

THE KENTUCKY GLADIATOR.

General Cassius M. Clay in His Home at White Hall, Talks of His Duels.

HOW HE FOUGHT, DECLARED AND MARSHALL

The Bowie Knife vs. the Pistol—Clay's Terrible Fight with Sam Brown—Brown—The Turner Fight at Easttown.

RICHMOND, Ky., Oct. 7.—[Special Correspondence of THE BEE.]—The life of General Cassius M. Clay has been one of constant fighting. Kentucky has always been a hot blooded state. Here a word is always followed by a blow and an insult has to be wiped out in death. Life is of less account here than in the north, and it was of still less value in the days of General Clay's youth, nearly two generations ago. It is sixty years now since he delivered the Washington centennial oration at Yale college, in which he espoused the cause of the negro and became the most hated man in Kentucky among the slave holders. All his life he has had to fight for his ideas, and the stories of his personal encounters read like a romance. It was during the latter part of my visit to "White Hall" this week while we were sitting, one evening, before the coals of his library fire that I drew General Clay on to talk of some of these fights and incidents almost as if they were of yesterday.

Said he: "I have never courted trouble with anyone, but I have never gone out of the way to avoid it. I have had a number of encounters and I have never been whipped in my life, except by my mother and by my older brother. I remember the first and only whipping I got from my brother. He was older than I was and a great deal stronger, and I was accustomed to tease him and play tricks upon him, until one day we were out trimming some trees in the orchard. The trees were rather high and my brother made a little ladder to enable him to get up into them. He took one row of trees and I took another and I would put away his ladder and take it over to my row so that he had to jump down and get it when he wanted to go to a new tree. He objected several times, notwithstanding this, I still kept at it and he caught me and threw me down and whipped me with some of the long sprouts or trimmings of the trees. These sprouts were very supple and I can almost feel their stings yet. I appreciated, however, the justice of the whipping and did not cry. I rose laughing, but from that time I did not take my brother's ladder and I stopped teasing him."

"When did you have your first duel, General?" I asked. "My first duel," replied General Clay, "terminated without either party firing a single shot. It occurred when I was twenty-one, fifty-eight years ago. I was engaged to be married and I had a rival suitor who, in spite of my success in wooing my sweetheart's mother in which he made a number of very obnoxious charges concerning me. The letter should never have been shown me, but the mother of my affianced wife did hand it to me and asked me to explain it. I explained it by going to Louisville on the hunt for the man who had written it. He was a doctor and his name was DeClary. A friend of mine went with me, and as soon as we got to town he quietly drew my attention and shot a good good hickory cane about as big round as your finger. I saw Dr. DeClary on the street and went up to him and asked him who he was. He said DeClary. He replied that it was and I then told him I would like to have a talk with him. This was on one of the main streets of Louisville and though I intended to come him, I did not want to do it where a crowd would rush in and prevent my giving him the punishment he deserved, so I quietly turned my horse aside to a side street. In the meantime my friend, James S. Rollins, afterwards noted during the war as General Rollins, walked along the other side of the street and watched me. When I had gotten DeClary into a side street, I said to Dr. DeClary, 'I am Cassius M. Clay, about whom you have taken the trouble to write in this letter, and I would like to know whether you can give me any explanation of your action.' He then showed him the letter, but he said nothing. I then raised my cane and began to cane him. He cried out and a crowd soon collected, but Rollins, by spreading out his arms and running in again and again, pretending to separate us, actually kept back the crowd until I was able to give him a good caning. I expected that DeClary would challenge me and I had brought Rollins along to act as my second. I was not disappointed. A few hours after the caning I got a challenge. We fixed a place in Indiana, just over the river and the time was the next day. When we got there we found that there was a great mob of DeClary's friends there on the ground, and General Rollins refused to allow the fight to go on. We then moved to another place, but DeClary's mob followed us there. The next day was to have been my wedding day, and I had to go to meet it. DeClary wanted me to come to fight after I was married, but I decidedly objected to breaking up my honeymoon in this way. He afterwards said that he intended to cowhide me the next time he saw me, and I went to Louisville to give him a chance. I went to his hotel, but he was not there. I waited for an hour, but he did not come, and I then went into the dining-room and looked against the pillar, intending to wait for him. As I stood there I heard someone rise behind me. I turned and saw DeClary. He was as pale as death and he was drawing a pistol. He did not hold my eye but got up and went. I stood for a short time longer, but finding that he did not intend to fight, went back home. As we were about to leave, he could not at that time be respected in Kentucky, and DeClary committed suicide the next evening by cutting his arteries."

"It is a curious thing," mused General Clay, as he peered up the dying embers of the fire into a glow, "that a man will have the bravery to commit suicide and still not have enough physical courage to fight. I have had a number of such instances in my life. It was so with Tom Marshall who was so famous as an orator in Kentucky. There has been for years a feud between the Clays and the Marshalls. Henry Clay, you know, had a duel with Humphrey Marshall, and Tom Marshall and my father were killed in a duel. My first trouble with him was at the time I was the editor of the "True American," and Marshall headed the mob which was raised to kill me and demolish the paper. I got two four pound brass cannons and put them up in my office and loaded them with shot and nails. I had them in a lattice and the mouths were just as high as a man's breast, and they faced the door. If a mob attempted to enter I expected to shoot right into it, and I had inside of the office also a keg of powder which I expected to blow up with a match, and send my enemies to eternity if they succeeded in capturing the office. Well, the mob attacked me, but I was not killed. Some time after this, I went to the Mexican war as captain of a company. Tom Marshall was captain of another company of the same regiment, and I decided to settle my trouble with him before we got through the war. He was drunk about half the time, and I believed he often cultivated drunkenness in order to enable him to say mean things, and not be called to account for them. I expected to have a duel with him and I got a stone and sharpened my sword until it shone like silver and had an edge like a razor. I gave him one or two chances to challenge me, but he did not do so, and at last one day when we were pitching camp, Marshall rode down to my quarters. He may have been drunk, and he may have mistaken my company for his. At any rate he came up to me and made some insulting remarks. I rose and said, 'Tom Marshall, we may as well settle our feud, and now is as good a time as any. Get down from your horse and we will fight it out.' He replied, 'Not now. Some other time.' I here drew my sword and said, 'This time for men who wear swords is now. You choose your own time to mob me at Lexington, and you are a coward if you refrain on account of your surroundings.' Marshall hereupon rode away to his tent. In a few moments he came back with his pistol. I saw him, and went into my tent and got mine. I came out with one in each hand. They were

cooled, and I said 'I am ready for you.' He was a coward and he was afraid to fire. He turned his horse and rode back to his tent. That same evening he tried to drown himself in the Rio Grande river, but the men saw him and prevented him. He was afraid to fight, but he was not afraid to commit suicide. Had we fought with swords I would have carved him up like a pancake."

"Clay's Fight with Sam Brown." "Do you remember any other instances?" "Yes," replied General Clay, "I suppose I could give others. It is a curious fact that even a brave man when he is once beaten hates to encounter the same man again. I can only explain the fact that I was not challenged by Sam Brown after our terrible fight on these grounds. "What was the fight, general?" "It rose out of a congressional contest," replied General Clay. "I was a candidate for the seat of John W. Wolfe, and Wolfe introduced my wife's name into one of his speeches. I challenged him and we first met on the 24th day of May, 1852, and I raised my air and demanded a second fight. The seconds would not permit this and we left the ground without a second meeting or an apology on either side. As I look over the matter now, I don't believe that my seconds had loaded their pistols with balls, and I did not see how I could have missed. I was an excellent shot and was accustomed to shooting with a rifle and revolver. One of my favorites was a squirrel. I shot at squirrels and could shoot the heads off of eleven out of twelve squirrels when out hunting. You know the boys hold my rifle, and I had a tree, and you remain quiet, as soon as he gets into whatever it considers a safe place, he will poke his head out and look to see where you are, and the skill in squirrel shooting is to shoot off the head of the squirrel."

"The Bowie Knife vs. the Pistol." "Well, Wicklife here had the worst of the fight, and during the canvass for congress I was talking very good words to him much to the disgust of the pro-slavery party. He had a handbill which he read during his speech. We had our speeches together and when he brought out his bill always read and asked if I might interrupt him. He would politely consent, and I would then say that I had read his bill and had been proven so. The pro-slavery men got tired of this and they decided to kill me. They sent for Sam Brown, who was one of the most noted ruffians of Kentucky. It is said that he had had forty fights and had never lost a battle. Brown came and he and Wolfe, a fellow named Jacob Ashton, and Ben Wood, a police wif, held a consultation at which they loaded a pistol which Brown was to use upon me the next day. I knew of this and I had not my dueling pistols with me. I interrupted Wolfe as usual and as I did so Wolfe drew his pistol and pointed it at me and told me that my statement was a d—d lie. I saw at once that it meant fight, and when I recognized Brown I knew it meant a fight to the death. I had four stars on my knife in the breast of my coat, and I jerked this out, but before I could strike Brown's neck he had drawn his pistol and had pointed me back about fifteen feet from Brown. Brown now pulled his revolver and told me to get out of the way and to let him kill me. The crowd got back and I stood alone. Brown had his pistol pointed at me and I started towards him. I could see him looking along the barrel of his pistol. He took aim and waited until he thought I was close enough to give him a sure shot and then fired. I felt the ball strike me in the breast and I thought it had gone through me, and I determined to kill him if I could before I died. I came down on his head with a tremendous blow with the bowie knife, and did not split open his skull. I struck again and again and stunned him so that he was not able to rise. With one cut of the knife I sliced his nose right in two, so that it fell in the middle and came out as flat as a pancake. With another blow I cut off his ear so that it hung by a shred, and with a third I put out his eye. The conspirators now seized me and I was struck with hickory sticks and chairs. Some of the blows of which I still feel the pain were from my captors and again for Brown, and they, to keep him out of my way, picked him up and threw him over a stone fence seven feet high and this ended the fight. Though I was the assaulted party, Wolfe and Ashton, for my money, and at this trial Brown confessed the conspiracy and Henry Clay defended me. Of course I was not convicted, but I felt very friendly to Brown and wrote him a note thanking him for his evidence and telling him I was willing to be friends with him if he cared to be so. He refused to accept my offer, and when I remembered his condition I did not wonder at it. The doctors had patched him up pretty well, but he was a horrible sight. He expected that he would insist upon a duel with me or would attack me and have his revenge. I met him several times afterwards, however, and he never touched me. I have no doubt that he stayed in Lexington intending to kill me, but the probability is that he had not the courage to attack me."

"Where did Brown's ball strike you, general?" "It struck me just over the heart," replied General Clay, "and I would have been killed but for one thing. The scabbard of my bowie-knife was tipped with silver, and in jerking the knife I pulled this scabbard up so that it was just over my heart. Brown's bullet struck the scabbard and imbedded itself in the silver and we found the ball there. There was a red spot just over my heart, and the whole seemed almost providential."

"Within an Ace of Death." "After General Clay said this, he leaned his head on his hand and looked for some moments into the fire in deep thought. He was apparently living the fight over again, and I interrupted him and asked him if he had ever been so close to death since that time. He replied, 'I don't know, but I think I have been within an ace of death a half dozen times since my fight with Brown. I was nearly killed within a mile of this house at Easttown, the cross roads where you turned off from the pike to come into White Hall. This was during one of the political campaigns during 1848, and when I was having a sort of a political discussion with a man named Turner. We spoke together and I was against slavery and Turner was for it. All the slaveholders were with Turner, and I knew that my situation was a dangerous one. I carried my pistols with me everywhere, but at Easttown I left them in my carpet-bag and was armed only with my bowie knife. At this meeting, our debate grew very hot, and Turner's soul rushed in and struck me and told me I had killed him. I knew then a fight and that there was a conspiracy against me. I drew my bowie knife, but was seized by about twenty of the conspirators and hauled back and my knife was jerked from me. I first thought that the men were only trying to prevent a fight and I did not make any resistance. But as soon as I lost my knife, they began to pound me with clubs and someone behind me stabbed me in the breast reaching around in front. The knife entered my lung. It cut apart my breast bone and I bled like a struck pig. I thought I was killed, but I determined to still the man who had incited the mob. I grabbed my bowie knife in my fingers, catching it by the blade and the handle and cutting the flesh through to the bone. You can see the scars now"—and with that General Clay held out his hand on the two fingers of which was a deep, neat white scar where the bowie knife had cut them.

"Well, I got the knife and I flourished it around my head with my bloody hands. The crowd disappeared as I cried out 'get out of the way,' and I rushed for Turner. I cut him in the abdomen, but as I drew the knife from him, I was almost felled from the loss of blood, and fell saying I died for the liberties of my country. At this time my boy ran in with my revolver, but it was too late and I could not use them. The crowd thought I was dead and this saved my life. They carried me home and I lay between life and death for some days. I did not think I was going to die, and I would not let the doctor touch me. I would not let them change my flesh through to the bone. You can see the scars now"—and with that General Clay held out his hand on the two fingers of which was a deep, neat white scar where the bowie knife had cut them.

Killed in Self Defense. General Clay has perhaps done more for

the negro than any other man in the south. He freed his slaves and fought for the abolition of slavery, when other men dared to speak or act for them. After the war was over, he came back to Kentucky and lived quietly at White Hall, leaving his slaves to time to study. He had with him his adopted son, Launcey Clay, a little boy of four whom he had brought with him from Easttown and he lived alone with Launcey and his servants at White Hall. His servants robbed him right and left. They stole his silver and his furniture, and systematically plundered his plantation. They poisoned his son and attempted to poison him, and when he discovered these facts he determined to murder them. White left, but sent letters saying he intended to kill Clay. One morning when out riding, General Clay saw him on his plantation, concealed in the woods. General Clay jumped from his horse and believing that he was perfectly safe, he drew his revolver, got the drop on him and told him to throw up his hands. He then began to give him a lecture and to ask him why he had threatened his life when Perry White put down his hands and jerked out his pistol. General Clay then fired and struck the negro in the neck. He fired and shot the negro through the heart. He was tried for the shooting, but was acquitted on the ground of self-defense. I walked with General Clay over the place where the shooting occurred. It was within a stone's throw of the house, and the general said that he had no doubt but that he would have been a dead man if he had not killed White."

How Julian Hawthorne Escaped a Duel.

General Clay is now nearly 82 years of age. But he is still a dangerous man to fool with. Quiet in his manner, but in his determination he would resent an insult as quickly today as when he was in his prime, and in self-defense, I am sure that he would be equal to two average men of his days. It is now only a few years ago since he came very near having a duel with Julian Hawthorne, the novelist. Hawthorne had reviewed a copy of General Clay's memoirs, and in his review had criticised Clay severely and had discussed the subject of the chastity of his wife. Said General Clay: "I was very angry. I did not believe that I could make anything out of the man by suing him, and I determined to make a course of my own. I wrote to Colonel W. G. Terrill of Washington asking him to act as my second, and I also wrote to Whitlaw Reid, requesting a letter to which I asked him to publish if his relations towards Hawthorne were such that he could do so without affecting them. This letter I told Clay, and Hawthorne that the article he had published concerning me in which he had used the name of my wife was false, and that he would give me an opportunity of withdrawing his allegations, and my letter was so written that between the lines you could see that I meant he should be allowed to retract. As to what he said about her in the smaller one which I had never uttered, and that I demanded an unequivocal retraction of everything he had said about her in the larger one, which I had retracted. This should be published that it would have wide a circulation as his article had had. I told him that I would give him an opportunity of withdrawing his allegations, and my letter was so written that between the lines you could see that I meant he should be allowed to retract. 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