

Poetry.

A CATEGORICAL COURTSHIP.

I sat one night beside a blue-eyed girl—
The fire was out, and so was her mother;
A feeble flame around the lamp did curl,
Making faint shadows, blending with each other;
'Twas nearly twelve o'clock, too, in November,
She had a shawl on also I remember.

Well, I had been to see her every night
For thirteen days, and had a sneaking notion
To pop the question, thinking all was right,
And once or twice had made an awkward motion
To take her hand, and stammered, coughed and stut-
tered,
But somehow nothing to the point had uttered.

I thought this chance too good now to be lost;
I fished my chair up pretty close beside her,
Drew a long breath and then my legs I crossed,
Bent over, sighed, and for five minutes eyed her;
She looked as if she knew what next was coming,
And with her foot upon the floor was drumming.

I didn't know how to begin or where—
I couldn't speak—the words were always choking;
I scarce could move—I seemed tied to the chair—
I hardly breathed—'twas awfully provoking—
The perspiration from each pore came oozing
My heart and brain and lips their power seemed
loosing.

At length I saw a brindle tabby eat
Walk purring up, inviting me to pat her;
An idea came, electric-like at that—
My doubts like summer clouds began to scatter;
I seized on tabby, though a scratch she gave me;
And said, "Come, Pass, ask Mary if she'll have
me."

'Twas done at once—the murder was now out,
The thing was all explained in half a minute;
She blushed and turning pussy cat about,
Said, "Pussy, tell him yes;" her foot was in it!
The cat had thus saved me my category,
And here's the catastrophe of my story.

Select Tale.

A TOURNAMENT
IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY JOHN MILLER.

The following narrative surpasses in thrilling interest the scenes of chivalric days.

In a close line our party continued to advance, brandishing their lances, and from time to time giving vent to the most discordant cries, which met with a ready response on the part of the enemy, in their war-whoop of defiance. It seems, indeed, necessary for the savage, when going to fight, to excite his courage by shouts and yells, and those primitive means are doubtless productive of a corresponding effect with the white warrior's drum and spirit-stirring fife.

With as noble a bearing as a knight of old, when about to tilt for his "lady's love," Black Wolf sat upon his horse and led the van, as became the chief of the Osages. With that love for display which is an innate passion with the Indian, he pulled his horse's neck into a curve, and, keeping an antique pair of Spanish rowels pricking against his flank, proudly curvetted him at the head of his troop, "trimmed like a younker prancing to his love."

We had now approached so near to the Pawnee band, that momentarily I expected to see them sweep towards us,—as in Indian warfare neither side wait, with the coolness which well disciplined courage can only inculcate, to receive the other's charge, and each brave is free to fight on his own plan, or any mode which the impulse of the moment may direct.

Much, however, to my surprise, a solitary warrior singled himself from his party, and, with something white flying at the head of a lance, approached at foot pace. The Osages instantly checked their horses at the command of their chief, and unattended, he rode forward to meet the messenger of peace.

I may here remark on the singularity that the flag of truce—a piece of white buffalo skin—should be adopted by those sons of the wilderness similar in color to our own. The copy, doubtless, was taken from the pale-face, upon learning that the emblem met with such inviolable respect; but the Indians deny this, and avow that their fathers regarded it as a signal of peace before the great canoe came across the great lake. In support of this it is worthy of observation that the skin of the white buffalo—a most rare prize—is held in great reverence by them.

The conference was brief between the Pawnee and the Black Wolf, and the latter, riding back to where we stood watching their movements with an interest easier to be conceived than described, in-

formed his brother in arms that the Pawnee chief was willing to settle the fight in single combat, and that he himself would meet either of the Osage braves who might be the chosen champion of his nation.

This plucky challenge created the wildest commotion among the aspiring warriors of our party, and so numerous were the volunteers, and so urgent their claims to have the honor assigned to them, that, unless Black Wolf had settled the contention by claiming it for himself, it was far from improbable that a new diversion might have arisen in mutiny against his orders. There was no disputing, however, the right of the chief to take the precedence of all; but the opinion veered to the opposite point, concerning the policy of the measure, when they found that they were to take no share in the glory. The greater number urged the expediency of a general fight, alleging that we were stronger than the enemy, and should capture all their horses and skins,—with which they were laden like ourselves,—in addition to a pretty haul of invaluable scalps.

Black Wolf, however, either from prudential motives or a desire to gratify his own vanity, decided to accept the challenge on the terms on which it was sent, and agreed that the horse and horse accoutrements of the vanquished should become the prize of the conqueror, which he was to take unmolested possession of in presence of the respective parties.

These preliminaries being adjusted, the arms of Black Wolf were now carefully examined by his companions, who threw aside all jealousy the moment the question was settled. One took his lance and tried the soundness of the shaft by bending it so that the two ends nearly met. Another thumped his bowstring; while several changed their best arrows for those of his which appeared defective. The touch-hole of his rifle was cleaned and re-primed, and even the knife and tomahawk underwent a careful scrutiny. The honor of the nation was at stake; and the breast of each individual present seemed to burn with patriotic pride and solicitude for the event which was to decide the fate of Osage or Pawnee chief.

All being in readiness, Black Wolf dashed his spurs into his horse's sides, and, bringing him upon his haunches by way of a start, he galloped before us, for the combined purpose of showing himself, and announcing to his enemy his readiness for the strife.

Nothing nobler can be pictured to the imagination than the appearance of the chief, as naked as he came into the world, with the exception of his arms slung across his shoulders, he sat upon his plunging and excited steed with grace, ease, and confidence. A tuft of the war-eagle's plume surmounted his head, proudly raised and threw back, while his finely-developed chest stood out like that of a gladiator. With tightened rein he held his horse's head close to his chest, and, using the spur freely, roused the animal's fiery blood until large flakes of foam flew from his jaws, his nostrils dilated, and his eyes looked ready to spring from their sockets.

After making the circuit, he suddenly reined in his horse, and the two stood motionless, as if carved from granite, some two hundred yards in advance of where we remained stationary to watch the result and see fair play. There was not, however, as I subsequently learned, the slightest apprehension for treachery, as in the combats which, although rare between members of rival tribes, are occasionally indulged in, the strictest faith is kept with regard to the terms on which they are to be fought.

The piebald horse, with the bearer of the lance, on which a small red flag fluttered, now darted from the horsemen drawn up closely in the distance, and, making a corresponding circle with Black Wolf, drew up in the same way opposite to him, and they appeared for a few brief seconds to be eyeing each other with intent far from charitable. As if moved by a common impulse, both drove the butt ends of their lances into the ground, and then, raising their rifles from their thighs, dashed forward and fired at the moment of passing each other, some fifteen or twenty paces apart. Whether the bullets flattened or were rendered harmless against the tough shields of some buffalo hides which were suspended round their necks, or whether they flew wide of their marks, I cannot tell; but, for aught I could see, no harm was done.

Dropping their reins to take aim, their horses carried them unchecked to within a few yards of where the respectful armies of Osages and Pawnees were posted. Indeed room had to be given to the Pawnee chief, who came with such a rush toward us as to threaten to upset a handful of the foremost spectators, among whom, as there was no danger to be apprehended, I had placed myself on Squabby Nigger. There was little opportunity to examine

him closely; but he was evidently of much less stature than Black Wolf, and possessed none of that fire and noble bearing which characterized the chief of the Osages. He seemed equipped in precisely the same way, and was equally devoid of the smallest article of attire. If, however, his personal attractions fell short of his antagonist's, in horsemanship and manner of using his weapons, he appeared in every way equal to him. Snatching up his reins, he checked the animal, and brought him round as if turned upon a pivot; and then, adjusting his rifle with a rapid movement, he drew an arrow from his quiver, and, with bending bow, swept towards Black Wolf, like an eagle as he swoops down upon his prey.

But the Osage, knowing the expertness of the enemy with whom he had to deal, was prepared in like manner; and, as they met about midway between the planted lances, their barbed weapons were drawn to their heads, and whizz they went at the same moment, with barely a dozen feet intervening between them. At close quarters such as these, and with unrivalled skill, it was barely possible that they should miss each other; but their bucklers received the arrows, and both the warriors as yet remained unseathed.

The short bows being easier to manage than the rifles, round they turned their horses as soon as their arrows were discharged, and again they swept the same course, with their bows prepared, as if by magic, for the bout. In this, the second turn, the Pawnee chief was not so fortunate; for as he came toward us, I perceived a stream of blood trickling down his bridle arm, the arrow having passed through the fleshy part of his shoulder, ripping it upwards, but not hanging in the wound.

Black Wolf also received a wound in the breast from the Pawnee's arrow, being buried almost to the feather in the shield; and although thus greatly spent in the force with which it was driven, it carved a deep jagged gash in his right side, from which the blood flowed copiously.

With increasing excitement, the two now rode at each other, delivering their arrows as fast as they could turn their horses, and it appeared to be a point to endeavour to give a shot without getting one in return. But so well matched were they both in the skill of managing their horses and use of their weapons, that neither of them could obtain that advantage, in spite of the most strenuous exertions.

The bodies of the two chiefs became crimson with gore from the number of flesh wounds each had received; but, as yet, no mortal one had been given, and from the care observed in protecting the body by means of the shields, and lying along the backs of their horses, so as to present to view as little of their person as possible, there was no great probability of these weapons terminating the fight.

At length Black Wolf's last arrow was shot; and, as his enemy came towards him, he held up his bow to signify that his quiver was exhausted.—In a moment the Pawnee turned his horse, and galloping back to the place where he planted his lance, plucked it from the ground and couched it by his side; nothing loth to imitate his example, Black Wolf grasped his lance, and without breathing time, the pugnacious foes spurred on their hot and impatient horses again to the combat; and as they did so, thoughts of tilt and tournament flitted across my mind, albeit my attention was absorbed beyond description in the pending struggle.

With a terrific shock the weapons crossed, and coming against the centre of the bucklers, the tough shafts bent like willow wands, and the horses were thrown almost upon their haunches.—Either from the great weight of the Osage, or the more effective direction of his lance, the Pawnee was laid flat on his back; and, as his horse bounded forward, it seemed impossible that he could regain his equilibrium in the saddle; but with an effort which could be made only by an Indian, he flung himself into his feet, and, seizing the rein, turned with the agility of a cat.

It was one of the fixed rules in these bloody frays, that there should be no time given between the acts, and that it was to be continued without let, check, or stop, until one of them should be slain.

As soon, therefore, as the horses could be brought round, their respective riders re-couched their lances, and dashed at each other with the fury of contending tigers. It might have been the effect of a heated imagination, but I fancied I heard the scratch of a lance as it entered the flesh, and at the same moment the Pawnee chief was flung round as if a round shot had blown him from his seat. In an instant, however, he was upon his feet, trying to catch the lance which was dangling at his horse's heels, but missing his hold, the animal made the best use of the opportunity, and fled away with all the fleetness he possessed.

Black Wolf now dismounted, and giving his horse and lance to Firefly, who rode forward to re-

ceive them, strode toward the Pawnee chief, armed only with the knife and tomahawk.

The appearance of both as they advanced towards each other, was most appalling. From head to heel they presented one thick mass of blood from the enormous wounds which they had received; but, as if insensible to pain or faintness, each appeared eager as game-cocks to renew their feud.—They now went to work hand to hand, hacking at each other with their tomahawks with deadly fury, and inflicting now and then most terrible cuts.—As the battle progressed, their shields became chopped to pieces, and hung in stripes from the surface, while the blows were showered upon them as thick as hail.

With that advantage, however, which a big man possesses in a personal encounter with a small one, provided his courage be not inferior, the Osage now became painfully evident in favour of Black Wolf. Up to the point of the Pawnee being hurled from his horse, the chances of the conflict appeared to be pretty nearly balanced; but when its faces became changed to a stand up fight between man and man, hand to hand, in sporting phraseology, it was a horse to a hay seed. Towering above his enemy but little less than a foot, the Osage drew his tomahawk down with tremendous force, and from his superior reach of arm, often kept his antagonist completely on the defensive, and rained two blows for one.

Nothing daunted however, the Pawnee maintained the unequal contest with a spirit that was only to be conquered with his life. Altho' his arm grew momentarily weaker, and he eged before his enemy's fierce onslaught, yet made as good a requital as laid in his waning power, and faced his foe as the bravest of the brave did only do. But like an expiring lion he was to be conquered but with his death, and when parently on the point of falling before the repeater of the enemy, he suddenly sprang forward, d, clinging to Black Wolf's shield, endeavouring to make a thrust with a drawn knife under it, he wary Osage was too much upon his guard to be taken by surprise, and shaking the Pawnee as he would a snake, he caught him by the throat in his iron grasp, and holding him at a's length, drove his long Spanish blade into the upper part of the belly, and ripped him to the chest!

A loud wild shout of exultation burst from the lips of our party as they witnessed this decisive act on the part of Black Wolf, who had over the body of his fallen foe with his head proudly erected towards the Pawnees, who were silent spectators of the defeat. For a few seconds the Osage maintained this attitude, without a perceptible motion of a muscle, and then stooping he took the dead chief's scalp lock between his fingers, and passing the point of his knife adroitly round his skull, plucked the scalp, hot and bling, from it, and held the prize up in triumph above his head.

Again his companions yelled with savage pleasure at the sight; but no one presumed to approach the spot where he has yet remained complete the measure of his triumph.

A Pawnee brave now came forward leading the piebald horse, which had either been caught by the lasso, or stopped upon reaching the main body of his own free will, and moving slowly towards Black Wolf, as if reluctantly ere in every step, he gave the rein without sign of word into his hands, and again returned to his party.

There was now little to be done. Black Wolf collected the arms of the slaughtered Pawnee chief, which were strewn upon the ground, and trying as must have been the feat, vaulted upon the back of the horse, and rode at a gallop towards us. Upon coming close I saw that his body and limbs were cut and hacked most fearfully; but Indian like, he paid no attention to his wounds, and as far as I could see, suffered but little from the loss of blood.

We now returned to the encampment, and permitted the discomfited Pawnees to bury their chief in peace where he had so bravely fallen. In the prairie wilderness they laid him; and, when all had quitted the solitary grave, a stranger visited it with sorrow for his fate.

A humorous young man was driving a horse which was in the habit of stopping at every house on the roadside. Passing a country tavern, where were collected together some dozen countrymen, the beast as usual, ran opposite the door, and then stopped in spite of the young man, who applied the whip with all his might to drive the horse on. The men on the porch commenced a hearty laugh, and some of them inquired if he would sell the horse.

"Yes," replied the young man; "but I cannot recommend him, as he once belonged to a butcher, and stops whenever he hears the calves bleat." The crowd laughed to the boy in silence.