

## LITERATURE.

[From Dickens's Household Words.]

## "WHO MURDERED DOWNIE?"

About the end of the eighteenth century, whenever any student of the Marischal College, Aberdeen, incurred the displeasure of the humbler citizens, he was assailed with the question—"Who murdered Downie?" Reply and rejoinder generally brought on a collision between "town and gown;" although the young gentlemen were accused of what was chronologically impossible. People have a right to be angry at being stigmatized as murderers, when their accusers have probability on their side; but the "taking off" of Downie occurred when the gownsmen so maligned were in swaddling clothes.

But there was a time when to be branded as an accomplice in the slaughter of Richard Downie, made the blood run to the cheek of many a youth, and sent him home to his books thoughtful and subdued. Downie was a sacrist or janitor at Marischal College. One of his duties consisted in securing the gate by a certain hour; previous to which all the students had to assemble in the common hall, where a Latin prayer was delivered by the principal. Whether, in discharging this function, Downie was more rigid than his predecessor in office, or whether he became stricter in the performance of it at one time than another, cannot now be ascertained; but there can be no doubt that he closed the gate with austere punctuality, and that those who were not in the common hall within a minute of the prescribed time, were shut out, and were afterwards reprimanded and fined by the principal and professors. The students became irritated at this strictness, and took every petty means of annoying the sacrist; he in his turn applied the screw at other points of academic routine, and a fierce war soon began to rage between the collegians and the humble functionary. Downie took care that in all his proceedings he kept within the strict letter of the law; but his opponents were not so careful, and the decisions of the rulers were uniformly against them, and in favor of Downie. Reprimands and fines having failed in producing subordination, rustication, suspension, and even the extreme sentence of expulsion had to be put in force; and, in the end, law and order prevailed. But a secret and deadly grudge continued to be entertained against Downie. Various schemes of revenge were thought of.

Downie was, in common with teachers and taught, enjoying the leisure of the short New Year's vacation—the pleasure being no doubt greatly enhanced by the annoyances to which he had been subjected during the recent bickerings—when, as he was one evening seated with his family in his official residence at the gate, a messenger informed him that a gentleman at a neighboring hotel wished to speak with him. Downie obeyed the summons, and was ushered from one room into another, till at length he found himself in a large apartment hung with black and lighted by a solitary candle. After waiting for some time in this strange place, about fifty figures also dressed in black and with black masks on their faces, presented themselves. They arranged themselves in the form of a court, and Downie, pale with terror, was given to understand that he was about to be put on his trial.

A judge took his seat on the bench; a clerk and public prosecutor sat below; a jury was empanelled in front; and witnesses and spectators stood around. Downie at first set down the whole affair as a joke; but the proceedings were conducted with such persistent gravity, that, in spite of himself, he began to believe in the genuine mission of the awful tribunal. The clerk read an indictment, charging him with conspiring against the liberties of the students: witnesses were examined in due form; the public prosecutor addressed the jury, and the judge summed up.

"Gentlemen," said Downie, "the joke has been carried far enough: it is getting late, and my wife and family will be getting anxious about me. If I have been too strict with you

in time past, I am sorry for it, and I assure you I will take more care in future."

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, without paying the slightest attention to this appeal, "consider your verdict; and, if you wish to retire, do so."

The jury retired. During their absence the most profound silence was observed; and except renewing the solitary candle that burnt beside the judge, there was not the slightest movement.

The jury returned, and recorded a verdict of Guilty.

The judge solemnly resumed a huge black cap, and addressed the prisoner.

"Richard Downie! the jury have unanimously found you guilty of conspiring against the just liberty and immunities of the students of Marischal College. You have wontonly provoked and insulted those inoffensive lieges for some months, and your punishment will assuredly be condign. You must prepare for death. In fifteen minutes the sentence of the court will be carried into effect."

The judge placed his watch on the bench. A block, an axe, and a bag of sawdust, were brought into the centre of the room. A figure more terrible than any that had appeared came forward, and prepared to act the part of doomsman.

It was now past midnight, there was no sound audible save the ominous ticking of the judge's watch. Downie became more and more alarmed.

"For mercy sake, gentlemen," said the terrified man, "let me home. I promise that you never again shall have cause for complaint."

"Richard Downie," remarked the judge, "you are vainly wasting the few moments that are left you on earth. You are in the hands of those who must have your life. No human power can save you. Attempt to utter one cry, and you are seized and your doom completed before you can utter another. Every one here present has sworn a solemn oath never to reveal the proceedings of this night: they are known to none but ourselves; and when the object for which we have met is accomplished, we shall disperse unknown to any one. Prepare, then, for death; another five minutes will be allowed, but no more."

The unfortunate man, in an agony of deadly terror, raved and shrieked for mercy; but the avengers paid no heed to his cries. His fevered trembling lips then moved as if in silent prayer; for he felt that the brief space between him and eternity was but a few more tickings of that ominous watch.

"Now!" exclaimed the judge.

Four persons stepped forward and seized Downie, on whose features a cold clammy sweat had burst forth. They bared his neck, and made him kneel before the block.

"Strike!" exclaimed the judge.

The executioner struck the axe on the floor; an assistant on the opposite side lifted at the same moment a wet towel, and struck it across the neck of the recumbent criminal. A loud laugh announced that the joke had at last come to an end.

But Downie responded not to the uproarious merriment. They laughed again, but still he moved not. They lifted him, and Downie was dead!

Fright had killed him as effectually as if the axe of a real headsman had severed his head from his body.

It was a tragedy to all. The medical students tried to open a vein, but all was over; and the conspirators had now to bethink themselves of safety. They now in reality swore an oath among themselves; and the affrighted young men, carrying their disguises with them, left the body of Downie lying in the hotel. One of their number told the landlord that their entertainment was not yet quite over, and that they did not wish the individual that was left in the room to be disturbed for some hours. This was to give them all time to make their escape.

Next morning the body was found. Judicial enquiry was instituted, but no satisfactory result could be arrived at. The corpse of poor Downie exhibited no mark of violence internal or external. The ill-will between him and the students was known; it was also known that

the students had hired apartments in the hotel for a theatrical representation—that Downie had been sent for by them; but beyond this, nothing was known. No noise had been heard and no proof of murder could be adduced. Of two hundred students at the college, who could point out the guilty or suspected fifty? Moreover, the students were scattered over the city, and the magistrates themselves had many of their own families among the number, and it was not desirable to go into the affair too minutely. Downie's widow and family were provided for—and his slaughter remained a mystery; until, about fifteen years after its occurrence, a gentleman on his death-bed disclosed the whole particulars, and avowed himself to have belonged to the obnoxious class of students who murdered Downie.

[From the Yankee Blade.]

## "WOOL GATHERING!"

OR, A LIVELY TIME AT THE OLD TREMONT.

Glorious old Tremont House! The history of that hospitable home of the way-worn traveller, the great and famed Tremont, may never be written, but must live in the memories of the many, who, yet surviving the wreck of matter and crush of worlds, will "come sit thee down" and relate the many high times, the luxurious times, the convivial times, they have had beneath the roof of that same old, and finally broken up abode of men of every clime, condition, good, bad and indifferent, whom "the course of human events" had thrown together, to meet soon to part, each and every time, the wiser and better for it.

Of the many "mems" of interest connected with the Tremont, one, at least, will bear relating, not so much, perhaps, for the moral it conveys, as for the fun of the thing. The steamship officers of the Cunard line, as well as most of the passengers coming into Boston in the steamers, were in the practice of "putting up" at the Tremont. The officers of these steamers were, of course, slightly addicted to steam, themselves, and very often had very jolly times at the Tremont. One night, Captain J—, of one of the aforesaid steamers, was in port, and some Port, probably, in him; he and some friends, with whom one or two foreigners—passengers who had come over with him, had been to the theatre, and returning to the hotel in a carriage, they jumped out very briskly, and Captain J, by way of a lark, throws his cloak over the head of a "colored pusson" passing by at the moment, and that individual not fancyin' such liberties from a gem'en to whom he had not the honor of being more formally introduced, walked square into the British captain.

"Wha—who de debil do dat for, umph?"

And the first ze gallant captain knew his cloak was shivering in the wind, his hat knocked into smithereens, and himself engaged, generally, with a buck nigger who was putting in his best licks, and forcing Captain J. to use all the wind he could raise, to call for a little material aid.

"Ah! ha! de law'd, I guess I gib you de wrong end ob dis fun—shuah!"

"You—you d-d-d—" gasped the captain, hitting at the "nig."

"No use, sah, I've not de chile to fool wid!"

cobiff, cobing-pug!—and into ze jolly Captain went Congo, like a house a-fire! Of course the companions of the captain loaned him their aid as soon as they could, but the "nig" and J. wheeled about, and turned about, up and down, mixed up with the captain's mantle, in such circuitous and sudden flip-flaps, that the royal captain and "gentleman from Africa" had a tolerable good rough and tumble, before "material aid" was available, and the "nig" had taken to his gutta percha heels, at a gait recognised by the fanciful genuses who hang around "race tracks," as beautiful.

"Well, my hies, wasn't that a go?" was the captain's first exclamation to his friends—now reinforced by two watchmen, a dozen servants and habitués of the Tremont.

"I vos help, captin," says a German Baron, who was in the coach, and partly in the fight; "but bine mine shoul, I vos never see sich fite vis nigga's! I hit mit mine cane, and bine mine gott, I vos miss evair bode and hit mine frient here, Monsheer Patois!"

"O-o-o-o! I vas disgust!" says the French-

man, "I vas knock on ze noose—vat you call, aud be gar, I vas knock to ze diable by mine fret, de Baron! Vat could I do! I do nossing, sair; Monsieur le Capetaine, allow me ze plaizure to present my comple-men, viz smell of mine snuff, for ze nerves, sair."

"Aug the snuff, let's go in and get some brandy and water; that nigger has made me as a porpoise!" the stalwart captain replies, and in went the party, to recuperate and discuss the sudden and unexpected *coup d'etat*!

While thus pleasantly situated, the clocks of the city were ringing out twelve—midnight, and all of a sudden, a fresh outbreak of some sort was heard in the rotundo and office.

"I tell you we're full, that's enough!" says the husky voice of the half asleep sub office keeper.

"Full, you is, eh? Well now, you see, de fac am, if I wasn't 'zackly a cullnd pusson, I'd not be told any'ing ob de kind!"

"Well clear out that's all!" said the clerk.

"I shan't do it—no, Sair; I've a 'spectable gemm'en as any gemm'en in dis house. I ax for lodgin, I'm gwine to pay for it, I wants a fuss rait room, too. I've gwine to hab one, shuah, or dere'll be fuss kick'd up heah, mighty sudden—sartin!" says the darkey.

The shrill phe-e-e-e-ut-t-t and ting a-ring a-ding, ding, ding, ding of whistle and bell, was started; three of the night servants, and one of the big, burly, Irish porters, made their appearance upon demand.

"Put out that cussed copper head!" says the clerk, but Congo put on an attitude of resolute defiance, and pushing open one of the rotunda street doors, he sung out to a bevy of darkies outside, and in they came, five or six, with a rush!—In the meantime, the big porter had engaged the first darkey, and in spite of his bigness, the "buck nigga" proved a huckleberry two much for him. In came the original originators of the muss; one of the darkies seeing Captain J., with a yell of delight, yolked him, and down they came—cobiff!

"Oh! its you, eh?—you-yo-you blasted—" but the quick revolution of the darkey cut short the captain's speech, and the captain's *bull* benow fully up, he went to work on his smutty-looking antagonist, in anxious earnest, the whole party more or less engaged, likewise.

This general and miscellaneous fight created an uproar that brought Captain John Olmstead out of bed, down stairs, sans everything but breeches and shirt, and upon reaching the rotunda, the captain was reinforced by "Tom," the other big Irish porter, a fellow as broad across the shoulders as a Dutch barn door, and capable of lugging a cart load of baggage to the fourth story, without drawing breath.

"Go in, Tom!" cries the captain, himself squaring for one of the buck darkeys, and Tom and the captain had it, nip and tuck—hit and hug—for the darkies had about taken a possession; their victims were lying around—done for, and but for the timely arrival of Capt. Olmstead and Tom, wool would have been victors of the almost bloodless fight.

"Whur-r-r-r!" says the herculean Irishman hitting one of the sable combatants, about midships, and putting him nearly through the rotunda door.

"Oh! de goo-goo-good lud!" and away went that Congo.

"You son of a gun!"—biff—fum! and Capt. O. had another over the same route.

"Tish too pad, bine mine shoul!" and the burly Barron, who had been standing back trying to get the hang of things, made a charge upon the last darkey showing fight; the derkey clinched the Barron, who, about as soggy as a barrel of sour beer or sour krout, canted over upon Congo, and down the stairs they pitched. The watchmen—those everlasting slow coaches—came upon the ground in season to see all but two of the darkies "up and gone," and in their endeavours to save the last two, one of the loggy watchmen was "cross butted" by the biggest of the two "collud pussons," and knocked half through the hall doors of Tremont Temple 'tother side of the street! The other watchman, big Tom, Captain Olmstead, four waiters, the little frenchman and a cab-driver, engaged the two darkies on all sides, and such hitting, kicking, butting, grunting, yelling, gouging, rough and tumble, never was seen before or since in