DUNRAVEN RANCH

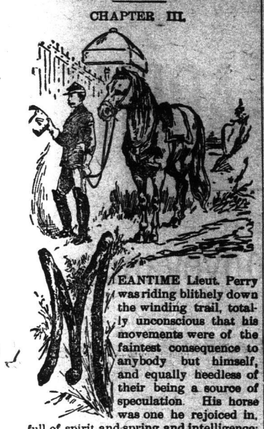
A Story of American Frontier Life.

By Capt. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.

Author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "From the Ranks," "The Deserter," Etc.

Copyrighted 1888 by J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, and published by special arrangement through the American Press Association

CHAPTER III.



MEANTIME Lieut. Perry was riding blithely down the winding trail, totally unconscious that his movements were of the faintest consequence to anybody but himself, and equally heedless of their being a source of speculation. His horse was one he rejoiced in, full of spirit and spring and intelligence; the morning was beautiful, just cool enough to be exhilarating; his favorite hound, Bruce, went bounding over the turf under the slopes, or ranging off through the cottonwoods along the stream, or the shallow, sandy arroyos, where the grass and weeds grew rank and luxuriant. Every now and then with sudden rush and whir a drove of prairie chickens would leap from their covert, and, after vigorous flapping of wings for a few rods, would go skimming restfully in long easy curve, and settle to earth again a hundred yards away, as though suddenly reminded of the fact that this was mating time and no gentleman would be mean enough to shoot at such a season.

Every little while, too, with prodigious kicking of dust and show of heels, with eyes fairly bulging out of his feather brained head, and tall lop ears laid flat on his back, a big jack rabbit would bound off into space, and go tearing across the prairie in mad race for his threatened life, putting a mile between him and the Monee before he began to realize that the two quadrupeds ambling along the distant trail were obedient to the will of that single rider, who had no thought to spare for game so small. Some Indian ponies, grazing across his pathway, set back their stunted ears, and, cow like, refused to budge at sight and hearing of the big American horse; whereat a little vagabond of a Cheyenne, not ten years old nor four feet high, set up a shrill chatter and screech and let drive a few well directed clods of turf, and then showed his white teeth in a grin as Perry sung out a cheery "Howdy, sonny," and spurred on through the opening thoroughfare, heedless of spiteful pony looks or threatening heels.

Perry's spirits rose with every rod. Youth, health, contentment, all were his, and his heart was warm towards his fellow men. To the best of his reckoning, he had not an enemy or detractor in the world. He was all gladness of nature, all friendliness, frankness and cordiality. The toughest cowboy whom they met on the long march down, the most crabbed of the frontiersmen they had ever encountered, was never proof against such sunshine as seemed to irradiate his face. He would go out of his way at any time to meet and hail a fellow man upon the prairies, and rarely came back without knowing all about him—where he was from, where he was bound and what were his hopes and prospects. And as for himself, no man was readier to answer questions or to meet in friendliest and most jovial spirit the rough but well meant greetings of "the plains."

Being in this frame of mind to an extent even greater than his normal wont, Mr. Perry's eyes glistened, and he struck spur to hasten Nolan's stride, when, far ahead, and coming towards him on the trail, he saw a horseman like himself. Being in this mood of sociability, he was something more than surprised to see that all of a sudden that horseman had reined in—a mere black dot a mile away—and was presumably examining him as he advanced. Hostile Indians there had been none for many a long month, "road agents" would have starved in a region where there practically were no roads, cowboys might, and did, get on frolics and have wild "tears" at times, but who ever heard of their being hostile, man to man? Yet Perry was plainsman enough to tell, even at the mile of distance, that the stranger had halted solely to scrutinize him, and, next, to his vast astonishment, that something in his appearance had proved either alarming or suspicious, for the horseman had turned abruptly, plunged through the timber and across the stream, and in another moment, veering that way himself to see, Perry marked him fairly racing into the mouth of a shallow ravine, or "break," that entered the valley from the south, and there he was lost to sight.

"What an ill mannered galoot!" was his muttered comment as he gave Nolan brief chance to crop the juicy grass, while his perturbed rider sat gazing across the stream in the direction taken by the shy horseman. "I've half a mind to drop the ranch and put out after that fellow. That ravine can't go in so very far but what he must soon show up on the level prairie; and I'll bet Nolan could run him down." After a moment's reflection, however, Mr. Perry concluded that as he had come so far and was now nearly within rifle shot of the mysterious goal of his morning ride, he might as well let the stranger go, and pushed ahead himself for Dunraven.

The stream bent southward just at the point where he had first caught sight of the horseman, and around that point he knew the ranch to be. Very probably that was one of the ranchmen of whom Mrs. Lawrence had spoken—churlish fellows, with a civil word for nobody, grim and repellent. Why, certainly. That accounted for his evident desire to avoid the cavalryman, but he need not have been in such desperate haste—need not have kept at such unapproachable bounds, as though he shunned even being seen. That was the queer thing, thought Perry. He acted just as though he did not want to be recognized. Perhaps he'd been up to some devilment at the ranch.

This thought gave spur to his speed and Nolan responsive to his master's mood, leaped forward along the winding trail once more. The point was soon reached and turned, and the first object that caught Perry's eye was a long row of stakes stretching from the cottonwoods straight to the south up the gentle slope to the prairie, and indicating beyond all question the presence there of a stout and high and impassable wire fence. There are few things the cavalryman holds in meaner estimate.

"That marks the western limits," thought Perry to himself, "and doubtless reaches miles away to the south, from what I hear. Now, where does one enter?"

A little farther on he came upon a trail leading from the low bluffs to his left hand. It crossed the winding bridle path on which he rode, though some of the hoof tracks seemed to join, and wheel tracks too. He had marked that between the fort and the point no sign of wheel appeared; it was a hoof trail and nothing more. Now a light and little traveled wagon track came in from the north, and while one branch seemed to cross the Monee and to ascend the opposite slopes close along the wire fence, the other joined him and went on down the stream. This he decided to follow.

A ride of a few hundred yards brought him to a point where a shoulder of bluff twisted the trail well in towards the stream, and he, thinking to cross and reconnoiter on the other shore, turned Nolan in that way, and was suddenly brought up standing by the heaviest and most forbidding wire fence he had ever seen. Yes, there it stretched away through the cottonwoods, straight as a die, back to the angle whence started the southward course he first had noted, and, looking down stream, far as the eye could reach, he marked it.

"Well," thought Perry, "I've often heard an Englishman's house was his castle, but who would have thought of staking and wiring in half a county—half a Texas county—in this hoggish way? How far down is the entrance, anyhow?"

Following the trail, he rode down stream a full half mile, and still there seemed no break. Nowhere on the other shore was there sign of bridle path leading up the slopes. Turning to his left in some impatience, he sent Nolan at rapid lope across the intervening "bottom," and soon reached the bluffs, which rose perhaps forty or fifty feet above the stream. Once on the crest, the prairie stretched before him northward, level as a floor, until it met the sky; but it was southward he longed to look, and thither quickly turned. Yes, there it lay—Dunraven Ranch, in all its lonely majesty. From where he gazed the nearest building stood a good long mile away. That it was the homestead he divined at once, for a broad veranda ran around the lower story, and white curtains were visible at the dormer windows of the upper floor. Back of it and on the eastern flank were other buildings, massive looking, single storied affairs, evidently stables, storehouses and corrals. There was a tall windmill there—an odd sight in so remote a region—and a big water tank.

Perry wondered how it ever got there. Then at the southwest angle was a building that looked like an office of some kind. He could see horses tethered there, and what seemed to be human figures moving about. Beyond it all, to the east and south, were herds of grazing cattle, and here and there in the dim distance a horseman moved over the prairie. This reminded him of the stranger who had given him the slip, and he gazed westward in search of him.

Far up the valley, between him and the distant post, he could plainly see a black object just descending the slopes from the southern prairie to the stream. Not another was in sight that his practiced eye did not know to be cattle. That, then, was his horseman, once more going fort-wards in the valley, after having made a three or four mile detour to avoid him. "Now, what sort of a Christian is that fellow?" thought Perry, as he gazed at the distant speck. "Going to the fort, too. By thunder! I'll find out who he is, anyhow. Now I'm going to the ranch."

Down the slopes he rode. Down the winding trail once more he trotted, peering through every gap among the cottonwoods, slaking Nolan's thirst at a little pool in the stream, and then, after another long half mile, he came to a sudden turn to the right. The road dipped and twisted through the stream bed, rose to the other side, wound through the cottonwoods and then out on the open turf. Huzza! There it stretched up the slopes straight away for the south, straight through a broad gap between two heavy gate posts standing on the stake line of that rigid fence. Nolan broke into a brisk canter and gave a neigh of salutation; Perry's eyes glistened with anticipation as he bent over his charger's neck, keenly searching the odd looking structure growing on his vision as they neared the fence. Then, little by little, Nolan's eager stride shortened and grew choppy. Another moment, and horse and rider reined up short in disappointment. Between the gate posts swung a barrier of cobweb lightness, slender and airy as spider ever wove, but bristling with barbs, stiff as "bullfinch" and unyielding as steel. One glance showed Perry that this inhospitable gate was firmly locked.

For a moment he sat in saddle, studying the situation, while Nolan poited his head over the topmost strand of wire and keeping at respectful distance from the glittering barbs gazed wistfully over the inclosed prairie in search of comrade quadruped who could tell him what manner of place this was. Meantime his rider was intently eying the heavy padlock that was secured on the inner side of the gate. It was square in shape, massive and bulky—something utterly unlike anything he had ever seen among the quartermaster's stores. Dismounting and holding Nolan well back from the aggressive fence with one hand, he gingerly passed the other through the spike fringed aperture and turned the padlock so as to get a better view. It was of English make, as he surmised, and of strength sufficient to resist anything short of a trip hammer. Evidently no admission was to be gained here, he reasoned, and yet it was through here that that horsemen had come but an hour before. Here were the fresh hoof prints in the trail, and it was evident that the rider had dismounted, opened the gate, led his horse through, closed and fastened it, then remounted and ridden away. Perry was plainsman enough to read this from the hoof prints. Studying them carefully, a look of surprise came into his face; he bent down and closely examined the two or three that were most clearly defined upon the trail, then gave a long whistle as a means of expressing his feelings and giving play to his astonishment.

"Johnny Bull holds himself too high and mighty to have anything to do with us blarsted Yankees, it seems, except when he wants his horses shod. These shoes were set at the post blacksmith shop, or I'm a duffer," was the lieutenant's verbal comment. "Now, how was it done without the quartermaster's knowing it? That's the cavalry shoe!"

Pondering over this unlooked for revelation, Mr. Perry once more mounted and turned his disappointed steed again down stream. At last, full half a mile farther on, he saw that a wire fence ran southward again across the prairie, as though marking the eastern boundary of the homestead inclosure, and conjecturing that there was probably a trail along that fence and an opening through, even if the southeastward line should be found fenced still farther, he sent Nolan through the Monee to the open bank on the northern side, cantered along until the trail turned abruptly southward, and, following it, found himself once more at the fence just where the heavy corner post stood deeply imbedded in the soil. Sure enough, here ran another fence straight up the gentle slope to the south, a trail along its eastern side, and a broad cattle gap, dusty and tramped with the hoofs of a thousand steers, was left in the fence that, prolonged down stream, spanned the northern boundary. Inside the homestead lot all was virgin turf.

Following the southward trail, Perry rode briskly up the long incline. It was east of this fence he had seen the cattle herds and their mounted watchers. He was far beyond the ranch buildings, but felt sure that once well up on the prairie he could have an uninterrupted view of them and doubtless meet some of the ranch people and satisfy himself what there was in the stories of their churlish and repellent demeanor. The sun was climbing higher all this time, and he, eager in pursuit of his reconnoissance, gave little heed to fleeting minutes. If fair means could accomplish it, he and Nolan were bound to have acquaintance with Dunraven Ranch.

Ten minutes' easy lope brought him well up on the prairie. There—westward now—was the mysterious clump of brown buildings, just as far away as when he stood, baffled and disappointed, by the gateway on the Monee. Here, leading away towards the distant buildings, was a bridle path. Here in the fence was a gap just such as he had entered on the stream, and that gap was barred and guarded by the counterpart of the first gate and firmly secured by a padlock that was the other's twin. Mr. Perry's comment at this point of his explorations was brief and characteristic, if not objectionable. He gave vent to the same low whistle, half surprise, half vexation, that had comforted his soul before, but supplemented the whistle with the unnecessary remark: "Well, I'll be damned!"

Even Nolan reined his protest against such incredible exclusiveness. Thrusting his lean head far over the topmost wires, as before, he signaled long and shrill—a neigh that would have caught the ear of any horse within a mile—and then, all alert, he waited for an answer. It came floating on the rising wind, a responsive call, a signal as eager and confident as his own, and Nolan and Nolan's rider whirled quickly around to see the source from whence it rose. Four hundred yards away, just appearing over a little knoll in the prairie, and moving towards them from the direction of a distant clump of grazing cattle, another horse and rider came trotting into hailing distance; and Perry, his bright blue eyes dilating, and Nolan, his dainty, sensitive ears pricked forward, turned promptly to meet and greet the new arrivals.

For fifty yards or so the stranger rode confidently and at rapid trot. Perry smilingly watched the outturned toes, the bobbing, "bent over" seat, and angular elbows that seemed so strange and out of place on the broad Texan plain. He could almost see the "crop" in the free hand, and was smiling to himself at the idea of a "crop" to open wire gates, when he became aware of the fact that the stranger's mien had changed; confidence was giving place to hesitancy, and he was evidently checking the rapid trot of his horse and throwing his weight back on the cantle, while his feet, thrust through to the very heels in the gleaming steel stirrups, were braced in front of the powerful shoulders of the bay. The horse wanted to come, the rider plainly wanted to stop. Another moment, and Perry could see that the stranger wore eyeglasses and had just succeeded in bridging them on his nose and was glaring at him with his chin high in air. They were within two hundred yards of each other by this time, and to Perry's astonishment, the next thing the stranger did was to touch sharply his horse with a barbed heel, whirl him spitefully about, and go bolting off across the prairie at lively canter, standing up in his stirrups, and bestriding his steed as though his object were not so much a ride as game of leap-frog.

It was evident that he had caught sight of Perry when Nolan neighed, had ridden at once to meet him, expecting to find some one connected with the ranch, and had veered off in disgust the moment he was able to recognize the uniform and horse equipments of the United States cavalry.

CHAPTER IV.

SWEET tempered a fellow as Mr. Perry confessedly was, there was something in the stranger's conduct that galled him inexpressibly. From his handsome mount, his garb and his general appearance, Perry set this stranger down as one of the Englishmen residing at the ranch. It was not fear of arrest and capture that sent him scowling away across the prairie; it was deliberate intent to avoid, and this was, to Perry's thinking, tantamount to insult. One moment he gazed after the retreating form of the horseman, then clapped his forage cap firmly down upon his head, shook free the rein and gave Nolan the longed for word. Another instant, and with set teeth and blazing, angry eyes he was thundering at headlong speed, swooping down upon the unconscious stranger in pursuit. Before that sunburned, curly haired, bulkily framed young man had the faintest idea of what was impending, Mr. Perry was reining in his snorting steed alongside and cutingly accosting him:

"I beg your pardon, my good sir, but may I ask what you mean by trotting away when it must have been evident that I wanted to speak with you?"

The stranger turned slightly and coolly eyed the flushed and indignant cavalryman. They were trotting side by side now, Nolan plunging excitedly, but the English horse maintaining his even stride, and stronger contrast of type and style one could scarcely hope to find. In rough tweed shooting jacket and cap, brown Bedford cords fitting snugly at the knee but flaming like shapeless bags from there aloft to the waist, in heavy leather gaiters and equally heavy leather gloves, the stocky figure of the Englishman had nothing of grace or elegance, but was sturdy, strong, and full of that burly self reliance which is so characteristic of the race. Above his broad, stooping shoulders were a bull neck, reddened by the sun, a crop of close curling, light brown hair, a tanned and honest face lighted up by fearless gray eyes and shaded by a thick and curling beard of lighter hue than the hair of his massive head.

He rode with the careless ease and supreme confidence of the skilled horseman, but with that angularity of foot and elbow, that roundness of back and bunching of shoulders, that incessant rise and fall with every beat of his horse's powerful haunch, that the effect was that of neither security nor repose. His saddle, too, was the long, flat seated, Australian model, pig skin, with huge rounded leathern cushions circling in front and over the knees, adding to the cumbrousness of his equipment and in no wise to the comfort; but his bit and curb chain were of burnished steel, gleaming as though fresh from the hands of some incomparable English groom, and the russet reins were soft and pliable, telling of excellent stable management and discipline. Perry couldn't help admiring that bridle, even in his temporary fit of indignation.

As for him—tall, slender, elegantly made, clothed in the accurately fitting madress "blouse" of the army and in riding breeches that displayed to best advantage the superb molding of his powerful thighs, sitting like centaur well down in the saddle, his feet and lower legs, cased in natty riding boots, swinging close in behind the gleaming shoulders of his steed, erect as on parade, yet swaying with every motion of his horse, graceful, gallant, and to the full as powerful as his burly companion, the advantage in appearance was all on Perry's side, and was heightened by Nolan's spirited action and martial trappings. Perry was an exquisite in his soldier taste, and never, except on actual campaign, rode his troop horse without his broidered saddle cloth and gleaming bosses. All this, and more, the Englishman seemed quietly noting as, finally, without the faintest trace of irritability, with even a suspicion of humor twinkling out the corners of his mouth, he replied:

"A fellow may do as he likes when he's on his own bailiwick, I suppose."

"All the same, wherever I've been, from here to Assiniboia, men meet like Christians, unless they happen to be road agents or cattle thieves. What's more, I am an officer of a regiment just arrived here, and, from the Missouri down, there isn't a ranch along our trail where we were not welcome and whose occupants were not 'hail fellow well met' in our camps. You are the first people to shun us; and, as that fort yonder was built for your protection in days when it was badly needed, I want to know what there is about its garrison that is so obnoxious to Dunraven Ranch—that's what you call it, I believe?"

"That's what—it is called."

"Well, here! I've no intention of intruding where we're not wanted. I simply didn't suppose that on the broad prairies of the west there was such a place as a ranch where one of my cloth was unwelcome. I am Mr. Perry, of the 4th cavalry, and I'm bound to say I'd like to know what you people have against us. Are you the proprietor?"

"I'm not. I'm only an employe."

"Who is the owner?"

"He's not here now."

"Who is here who can explain the situation?"

"Oh, as to that, I fancy I can do it as well as anybody. It is simply because we have to do pretty much as you fellows—obey orders. The owner's orders are not aimed at you any more than anybody else. He simply wants to be let alone. He bought this tract and settled here because he wanted a place where he could have things his own way—see people whom he sent for and nobody else. Every man in his employ is expected to stick to the ranch so long as he is on the pay roll, and to carry out his instructions. If he can't, he may go."

"And your instructions are to prevent people getting into the ranch?"

"Oh, hardly that, you know. We don't interfere. There's never any one to come, as a rule, and, when they do, the fence seems to be sufficient."

"Amply, I should say; and yet were I to tell you that I had business with the proprietor and needed to ride up to the ranch you would open the gate yonder, I suppose?"

"No; I would tell you that the owner was away, and that in his absence I transacted all business for him."

"Well, thank you for the information given me at all events. May I ask the name of your misanthropical boss? might tell him I called."

"Several officers called three years ago, but he begged to be excused."

"And what is the name?"

"Mr. Maitland—is what he is called."

"All right. Possibly the time may come when Mr. Maitland will be as anxious to have the cavalry around him as he is now to keep it away. But if you ever feel like coming up to the fort just ride in and ask for me."

"I feel like it a dozen times a week, you know; but a man mustn't quarrel with his bread and butter. I met one of your fellows once on a hunt after strayed mules, and he asked me in, but I couldn't go. Sorry, you know, and all that, but the owner won't have it."

"Well, then there's nothing to do for it but say good day to you. I'm going back. Possibly I'll see some of your people up at Rossiter when they come to get a horse shod."

"A horse shod! Why, man alive, we shoe all our horses here!"

"Well, that fellow who rode out of your north gate and went up towards the fort about an hour or so ago had his horse shod at a cavalry forge, or I'm a duffer."

A quick change came over the Englishman's face; a flush of surprise and anger shot up to his forehead; he wheeled about and gazed eagerly, loweringly, back towards the far away buildings.

"How do you know there was—What fellow did you see?" he sharply asked.

"Oh, I don't know who he was," answered Perry, coolly. "He avoided me just as pointedly as you did—galloped across the Monee and out on the prairie to dodge me; but he came out of that gate on the stream, locked it after him, and went on up to the fort, and his horse had cavalry shoes. Good day to you, my Britannic friend. Come and see us when you get tired of prison life." And, with a grin, Mr. Perry turned and rode rapidly away, leaving the other horseman in a brown study.

Once fairly across the Monee he ambled placidly along, thinking of the odd situation of affairs at this great prairie reservation, and almost regretting that he had paid the ranch the honor of a call. Reaching the point where the wagon tracks crossed the stream to the gateway in the boundary fence, he reined in Nolan and looked through a vista in the cottonwoods. There was the Englishman, dismounted, stooping over the ground and evidently examining the hoof prints at the gate. Perry chuckled at the sight, then whistling for Bruce, who had strayed off through the timber, he resumed his jaunty way to the post.

In the events of the morning there were several things to give him abundant cause for thought, if not for lively curiosity, but he had not yet reached the sum total of surprises in store for him. He was still two miles out from the fort, and riding slowly along the bottom, when he became aware of a trooper coming towards him on the trail. The sunbeams were glinting on the polished ornaments of his forage cap and on the bright yellow chevrons of his snugly fitting blouse. Tall and slender and erect was the coming horseman, a model of soldierly grace and carriage, and as he drew nearer and his hand went up to the cap visor in salute a gesture from his young superior brought an instant pressure on the rein, and horse and man became an animated statue. It was a wonderfully sudden yet easy check of a steed in rapid motion, and Mr. Perry, a capital rider himself, could not withhold his admiration.

"Where did you learn that sudden halt, sergeant?" he asked. "I never saw anything so quick except the Mexican training; but that strains a horse and throws him on his haunches."

"It is not uncommon abroad, sir," was the quiet answer. "I saw it first in the English cavalry; and it is easy to teach the horse."

"I must get you to show me the knack some day. I've noticed it two or three times, and would like to learn it. What I stopped you for is this: You've been stable sergeant ever since we got here, have you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then if anybody besides members of the troop had horses shod at our forge you would be pretty apt to know it?"

"I know that no one has, sir." And a flush was rising to the young sergeant's face and a pained look hovering about his bright blue eyes. Yet his manner was self restrained and full of respect.

"Dr. Quin!—the post surgeon! Are you sure, sergeant?"

"Certainly, sir. The doctor rode into the post just about an hour after the lieutenant left—coming up the valley too. He went right around to his own stable, over towards the hospital."

A look of amaze and stupefaction was settling on Perry's face. Now for the first time he recalled Mrs. Lawrence's intimations with regard to the doctor and his connection with the signal lights. Now for the first time it occurred to him that the secret of those cavalry hoof prints at the gate was that no ranchman but an officer of the garrison, had been the means of leaving them there. Now for the first time it flashed upon him that the Englishman's astonishment and concern on hearing of those hoof tracks indicated that the story of a mystery at Dunraven in which the doctor was connected amounted to something more than garrison rumor. Now for the first time an explanation occurred to him of the singular conduct of the horseman who had dodged him by crossing the Monee. Never in his young life had he known the hour when he was ashamed or afraid to look any man in the eye. It stung him to think that here at Rossiter wearing the uniform of an honorable profession, enjoying the trust and confidence of all his fellows, was a man who had some secret enterprise of which he dared not speak and of whose discovery he stood in dread. There could be little doubt that the elusive stranger was Dr. Quin, and that there was grave reason for the rumors of which Mrs. Lawrence had vaguely told him.

For a moment he sat, dazed and irresolute, Nolan impatiently pawing the turf the while; then, far across the prairie and down the valley there came floating quick and spirited, though faint with distance, the notes of the cavalry trumpet sounding "right, front into line." He looked up, startled.

"They're out at battalion drill, sir," said the sergeant. "They marched out just as I left the stables."

"Just my infernal luck again!" gasped Perry, as he struck spur to Nolan and sent him tearing up the slope. "I might have known I'd miss it!"

"Don't think I'm intimating anything to the contrary, Sergt. Gwynne. No soldier in the regiment more entirely holds the confidence of his captain—of all the officers—than you. I was not thinking of that. But somebody down there at that big ranch below us has had his horse shod by a cavalry farrier—it may have been done while the Eleventh were here—and, while I knew you would not allow it at our forge, I thought it possible that it might be done in your absence."

"It's the first time I've been out of sight of the stables since we came to the post, sir, and the captain gave me permission to ride down the valley this morning. May I ask the lieutenant why he thinks some ranchman is getting his shoeing done here at the post?"

"I've been down there this morning, and met a man coming up. He avoided me, and rode over to the south side, and so excited my curiosity, and as they keep that whole place inclosed in a wire fence, and he had evidently come out of the north gate, I was struck by the sight of the hoof prints; they were perfectly fresh there on the trail, and plain as day. There's no mistaking the shoe, you know. By the way, he rode up to the fort, and probably entered at your side of the garrison; did you see him?"

"No, sir, and, except for breakfast—just after reveille—I have been at stables all the morning. I was there when the lieutenant got his horse."

"Yes, I remember. Then no one rode in from the valley?"

"No civilian—no ranchman, sir. The only horsemen I've seen were some Cheyenne scouts during the last two hours, and Dr Quin—just before sick call."

(To be Continued.)

PRUSSIA'S HAUGHTY LITTLE CROWN PRINCE.

The little Crown Prince of Germany seems to have inherited some of the qualities of his father. The prince was driving out with his governess. As usual the Germans cheered the boy or lifted their hats to him as he passed, to which the young prince replied by raising his bonnet. At last he got bored with having continually to acknowledge the salutes of the populace. Flinging himself back in the carriage, he said to his governess: "I am tired now and shall not lift my bonnet any more to them no matter how much they cheer." "You are a naughty boy," replied the governess, "and unless you acknowledge the salutes of the people I shall not continue to drive with you." The crown prince sat up immediately. "Coachman," said he. The coachman looked around. "Stop the carriage, coachman," continued the little one, and with a lordly wave of his hand to the governess, added, "this lady will get out."—*London Figaro.*

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria

A THRIFTY OLD LADY

Who Netted a Nice Income for Her Declining Years.

By Saving Everything Thrown Away as of no Value in a Rich Banker's Family.

One comes across some queer folks in New York City. The queerest I have seen this six months is an old lady who has laid up a very comfortable sum for the support of her old age by saving everything. She found herself twenty years ago without a penny. Happily, wealthy relatives gave her permission to occupy a room on the top floor of their big house, but this did not occur until she had passed through a very terrible six months in which she had kept off cold and starvation with almost infinitesimal defenses. Suddenly transferred to the lavish luxury of a rich man's home, she was shocked by what seemed to her the most terrible waste. Before very long her resolution was formed. She had very nearly perished for want of much less than these people waste every month in the year, and she determined that she would catch up and store the crumbs that fell unnoticed from the rich man's table. The garret was vacant and the servants rarely went there, the family never. This she used as her store-house. Every one was fully occupied with their own full lives and paid little heed to her, so that she carried on her system of saving quite unnoticed. Nothing in that house for twenty years wasted. Every old match-box, empty bottle, cork, bit of string, scrap of paper, hair combings, rags, clippings, old spools, basting threads, outworn garments, old pens, worn out sponges, faded ribbons and tattered gloves, every broken piece of china, empty envelopes, torn letters, old newspapers, circulars, lost pins and hairpins, were faithfully gathered up and stored in long bags hung from the garret rafters. She gathered up the children's broken toys, the family's old shoes and hats, worn undergarments, handkerchiefs, frayed collars, empty bonbon boxes, cast off Christmas cards, the wire from their faded bouquets, every single article that was of no more use to them, and each article was carefully stored during the winter.

When summer came the spinster always begged to be allowed to remain in the house and look after it, and as soon as the family had departed she sorted and arranged her winter store and began to look for purchasers of it. She found out just where she could dispose of her wares to the best advantage. The stock of such things in a big household mounts up every six months to something truly astonishing and her summer was a busy one in the arranging and selling of the wares. All this money she put in the bank and at the end of ten years it had reached quite a figure. Ten years ago land in the upper part of New York sold for a much lower figure than it does now, and she invested here there in property that had been improved to a certain extent, sufficient rent being paid for it to keep even with her taxes and interest. In the last three years property there has risen, and the old lady took advantage of the boom this autumn, and sold out. Then she took all the receipted bills for the stuff she had sold—every one of which she had kept—to the head of the family and said: "I have ventured to take all that you have thrown away for twenty years, and here is the result. This sum has been more than doubled by prudent investment, and now I have an income of $2500 a year. I thank you deeply for all your goodness and generosity. I have taken a little cottage in a country town near New York, and, thanks to the chance I had here, I shall be able to spend the balance of my life in comfort and ease." And she went, leaving the rich banker contemplating in amazement the sum of money he and his family had thrown away in twenty years. Since her departure the household complain that they suddenly find the house running over with outworn and useless trash that they cannot get rid of.—*Brooklyn Eagle.*

TO BRIDGE THE BOSPHORUS.

There need be no more Leander-like or Byronic swimming across the Bosphorus if the project contemplated by a French engineering company be taken up seriously and carried to completion. This plan comprises nothing less than the construction of a colossal bridge, 800 metres, or 872 yards long, over the historic and picturesque channel that flows between the shores of Europe and Asia, connecting the sea of Marmora with the Euxine. The project has been talked of any time these twenty years, but it was not considered that the bridge would be useful enough to justify the enormous expense which it would entail. The points already designated for the construction were Roumeli-Hissar and Anatoli-Hissar, and it is considered that if now contructed it would act as a link in the local railway system, eventually paying for itself in a satisfactory manner. The French engineers who are thinking of undertaking the construction of the bridge would make it with one arch only.—*London Telegraph.*

A MILD WINTER IN PEPYS' TIME.

A correspondent sends the following extract from Pepys's Diary, which is very illustrative of the dangers of a mild winter. After recording in August, 1661, "a sickly time both in the city and country everywhere (of a sort of fever) that never was heard of almost unless it was in a plague time," he makes on the 15th of January, 1662, the following remarkable entry:—

"15 January, 1662. * * * A fast day ordered by the Parliament to pray for more seasonable weather; it having hitherto been summer weather, that is, both as to warmth and every other thing, just as if it were the middle of May or June, which do threaten a plague (as all men think) to follow, for so it was almost the last winter; and the whole year after hath been a very sickly time to this day."

The impartiality of the prevailing disorder, which has been just as active in the breezy Chiltern Hills as in South Kensington or Hoxton, is as noticeable in the present winter as it was two centuries ago. The chief difference is that Parliament is not now sitting in January, and would not order a fast day if it were, remembering, possibly, that the fast day ordered in 1662 did not prevent the plague a few years afterward.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

THOUGHT HE WAS IN THE GAME.

Minneapolis Tribune.

Yesterday a little group of poker fiends were discussing with some gusto the various phases of the great national game. "Talking of poker games," chimed in a smooth traveling man, smiling with good humor upon the group of common men about him, "they play a big stiff game out in Montana. In Butte men lose their $10,000 or $15,000 every night, and they plank down their good money and think nothing about it, either. Why, at the Silver Bow Club, when the big ones get together, they take down the roof and skylights and play a game that gives a man cold feet. There's Daily and Clark and Hogan and Hauser, all of them three or four millionaires, and their game is something very stiff. I had a friend out there who thought he would like to join in the big ones' game. Nice fellow, too; clean, bright; no flies about him at all, in fact, but didn't know any better, you know. 'Could he come in?' Oh, yes, if he wanted to,' said Mr. Hogan, a little bored, as there was $5,000 on the table and he had but a full house, kings high, and deuces back of them. So after the hand was played the traveling man laid off his coat; good stock, too, fur lined and beaver collarettes; got it in Chicago, bargain, too; only $85; a little shop-worn. Then he laid off his silk tile and was ready for the game.

"'Give me a hundred dollars' worth of chips,' said he, slapping a crisp $100 bill upon the table.

"'Daily was running the bank. He seized up the bill and looked surprised, then looked across at Clark. Clark glanced at Hogan, and Hogan took a side peep at Hauser. 'Well, what's the matter, gentlemen?' said my friend, the tourist, with a bland smile; 'ain't I in the game?'

"There was a silent moment. 'He wants to know if he's in the game,' at length said Daily, turning helplessly to Hauser, who sat on his right.

"'In the game?' repeated the great mining king; 'why, of course he's in the game; Daily, give the gentleman a white chip.'

"After that you could not have kept that traveling man in the house with a lasso. In fact he left town that night on the east-bound freight, but he did not join the game."

WILLIS BOND.

BY AN ADMIRER.

Willis Bond is Victoria's pride,
He has big feet and a colored hide,
His shoulders have a Grecian bend,
Which to his figure grace doth lend.

He is an orator by nature born,
Though by conflicting powers torn,
Commercial Union is his forte
When helped by a glass of rare old port.

When on the lecture stage he stands,
The landlord for his rent demands,
So then a collection is taken,
And into his beaver the nickels are shaken.

Then in *soft* and *musical* tones,
Which jarred on his hearer's bones,
He proceeded with his speech,
Which acted like a leech.

Imperial Federation is another theme
Upon which he vents a little steam,
And when the steam exhausted is
He says 'tis time to close this "biz."

Long, long life to Willis Bond,
Of whom learned men are all so fond,
When his last days are drawing nigh,
May his thoughts be of God most high.

ROYAL SIGNATURES.

The Queen's signature to State documents is still a model of firmness and legibility, no sign of her Majesty's advanced age being discernible in the boldly written "Victoria R," which she attaches to such papers as have to bear her royal autograph. There are veteran statesmen living who will remember that the question of the signing of State documents by the Sovereign became one of considerable importance in the last months of George IV.'s reign. During this period his Majesty was in such a debilitated state that the writing of numerous autographs was practically impossible for him, and under these circumstances a short bill was hurriedly passed through Parliament authorizing the King to affix a facsimile of his autograph by means of an inked stamp. It was also provided, however, in the bill that George should before stamping each document give his verbal assent to it in a specified form. The Duke of Wellington was in office at the time, and it was often his duty to lay certain documents before the King for his approval. One day the "Iron Duke," noticing that his Majesty was stamping the papers before him without repeating the prescribed verbal formulary, ventured to enter a respectful but firm protest. The King, much irritated, exclaimed:—"D— it, what can it signify?" "Only this, sir," replied the Duke, "that the law requires it." George IV. said no more, but at once began to repeat the requisite formulary as he stamped each of the remaining documents.—*London Figaro.*

ISMAIL PASHA.

One of the most remarkable facts of contemporary history is the curious manner in which Ismail Pasha has been quickly permitted to drop out of sight and memory. Most people imagine that the ex-Khedive is dead, so little is the curiosity evinced as to the whereabouts of a man to whom the Turkish Government has granted the enormous sum of £1,000,000 per annum. A few years ago Ismail Pasha was perpetually to the front, now in Paris, at the Grand hotel, or at Vichy drinking the water. He passed the winter in the greatest magnificence at Rome or Naples, and the summer season at various fashionable watering places, of which Hamburg and Vichy were the favourites. Ismail is now living a prisoner in one of the most splendid palaces on the Bosphorus. He enjoys his revenues and every luxury money can procure, but with the outer world he may not and, what is more, he cannot communicate. If he were buried in a vault or dungeon his seclusion could not be greater, for beyond the ladies of his harem and his attendants the ex-Khedive sees or hears no human face or voice. One day he will be found dead, and, be sure, there will be no inquest.—*London Star.*

THE FYFE MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT.

So many guesses at the future provision for Princess Louise of Wales, Duchess of Fyfe, have been made that it may be of interest to give the effect of the Fyfe marriage settlements. It is thus:—In the event of the Duke of Fyfe predeceasing his wife, the trustees shall pay to the princess a jointure of $35,000 per annum, in half-yearly payments, in advance, during such time as she may remain unmarried. There is also placed in the trustees' hands a sum of $100,000 to provide a dower-house for the princess, who will be paid the interest upon it until such residence is provided, at her own request, in lieu thereof. In the event of the Princess' re-marriage, the annuity will be reduced by one-half, and the dower-house, or unappropriated part of the invested sum, will revert to the children for whom other provision is also made.—*Ex.*

A NEW PACIFIC ISLAND.

The last addition to the volcanic isles of the South Pacific has been recently surveyed and mapped by Captain Oldham, of the British surveying ship, Egeria. In the submarine eruption of 1867 its nucleus was thrown up from a part of the ocean floor 6,000 feet deep, about 30 miles west of Namuka Island, one of the Friendly or Tonga archipelago. It is composed almost entirely of ashes, cinders and volcanic bombs. The new land, now very much larger than when first discovered by the officers of H. M. S. Falcon, from which it is named may yet become one of the finest and most fertile isles that deck the broad bosom of the South Pacific, and a bone of contention between rival nations.—*N. Y. Herald.*

HE WAS EXACT.

"Driver," said a portly gentleman, as he crawled inside the conveyance, "can you drive me to the corner of Eleventh and J streets?" "Can I drive you there?" "That's what I said." "My dear sir, I wouldn't be guilty of such an attempt, even if I had any suspicion that it would meet with success. It will, however, give me great pleasure to drive the horse to whatever point you may select and stop the vehicle promptly upon its arrival.—*Washington Post.*

THE AFGHAN ARMY.

How it is Supplied With Arms and Ammunition.

A First-Class Plant For Making Martini-Henry Rifles Imported From England to Cabul.

The whole of the Ameer's army at present numbers about 50,000 men, and for these the workshops in Kabul have so far been able to turn out annually about two cartridges for each man, each cartridge having to be made by hand. Mr. Thomas B. Pyne has succeeded in creating in Kabul two machines for making solid-drawn, Martini-Henry cartridges, which are capable of turning out 10,000 cartridges per hour. He has also got from one of the very best firms in England the whole of the plant for making Martini-Henry rifles, and the whole of this machinery is set up in Kabul at the present time. Not only this, but there are two English mechanics in Kabul now, both specialists, one in cartridge making, and the other in the manufacture of rifle barrels. The whole of these works are in K