

The ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, UNLIMITED

THERE once stood in front of a tobacconist's on Broadway, New-York, a life-size image of Tonawanda, the great Indian fighter. This copper-colored hero held out in one of his hands a Roman sword of portentous dimensions; the other obligingly displayed a bunch of wooden cigars, which he generously offered to a heedless public. I suppose that the attitude meant a choice of war or peace, the cigars symbolizing peace.

I was one of a number of young men who resorted to this particular shop to smoke the fragrant weed and talk politics. Sometimes we got into mischief, when one of our diversions was to carve our initials with penknives upon the wooden figure of old Tonawanda. William Ross Wallace the poet, who belonged to our coterie, not content with cutting his "W.R.W." deep into Tonawanda's arm, also carved an immense spread-eagle on the old man's back; a piece of vandalism that deeply excited the indignation of the proprietor and resulted in the sale of the image to a junk-dealer.

The substitute was a brand new figure, this time an Indian princess in short skirts, balancing not a bunch, but a whole box of cigars. As we were seriously cautioned not to cut any capers with this lady, we took to some new form of mischief, until the art of carving initial letters and spread-eagles was lost entirely from among us. We often thought and spoke of Tonawanda, whose manly figure and well-marked features we had contributed so much to deface, and regretted that in cutting him he had been compelled to cut us.

As we grew into manhood, each went his separate way—some went abroad, some died, some rose to eminence, some sank into oblivion; the tobacco-shop itself gave way to other vanities—and at the end of thirty years little remained of the ancient coterie beyond a vague recollection of Tonawanda and the pranks we used to play upon him. The artist who carved the figure and arrayed him in all the glories of red, blue and yellow paint must have been little less than a genius. The pose was so natural (I allude to the American Indian's notorious prodigality of Roman swords and Havana cigars) and the features were so strongly marked, that I could have picked him out from among a thousand redskins.

Wallace, Augustine J. H. Duganne, William Cooke of the Erie Railroad and myself laid the foundations of a Know-Nothing daily called "The American Times," which broke down within a year, when Wallace retired to the poetry column of "The Journal of Commerce," Duganne started a long-since defunct weekly called "The Republic," and I went back to engineering.

They are all dead now, the last survivor being Wallace. One of his latest appearances was on a Fourth of July, brandishing a wooden sword, reciting poetry to a crowd of small boys, and trying, poor fellow, to be a youth again. Vain effort! His handsome Gaelic face now was seared with wrinkles, his once beautiful teeth were reduced to stumps, his voice was cracked—

"What's that you've got in your hand?" I asked him.

"Don't you remember? It's old Tonawanda's bowie-knife. I bought it of a junk-dealer for a dime."

It was a relic of our old trysting-place: Tonawanda's sword. I bade him good-by, dear old chap. We met only once more, and then his dear, honest face passed away, never to be seen again.

It was long after all these souvenirs of youth had faded into the past that I met him again in London, where we fraternized for a week or more, until I was ordered away to the coast of Senegambia, to examine some gold properties near Timbuktu for a London promoting company. So I bade good-by to my old chum and started for Paris and Bordeaux, where I boarded one of the Messageries Maritimes and sailed for Dakar on the west coast of Africa. Thence I went by canoe to Solde, where I struck across the desert for Timbuktu, a painful journey of nearly a thousand miles. The caravan being well provided, I arrived at my destination without accident, where I was surprised and rejoiced at meeting several Englishmen, who entertained me in their own bungalow and furnished me, among other good things, with the sight of an English newspaper.

Tonawanda, the Wooden Indian of a Broadway Tobacconist, Becomes an African Fetish

By ALEXANDER DEL MAR

These men, who appeared to conduct a trading company, spoke both the Arabic and negro dialects and were on excellent terms with the native authorities. In a week's time I accomplished the object of my journey, and was preparing to return to Dakar, when my friends proposed a visit to Timbuktu. I have called it Timbuktu, and intend to stick to that name, but in reality it was not Timbuktu, although not far from it. Suffice it to say that it was a city of equatorial Africa, about a thousand miles eastward from the coast of Senegambia.

Four of us rode into the town together. To avoid unnecessary scrutiny we stained our hands and faces

negro in the full summer costume of the old Imperial Guard, all except the brogans, for he was bare-footed. His weapons consisted of a flint-lock musket and single-barreled pistol. The musket was French; the pistol English. The former might yet be an effective weapon; the latter was a mere toy, a brummagem outcast, of the Hanoverian period.

"Another of Templeton's specs.," said the nearest Englishman. "We call them 'Immortals,' because they never kill anybody."

We rode forward. Near the city gate we were met by a band of musicians, who, like the Fratres Arvaes of old, danced to a chorus of shouts, a clashing of cymbals and a clinking of swords. The cymbals were curious. They resembled bronze stew-pans with long handles. Surely, I had seen something of the kind before, yet I could not place them; so I looked inquiringly toward one of my English friends.

"Yes," he replied, "you're right. They're old English warming-pans grown useless and sold in a job-lot for a mere trifle. We originally got more than their weight in gold for them; but they are now giving us trouble, for in order to avert a disastrous break in the African musical market we have been obliged to buy up every blessed lot of warming-pans which some malign trader in Wolverhampton has been shipping to the Bight of Benin."

"Then you're old junk-dealers," I remarked. He laughed. "We call ourselves 'The Antiquarian Society, Unlimited.'" "What does the Unlimited refer to?" "The profits."

We passed the wall and entered the town. It consisted of several hundred houses, chiefly of adobe, mostly of one story, a few of two stories, and all with brick *azotéas*. The streets were thronged with negroes; not a Moor was to be seen. We put up our horses at an inn and made our way on foot to the farther side of the town, where the M'Lenga's temple "reared its proud head to the clouds," that is, when they were down low. It was an enormous structure of nearly circular form, the basement of stone, the walls of burnt brick, and the roof of tiles. The approach was by a flight of six stone steps. The doors were wide open, and from a slight eminence in the street we could perceive over the heads of the crowd the lights burning on the altar. The edifice was jammed with people; the steps and porch were thronged; even the street was crowded.

Presently the altar lights moved forward. The priests were evidently leading a procession toward the entrance. The negroes without cried "M'Lenga!"

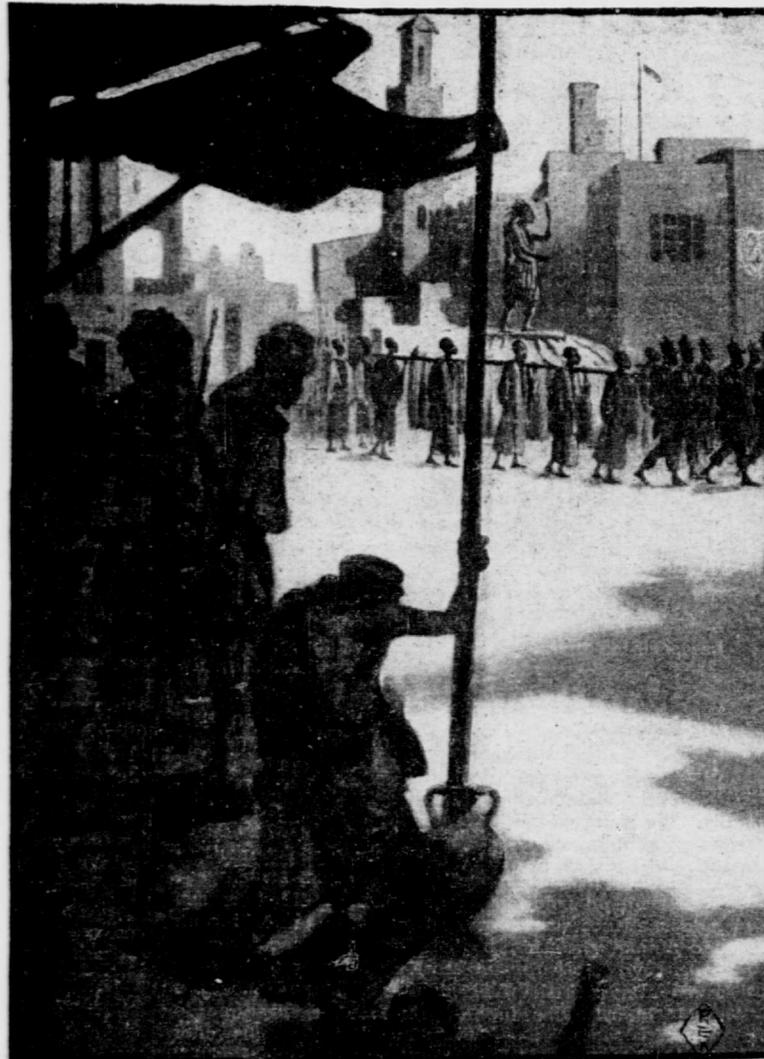
and dropped on their knees; the negroes within caught the cry and shouted "M'Lenga!" while my English friends followed the general example, and drawing the hoods of their garments over their heads, they plumped down in the mud on their knees, with shouts to M'Lenga.

"You'd better follow our example," whispered one of them. I remembered the Roman proverb and obeyed.

The procession now issued from the temple and swept past us. First came a band of warming-pans, sleigh-bells and tom-toms; next a silk banner stretched upon a frame and bearing some gilt letters, too much effaced to be legible. Like everything else in this country, it resembled some cast-off finery from a distant world or age. I began now to suspect whither all the old clothes went from our great cities of the north and west.

Next came a company of boys with sticks of burning punk. Following these was a cluster of priests or obi men surrounding the dread M'Lenga, whose giant white figure, decorated with red tattoo marks, held out its threatening arms to the skies, commanding them to open their sluice-gates and refresh the earth with fructifying showers.

The figure fascinated me. It seemed a Roman antique: something which perhaps I had seen in Florence or Rome. I pushed my hood aside and



The Dread M'Lenga Held Out Its Threatening Arms to the Skies

to agree with the Moorish complexion tint and wore the Moorish burnoose. It was a brilliant day in May, the atmosphere was sultry, but dry and bearable. The low hillsides were covered with negro troops, commanded by Moorish officers. What instantly arrested my attention was the extraordinary uniform of the men. It was that of the Imperial Guard of the First Napoleon, swallow-tail coats, white trousers, pipe-clayed belts, leather hat and shako; but all worn, stained and ancient.

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"Is this a masquerade?" I asked.

"Well, not exactly. It is a ceremonial and parade day. The fields have suffered greatly from drought, and the great idol, called the White M'Lenga, is to be brought out to call down the rain. The Moorish commanders also have a part in the ceremonial, for they have suggested the firing of a volley, ostensibly to honor the M'Lenga, but really because they believe that that is the only part of the ceremony which is likely to have any practical result."

"Where on earth did the men get such a rig?" I asked.

"That's Templeton's spec.," they said. "Bought at Toulon for eighteen pence per costume; sold at Timbuktu upon a slight advance." They all chuckled. I didn't understand.