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A Funeral Thought.

BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

When the pale Genius, to whose hollow tramp
Echo the startled chambers of the soul,
Waves his inverted torch o'er that wan camp
Where the archangel's marshaling trumpets roll,
I would not meet him in the chamber dim,
Hushed and o'erburdened with a nameless fear,
When the breath flutters and the senses swim,
And the dread hour is near!

Though love's dear arms might clasp me fondly then,
As if to keep the summoner at bay,
And women's woe and the calm grief of men,
Hallow at last the still, unbreathing clay—
These are earth's fetters, and the soul would shrink,
Thus bound, from darkness and the dread unknown,
Stretching its arm from Death's eternal brink,
Which it must dare alone!

But in the awful silence of the sky,
Upon some mountain summit never trod,
Through the bright ether would I climb, to die
Afar from mortals and alone with God!
To the pure keeping of the stainless air
Would I resign my feeble, falling breath,
And with the rapture of my answered prayer
Welcome the kiss of Death!

The soul, which wrestled with that doom of pain,
Prometheus-like, its lingering portion here,
Would there forget the vulture and the chain,
And leap to freedom from its mountain-bier!
All that it ever knew of noble thought,
Would guide it upward on the glorious track,
Nor the keen pangs by parting anguish wrought,
Turn its bright glances back!

Then to the elements my frame would turn:
No worms would riot on my coffin'd clay;
But my cold limbs, from that sepulchral urn
In the slow storms of ages, waste away!
Loud winds, and thunder's diapason high,
Should be my requiem through coming time,
And the white summit fading in the sky,
My monument sublime!

Gen. Samuel Dale—His great Canoe Fight.

In 1784, when Samuel Dale was yet a boy, his father removed from Virginia, and made a settlement near the site of the present town of Greensboro', Georgia. But a few days had elapsed, when the subject of our sketch—a youth of sixteen summers—found himself an orphan; and in virtue of seniority, guardian of seven brothers and sisters. Disposing of them in the best manner his limited resources would allow, he joined a company of volunteers, raised to repel the invasions of the Creek Indians; and here commenced that military career, which only closed when the difficulties of his country ceased. We do not propose to follow it up. Whoever is acquainted with the history of the Indian wars—with the bloody battles of Burnt Corn and Holy Ground—the terrible massacre of Fort Mims, the hazardous expeditions of Claiborne, and the Seminole campaigns of Jackson—knows enough to appreciate the iron nerve and daring intrepidity of Gen. Dale. We will now notice a few of those remarkable adventures with which his life is so replete.

His celebrated "canoe fight," in the Alabama river, in which he and two of his company, brained, with clubbed rifles, nine Indian warriors, in fair and open combat, is a kind of household word with our old settlers. Every old crone on the river could relate to you the incidents of the bloody conflict; while her aged partner, whose head had whitened with the growing improvement of his state, would hobble down to the bank and point out the very spot in the bright waters where the two canoes met; if, perchance, the reader has ever made a trip down the river on that elegant boat which bears our hero's name, (Sam Dale,) he has doubtless had designated to him, by the courteous captain, the time honored old beech which marks the spot, as well as a high projecting bank which had previously sheltered the namesake of his boat from the fire of the Indians.

Soon after the bloody tragedy of Fort Mims, many of the whites, urged by their defenceless condition and the increasing hostilities of the Indians, took refuge in Fort Madison. As Gen. Claiborne was prevented from marching to their aid, by the hostile movements of the enemy about St. Stephen's, Capt. Dale and Capt. Carson were left in command of the fort. As soon as his wounds received at the Bunt Corn fight were sufficiently healed,

Dale determined to change the mode of conduct from defensive to offensive. With 70 men, he proceeded southwestwardly to Brazier's landing on the Alabama. Here they found two canoes, belonging to a negro named Caesar, who informed them that there were Indians above there on each side of the river. He also tendered them the use of the canoes, and proffered to act as their pilot. Capt. Dale immediately placed the canoes in charge of Jeremiah Austill and six men, who were ordered to keep them parallel with the party on land. Arriving at the mouth of Randan's Creek, the canoe party discovered a boat filled with Indians, who, however, immediately paddled to shore and fled.

The land party, finding it impossible to continue their route on account of the thick cane and vines, were ordered to cross over and proceed up on the other side. While they were effecting a passage, Dale and several of his men kindled a fire a short distance from the river, to prepare their day's meal. Thus engaged, they were fired upon by a party of Creeks from an ambush. Retreating towards the river, so as to gain the cover of the projecting bank, they discovered a large flat-bottomed canoe, containing eleven armed and painted warriors. The party behind them now retired, leaving Dale to choose his own course towards those in the boat. As both of his canoes were on the opposite side, Dale ordered the larger one to be manned. Two of the warriors now left their boat and swam for shore; but a ball from the unerring rifle of James Smith perforated the skull of one of them, and he immediately sunk; the other gained the shore and escaped. Eight men had, in the meantime, manned the larger canoe, and were approaching the Indian boat; but coming near enough to see the number of rifle-muzzles over the edge of the boat, they hastily paddled back to the shore.

Dale, exasperated by this "clear back out," as he termed it, on the part of his men, shouted to them in a scornful tone, to "look and see three brave men do what eight cowards shrunk from;" and, followed by Austill, and Smith, sprang into the smaller canoe, which the faithful Caesar had just brought over. Paddling their canoe directly towards their enemies, they soon commenced the "canoe fight," so celebrated in Alabama tradition.

When within twenty paces of the Indians, our heroes arose in their canoe to give them an opening broadside; but unfortunately the priming of their guns was wet with the mist that was falling, and they failed to fire. Had not the same accident befallen the enemy, the result of the canoe fight might have been very different. Dale now ordered Caesar to bring his boat alongside and hold them together. The warriors, confident of their strength, and eager to grapple with three men whose guns would not fire, allowed their boat to move leisurely along with the current.—As the two neared each other, the chief arose, and with an ejaculation of defiance to "Big Sam," (which, on account of his great size and strength, was the name applied by the Indians to Dale,) leveled his gun at Smith's breast; but before he could draw trigger, the latter directed a blow at him, which would have proved fatal had it not been adroitly avoided.

The canoes came together with a jar, which threw Austill slightly off his balance, and ere he could recover it, a well directed blow from a war-club prostrated him across the boat. A half dozen powerful arms were raised to complete the work, when the heavy rifle of Dale came down upon the head of the chief, with a force that sunk it deep into his skull. Smith had not been less active, and his trusty barrel had fallen with like effect on the skull of another warrior, and the two now felt their death throes in the bottom of the canoe. Austill had in the meantime recovered, and added his strength to the work of destruction. The bold Caesar held the boats together with an iron grasp, and with one foot in each our heroes fought.

Two successive blows from Austill's rifle despatched two of the enemy, one of whom fell overboard. Thinking to make sure of his foe by a second stroke, Austill leaned forward to strike, when he was again prostrated by an Indian club. The exulting savage, never forgetful of a scalp, raised the war-whoop, seized his victim by the hair—the scalping-knife glittered in the air, when another timely blow from Dale's clubbed rifle divided his skull.

Tradition says, that so great was the force of the blow, that the skull was split from the crown to the vertebral column. In the meantime Smith, at the other end of the canoe, grappled with two lusty warriors. He was a powerful man, but the chances now were against him. The iron clutches of one of his assailants are upon his throat—the tomahawk of the other is above his head! he sees his danger; one foot is in one canoe, one in the other; with a desperate effort he gets both feet into one canoe, and draws one Indian after him, while the sudden movement separates the ends of the boats and leaves the others behind to meet the fate of those who have already come within range of Dale's and Austill's rifles.

Smith now had his enemy in his power, and soon despatched him. The conflict now became equal—three to three. The savages, reduced in numbers from nine to three, now fought with the energy of despair. Light and active, they avoided many of the blows of the whites, and dealt in return such well directed ones that they were beginning to tell in their favor, when Dale, calling to Caesar to hold the boats firmly together, sprang upon one of the seats and dealt a blow which shivered a club that had been directed to meet it, and leveled another warrior. The remaining two were left to have destruction dealt out to them at the hands of the victorious Dale, who, while Smith and Austill leaned upon their bloody and brain-besattered rifles, despatched them at two successive blows. During the whole of this sanguinary conflict, the heroes were encouraged by the continued cheers of their comrades on either bank. Of the nine warriors, Smith killed two, Austill two, and Dale five.—"Having laid them all low," says Mr. Pickett, "these undaunted Americans began to cast them into the bright waters of the Alabama—their native stream now to be their grave. Every time a savage was raised up from the bottom of the canoe and slung into the water, the Americans upon the banks set up shouts loud and long, as some slight revenge for the tragedy of Fort Mims. The Indian canoe presented a sight unusually revolting—several inches deep in savage blood, thickened with clots of brains, bunches of hair, &c."

A few years previous to the canoe fight, Gen. Dale was engaged in another hand-to-hand rencontre hardly less exciting. There is so much of the spirit of wild adventure and romance connected with the incident, we are surprised that it has not, ere this, been made the basis of one of our thrilling border tales. When the Indian hostilities first began to assume a threatening attitude, in consequence of the Galphinton treaty, a white woman was seized by a party of Indians, and carried into captivity. All attempts towards recapturing her seemed fruitless, indeed so many similar cases occurred, that they failed to excite that interest which we would naturally expect.—Dale, however, having gained some information as to her whereabouts, determined—and with him determination was but another word for accomplishment—to rescue her.—Setting out alone, his experience in trailing soon brought him upon the heels of the savages. Finding himself near them, with a characteristic coolness he stopped to drink and refresh himself previous to beginning his work. While stooping to drink, two of the party who were nearer to him than he thought, sprang upon him. Without attempting to rise, he drew his hunting knife, and, with an under stroke, killed one of his

assailants, then rising suddenly, he threw the other from him, and ere he could regain his feet, despatched him.

Thus much accomplished, he took the trail of the others—followed them for many miles—came upon them asleep—knifed three of them—cut the thongs of the captive woman, and was about to commence his triumphant march homeward, when another warrior whose position behind a log had screened him from view, sprang upon him. Weak from the loss of blood, and in the deadly grasp of the savage, Dale would now have fallen by the hands of a foe whom he had ever conquered, had not the liberated woman snatched up a tomahawk and split the Indian's skull. The mutual deliverers, having exchanged congratulations upon their fortunate escape, were soon in the midst of their rejoicing friends. Gen. Dale, in after life, often said that he had given up all hope of life in this instance, and could hardly believe that the weak emaciated female, whose captive thongs he had just cut, could be his deliverer.

The biographer of Gen. Dale, John H. F. Claiborne of Mississippi, cites the above incident and vouches for its truth. The tales of Knight-Errantry could hardly equal it in romance and wildness of adventure, and no Bois-de-Gilbert, of the Middle Ages, in "panoply complete," could boast of greater triumphs of his lance, than could Gen. Dale of his hunting knife.

After the treaty of peace with the Indians, Gen. Dale settled in Lauderdale county, in the northern part of Alabama, where his log cabin was the seat of an extensive and generous hospitality. In 1836 he was elected to the State legislature, in which he served with his characteristic openness and independence of character. An interesting anecdote of him is related by Mr. Claiborne in his biographical memoir. We give it in the author's own language:

"Some time ago Gen. Dale was held in Mobile, as endorser upon a note. The debt was in the hands of a stranger. Accompanied by an officer, he sought the creditor and found him in the saloon of Cullum's far famed hotel. 'Sir,' said the General, 'I have no money to pay this debt. The principal has property, make him pay it, or let me go home and work it out.' The Shylock hesitated. 'Very well,' said the veteran, in tones that rang indignantly through the apartment, 'Very well, sir! Look at my scars! I will march down to jail, down Muise street, and all Mobile shall witness the treatment of an soldier!' These simple words fell like electricity upon that high-toned people. In half an hour a dozen of the brightest names of the city were upon that bond; and before morning the debt was paid and a full discharge handed to the General."

Gen. Dale died in 1841, at his residence, "with the fortitude of a soldier, and the resignation of a christian."

We know not better how to close this article than by quoting from the well-written biography, which we have already used:

"In many respects, physical and moral, he resembled his antagonists of the woods.—He had the square forehead, the high cheek-bones, the compressed lips, and in fact the physiognomy of an Indian, relieved however by a fine benevolent Saxon eye. Like the red man of the forest, too, his foot fell lightly on the ground, and turned neither to the right nor left. He was habitually taciturn; his face grave; he spoke slowly and in low tones and seldom laughed. I observed of him what I have often noticed as peculiar to border men of high attributes—he entertained the strongest attachment for the Indians—extolled their courage, their love of country, and many of their domestic qualities; and I have often seen the wretched remnant of the Choctaws encamped around his plantation, and subsisting on his crops. In peace they felt for him the strongest veneration—he had been the friend both of Tecumseh and Weatherford—and in war the name of 'Big Sam' fell on the ear of the