Tuesday, August 10, 1909

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an I Cour with the Editor and as I was squinting my eyes so as to see taken, but Charles escaped to Sweden. He what the other man looked like, I heard a scarcely arrived when he raised an army upwards in the air, the Sun seemed to rise in the second to rise in the second to rescarcely arrived when he raised an army in the second to rescarcely arrived when he

VICTORIA COLONIST

THE

"STRANGER THAN FICTION"

That truth is stranger than fiction every one knows. A novelist would hardly dare invent incidents of a kind that frequently happen in everyday life. Sometimes on the stage we see strange coincidences and surprising situations, but the audience is always either prepared for them by something said in advance or an explanation is worked into the dialogue afterwards. But the experience of everyone is that it is the unexpected which happens. Coincidences of names, events and conditions are exceedingly common. It is rare that two people exchange experiences in regard to the unusual that both of them have not something to relate that is worth the telling. The Colonist had a letter a few days ago, relating how a baby boy was thrown from the deck of the troopship Birkenhead, as she was sinking, to a boat alongside, and how afterwards that same boy, grown to be a man and occupying an important public position, received a bottle in which was a letter, written by his father and mother and thrown into the sea just before the ship went down. It so happened that all the letter contained was a message full of trust in God, but it might just as well have conveyed important information in regard, let us say, to estates which the boy was entitled to inherit, and yet if a novelist would make a story turn upon such an occurrence, he would be accused of violating all probabilities and of poverty of invention. Here is another story, which is well vouched

During the War of Secession a soldier on the side of the North was on picket duty. He heard some one coming towards him and gave the necessary challenge. The person approached and asked permission to pass through the Union lines, giving as a reason that he had a baby lying at the point of death, and only a medicine which he hoped to get in the town nearby could save her. The sentinel at first refused to let him pass, but afterwards relented, and not only allowed him to go on, but gave him the countersign for the night in case he should meet other sentries. In the course of a short time the man returned, bringing with him the much-desired medicine, and after expressing his thanks pro-fusely, went on his way. Years afterwards, the sentry, then a well-to-do man of business, was telling the story at a table in the diningroom of the Hotel Metropole in London. When he had finished a prosperous-looking gentleman opposite said: "Excuse me for intruding upon you, but I am the man you allowed to pass, and this lady on my left s the baby whose life you saved." Seeing the incredulous look upon the faces of the others, he added: "I will prove what I say. This is the countersign you gave me." And he repeated it. That is the end of the story. Nothing else came of it; but such an occurrence might easily have been fraught with important consequences, if the persons concerned in it had mutual interests that needed elucidation. A playwright, who would expect his audience to accept such a thing as probable, would be thought absurd. Said one man to "The world is so small that I supanother: ither of us should go, say, to Fiji, he would meet some one who would know him or some mutual acquaintance." At that moment the door opened and a stranger walked in. "Is Mr. ---- in?" he asked, mentioning the name of the man who had spoken. "I am ----," said the latter; whereupon the stranger said: "I am ----, of Fiji. I never met you, but I knew your father well." This occurred in a newspaper office in Seattle. H. G. C. K. was a civil engineer. He expected to be sent to Brazil from London, and called upon the financial house in London by which he was to be employed. The member of the firm, with whom he spoke, said that unfortunately the references from India, which K. had promised to give, had not arrived, and although they had telegraphed to the man who was to send them, they had received no reply, and he added that whatever they might have done, if nothing had been said about references, K. must see that, under the circumstances, they could hardly send him to Brazil. K. said that he felt very much broken up. He had gone to London from Canada in the hope of securing employment on the Brazilian railway, and to be disappointed in this way seemed pretty hard; but he saw that there was nothing to be done but to make the best of it, and so he started to leave the office.. When he reached the door it was opened from the outside, and he found himself face to face with a gentleman who exclaimed: "Well, K., I never expected to meet you here. I thought you were in Cana-I see you know my friend ---- " mentioning the name of the financier. The financier, who knew the stranger well, who was none other than the great Indian engineer whose recommendation had been expected, promptly said: "The steamer for Brazil sails tomorrow, Mr. K.; you will just have time to get ready. This incident, which is told just as it was related to the writer by K. himself, would make the gallery gods howl because it was so utterly improbable, if it were introduced into a play. J. C. A. and E. J. were cousins. Both were somewhat portly. A. told the following story: "I was in London, and got up one morning early for a walk and took my way to the Law Courts, where I wandered around looking at the architecture. As I was gazing up at the building, I came into collision with some one rather violently. I took off my hat at once and apologized, and so did the person with whom I had unceremoniously come into contact. I am a little near-sighted, as you know, Danes, Prussians and Russians. The city was day. It is told of Charles that in one of his

hearty laugh and a voice say, "Hulloa, John, when did you come to London?" It was my cousin, who when I had last seen him was in our home in New Brunswick. He had decided upon taking an English trip without knowing that I had already gone; he had decided to get up early in the morning and take a walk; he had selected the Law Courts as his objective point; he had been walking around looking at the architecture and was gazing up at something near the roof at the identical moment that I was."

It would be possible to tell a good many more stories of this kind. There have been instances where persons have been impelled to take a line of action much against their will, only to find out that it was fraught with very great and beneficial results. There have been extraordinary coincidences in the matter of names, of which somemay be related at another time, extraordinary repetitions of circumstances, extraordinary simultaneous utterances of opinion. But it would be interesting, before relating any of these, to learn if Colonist readers cannot tell us something out of common. If they will do so, names will be surpressed, but the narrator must give his own name as a guarantee of good faith. In the case of the individuals about whom the tales may be related, it would be well to give the real initials, and sufficient of the surrounding circumstances to show that the story is not a pure invention. We are of the opinion that many excellent tales could be brought to light in this way.

FREDERIKSHALL

Charles XII. of Sweden is one of the meteoric figures in European history. His biography reads like a romance. Born in 1682, he ascended the throne on the death of his father in 1697. At this time he was nothing more than an active, fun-loving boy, al-though a hard student. His favorite character in history was Alexander the Great, whose exploits he seems to have determined to emulate, and it was possibly to prepare himself for a campaign of conquest that he devoted himself to athletic sports, in which he became proficient, developing great physical strength and a splendid vitality. At this time the territory of Sweden was not confined to the Scandinavian peninsula, but embraced nearly the whole circuit of the Baltic Sea. Denmark only felt able to dispute the claims of the Northern power to supremacy in that part of the world, and Frederick IV., the Danish King, proposed to Augustus, King of Poland, and Peter the Great, of Russia, that they should extinguish Sweden as a nation. Denmark was already master of Norway, and the suggestion was that what is now Sweden should be added to her possessions, Russia and Poland sharing the lands south and east of the Baltic between them. Frederick counted upon very little opposition from a boyish king, who devoted his time between his books and his sports. Confident of success, he invaded the Holstein duchy, which was under Swedish protection, and the boy King at once showed that drove the Danes from the sea, and thereupon Charles invaded Denmark, leading his forces personally. So impetuous was he, that he sprang overboard as his ship neared the Danish shore, although the water was so deep as to be up to his chin, and led his troops hurriedly towards Copenhagen. The Danish King promptly sued for peace, and Charles then. turned his attention to Russia and Poland. The first battle was fought at Narva, where 50,000 Russians were stationed in an entrenched camp. Charles attacked them with 10,000 infantry, and so furious was the onslaught that in fifteen minutes the enemy was routed and dispersed. He followed this up by defeating the Poles and Saxons, and pursuing his success, he made himself master Poland. His position ought to have satisfied even his ambitions, but he was determined to humble Russia. In 1707 he led a force of nearly 90,000 men against the army Peter the Great, selecting January, when the country was covered with ice and snow, as the time for advance. Victory followed victory: He then formed an alliance with the famous Mazeppa, hetman of the Ukraine Cossacks. The delay which this occasioned was fatal to his ambitions. Mazeppa disappointed him, and his reinforcements from Poland were cut to pieces by the Russians. Compelled to winter in an enemy's country, where supplies were hard to procure, many of his soldiers died, and when spring came he had only 23,-000 men left. Peter attacked him with a large army, and the result of the battle was a complete defeat for Charles, who, with the remnant of his forces, took refuge in Turkish ter-Here he remained for three years, all ritory. of which he spent in intrigues to involve Turkey in war with the Tsar, but in vain. Turkish hospitality provided lavishly for his entertainment, but at length even the Sultan grew impatient, and ordered him to leave the country. Charles refused to go, whereupon he was taken prisoner after a sharp fight between the Turkish soldiers and his Swedish guards. At length, taking advantage of the freedom of movement allowed him, he left for his own country with only two attendants. The Sultan was only too pleased to have him go, and no pursuit was made. He reached Stralsand, in Pomerania, after a roundabout journey, and his arrival there was the signal for an attack upon the city by a force composed of Saxons,

with which he invaded and overran Norway. He was then persuaded to make peace with Russia, and once more invaded Norway, his object being to establish himself firmly in that country, and make it the base of an expedition to Scotland, with the object of restoring the Stuarts to the throne, in which plan Spain promised to join. In 1718, Charles laid seige to Frederikshall, regarded as the key to Norway. Exposing himself with his customary recklessness, he was shot through the brain and died instantly. Thus perished at the age of thirty-seven a man, who, if his energies had been more wisely directed, might have been the arbiter of Europe, and with

him fell all hope of Swedish supremacy-Frederikshall may therefore be looked upon as one of the pivotal battles of history. It left the way clear for the development of the ambitions of Peter the Great, and thus made the Russian Empire possible. It permitted the development of the power of Prussia and thus paved the way for the establishment of the German Empire as it exists today. Charles himself is worthy of more extended notice than can be given here. His great qualities were strength, sympathy and courage. He was a poor administrator, and an indifferent diplomat. He was impelled forward in his career by an unbounded ambition, and if this had been tempered with wisdom, he might easily have ruled Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. But he was impetuous in the highest degree and intolerant of advice. His personal habits were Spartan. After his eighteenth year he never drank wine and rarely slept in a bed. He rested upon the floor of his room or out in the open air, deny-

ing himself all luxuries or amusements. He never married.

GREAT INVENTIONS

Greek legends say that Daedalus, a man whom is attributed great ingenuity, and who is said to have been the inventor of a number of very useful things, having murdered his nephew, of whose inventive skill he was jealous, was banished to Crete, where he constructed the famous Labyrinth. To escape his imprisonment there, he made a flying machine, with wings of wax, with which he and his son escaped. The son got a little too adventurous later, and his wings being melted by the Sun's heat, he fell into the sea, and, there being no friendly torpedo boat at hand to rescue him, was drowned. Those who be-lieve that all tradition has a basis in history, will accept the story of Daedalus as proof that under a former civilization mankind had learned to fly. The statement that he did so with wings made of wax presents no difficulties, for in the course of a generation or two the story of a flying machine might become very much altered from the original descripvery much altered from the original descrip-tion, and, as a young lad said the other day, "when they made poetry about it they would change it altogether." Therefore if you wish to believe that in the day when the events, upon which Greek mythology and tradition what he was made of. He secured the co-op-eration of England, which despatched a fleet and that aviation simply remained a lost art son why you should not do so. The poet Horace tells us that Archytas, of Tarentum, made a heavier-than-air machine in the form of a pigeon, that was propelled by internal mech-anism and could fly. There are accounts of flying machines made during the Middle Ages. but most of them seem very improbable, to say the least. It is related that in the Eleventh Century an English monk made himself an apparatus with which he flew from a tower the distance of a furlong, and other stories are told which, like this one, seem impossible of confirmation. Many books were written about flying in the Seventeenth Century, among the writers being Cyrano de Bergerac, whose name is familiar to opera-goers. In 1670 Francis Lana, a monk, proposed to make a ship of thin copper balls, from which he intended to exhaust the air. This, he thought, and properly so, would rise in the air, and he proposed to propel it by sails. This was the first suggestion of practical value in aeronautics in the present era, at least. The balloon was invented by two brothers, named Montgolfier, who lived at Lyons in France. On June 3, 1783, they sent up a linen bag, 105 feet in circumference, in which they had rarefied the air by means of a fire. It ascended over a mile and a half before the air cooled sufficiently to cause it to fall. Two months later a balloon of varnished silk, filled with hydrogen gas, was sent up. It rose very rapidly for a distance of three thousand feet. In same year the Montgolfiers sent up a balloon with a cage attached to it, in which was a sheep, a cock and a duck. The animals made the journey in safety, and were therefore the first aviators since the days of Daedalus. François Pilatre de Rozier was the first person to ascend in a balloon. This was in October, 1783. In the following month he made another ascent with a companion. They only went up five hundred feet, but as they remained more than twenty minutes in the air, during which they travelled more than five miles, it is no wonder that all France went wild over their achievement. Two years later de Rozier attempted to cross the English Channel in a balloon, but was drowned. In 1783, which was the birth year of aeronautics, a Frenchman named Charles greatly improved the balloon, introducing into its construction all the chief features employed at the present

the west, and as he descended he saw it set and won for themselves much treasure. again. The first ascension made in England was by an Italian, and was in 1783. It was a great success. In the following year a Frenchman went up from Sandwich, Kent, and came down in French Flanders, having travelled seventy-five miles. After these achievements ballooning became very common, and there were, of course, many mishaps, but the aeronauts were daunted by nothing.

Perhaps the greatest of all the balloonists of the last Century was Glashier, who between 1862 and 1869 made twenty-eight ascents, in one of them reaching the great altitude of 37,000 feet. This has never been exceeded. Mr. Glashier was accompanied by Mr. Coxwell, both of them being scientific observers. The story of the ascent as told by him shows the perils of ascending into such high altitudes. The last observation they were able to take was at the height of 29,000 feet, when he became insensible. Coxwell retained his senses for some time longer, but realizing that he too must soon give up, he managed to loosen the valve by pulling on the cord with his teeth, his hands having become insensible from the extreme cold. They fell very rapidly, and landed without accident. The altitude was fixed by calculation, and is doubtless correct. The chief use of balloons was for exhibition or scientific purposes, although they have been employed on several occasions by the French during military operations for the purpose of taking observations of the enemy's position. They were also used to some extent by the Northern troops during the war of Secession. During the seige of Paris by the Germans they were much employed. The history of they were much employed. ballooning is full of stirring incidents, but these are out of place here. It may be mentioned that the parachute was invented and used only a few years after the balloon.

It is needless to say anything in this connection about the dirigible balloon and the flying machines, for the history of those inventions is a matter of every day conversation and forms a part of current newspaper stories. What part aerial navigation will play in the affairs of mankind no one can at present pretend to say. If we may argue from analogy, will be one of vast importance; but all that is mere matter of speculation. The slow progress of ballooning, for in a century of experi-ment exceedingly little progress was made, was doubtless due to the lack of a light motor whereby the airships could be propelled. Now that this problem seems to have been solved, seems reasonable to expect more progress. The same observation applies to flying machines

This is the last article of the series on great inventions. We have, in the series, endeavored to trace how men have from the crudest beginnings achieved by invention great conquests over nature, and we think have demonstrated the truth of what we said at the outset, namely, that most of the things which we take for granted and are absolutely necessary to our civilized existence, are the result of human invention, and therefore that we may speak of man as distinguished from the brute creation by the possession of the inventive

tus and his men were successful in every fight

"By the pillars of Hercules they were encompassed by mermen, who sing songs so sweet that mariners will rest slothfully on their oars, and listen to them for days without wearying of their songs to hear. These impeded them much with their wicked crafts, but they escaped them safely. In a peaceful sea and among the playing fish they came to Dartmouth in Totnes. There the ships bit the sands, and with merry hearts the warriors went ashore."

And here they all decided to remain, and one evening they made a great festival, the sound of their revelry filled the air, the fumes from their smoking viands mounted to the sky. Fierce giants, the descendants of Albina, her sisters and the monstrous spirits, came down from the hills. "Trees were their clubs; in the centre of their forehead was a single eye, vivid as blue ice. They hurled huge stones and slew five hundred of the Trojans."

But Brutus and his men rallied to the conflict. They bent their bows and their arrows flew steady and true. Bewildered, the giants turned to try and find safety in retreat, but death followed them everywhere in the poisoned arrows of the invaders.

Geog-magog was brought bound before Brutus, who gave orders that the strong man of his army, one Corineus, and the captive giant should wrestle together, and the decision hould rest upon the outcome of the match as to who should have supreme power in the island.

Giants and Trojans gathered upon the downs by the sea-cliff, and the terrible fight began.

"Corineus and the giant advanced toward each other; they yoked their arms and stood breast to breast. Their eyes gushed blood; their teeth gnashed like wild boars; their bones cracked. Now their faces were black and swollen, now red and flaming with rage."-But Corineus was not overcome; he hugged the giant grimly to his waist, and grasping him by his girdle, swung him over the cliffs upon the rock below, which spot is called Geog-magog's leap to this day. And to Corineus, the conqueror, was given a dukedom, which was thence called Corinee and thence Cornwall.

Brutus having conquered the giant offspring of the treacherous sisters, built a new Troy, and erected temples to the great Diana, and caused her to be worshipped throughout the land, "which was named Britain after Brutus, the first man who set foot upon its shores.'

We are told that the aborigines of Britain came from several regions of the East originally, and Tacitus writes that when Ceasar first came to the island he found there three distinct tribes, the tawny-haired, blue-eyed Celts in the north; the Silures of Devon and Cornwall, and the Cassiterides of the Scilly Isles, who had swarthy faces and dark, curly hair, like the Iberi of Spain.

In the account of the Scotch and the Irish a description has been given of the habits and manners of the earliest inhabitants of Britain Those of the in the north and west. were much more civilized at the time of the Roman conquest. They lived in houses carpeted with the skins of dogs and wolves, and farmed their lands. Instead of going naked and painting their bodies, as was the custom with their neighbors to the north, men and women alike took pride in their costumes That of the men consisted of a waistcoat and trousers and a square mantle. They wore caps upon their heads and sandles upon their feet. The women wore tunics of woven material, secured with brazen buckles. They allowed their hair to grow and decked them-selves with chains, bracelets and rings. "The Britons were famous spinners and weavers, and their sailcloth was largely exported. Some historians, Mr. Bell among them, tell us that these aborigines of Britain were vastly superior to the tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes who came upon the helpless country after the Romans had abandoned it and divided all the land among themselves, "driving the Britons back to the hills and despoiling them of their wives and cattle." But whether the earlier race was superior or not, the invading Germans were not ancestors of whom anyone need be ashamed.

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faculty.

A correspondent has asked for an article on Emanuel Swedenborg. This will, if possible, be given next Sunday.

The Birth of the Nations XXX. (N. de Bertrand Lugrin)

The British, I.

We find a very charming legendary account in Mr. Bell's latest book, of the earliest history of the "White Island to the Westward of Gaul," as Britain was known in ancient days, the first name given to her being Albion, afterwards changed to Britain. It is chiefly from the book above mentioned that the information was obtained for the following account.

Long, long ago before Rome was built, and when Greece was young, Danus, king of the latter country, had fifty sons who had been married to the fifty daughters of Eagistus, king of Egypt. These sisters were all jealous of their husband's power and privileges, and plotted to kill the sons of Danus while they slept. The wicked scheme was discovered, and the faithless wives were seized and set adrift in ships upon the sea. After many weary days of drifting their boats took them to the shores of a large island, where they landed, and which they named Albion in honor of the eldest among them who was called Albina. Here they stayed and lived by the chase. "And when filled with meat and drink and with thoughts, they lay sleeping on the ground, covered with the skins of wild beasts, brooding spirits swept toward them from the sky and intoxicated them with their flaming breath.

Silvius was the son of Ascanius, whose ancestor was Eneas of Troy, and Silvius' son was called Bru, or Brutus. While hunting in the wood one day Brutus mistook his father for a deer and shot him, for which crime he was banished. He went to Greece, and from there took ships and men and sailed away on a voyage of discovery. A month of nights and days they journeyed, and met with many wild adventures. They encountered many

He Was a Colonel.

Uniformed officials are often a puzzle to American travelers. An instance of this is given in "Recollections of a Varied Career,' by General W. F. Draper, formerly American Ambassador to Italy. General and Mrs. Draper were traveling in Russia, when they had the following amusing experience in the sleeping-car.

After Mrs. Draper's bed was made she desired another pillow, and Marie rushed into the corridor to get one. Seeing a man in uniform-the railway porters wear uniforms -she demanded a pillow in German.

"I have no pillows," said he. "A bolster, then," said Marie.

"I have no bolster."

"Then give me a couple of towels to wrap up one of these dirty cushions." "I have no towels, either," said the uni-

form. "I am a colonel in His Majesty's Imperial Guard."

Poor Marie nearly went into hysterics, and I was called in to explain that no offence was meant.