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A Veteran's Armor

By LAURENCE FOSTER CHURCH.
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ciation.]

Here is a story I rescued from some
old family papers that had not been
overhauled in half a century. I have
reconstructed it from its original letter
form, preserving the first person in
which it was written:

I came to New Orleans in 1845 from
France. I was sitting one evening,
soon after my arrival, in a cafe when
an elderly man, about fifty-five I think,
stepped up to me and with a broad
southern accent said, "You are M.
Desmounes of Paris, I believe, suh."

"I am and at your service, monsieur."
"I am a stranger in the city, suh. I
am a planter from the interior of the
state. I desire the services of some
one familiar with the code duello and
have been told that you have officiated
on several occasions at meetings among
gentlemen. If it would not be too much
to ask, suh, I would like you to act fo'
me in an affair of hona', suh."

He was a typical Louisiana planter
of the period, but withal having a sol-
dierly bearing—tall, erect and with
grizzly gray hair.

"I shall be happy to serve you, mon-
sieur. But I should like to know
something about the case."

"Certainly, suh. My opponent de-
clared publicly that General Jackson
at the battle of New Orleans used cot-
ton bales fo' breastwo'ks. I told him
that he was mistaken. He persisted.
I gave him the lie. He challenged me."
I was surprised. I had not then
learned of the various methods among
gentlemen in vogue in the city of pick-
ing a quarrel which was based on an-
other cause.

"Were you right?" I asked.
"Certainly, suh! I was present at
the battle, suh."

"And who is your opponent?"
"Camille Trudeau, suh."

"Camille Trudeau! Is he here? Why,
my dear sir, he has been out twenty
times and always killed or winged his
man."

"So I have heard, suh."

After a failure to induce Captain St.
Leger—the name he gave me—to find
a way out of the difficulty, I consented
to act for him. His opponent's second
informed me that his principal, who
was twenty-five years younger than
St. Leger, would not kill the captain
if he could possibly help it. St. Leger,
as the challenged party, selected pis-
tols and a ground under the levee a
few miles north of the city. We pro-
ceeded thither at daybreak the next
morning. I noticed that the captain
stepped from his carriage gingerly and
walked on to the ground with a slight
limp. There also seemed to be some-
thing the matter with his left arm.

We placed the contestants thirty
paces apart. The captain told me that
he was a poor shot and named the dis-
tance himself. They fired at the drop
of a hat. Trudeau was unharmed,
St. Leger received a ball in the leg
that nearly knocked him over. But he
maintained his balance and awaited
the signal for another round. Trudeau
looked surprised. He had aimed at
the captain's leg just below the knee
and knew that he had placed his bul-
let there. Such a stroke should be
sufficient to put any man out of the
fight. We endeavored to induce the
old man to withdraw, but he would
not hear of it.

Just before the next signal I saw
Trudeau looking at his opponent's
right arm, as if he intended to shatter
it. I was not surprised that he
changed his intention, for he could not
carry it out without killing his man.
When the shots rang out Trudeau was
still unharmed. St. Leger's left arm
swayed and then hung limp. He stood
as steady as ever.

Trudeau turned pale. Was he to
continue to put holes in his adver-
sary's members without any percepti-
ble injury? I confess I was puzzled.
Trudeau appeared to be rattled. The
captain's shots had been drawing
closer to him, and this doubtless had
an effect upon his nerve.

St. Leger insisted on another round.

When their hands were raised for
the next shot I thought I noticed a
slight tremor at the muzzle of Tru-
deau's pistol. The captain's face was
a study. It showed plainly that this
time he was determined to kill his op-
ponent and showed, further, great con-
fidence in his ability to do so. I be-
lieve Trudeau considered that his own
life depended on taking his opponent's.
But his nerve had gone, and he looked
anxious. The captain stood straight
as a ramrod on his wounded leg, which
he had not permitted the surgeon to
examine and on which no blood was
visible. I looked to see it oozing from
under his pantaloons where they were
strapped over his boot, but looked in
vain.

At the next fire Trudeau's bullet
knocked St. Leger's pistol out of his
hand, glanced and buried itself in a
tree. Trudeau fell with a hole in the
center of his forehead. The others
present, except myself, ran to Trudeau.
I started for St. Leger, but was sur-
prised to see him walk to the carriage
with no more impediment than his
usual limp. He told me to get in, and
we drove away.

"Your leg, captain, and your arm!" I
exclaimed.

"What about them?"

"The wounds."

"I lost my right leg and my left
arm at the battle of New Orleans, suh."
Trudeau had been firing into wood.
It cost him his life. I learned after-
ward that when Trudeau had first
come from Paris he had selected Cap-
tain St. Leger's only son for a target
on which to make a display of his
skill.

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