



Duelling

The practice of duelling or settling disputes by single combat may be traced to the middle ages, and seems to be a relic of that barbarous period when gross darkness covered the minds of men.

The northern hordes of Europe, unskilled in the nice principles of law, by which justice may be rendered to every man and the rights of all preserved, chose this summary method of settling all their questions of right. If anyone deemed himself wronged he challenged his adversary to meet him in mortal combat, and appealed to their gods, whom they supposed well pleased with scenes of violence and blood. This rude custom of judicial contests suited well the savage and warlike spirit of the barbarians. Yet it seems a poor method to settle controversies by strength or skill

rather than by the justice of the cause; some more equitable procedure

might have been resorted to by the rude and the ignorant.

We boast of our form of Government and the excellency of our laws and surely there is no need of resorting to such bloody tribunals. Our laws afford a peaceful remedy for all real grievances. But some persons have (such) a sensitive spirit of honor,

which cannot bear the least breath of suspicion, and so at the least affront they ~~seek~~ adopt this method of obtaining redress and showing to the world that they are men of honorable feelings. How much more noble and truly honorable to take no notice of the little provocations on account of which duels are fought. The offences are hardly worthy of any regard from a man of a magnanimous spirit. We applaud the high mindedness of Themistocles, who said

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"Strike but hear me". How ^{much} ^{was he} superior to those, who fall into a passion on every trivial occasion, and think there is no way of vindicating their honor, but ^{by} rashly exposing their own lives and madly seeking to destroy the life of another.

And were a real injury inflicted, too grievous to be borne, or too enormous to be overlooked, and no remedy provided by law, this custom would afford poor satisfaction, Shall we give our enemy an equal chance to inflict greater injury on us? Are we to make ourselves a ^{mark} target for him to shoot at if we think he has not treated us with proper respect. This is paying too costly devotions to the bloody demon, which is worshipped by all savage nations.

The more we look upon this custom the more revolting it seems, It is a waste of life, and happiness without producing any advantage to individuals or the community merely to gratify a false principle of honor. The consequences of this custom are most injurious upon the community where it is practiced; It not only deprives society of some of the most talented and distinguished men, but it also cherishes and brings into exercise the brutal and malignant passions and cultivates a cruel, bloodthirsty disposition.

And wherever Duelling prevails, instead of producing a polite refined state of society it is attended with scenes of lawless violence and barbarity. By setting at defiance the law of the land a spirit of insubordination and contempt for wholesome restraint is encouraged. Individuals become irritable and ready to take up arms on the most trivial occasions and jealous of their honor "They kindle at the shadow of a wrong".

June 28th 1837

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