or four of us, and help you to dig up the corpse; but then you must take it on your back, bring it up to your room here, and spend the night alone with it!"

It was some relief to me to find I was to have company during the first part of my awful undertaking; but still I felt far from agreeable, I assure you; and chancing to look into a mirror, as the time drew near for setting out, I fairly started at beholding the ghastly object I saw reflected therein.

"Come, boys," said Benson, who was always, by general consent, the leader of whatever frolic, expedition, or undertaking he was to have a hand in—"Come, boys, it is time to be on the move. A glorious night for us!" he added, throwing up the window and letting in a fierce gust of wind and rain; "the d—l himself would hardly venture out in such a storm!"

He lit a dark-lantern, then threw on his long, heavy cloak, took up a spade, and led the way down stairs; and the rest of us, three besides my timid self, threw on our cloaks also, took each a spade, and followed him.

We took a round-about course, to avoid being seen by any citizen that might chance to be stirring, and in something less than half an hour we reached the cemetery, scaled the wall without difficulty, and stealthily searched for the grave, till we found it, in the pitchy darkness—the wind and rain sweeping past us with

dismal howls and moans, that to me, trembling with terror, seemed to be the unearthly wailings of the spirits of the damned.

"Here we are," whispered Benson to me, as we at length stopped at a mound of fresh earth, over which one of the party had stumbled. "Come, feel round, Morris, and strike in your spade, and let us see if you will make a good hand at exhuming a dead body as you will some day at killing a living one with physic."

I did as directed, trembling in every limb; but the first spade-full I threw up I started back with a yell of horror, that of any other but a howling, stormy night would have betrayed us. It appeared to me as if I had thrust my spade into a lurid lake of fire—for the first dirt was all aglow like living coals; and as I had fancied the booming of the storm the wailings of tormented spirits, I now fancied I had uncovered a small portion of the Bottomless Pit itself.

"Fool!" hissed Benson, grasping my arm with the grip of a vice, as I stood leaning on my spade for support, my very teeth chattering with terror; "another yell like that, and you'll be a subject of you! Are you so easily scared? You never had any, by the way, did you? Don't you see that?"

There was a man, who I often found in grave-poor orphan girl, who had been taken to the grave by every few minutes, and she was considered a favorable subject for the party whose turn it was to furnish the next subject, as the graves of the poor and friendless were never watched with the same keen vigilance as those of the rich and influential. Still, it was no trifling risk to exhume the bodies of the poorest and humblest—for not infrequently persons were found on the watch over these, and only the year before, one student, while at his midnight work, had been mortally wounded by a rifle ball, and another, a month or two subsequently, had been rendered a cripple for life by the same means.

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—but probably by a sort of instinct; for I only remember of my brain being as I did, feverish whirl, with ghastly phantasms all about me, as one sometimes sees them in a dyspeptic dream.

But reach my room I did, with my dead burden on my back; and I was afterwards told that I made wonderful time; for Benson and his fellow-student, fearing the loss of their subject—which, on account of the difficulty of getting bodies, was very valuable—followed close behind me, and were obliged to run at the top of their speed to keep me within hailing distance.

—I remember distinctly, after getting to my room, was the finding myself awake in bed, with a dim consciousness of something having happened—though what, for some minutes, I could not for the life of me recollect. Gradually, however, the truth dawned upon me; and then I felt a cold perspiration start from every pore, at the thought that perhaps I was occupying a room alone with a corpse.

The room was not dark; there were a few embers in the grate which threw out a giddy light; and fearfully raising my head, I gazed quickly and timidly around.

And there—there on the floor, against the right hand wall, but a few feet from me—there, sure enough, lay the cold still corpse, rolled in the white shroud, with a gleam of fire-light resting upon its ghastly face, which to my excited fears seemed to move. Did it move? I was gazing upon it, thrilled and fascinated with an undecipherable terror, when, as sure as I see you now, I saw the lids of its eyes unclose, and saw its breast heave, and heard a low stifled moan.

"Great God!" I shrieked, and fell back in a swoon.

How long I lay unconscious I do not know; but when I came to myself again, it is a marvel to me that, in my excited state, I did not lose my senses altogether, and become the tenant of a mad house, for there—right before me—standing up in the white shroud—with its eyes wide open and staring upon me, and its features thin, raw and death-faded—was the corpse I had brought from the cemetery.

"In God's name, avout!" I gasped. "Go back to your grave, and rest in peace! I will never disturb you again."

The large, hollow eyes looked more wildly upon me—the head moved—the lips parted—and a voice, in a somewhat spiritual tone, said:

"Where am I? Where am I? Who are you? Which world am I in? Am I living or dead?"

"You were dead," I gasped, sitting up in bed and feeling as if my brain would burst with a pressure of unspeakable horror; "you were dead and buried, and I was one of the guilty wretches who this night disturbed you in your peaceful rest. But go back poor ghost, in Heaven's name! and no mortal power shall ever induce me to come nigh you again!"

"Oh! I feel faint," said the corpse, gradually sinking down upon the floor with a groan. "Where am I? Oh! where am I?"

"Great God!" I shouted, as the startling truth suddenly flashed upon me, "perhaps this poor girl was buried alive, and is now living!"

I bounded from the bed and grasped a hand of the prostrate body. It was not warm, but it was not cold. I put my trembling fingers upon the pulse—did it beat, or was it the pulse in my fingers? I thrust my hand upon the heart. It was warm—there was life there. The breast heaved; she breathed; but the eyes were now closed, and the features had the look of death. Still it was a living body—or else I myself was insane.

I sprang to the door, tore it open, and shouted for help.

"Quick! quick!" cried an alive—the dead is alive!

Several of the students, joining rooms, or thinking I had some of them) and all knew had been such a

"Poor fellow!"

"It is true!"

"Quick! a light and some brandy! She lives! she lives!"

All was now bustle, confusion and excitement, one proposing one thing, and another something else, and all speaking together. They placed her on the bed, and gave her some brandy, when she again revived, I ran for a physician (one of the faculty), who came and tended upon her through the night, and by sunrise next morning she was reported to be in a fair way for recovery.

"Now, what do you think of my story so far?" queried the Doctor, with a quiet smile.

"Very remarkable!" I replied; "very remarkable, indeed! But tell me, did the girl finally recover?"

"She did; and turned out to be a most beautiful creature, and only sweet seventeen."

"And I suppose she blessed the resurrectionist all the rest of her life?" I rejoined, with a laugh.

"She certainly held one of them in kind remembrance," returned the doctor, with a sigh.

"What became of her, Doctor?"

"What should have become of her, according to the well known rules of poetic justice of all you novel-writers?" returned my friend, with a peculiar smile.

"Why," said I laughing, "she should have turned out an heiress, and married you."

"And that is exactly what she did," rejoined the doctor.

"Good heavens! you are jesting."

"No, my friend, no," replied the doctor in a faltering voice; "that night of horror only preceded the dawn of my happiness; for that girl—sweet, lovely Helen Leroy—in time became my wife, and the mother of my two boys. She sleeps now in death beneath the cold, cold sod," added the doctor, in a tremulous tone, and brushing a tear from his eye, "and no human resurrectionist shall ever raise her to life again!"

proved its patriotism, and the power of its principles, conclusively; to test of thousands of those who were once its most prejudiced and apparently implacable enemies.

Battling with abolitionism in the North and Know Nothingism in the South, its nationality, consistency and unvarying adherence to principle have been manifested more clearly than perhaps ever before. And therefore those who have been educated as opponents of Democracy, whose early associations taught them to denounce it as a political Pandora's box, have had an opportunity of witnessing its working under circumstances calculated to test it.

And consequently our ranks have been reinforced with hosts of our old enemies, who have come to us, not as captives, but as converts, whose prejudices have yielded to honest convictions of judgment, and who are now—where they see they should, ever have been—standing by the Constitution, shoulder to shoulder with the followers of the true faith of the Fathers of the Republic.

The Democratic party is distinguished for its unity, from the simple fact, that it is based upon principles applicable alike to one section of the Union and to every other, to New Hampshire and Texas, to Ohio and Alabama. The principles of the Whig party were national enough, if that had been all that was needed, to eternize it. But they were radically wrong in policy, as they were also too strongly tending to centralization at the expense of State sovereignty and in contradiction to the construction of the Government. The rights of the several States, as distinct from the Federal Government were never safe in its keeping; while, with the Democratic party, the most prominent characteristic since its organization has been an inflexible adherence to the rights of the sovereign States, and always with a due regard for the prerogatives assigned to the General Government.

Late events have been such as to leave no margin for evasion or equivocation on the part of political parties in this country. Positive principles in all their nakedness, for good or for evil, have been brought to bear directly upon the politics of the country. Questions not susceptible of debate, except upon the high ground of constitutionality, have almost exclusively engaged public attention. And it is to the Democratic party that the nation has turned for a vindication of the Constitution and the protection of the Union.

North and South, East and West, the warfare is waged now, as ever, upon the same platform and the same principles, on the part of the Democracy. Douglas of Illinois, Toney of Connecticut, Alexander of New Jersey, and all that noble band of Northern National Democrats, have been, and are still, fighting under the same flag that floats over Wise and Hunter of Virginia, Cobb of Georgia, Jones of Tennessee, Pickens of South Carolina, and their thousands of co-laborers and conferees throughout the South.

Such a party must always triumph as long as patriotism is alive in the hearts of Americans and principles are resorted to for the adjustment of difficulties and the dissipation of dangers.