

DESERT EVENING NEWS.

Thursday, May 7, 1908.

ON THE DEATH OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

In one respect, Westminster Abbey stands out among the buildings of the world. A time has come when a fresh nucleus of life—or rather of death—has been formed within it, a new combination produced, a larger ramification thrown out. First, was only King who found their noble home within its sacred walls, then nobles and ministers of state, and last, the true great ones of the land, whose valor saved or whose genius enriched it. The Abbey, as everybody knows, owes its origin to the piety of Edward the Confessor, of whom a very full description has been given by his contemporaries—and this is the portrait which Dean Stanley has compiled from their materials: His appearance was such as no one could forget. It was almost that of an albino. His full, flush, rose-red cheeks strangely contrasted with the milky whiteness of his waving hair and beard. His eyes were always fixed on the ground. There was a kind of magic charm in his thin white hands and his long, transparent fingers, which not unnaturally led to the belief that there resided in them a healing power of striking away the disease of his subjects. His manners presented a singular mixture of gravity and levity. Unusually affable and gentle, so as to make even a refusal look like an acceptance, he burst forth at times into a fury which showed that the old monk's rage was not dead within him. "By God and His mother, I will give you just such another turn, if it ever come in my way!" was the utterance of what was thought by his biographers as a very mild expression when his noble indignation against a peasant who interfered with the pleasure of his chase, Austere as were his habits—old even as a child—he sometimes startled his courtiers by peals of boisterous laughter, for which they or he could only account by some curious vision which had passed across his mind without their knowledge. His time was almost equally divided between devotional exercises and hunting. He would spend hours in church, and then again days together in hawking and cheating on horseback. When Edward the Confessor had thrown himself on the protection of his favorite saint, St. Peter, and swore that if his affairs succeeded, he would make a pilgrimage to that apostle's grave in Rome; and when he came to the throne, he announced his intention of proceeding thither. But his great council would not let him leave the kingdom; far less risk the perils of the Roman brigands—who, it seems, have been by far the most permanent institution in Italy—a delegation was sent to the Pope to beg a release from his vow. The release came on condition that he should found a monastery, and accordingly "the college church of the Abbey of St. Peter" was founded, which is much more commonly known as Westminster Abbey. When Edward died, he was of course laid in this temple of his own creation, attired in his own royal habit, with his crown upon his head, a crucifix of gold, with a golden chain, round his neck, and the pilgrim's ring on his hand; and there, we are well assured, his dust reposes to this day.

A FIELD OF BLOOD.

The soil of Blandensburg, Md., has a bloody record. It has been the scene of many a refined murder in days past. One who visits the place now will find the field green with verdure, which a few years since was trampled by the feet of men arrayed in deadly hostility. Here, on a beautiful grass plot, surrounded by trees, fought the battle of the image of God came to insult nature and defy Heaven. In 1814, Edward Hopkins was killed here in a duel. This seems to have been the first of these fashionable murders on this duelling ground. In 1819, A. T. Mason, a United States Senator from Virginia, fought with his sister's husband, John McCarty, here. McCarty was averse to fighting, and thought there was no necessity for it; but Mason would fight. McCarty named muskets loaded with buckshot, and so near together that they would hit heads if they fell on their faces. This was changed by the seconds to leading with bullets, and taking twelve feet as the distance. Mason was killed instantly, and McCarty, who had his collar bone broken, still lives with Mason's sister in Georgetown. His hair turned white so soon after the fight as to cause much comment. He has since been collected to act as second in a duel, but refused, in accordance with a pledge made to his wife soon after killing her brother. In 1820, Commodore Decatur was killed here by Commodore Barron. At the first fire, both fell forward and lay with their heads within ten feet of each other, and as each supposed himself mortally wounded, each pulled and freely forgave the other, still lying on the ground. Decatur expired in a few days, but Barron eventually recovered. In 1821, two strangers, named Lega and Segs, appeared here, fought, and Segs was instantly killed. The neighbors only learned this kind of their names from the marks on the gloves left on the ground. Lega was not hurt. In 1822, Midshipman Locke was killed here in a duel with a clerk of the Treasury Department, named Gibson. The latter was not hurt. In 1828, Henry Clay fought his second duel with John Randolph, just across the Potomac, as Randolph preferred to die, if at all, on Virginia soil. The latter received Clay's blow and then fired his pistol in the air. This was in accordance with a declaration made to Mr. Benson, who spoke to Randolph of a call the evening before on Mrs. Clay, and alluded to the quiet sleep of her child and the repose of the mother. Randolph quickly replied: "I shall do nothing to disturb the sleep of the child or the repose of the mother." Gen. Jessup was Clay's second. When Randolph fired he remarked, "If I do not shoot at you, Mr. Clay," and extending his hand advanced toward Mr. Clay, who rushed to meet him. Randolph showed Clay where the ball struck his coat, and said facetiously, "Mr. Clay, you owe me a coat." "Thank God, the debt is no greater." They were friends ever after. In 1822, Martin was here killed by Carr. These duels were not recommended. They were from the South. In 1823, Mr. Key (son of Frank Key, and brother of Barton Key), met Mr. Sherbon, and Mr. Sherbon said, "Mr. Key, I have no desire to kill you." "No matter!"

said Key, "I don't want to kill you, but I will kill you, if you don't stop." In 1845, a lawyer named Jones fought with and killed a Dr. Johnson. In 1851, a Dr. Johnson and A. J. Dillie fought with and killed each other. In 1853, Daniel and Johnson, two Richmond editors, held a harmless set-to here, which terminated in coffee. In 1853, Davis and Ridgway fought here; Ridgway allowed his antagonist to fire without receiving the shot.

BAD EFFECTS OF SMOKING.—A paper was read before a medical society in England, stating that of thirty-seven cases of amaurosis, or nervous blindness, treated by the writer, thirty-one were smokers; and he came to these conclusions: 1. Among the men, the form of amaurosis (primary) while atrophy of the optic nerve) is rarely met, except among smokers. 2. Most of its subjects have been heavy smokers—half an ounce to an ounce a day. 3. It is not associated with any other affection of the eye. 4. Amongst the measures of treatment, the prohibition of tobacco ranks first in importance. 5. The circumstantial evidence tending to connect the disease with the use of tobacco as a cause deserves the serious attention of the profession.

A prominent journalist in New York, who is perfectly bald, has offered a reward of one thousand dollars for a tale that will make his hair stand on end.

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1850: 1868:

THE DESERT NEWS

Published every Tuesday and Saturday

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