

“Wyndy” Glybb’s Experiment by Judge Clark

Wyndham Glybb, Esquire, was a man of wonderful word power. As a basis of speech, he could make one idea go as far as six would with ordinary men. Indeed, at a pinch, he could talk without any idea at all, reminding you of Davy Crockett’s comparison of a certain boisterous congressional orator, with a saw-mill, under full headway, without any log to saw.

With so rare a “gift of the gab,” it is not surprising that “Wyndy” Glybb, as he was commonly called, after a brief residence in the county, discoursed himself into a nomination for the legislature over the heads of several older if not better soldiers in the party ranks. The opposing candidate was a plain man, of no great fluency; but the county was a close one, and notwithstanding Mr. Glybb’s superior volubility, the chances stood pretty even.

The contest, at first animated, soon grew to be rancorous—so virulent, indeed, that in a scurrilous hand-bill Mr. Glybb’s private character was anonymously assailed. Among other things it was asserted that he had absconded from his former residence in consequence of certain acts of swindling which made the place too hot to hold him. Even the names of the victims were given, and the particulars so circumstantially stated, that Mr. Glybb’s friends stood aghast, and, for a season, his enemies were jubilant.

But such an accusation, like a two-edged sword, cuts both ways. If sustained, it proves fatal to its object; if confuted, swift and sure destruction falls upon the author. A character, moreover, never shines so brightly as when emerging from the mists of a dissipated calumny.

Now, it so happened that Mr. Glybb was able, in a very brief time, to disprove every allegation made against him. He even produced the affidavits of the very persons he was charged with having cheated, clearing him of every shadow of suspicion. His vindication was triumphant, and his popularity rose to a white heat.

It was a proud day for Mr. Glybb, when standing up before “a large and enthusiastic audience,” he poured, for two hours, a torrent of invective on the invisible head of his defamer.

“I brand him,” *perorated* Mr. Glybb, “as a calumniator and a coward! Let the dastardly skulker come forth! I challenge him to show his sneaking face! If he has a spark of manhood in him, let him reveal himself, and I promise to call him to a stern and bloody account!”

This defiance of the detractor was a masterpiece of rhetorical address. It was a fire-eating community, and with such nothing gives a man greater *eclat* than showing a willingness to fight.

Mr. Glybb and his friend, Tom Wyke, were relaxing over a bottle of wine after the great oration, when a visitor sent in his card.

“Fergus Croft,” said Mr. Glybb, glancing at the card; “the name is strange to me; do you know him, Wyke?”

“He’s a staunch supporter of the opposition. What can he want, I wonder?”

“Show him in,” said Mr. Glybb to the waiter; and almost immediately a thin-visaged, stern-looking man entered.

“Mr. Glybb, I presume?” he said, inquiringly, with a stiff bow to that gentleman, who returned it with another as stiff.

“My name is Croft,” the visitor continued. “I am charged with a letter to which I must invite your present attention.”

Mr. Glybb leisurely opened the missive placed in his hand. Soon it began to flutter in his fingers, and his face vividly paled.

“I—I will be ready with an answer in an hour,” he stammered.

“Rather a long delay, under the circumstances,” returned Mr. Croft. “However, you must be your own judge. I will call you at the end of the time mentioned.

“Look at that!” exclaimed Glybb, when the two were alone, tossing the letter to his friend.

Tom took it and read:

“WYNDHAM GLYBB, ESQ.—*Sir*: To-day, in a public harangue, you denounced the author of a certain publication as ‘a calumniator and a coward.’ Avowing myself responsible—as I here do—for the article in question, you must be sensible that I cannot permit such language to pass unnoticed. The insult is too gross to be atoned for by a simple apology. I am under the necessity, therefore, of at once demanding that satisfaction which, in such cases, is usual among gentlemen. This will be handed you by my friend, Col. Fergus Croft, whom I trust you will refer, without delay, to some friend of yours, with a view to arranging the necessary preliminaries.

“I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“CEPHAS MOLDWARP.”

“What a confounded scrape to be in!” said Wyndham Glybb, when Tom had finished reading.

“There’s but one thing to do,” said the latter.

“What’s that?”

“Fight.”

Poor “Wyndy” started as if already struck by a bullet.

“But you see, I—I don’t believe Mr. Moldwarp wrote the hand-bill. In—in fact I *know* he didn’t.”

“Very likely,” replied Tom; “but the opposition couldn’t well let the matter rest after what you said to-day. *Some* of them must have published the libel; and, if the author didn’t take up your challenge, and nobody else did, it left an imputation of cowardice lying round loose among them, which somebody had to resent for the good of the party, and, as like as not, Mr. Moldwarp was the man selected. But how do you know *he* didn’t write the hand-bill?”

Glybb blushed and hesitated. Then leaning over he whispered in his friend’s ear, whereat the latter gave a start of surprise.

“Don’t you think,” resumed Mr. Glybb aloud, “if I wrote to Moldwarp, saying I was satisfied he had nothing to do with the offensive document, and never intended my remarks to apply to him, it might prove satisfactory?”

“Certainly not. Mr. Moldwarp having avowed the responsibility, to question his word now would only furnish a fresh ground of offence.”

Mr. Glybb sat for a minute gloomy and silent. Then looking up nervously, he said:

“That man will be back for his answer soon. What shall I do?”

“Simply refer him to a friend. No other answer is required.”

Further colloquy was cut short by Col. Croft’s return. Mr. Glybb, with as bold an air as he could muster, referred him to Mr. Wyke.

The two seconds retired to consult, and not long after Mr. Wyke returned alone. Everything had been satisfactorily arranged, he said; but it was anything but satisfactory to Wyndy Glybb to learn he was to fight with pistols at ten paces at sunrise the next morning.

When his friend had left, poor Wyndy sat for a long time in moody reflection. Then springing up suddenly,

“It’s my only chance!” he cried.

Opening his writing-desk, he penned a brief note, which he carefully sealed and directed. Concealing his face with a muffler, and slouching his hat over his brows, he sallied forth. After walking a short distance, he called a boy to whom he gave a quarter to carry the note to the proper address. Then hurrying home he flung himself on the bed, without undressing, to await the horrors of the morning.

He had just fallen into an uneasy slumber, when Tom Wyke came and shook him by the shoulder. He started with a shudder like a condemned criminal aroused from his last sleep by the hangman’s touch.

There was barely time to reach the ground; so they started immediately. When they arrived they found the other party already there.

The seconds set to work without delay. The distance was measured, the pistols loaded, and the men placed, in less than ten minutes.

“Are you ready, gentlemen?” called out Col. Croft, in a clear, sharp voice.

“Yes,” responded the impassive Moldwarp.

Wyndy Glybb’s ear was bent in another direction. It had just caught the sound of hoofs.

“The sheriff! the sheriff!” he cried, more in a tone of relief than of alarm—“save yourselves all!” and without waiting for the others, Wyndy took to his heels.

“Stop! stop!” bawled the sheriff; “I’m not going to interfere. I’ve come merely as a looker on.”

But Wyndy only ran the faster, and soon was out of sight.

“Confound the coward!” growled Tom Wyke. “He confessed to me yesterday that the hand-bill was written by himself as an electioneering dodge, knowing that nothing helps a man like a slander well refuted, and hoping to make a reputation for courage by bullying the pretended author.”

“And I think it’s not unlikely,” the sheriff added, “that the anonymous note which called me here this morning came from the same hand.”

Wyndy Glybb never came back to learn the result of the election, and it is quite probable he never repeated his experiment.

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