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MIRAMICHI ADVANCE

Vol. 25. No. 11. CHATHAM, NEW BRUNSWICK, JANUARY 25, 1900. D. G. SMITH, EDITOR & PROPRIETOR TERMS—$1.00 a Year, in Advance

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The "MIRAMICHI ADVANCE" is published at Chatham, Miramichi, N. B., every THURSDAY morning in time for despatch by the earliest mails of that day.

It is sent to any address in Canada, or the United States (Postage prepaid by the publisher) at ONE DOLLAR A YEAR, payable invariably in advance.

Advertisements, other than yearly or by the season are inserted at eight cents per line nonpareil, for 1st insertion, and three cents per line for each continuation.

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The delicate pink of the Rothchild rose is composed of the bodies of thousands of the identical microbes which bring death through consumption to so many of our friends and relations The violet and pansy get their color from the cancer microbe, the tulip from the gout germ, and the geranium from the scarlet-fever bacillus. Likewise, every time you inhale the scent of any flower you are in reality gulping down mouthful after mouthful of some terrible disease. There is no way of disinfecting flowers, as they are actually composed of microbes, and if you take the latter away no flower is left.

WHAT I FOUND IN THE MINE

HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE OF OLIVER ROBERTS, MINING ENGINEER.

Descended 300 Feet Into an Unused Mine—Fought for His Life With a Vast Swarm of Bats—Hundreds of Rattlesnakes to Contend With—Mr. Roberts Says He Did Not Explore Further.

Last January I received a note which read as follows:—

General Oliver Roberts,
1803, Broadway, San
Francisco, California.

Dear Sir,—Will you please call at 10 p.m., Palace Hotel, room 937, on business of importance?

Signed, M——and W——.

I called at the above-named place at the hour appointed, and met two English gentlemen, to whom I introduced myself. After we had exchanged greetings, Mr. M—— asked me if I would go for them to Inyo County, California, to examine the Govebold and Napoleon mines, and report as to their value, location, and feasibility as properties upon which to expend capital. I said that I would. Thereupon I set a price upon my services, which was promptly accepted. Without delay, I packed up a camping and mining outfit, and I was off, by way of Mojave and through Mojave desert.

The mines mentioned are situated on the east side of the Panamint range of mountains, facing the famous and terrible Death Valley—a country well known to me from years of residence and travel in that portion of the State. I was to meet two men with horses and a waggon at Mojave. They were to accompany me on the trip, and to assist me in every way possible to explore and investigate the mines.

We bought a 300ft. rope, 3-4 in. in diameter, and secured grub, and a larger camping outfit, all of which we put into the waggon, with a ten and twenty-five gallon water-barrel the country before us being almost entirely without springs, creeks, or even rains, and good water therefore almost wholly lacking. We struck out from Mojave, and by the first night made Indian Wells.

The next day brought us to Shepherd's Station, in Shepherd's Canon. On the day that followed we had a long, hot ride across Panamint Valley, and into Wild Rose Canon. That night we arrived at the old cool camp where I had been so many years before. At this place we left the waggon,

PACKED BOTH HORSES,

and started on foot to finish the trip—a distance of twelve miles, over towards Death Valley. When night came again we were at the mines, where we camped until morning. All up to this time had been comparatively easy sailing—fatiguing, certainly, under the blistering sun, but yet not attended by any particular discomforts to one accustomed to the mountains and barren country.

After breakfast that morning I took a look around the locality and surrounding mountains. The men showed me a tunnel which had caved in. It had formerly tapped the shaft of the mine which I was to investigate. The cave had filled it in completely from floor to roof; we therefore climbed the hill, at the top of which was the shaft. Here we found an old windlass of ancient and primitive construction. It had two sticks thrust through holes in each end, the extremities sticking out like four spokes in a wheel. This sort of windlass is much more difficult to control than the type on which a crank is employed. This mechanism we put together, erected over the open mouth of the shaft, and then braced it strongly in position. Finally the rope was made secure and wound on, after which we fastened to the end a cowhide tub, stout and large, and, of course, portable.

While the preparations for my descent into the shaft were being completed, I could hear mysterious noises proceeding from the dark hole. Pebbles and small pieces from the ledge fell in and rattled down, finally to strike on the bottom. I could not imagine a reason why these things should fall in, and asked one of the men what he thought the noises were, or what they indicated. He said he thought they were made by wood rats or kangaroo rats, which were numerous about the place. The other man said that undoubtedly lizards were the cause. Their explanations, however, failed to give me entire satisfaction; I thought of other far more objectionable things which might be inhabiting the old, deserted works.

It was exceedingly hot down there in that desert country. I had started to go down the mine in a silk negligee shirt and stout overalls, but on second thought I put on a heavy brown duck coat, lined with blanket wool. The overalls were made of the same material. I then put on a pair of heavy buckskin gloves, took my pick, got into the raw-hide tub, and TOLD THE MEN TO LOWER AWAY.

Well, they lowered with a vengeance. Instead of letting me down slowly, controlling the windlass by holding to the spokes on each end of the rickety old affair, they employed a brake, which they had rigged up for the purpose. It consisted of a rope wound around the roller. This, however, was not strong enough, or else it was too stiff to bind or tighten. At any rate, it failed to give sufficient friction on the wood—so down, down, down I went into the apparently bottomless pit.

Finally, my descent was not so swift then the speed began perceptibly to slacken. Soon I stopped altogether, suspended in the shaft. I could just see above me a speck of light. It did not appear larger than my hand. I shouted up for the men to lower more slowly. At the first sound of my voice, however, an enormous flock of bats started suddenly up the shaft—so thick about me that my candle was instantly extinguished. Then came a fight. The situation was well calculated to appal the stoutest.

I shouted again and again for the men to hoist, for I was being overwhelmed and choked by the vast swarm of creatures. But instead, down and down I went. The men evidently could not hear my cries. I held tightly to the rope with one hand and tried to get a match to light the candle, but the bats flew against my face and hands, striking their sharp little claws into my flesh. I was completely covered by the evil-smelling and nauseating creatures. There were thousands of them, which I tried to fight off from me.

BUT NOW CAME THE WORST.

I was shot down until I was entirely through the bat "line" or "belt," and was still descending. Kneeling down in the cow-skin tub, or bucket, I got out a match and relighted the candle. Instantly a dozen or more rattlesnakes set up their fearful and unmistakable sound of warning. I say a dozen, but there must have been hundreds of these deadly reptiles in that old shaft. Years before there had been good mining done, and, therefore, the shaft was timbered up in this lower portion where the rock was loose. Now, on each of the shelf-like cross-timbers I saw one or more of the snakes. They had crawled up, I suppose, trying to get out; but it is a well-known fact to all miners and hunters of the Far West that rattlesnakes climb even the trees, whether necessity for such a course exists or not.

Now, as I went down among this rattling, ghastly, mass, a big fellow struck, from his position on a timber, and fastened his fangs in my sleeve. Creeping with horror in every nerve, I caught him quickly by the back of the head, tore him off, and dropped him down the pit. I heard him strike the bottom, and knew that I was not far above it, by the promptness with which the sound came back. Two or three other rattlers had struck in a similar manner, but had fallen short of their mark and gone down. One struck me, or rather my coat, at the small of my back, but the coat was loose, so that the snake failed to penetrate to the skin, and he finally fell off and down to the bottom of the hole.

By this time the sound of rattling had increased a hundred-fold; the falling snakes having aroused countless numbers of their fellows at the bottom of the shaft. The bucket now stopped abruptly. I was suspended there 300 ft. below the surface and about 15 ft. only from the snake-inhabited bottom of the mine. Such rattling no one ever heard before; and the

STENCH OF THE SNAKES

was stifling. Only those who have ever smelt rattlesnakes in a horrid, close, writhing mass can realize what this dreadful odor is. I was sick and faint with it, and the prospect of being lowered helplessly into the very midst of this den of snakes was something awful. I fairly shivered with terror at the mere thought.

I shook the rope in desperation; I shouted and kept shouting, and shaking more and more frantically. I felt as though I were frozen, so cold and horrified had my whole body become. It seemed as if nothing could save me from shooting down that last paltry 15 ft. to a death from which it would be absolutely impossible to escape.

But at last the bucket began to ascend—slowly—slowly. Oh, it was maddening! I felt as if it would reverse and go down at any moment lower than ever. I crouched in its cow-hide depths and struggled with all my power of will to endeavor to make the men hoist faster. The slowness with which the thing went up was enough to make a man go crazy. The ordeal I had already undergone before was now repeated. I was continually being struck at by the snakes left on the timbers. I was hit time after time—so much so, indeed, that my duck coat was wet in many places with the poison of these horrid reptiles. The thing would have been horrible enough God knows, had it happened above ground in the light of day. But down in that awful pit—!

One monster, about 3 1-2 ft. long, finally got into the bucket with me. He must have reached out too far, when striking, and fallen in. I quickly stamped my foot upon him and ground it down and held it there; I put my whole weight upon it, and got him just behind the head, where he could not move to strike. His body writhed about my ankles; his skin slipped on his body, beneath my weight. It was

A SICKENING SENSATION

to feel that awful slippery form under my heel; the chill and the crawling of my nerves never departed for a second. But the bucket still moved upward, slowly, slowly.

I now arrived in the belt of the bats again, and such a mess I don't think any man ever got into before. The erratic winged creatures beat about me—it seemed with added fury. They struck me repeatedly in the face, and once more put out the candle. It was hideous, I tell you. Their mouse-like squeaks and the dying rattle of the snake beneath my heel nearly froze me to death. I could not fight such a cloud of foes—it was all I could do to protect myself a little from their flapping wings and blind hurtling against my cold face.

Now, at last, I could see daylight and could make myself heard. I shouted to the men to hoist quickly. The two miners did their very best, and soon had me up at the top, or within a few feet of it. They now discovered, and I also saw, four large rattlesnakes hanging to the bottom edge of the leather tub. These had struck at me, and had got their fangs caught in the raw hide in such a manner that they could not get away.

With the butt-end of my pick I smashed the head of the fellow I had under my foot, and then I was hoisted to the level of the top, where I crawled out of my cow-hide bucket on to the dump. The sun was blistering hot, but I shivered from head to foot, and was so nauseated that I vomited for an hour. For a long time I lay upon the earth in the hot glare of the sun trying to get warm. My flesh was as cold as ice and my face, they told me, as white as a piece of marble.

The men killed three of the rattlers which were hanging to the bottom of the bucket, and I guess the other fellow killed himself, for he broke loose and fell down the shaft again, which was more than the 300 ft. deep which we had calculated. I now learned that the only reason why I had not been lowered entirely down to the bottom, among the deadly and disgusting mass of snakes inhabiting the place, was that the rope had been all paid out, and therefore could not let me down farther. It had held me suspended not more than 10 ft. or 15 ft. from the floor of the place; a distance which I was well able to judge from the many sounds of falling matter—animate and inanimate—I heard while in

THAT DREADFUL POSITION.

Had the rope been 20 ft. longer, what would have become of me I do not not know, for the two men on top would have continued to let me down, and I should have been landed in the thick of a living mass of venomous and enraged serpents, at the number of which I can only guess.

After I had got over my fright and had begun to regain my self-control, and my blood had again begun to flow through my veins, I asked the men why they did not hoist when I shouted up. They answered that they had not heard a sound, and that furthermore it was all they had been able to do to stand at the edge of the shaft when the bats came out. The cloud of the creatures, they told me, was so thick as it poured from the mouth of the hole that it was like so much smoke. Then the sun had made the bats blind, so that they flew against the men, and battered them as they had done me, and all but made them blind themselves for a time. My assistants, indeed, had been unable to see anything but bats, and could hardly control the windlass, assailed as they were by the winged myriads. They did not dare, at the time, to pull me up again through the mass, but thought it would be best to let me drop below the belt where the creatures lived. They did not, of course, know of the other still more fearful danger.

My adventure put an end to all exploration of that particular mine—by me, at any rate. The rope was pulled off the windlass; the outfit was packed, and my coat thrown away on account of its being covered with the poison of the snakes. The venom looks very much like albumen, but is very thin and watery.

The explanation of the presence of the snakes in the mine is that about the shaft which I descended, until hoisting out the rock and ore became too difficult, when they went down the mountain side and drove in the tunnel which tapped the shaft at the bottom. The tunnel was completed as planned, but the miners found that the ore was too poor or "low-grade," to warrant their pursuing the work further. At that time milling facilities were almost wholly lacking, so that rich ore was the only sort worth taking from the earth. The prospectors therefore abandoned the mine, which thereupon became the den of snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, and sundry other denizens of the rock and brush, with which the country swarms. After many years the tunnel caved in, imprisoning the snakes and anything else which had made the pit their home. Doubtless creatures less tenacious than are the rattlers perished, but the snakes fed on the young bats that fell into the shaft, and there the serpents have been breeding and flourishing ever since.

I weigh 250 lbs., and had I lost my nerve and fallen to the bottom of the pit those snakes would have had enough to eat and keep them alive for two years.

The trip down the shaft did not turn my hair grey, but if anything like that ever happens again, I believe it will become as white as snow.

I returned to San Francisco and reported to my English friends that I had made the trip and found—the biggest rattlesnake mine in the country!

AFTER ELANDSLAAGTE.

Vivid Description of the Scenes Near the Battlefield.

The scene at Price's store on the night of the fight at Elandslaagte was, says a writer in a Natal paper, a memorable one. Wounded men were being attended to at one end of the dining room, while soldiers and civilians, officers and men were hungrily disposing of biscuits and bully beef at the other.

A few bottles of whisky had been smuggled out of sight during the Boer occupation, but these speedily evaporated on the reoccupation of the store by the wet and dirty Britons.

As the night went on further batches of Boer prisoners were brought in, and the little side room, which served as a prison house, soon became uncomfortably overcrowded.

Later in the night these men were brought before a sort of impromptu Court-martial consisting of two good-natured and half-amused imperial officers and a pompous little volunteer with two stars on his shoulder strips. Of course this Court-martial, if such it was, ended without any result.

In the back kitchen at Price's sat a group of soldiers, Imperial Light Horse and volunteers, yarning, smoking and, when the chance offered, drinking to while away the weary hours till dawn.

A negro prisoner, with half his scalp torn away, lay bleeding in his rags under the kitchen table.

A bronzed Sergeant of the Lancers, with a jocularity that contrasted strangely with his general appearance, described with his riding whip how he impaled two Dutchmen with one poke of his lance—a yarn which has since been published in the newspapers as a fact—but the truth of which I still greatly doubt.

A young Sergeant of the Imperial Light Horse—quite a youth of 24 or 25 years of age—sported a Boer Commandant's sash over his dirty khaki tunic and described his special feats of prowess to a half credulous audience.

In the corner sat a poor old Dutch vrouw, bewailing at intervals the shamefulness of war.

At last daylight broke, and in the dull dizzy morning the victorious column returned back to Ladysmith and left the battlefield they had so hardly won to the beaten Boers.

WARRIOR WOMEN.

The position of women in the last century, writes Sir Walter Besant in the London Queen, leads to many classes of subdivisions. I have ascertained, without much trouble, that woman drank like a man, fought like a man and was as strong as a man.

One of these men-like women led the mob in the Gordon riots of 1780, and, to escape the consequences, assumed man's dress, became a peddler, and kept up the disguise for the rest of her life.

There is the case of Samuel Bundy, the girl who served on board a man of war first and a merchantman next. There was a negress on board the Queen Charlotte for eleven years; she became captain of the foretop. There were many others, but I will only relate the case of Christian Cavanagh.

Her father lost his fortune, and she was taken up by an aunt who kept a tavern. She married the waiter and had three children. This husband was then kidnapped, after the humane methods of the time, and was carried off to Holland, where he had to enlist as a private soldier. When Christian heard of this she dressed as a man and enlisted as a private soldier in order to get near her husband. She was wounded at the battle of Landen. She was made prisoner by the French, and was carried to St. Germain-en-Laye, where she stayed till she was exchanged.

She quarreled with her sergeant, fought a duel with him, wounded him, and got transferred to another regiment. Again she was wounded.

At Ramillies she was wounded in the head, and while in hospital her secret was discovered. She was permitted to stay with the regiment as cook.

She married again, lost her second husband, returned to England and presented a petition to the Queen, setting forth her case and her services. The Queen gave her a bounty of £50 and a pension of a shilling a day. She married a third time, set up a pie shop, came over to Chelsea Hospital, with her third husband, died in 1739, and was buried with military honors.

GETTING AT THE FACTS.

She—Yes, she is a woman who has suffered a great deal because of her belief.

He—Indeed! And what is her belief?

She—That she can wear a No. 3 shoe on a No. 6 foot.

FAILED TO USE CAVALRY.

GEN. WHITE'S MILITARY ERROR MADE IN THE TRANSVAAL.

Immense Value of "The Army's Eyes and Ears"—"Horses Were Given Them to Ride," Says Buller, "and They Should Not Be Dismounted."

The London press is teeming with criticisms of Sir George White's use, or rather misuse, of the cavalry at Nicholson's Nek. He was well provided with what military experts call the eyes and ears of the army, and which could and would have kept his center in communication with his right wing, but which was employed doing the work of infantry, helping to storm a position which was found to have been abandoned. They were dismounted, doing work for which their arms and accoutrements rendered them unfit, when they ought to have been on horseback, ready to cover the attack or the retreat of the infantry from the center or either of the wings.

Modern Generals have most of them a prejudice against the employment of cavalry, which seems strange when taken into account with the amount of reliance placed upon this arm of the service by the commanders of 50 years ago. In the age of quick-firing machine guns and rapidly served artillery, throwing highly explosive shells, cavalry cannot perhaps take the place in pitched battle it once had, but its advance against columns of infantry upon anything like open ground is still not only possible, but can be accomplished with greater rapidity, and hence with smaller loss, than an infantry attack, and, once a cavalry charge is delivered, its effects are far more terrible than the fiercest of bayonet charges.

SOME FAMOUS ACHIEVEMENTS.

History speaks highly of the usefulness of cavalry. Hannibal's successes against the Romans were largely due to the superiority of his horse. At Cannai his mounted troops won him the battle, while at Zama he owed his defeat to the fact that for once Scipio had the finer cavalry. Frederick the Great swore by his cavalry, which gained him battle after battle. On the victorious field of Zorndorf, August 25, 1758, for example, his mounted troops were his salvation. The Russians were sweeping Frederick's infantry before them when the cavalry, led by Seidlitz, furiously assailed the apparent conquerors, broke them, routed them, and sabred thousands of them.

Napoleon was an artillery officer, and believed that battles were won by the General who had the best gunners and most guns. Yet he owed the fact that he became Napoleon the Great to the arm of the service which like some modern Generals he affected to despise. It was at Marengo that what must stand as the most decisive cavalry charge on record saved the battle, and incidentally Napoleon. And history is full of such incidents.

But even when the circumstances do not permit the cavalry to get in with the lance or the sabre, as in South Africa, where the enemy fight from a hilltop, the horseman is more useful mounted and ready for emergencies than he is crawling on his stomach between boulders and playing at sharp-shooting, a game for which, in the first place, he is not trained.

REAL USE OF CAVALRY.

From the rapidity with which cavalry can be moved, they can be put to a dozen uses. When an infantry division is retiring, perhaps under compulsion, a General can throw out his cavalry and often turn a retreat into a pursuit. When an infantry division moves out to attack an enemy in position, the cavalry, skilfully handled, can be thrown around to the enemy's rear, and convert an orderly retreat into a panic-stricken rout. But better still in warfare, such as that in South Africa, a strong and well-led force of cavalry can draw the enemy out of the best position.

The Boer and his pony are one, for he does not take the field without something to ride. But because he loves to fire at an enemy from behind cover, he must of necessity leave his horse tethered somewhere when he unslings his rifle and goes to the top of a hill to pot the rooineks. And here is the cavalry's chance. If, as at Talyuna Hill, they work round to the rear and get among the Boer's horses, the Boers at once get tired of shooting, and make tracks for their steeds, exposing themselves to a cavalry charge, and leaving their position to be taken by the attacking infantry.

Sir Redvers Buller's opinion of the use of cavalry is a good one. It is that to employ them dismounted or as mounted infantry is the worst of folly—the General calls it something more forcible. "Keep your cavalry mounted," he says, "and when you have the enemy engaged with your attack, let your cavalry go for their horses, or their encampment, or anything else which is visible, and which they can't afford to lose. You always have them ready to cut in with the sword, if you want them for it, and, as you can move them as rapidly as the best mounted of the enemy can move, you can protect your infantry brigades from any move intended to cut them off. Keep your cavalry on horseback, his horse was given him to ride."

HERO OF ELANDSLAAGTE.

Lieut. Meiklejohn, of the Gordons, Struck Over Light Times.

Possibly, writes former Major Tamplin, in the Cape Times, the real hero of Elandslaagte will prove to be Lieut. Meiklejohn, of the Gordon Highlanders.

This young officer, one of the "Dargai Boys," helped the charge in an endeavor to embrace the Boer flank. Supported by a party of Gordons, says that paper, Meiklejohn waved his sword and cried out to his party hastily gathered round him. But the Boer ranks were alert, and poured in a deadly fire on the gallant band. Lieut. Meiklejohn received three bullets through his upper right arm, one through the right forearm, a finger blown away, a bullet through the left thigh, two bullets through the helmet, a "snick" in the neck, and his sword and scabbard were literally shot to pieces. He has by now lost his right arm, but, happily, being left-handed, we may hope for his continuance as the valiant commissioned officer he is.

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