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TALK about military despotism in the islands, it is nothing to the despotism of the Commissioner of Pensions over 1,741 clerks, thousands of attorneys and 993,000 pensioners.

THE cost of supporting the New York City courts has risen in 10 years from 82 cents per capita of the population to $1.04, or 20 per cent. And the quality of justice rendered is, if anything, much inferior.

THE Czar is following the Kaiser in making a knowledge of English obligatory. Every Russian holding an official position must study English. In a little while this world will be a comfortable place for an American to travel about in.

THE mere say so of the Commissioner of Pensions, regardless of laws and evidence, can give or take away the whole support of tens of thousands of aged men and women. No American citizen should be in the uncontrolled grasp of any one man.

SPAIN has got ahead of us in one thing. She has adopted a 24-hour day, which we shall probably have sense enough to before the next decade opens. There was enough labor and thought expended over "A. M." and "P. M." during the past century to have built the Nicaragua Canal.

THE Cuban Constitution makers have likely been their own undoing. They are still under the influence of Spanish ideas, and want to load the island down with office-holders, who will suck every cent out of the wealth producers. The business men have had an opportunity to see the advantages of a simple, cheap American Government, and are liable to kick the whole thing over and declare for plain annexation, with a Territorial form of Government, which would be their sensible course.

MR. ROBERT P. PORTER, ex-Superintendent of the Census, says that at the present rate of increase the population of the country will be 300,000,000 at the beginning of the next century. But there are forces at work which may reduce this. The size of families is decreasing, especially in the cities, where the average family has fallen from five to four. If the increased strain in life should make young men postpone their marriage one year—the average age for marriage is now 25—and marry at 26, it would cause a falling off of 1,000,000 in the annual births.

THE Star of Empire did not boom westward during the last 10 years at anything like the rate of any preceding decade. The center of population has been determined to be about seven miles southeast of Columbus, Ind., and only 14 miles west and three miles south of where it was 10 years ago. Having struck the rich White River bottoms of Bartholomew County, Ind., it shows a very natural disposition to stay there. It cannot find a better country anywhere, "now sence the country's bin opened up, and the mashes dreened, and the ager and the milk-sick's gone," as the old settlers used to say. But we forget: No real, self-respecting settler in Bartholomew County ever admitted for an instant that there was such a thing as "fever-an'-ager" or "milk sick" in his County. "But they have 'em powerful bad over in the next County," he would admit.

JUST exactly what is a "colony" is discussed by Henry C. Morris in an exhaustive work. Webster defines a colony to be a "company or body of people transplanted from their mother country to a distant one to cultivate and inhabit it, and remaining subject to the jurisdiction of the parent State." Worcester gives a similar definition, but these are not justified by the etymology of the word, and its meaning for centuries in other languages. It means anything from plain farmers to a collection of people who are connected with another by religious ties. Mr. Morris insists that the best modern meaning of the word implies "a large number of people who have migrated to a distant country and taken with them their language, customs, laws and allegiance to a flag." It is pointed out that this would not describe William Penn's colony, the majority of whom were Germans. Mr. Morris says that a colony differs from a dependency, in that in the latter a foreign power has imposed upon the people its laws, customs and ideas.

DE LESSEPS began work on the Panama Canal Feb. 28, 1881, and it was then estimated that a tide-water canal could be constructed for $120,000,000. His success with the Suez Canal made the enterprise a popular one with the thrifty French peasantry, of whom about 800,000 took the bonds, from time to time. The money was squandered and stolen, until when, in 1889, the company was forced into bankruptcy, it was estimated that the bonds and other indebtedness aggregated $350,000,000, besides unpaid interest amounting to $20,000,000 more. All that there was to show for this immense sum was the Panama Railroad, and an amount of digging, estimated at one-fifth the total. This was being rapidly destroyed by the torrential rains. Now the French want $100,000,000 for the canal. Bankrupt sales do not usually realize anything like that proportion of value.

THE 20th CENTURY AND THE VETERANS.

Gen. Sickles sounded a keynote in his address to the President when he urged him to signalize the opening of the new century by some act of signal justice and liberality to the aged men and women who for the last 40 years of the dying century had been the country's mainstay and sure reliance.

There was scarcely need of more than a reminder to the President of the incalculable services rendered the country by the veterans, for he is as fully conscious of them as any one.

Not by any means did their great services to the country end when they were mustered out. Appomattox and the other surrenders which followed were only decisive because the men who had compelled those events were still within easy call and ready at any time to compel by physical force the abiding by the terms then made. This was all that secured the peaceful reconstruction of the country and its undisturbed progress toward prosperity and greatness. With 1,000,000 rebels lately in arms, still living in the South, with them all more or less embittered by their defeat, and by the radical changes in business, society, politics, etc., which followed the war, it is amazing that the country passed through the succeeding decade without serious outbreaks and troubles. That it was able to do so was wholly due to the inflexibly firm attitude of the veterans, who, though discharged and following peaceful pursuits, were scarcely less a power than they had been as an organized army. Four years of the most terrific fighting the world had ever seen had tempered and welded them into an incomparable moral and physical power, which the Government of the United States could wield with resistless force in any direction that sound public policy dictated. It was knowledge of their prowess and their solidarity which compelled the French to hurry out of Mexico and the British to agree to the Geneva Convention. Napoleon III knew that no force he could send to Mexico could make the slightest headway against them, and Great Britain was quite willing to pay $15,000,000 to save Canada from an invasion that they were only too willing to make. They, and only they, saved the country from the horrors of civil war in 1876.

And so, ever since, through all the commotions, the turmoils, the threatened upheavals which menaced the very foundations of society, the veterans have been the bulwark and reliance of the country. No matter who else wandered off after strange gods, they were found true to the highest and best interests of the country; they threw all their immense moral power solidly on the right side, and were as ready as ever to follow it up with their physical strength as far as their strength would go.

The veterans were the backbone of the movement for the war against Spain, and when the yellow papers started their crusade on embalmed beef and the horrors of camp life, the veterans simply laughed them out of court.

So it has been all the time. Any man saying or proposing anything against the highest honor of the country has at once encountered the fierce wrath of the veterans.

Now, after 40 years of unequaled services, how are the veterans to be treated in the years that may be vouchsafed them in this century?

Is there to be a man in the Pension Bureau, as there has been for the past seven years, whose every utterance will be a denial of the services of the veterans as a class, an impugnment of their honesty and honor, a sneer at their wounds and disabilities?

Are they to continue to be treated as if they, of all the creditors of the Government, were essentially dishonest and must be treated with a harshness and suspicion not shown toward any other class?

Are laws passed for their benefit to be scornfully nullified, and money appropriated to meet their just claims returned to the Treasury unexpended, for the purpose of building up some official's reputation as an economist?

Is the practice to go on that no man's or woman's claim, no matter how just or well proven, is to be allowed until some one dies and makes a place on the roll for him or her?

We do not believe it. We have confidence that now, with his hands far freer than they have been since he entered office, President McKinley will find time to make a personal investigation of the management of the Pension Bureau and institute reforms which his own sense of justice will suggest, independent of the widespread complaints that have been reaching him for years.

So mote it be.

THERE is a good deal of absurdity in this talk about reorganizing the Democratic party and putting up new leaders. No man nor set of men can, out-of-hand, make, reorganize or destroy a party. That is a matter which must be done by a very considerable portion of the people, acting together, and all that the would-be leaders have to do is to watch the process, and take advantage of it when it has reached the proper stage. No man nor set of men can radically change either the Republican or Democratic party. Each of those parties is the expression of the will of several millions of people, and they can only be changed when those people change their minds. As long as some 6,000,000 people think pretty much as they did last Fall the Democratic party is going to remain substantially as it is. And it is the same with the leadership. A leader is not commissioned as a Colonel is. He is developed from among the people themselves. Mr. Bryan is the unquestioned leader of the Democracy, and is going to remain so until a new and stronger man develops, of which we see no present signs. Never in the history of the country has the Democratic party been so poorly represented in Congress and in the States as today. There seems to be absolutely no man anywhere of such National importance as to promise rivalry with Bryan. At times Gorman, of Maryland; Hill, of New York; Boies, of Iowa; Smith, of New Jersey; Patterson, of Pennsylvania; Carlisle, of Kentucky; Matthews, of Indiana, and Bailey, of Texas, seemed likely to forge to the front as great National leaders of the Democracy, but they have one by one fallen by the wayside. Bailey, who seems to have more elements of leadership than any of them, is still in the ring, making a fight for the Senatorship from Texas. If he succeeds, as seems likely, he may have a great future. The biggest man the Democrats have in the Senate today is Senator Morgan, of Alabama, and he seems hopelessly out of accord with most of the present ideas of his party. Except Bailey, there is no present promise of any exceptionally able man appearing on that side in the next Congress.

TOO MUCH POWER FOR THE COMMISSIONER.

The Commissioner of Pensions exercises far more arbitrary and despotic power than any other officer of the Government.

He has autocratic, unchecked control over more money and more people than any monarch in Europe, outside the Czar of Russia.

This is outrageously un-American and should be reformed at once.

The Commissioner has absolute control of the allowances to 993,000 people, and at his discretion can give to or take away what is to tens of thousands of them their only means of livelihood and support. This is entirely too great a power to be exercised without check or restraint by any one man in the United States.

The Commissioner has the disbursement of $145,000,000 a year, and can at his pleasure cut this down or increase it millions of dollars. This is a discretion far exceeding that enjoyed by any other officer of the Government, and is entirely too much for any one man to have.

Every week the Commissioner passes upon thousands of claims, many of them involving the whole support of aged men and women, and can allow, or disallow, any and all of them, according to his present whims, vagaries, hallucinations, prejudices or other personal feelings, and there is substantially no redress or appeal. This is grossly un-American.

The Commissioner is the final and absolute judge of all evidence, law and equity. He makes the laws and says what they shall mean, contrary to every cherished American idea and principle.

He has the most despotic power over every attorney that appears before him in the interest of claimants, and can, at his pleasure, inflict the severest punishments upon him.

All these considerations point irresistibly to the need of a Court of Pension Appeals to supervise, control and regulate the Commissioner.

IF we buy the Danish West Indies we will get in fee simple one of the oldest and most widely known of legends—that of Bluebeard. It is not an Asiatic story, as most of the tellers make it, nor a French one, as the rest do, but belongs to St. Thomas, and the town of Charlotte Amalie, as the principal city on the island is officially named. The real story is quite different from the one in the highly-colored picture-books, and makes out Bluebeard to be a better sort of a man. In reality, he and his brother-in-law, Blackbeard, were pirates, who had discovered the possibilities of St. Thomas as a base of operations against the Spanish treasure-galleons, and settled there, dividing the dominion of the island between them and each building a strong castle for the protection of his ships and followers. Each fellow ran his business independently, only joining together when some job came up too big for one. Mrs. Bluebeard was the sister of Blackbeard, and a lady of very jealous disposition. Any lady in the settlement whom she suspected of attracting Bluebeard's attention was sure to succumb in some mysterious way to the climate and be fitted with a headstone in the neighboring cemetery. As there were none-too-many women on the island at best, Bluebeard had to restrain his wife, and he started in to do so by cutting off her own head. It was then that she sent Sister Ann up into the tower to signal her brother Blackbeard, who arrived just in the nick of time. Probably he only wanted some such excuse for getting rid of his brother-in-law and grabbing his estate. The moral in the commonly-received story seems to be that ladies should restrain their curiosity about their husband's previous love affairs, and that husbands should repress their tendency to snap off their wives' heads to a reasonable number, say seven or eight. If Bluebeard had been content with decapitating eight wives no one would have interfered with his family affairs, though the neighborhood might have thought he was getting more than his share of the marriageable girls. But there does not seem to be any moral at all to the St. Thomas story.

EUROPE has long been taking our back-number reapers, expired-patent sewing machines, etc. American people demand improvements every year on their machines, and have no use for anything that is out of date. The manufacturers, however, find a profitable market for these across the Atlantic. A sewing machine, a reaper, or any machine of the model of 1890, or even of 1870, which would be unsalable in this country, is plenty good enough for Europeans. The manufacturers, having all the patterns and methods, can make them cheaper than newly-improved machines, and so a great deal of profit accrues out of this trade. Now it seems that they are to take our back-number shows. An American circus traveled through Europe last Summer, and awakened the wildest enthusiasm wherever it went. In Germany, particularly, the people could not get enough of it. The proprietor has decided to leave it in Europe permanently, and get up something entirely new and fresh for this country. He says that the old-fashioned circus has got to go, and be replaced by an entirely new range of attractions. All the same, the old-fashioned circus has its fascinations.

The G. A. R. men of Cleveland have received an appeal from Denver, signed by the Mayor, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Commander of the Loyal Legion, and the Department Commander and Past Department Commanders of the Wyoming and Colorado G. A. R., requesting that the efforts being made to get the G. A. R. National Encampment to Cleveland this year be suspended until Denver has had an opportunity to conclude its negotiations with the railroads, upon which depends its own chance for the Encampment as first choice.

THAT horny-handed workingman, Dick Croker, has just paid $20,000 for a string of six thoroughbred Kentucky colts.

SOUTH CAROLINA beat all the other States in the South last year in building cotton mills. This gives a ray of hope that John C. Calhoun and Jeff Davis are being slowly but surely forgotten. The whir of factories and pulsations of new enterprises are sovereign remedies for the malaria of those old poison-breeders.

THE railroad statisticians state that from 95 to 98 per cent. of the wage expenditures of railroads goes to the lower-salaried employes of all kinds, and that not to exceed 5 per cent., and more generally only 3 per cent., goes to officials. The Pennsylvania Railroad's report for 1900 shows that $9,083,274 was paid to the trackmen, engineers, conductors, telegraphers, etc., etc., and but $242,560, all told, to the President, Vice-Presidents, General Managers, and similar high-grade officials.

Si Klegg as a Veteran

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A Few Days' Experience With "Gentle, Lowing Kine."

Ready, resourceful and cheerful as Shad Graham had heretofore shown himself for every duty and in every emergency, he drew a decided line at cattle driving, and would have absolutely none of it.

Shorty, as usual, after his first burst of temper, and cursing by name everybody in the army, from Gen. Sherman down, had accepted the situation, and energetically set about making the best of it.

But Shad was grieved to the heart by the downfall of his expectations of some special service of thrilling importance, and sulkily refused to take the least interest in the herd, or in getting it on to its destination. Possibly his association with the Engineers had something to do with his aversion.

"I know somebody's got to do the Commissary act, and it's very necessary," he said in reply to Si's remonstrances, "but let it be those fellows whose minds run to meats and groceries. It ain't in my line. I'll dig ditches and make roads and build bridges, and do all that sort of drudgery just as hard as anybody, but I simply won't associate with cattle and hogs on any terms. It used to break my heart to have to bring up the cow to milk, and I've been whipped oftener about it than anything else. I'll go along with you, because that's now the best way to get to the army, but I'll only be a passenger. You take charge of the whole outfit. You understand cattle and know how to manage them. You take command. I'll be responsible for all you do, so you see I'm not shirking my share."

As was habitual with Si, when he saw he had to do a thing, he went at it with all his might and cheerfully.

"It's all right, boys," he called out blithely. "It's only a two or three days' march to our regiments at Atlanta, a sort of a pleasant promenade, and we'll have the cattle for company. I always liked to drive cattle when I was at home. They're so quiet and steady-going that they're no bother at all, like hogs and sheep, who're always cutting up didoes. Jake, deploy out a few of your men on both sides of the road there, and keep the cattle together as they come across the crick, and me and Shorty will count 'em. Monty, you and Harry take distance down the road there, one on each side, and count, too, so that there won't be no mistake. Alf, Gid, Sandy and Pete, you go down across the crick and skirmish 'round and help hustle the beasts over. The rest of you boys go over and hide behind those cedars there, so's as not to scare the cattle by showing too big a crowd. Keep hid till they've passed. It's easy enough driving stock if you only go about it right. It's all in the knack."

They could hear the locomotive whistle sounding impatiently for the men to come aboard.

"Hurry up, Lieutenant," said Lieut. Ermentrout. "They're calling loud for me."

"Hurry up, yourself," said Si. "We're ready to take your cattle as soon as you pass them over the crick to us. Start 'em over."

"Here, rush those beasts along. What's the matter with you?" yelled the Lieutenant back to his men.

"We can't. They won't budge. They're skeered o' something over there," yelled back the men.

"Put the gads to 'em. Make 'em come," yelled the Lieutenant.

"We have, and it don't do no good," shouted the men back. "We've nearly licked the hides offen some and it only seems to make 'em worse. They seem to smell something. Must be something dead over there."

"Nothing dead around here but my ambition," remarked Shad, saturninely. "That oughtn't to scare them."

"No, there's nothing dead around here," answered the Lieutenant. "It's probably the only place in Northern Georgia where there ain't. Lick old Jo Wheeler there, across the ford, and the rest'll follow."

"We call that lead steer, with the bell on, Jo Wheeler," explained Lieut. Ermentrout, "because he's such a runner, and he always runs faster when he comes near infantry."

"We've tried it, and it don't do no good," they yelled back. "He just runs 'round and 'round, and hides in the brush. He must smell something."

"Singularly delicate nose, that, for any one around this army," commented Shad. "Can't have been long in the service."

"Mebbe he smells that meat I mashed up at the station," remarked Shorty, with returning good humor. "Possibly it was the remains of a loved relative."

"It's likely the smell and sight o' so many strangers," suggested the more practical Si. "Here, you fellers, up there; move down below the road and get to leeward. You're not a bunch o' roses, nohow, after being cooped up on that steamboat and the cars."

Still the cattle grew momentarily more fractious and unruly. The drivers would lash them down to the edge of the creek, when they would snort, throw up their tails and dash back through the brush.

The whistles from the engine became more imperative. "Say, send some of your men across the creek there to help mine get the drove across," begged the Lieutenant. "I'm afraid thy won't wait for me on that train, and it's the last chance I'll have. I must get back."

"Scarcely," said Shad, who saw an opportunity of evading the duty. "Your business is to deliver the cattle to us this side the creek. We've no orders to go over there after them. We were simply to march up the bank of the creek and wait there. If you want us to drive your cattle, you must bring them over here. We ain't going after them. They'll be trouble enough after we get them. We ain't going around hunting for trouble."

The Lieutenant sat on his horse and watched the growing commotion in his herd with deep distress depicted on his face. "I must get back on that train," he said to Si and Shorty. "I've been in the field now since the very first and never asked for a furlough till now. My mother is not in good health, and there's no telling how long she'll live. I'd like to see her once more."

"Too bad, but most of us have mothers that we'd like to see," remarked Si, but with a touch of sympathy in his voice. "But they'll have to wait until the campaign is over."

"Besides," continued the Lieutenant, his face growing so red that it showed through the tan, "I'm engaged to be married to a girl who's waited for me ever since I first enlisted, in 1861. I hate to ask her to wait any longer. Besides, it ain't safe. There's a widower with a big farm after her, and her father and mother favor him."

"You go right over there and take that train," said Si decidedly. "We'll look after your cattle."

"That we will," echoed Shorty, with even more decision. "Get back home as quick as you can, if there's a rich widower after your girl. Don't lose a minute. Wouldn't trust a widower far's you could sling an ox by the tail."

"You give me your word of honor that there's 500 cattle over there?" asked Si as a final precaution.

"I give you my solemn word of honor, as an officer and a gentleman, that there are 501 over there."

"All right," answered Si. "Break for your train and save your girl from that widower, at any cost. May you be happy and have lots o' children. We'll take care o' your herd all right. I've bin used to cattle all my life and know just how to manage 'em."

Si and Shorty and Jake Dye went over the creek with the Lieutenant, and received from him his horses and those of his helpers, and saw them rush off for the train. Si sent Sandy over with the Lieutenant's horse for Shad and took the next best himself.

"Now, boys," said Si encouragingly, "there's going to be no trouble about this. All that's required in driving cattle is a little patience and knack. They're the best and kindliest things in the world, if they're only handled right. There's a great deal o' natural cussedness in pigs and sheep, but cattle's naturally good. Treat 'em gently and kindly, and you're all right. Jake, you take 50 men, go down the crick a little way, deploy them around in the rear of the herd and rush 'em forward. Be sure and don't skip none. Search the brush thoroughly for 'em. I'll go down and find this lead steer, this Jo Wheeler, as they call him, and start him acrost the crick myself, and I think the rest'll foller all right. Them other fellers have been nagging and fretting him until they've got him wild."

"Where is this Jo Wheeler, Pete?" he asked, coming up to that youth, who, oblivious to the worries of his seniors, was employing his leisure in trying to beguile a fish to bite at a fat grub worm he had found in the rotting wood and fixed to a hook he had taken from his pocket.

"HERE THEY COME! CLEAR THE TRACK, EVERYBODY!"

"The last time I saw that white-faced skeezicks," answered Pete, indifferently, as he made a jerk in response to a nibble, "he'd started with his head and tail up for Chattanooga, as if there was a circus there and he must see the parade."

And Peter carefully cast his hook for another trial.

"Here, drop that pole, put that hook-and-line back in your pocket, and 'tend to your business, Pete," said Si irritably. "The United States ain't paying you $16 a month to catch sunfish. Come with me and find that steer, and be quick about it."

Pete sighed at a lost opportunity, but put up his tackle, and the two started in search of the herd leader. The cattle were all now quietly browzing around in the little valley. Several red steers were found, but none of them had the white face, the crop in the left ear, and the other distinguishing characteristics of the sought-for Jo Wheeler. That individual seemed to have disappeared as utterly as if the earth had swallowed him. Si began to be feverish, as the afternoon was passing away. He galloped back to Jake Dye, to find that all the rear of the herd had been closed up, but there was no Jo Wheeler among them.

"Where in time can that measly windsucker be?" said Si, wiping his face and making another tour of the cattle.

He made a vain effort to have one of the other red steers assume the lead, but each of them, after being urged forward a little ways, would suddenly slip off to one side, and presently fall to quietly munching the grass, while the other cattle would not pay sufficient attention to the performance to look up from their browzing.

Si sent Shorty back for some more of the men, and they deployed as a skirmish line to work through the herd, and the ground it occupied, in search of a red steer with a white face, a bell on, and a crop in his left ear.

A precious hour was spent in this vain search, and Si lost his temper as far as to make some acrimonious remarks to Jake Dye and his men about their carelessness in looking to the rear, which had let the steer escape.

Si stopped on a little knoll not far from the ford, to think over what to do next, and gather in his lieutenants for further directions.

Pete took advantage of the lull to look around for another worm to bait his hook. He presently yelled:

"Sarjint, there's that confounded steer, hid in that bunch o' cedars there. He's bin there all the time, standing so still that he hain't even tinkled his bell. That's just like an ox. That's just what makes me despise an ox."

Si rushed up there, to find Jo Wheeler gazing with mildly contemplative, indifferent eyes upon the turmoil around him, as if it was a matter in which he had only the most languid and spectacular interest.

Time was so important that Si violently restrained his angry desire to rush at the bullock with his whip. Besides, he remembered his admonitions to his men as to kindliness. He moved quietly around to the rear and ordered him out.

Jo Wheeler's mood underwent a lightning transformation. Before Si could think he suddenly dashed out of the copse and started on a gallop up the creek, to the left and away from the ford, a way that none of them had so far shown the slightest desire to go. The others as suddenly stopped their browsing and started after him on a dead run.

Si jumped into the saddle and started after, circling around to head him off.

"Dumbed if I ever saw a horned critter run so in my life" exclaimed Si, as he stopped to rescue his hat from the brush. "Must be crossed with a deer. I'd like to send him back to Injianny to trot in single harness for a prize. But he can't keep up that gait for long. Nothing covered with sole leather can."

But a mile had been passed, and Jo Wheeler's wind and bottom seemed unimpaired in the least. Though Si had a good horse, and could ride him for all that he was worth, he had trouble keeping Jo in sight.

"Think I'd like to have that steer," remarked Shorty, "and get the contract for carrying the fast mail to San Francisco. Don't think he'll stop in Chattynoogy. He wants to see friends in Nashville."

But a half mile farther Jo Wheeler seemed to conclude that over-exercise might be bad for his heart. He whirled suddenly to the left and plunged into a paw-paw thicket, where he stood as motionless and silent as if carved out of wood. The others stopped, lolled out their tongues and panted.

But he could not play that trick twice on Si, who was old enough skirmisher to watch for the bushes shaking. He rode carefully to a little knoll in front of the copse, and as he looked back from it he could see the country around the ford, and the cattle still turmoiling around there, utterly refusing to start across the creek. His patience was clear exhausted, and, besides, he was so far away that any exhibition of temper would not have a bad effect on the boys. There were piles of large rounded pebbles, called "dornicks" by the people of that country, just the size for a strong man to hurl with deadly effect. Si picked up one of these and threw it into the brush with all the might that flaming rage could lend to his stalwart arm, and when Si threw a stone it was no joke. It hit Jo Wheeler's side with a whack like a note on a bass drum, and startled him from his meditations on what fools men were who tried to drive cattle. Before he could formulate his ideas another one struck him on the rump with such force as to almost knock him onto his knees. Jo Wheeler had been around the army long enough to know that that "position was no longer tenable," and as he did not have time to think of any other way, he started on a gallop back on that on which he had just come.

Si gathered his hat full of the dornicks, leaped into his saddle and galloped after him, flinging a stone after him at every opportunity, and accompanying it with a volley of "Dumb you!" Consarn you!" "Plague take you," and similar Wabash expletives boiling out at white heat.

"Here they come! Here they come! Clear the track, everybody," yelled Shorty, laughing, as they came in sight. "I'll bet every cent I've got, two to one, on the bay steer—out of Bullbeef, and damned by everybody in the army. Who'll take it? Three to one, and no offers. Hump yourself, Si, he's a-gaining on you. Push on the reins. Don't throw stones and swear, Si. That's not kind. Always treat cattle kindly."

Si sent a stone flying in the direction of his partner, who dodged as it whizzed by him.

Si was landing the stones with such effect on Jo Wheeler that when the latter reached the ford he turned and dashed across it and up the hill on the other side, still followed by Si, and he by the cattle, who no longer showed antipathy when they saw their leader go. They went over with such a rush now that Monty and Harry could not make an accurate count. But they were certain that fully 500 had passed, and would have been willing to make the number near double.

The cattle continued moving at a rate which promised to make up a good deal that was lost by their previous stubbornness. Jo Wheeler maintained his lead, and paced along at a gait which kept Si's horse moving. Riding by the side of Shad Graham, Si would look back from each rise and note with satisfaction the mile-long column pressing on through the narrow valley. As there were cleared fields on either side of the road, there was now little difficulty in keeping the cattle together. But Si began to fear that he pace at which they were going would soon break them down, and he tried to get Jo Wheeler to strike a slower gait. That erratic individual, however, had ideas of his own as to traveling, and showed such disinclination to be interfered with that Si, after several attempts, prudently let him have his own way, especially as they were now going over a hill, which had brush on either side the road, and offered endless possibilities of scatterment.

They descended into a wide, open valley, which struck Si at once as a good place for rounding up and bedding down the cattle for the night, and also to graze them for an hour or two in the morning. The sun was now beginning to sink behind the mountains, and it would be soon necessary to stop. He brought all his herding skill to bear. He got Shad, Shorty and the rest of the mounted men immediately behind him on the right side of the moving line, and as the column descended onto the plain, began to press its head slowly and carefully over toward the left. Jo Wheeler bore off to the left to keep a distance from the horsemen closing quietly and persistently in upon him, slowed down, and presently found himself describing a wide circle around the valley, coming back toward where he entered it. Presently the whole herd was "milling" around in the most satisfactory manner, with the horsemen gradually contracting the circle. At length Jo Wheeler stopped, gazed contemplatively for a minute or more on the darkling mountain tops and meditated on the mutability of mundane affairs and the vicissitudes in an ox's life. Then his fore knees suddenly bent, but his haunches came first to the ground, and without any apparent preliminaries. He continued his speculative gaze on the mountain crests, gave a resounding sigh over the vanity of bovine existence and man's inhumanity to the whole horned race, and then began deliberately chewing his cud, and sinking into deeper and deeper reflections. The rest followed his example, and soon the whole herd was lying in a compact mass, engaged in contented rumination.

"Must be some fun about being a steer, after all," remarked Shorty, gazing on the scene. "He eats his grub twice and swallows it three times, and so gets at least twice as much good out of it. But, then, when he hain't none, he must be twice as hungry as other people."

"We're all right, now," said Si satisfiedly, as he disposed his men for the night and came back to take a last look at the herd before it became too dark. "We had a little trouble starting them, because we were strange to them, and they strange to us. But we done that rounding up in great shape. Oldest cow puncher in America couldn't have done it better. I'll make a detail directly, to take turns riding herd all night, and keeping from being disturbed, and tomorrow morning we'll just unwind 'em just the way we wound 'em up to-night, and start 'em right along without any trouble. All we've got to do is to keep 'em from being disturbed to-night, and I don't think there'll be any trouble about that, for there ain't anything alive in this part of the country. What ain't been killed has been scared off. I think my strongest point is stock, and I'll go into stockraising and handling, after the war. There's a pile o' money in it for a man's who's built for the business."

"If you heave another dornick so close to my head as that'n to-day, you're liable not to live to see the end of the war," remarked Shorty, as they sauntered back to the fire for their coffee and crackers. "You throw stones too well to make it funny. I'd rather have a rebel flinging shells at me."

The crisp evening air was redolent of the fragrance of boiling coffee and frying meat. The tired partners sat down in deep content to a full meal of the grateful viands furnished by the Commissary.

"Driving cattle isn't so bad, after all," remarked Shorty, as the mollifying effects of a good supper began to make themselves felt. "I guess I'd about as soon go on to Atlanty this way as any other."

"Sooner go this way than be cooped up on the cars," echoed Si, contentedly.

A white mule, which had escaped from his corral, or had been turned loose to die in the Summer, had surveyed the scene from the hill top, which had been his refuge and range during his period of freedom. The sight of the fires and the smell of the coffee and meat brought homesickness to his hybridized heart. It brought back memories of the happy days of companionship with his fellows, of regular rations of rich, golden corn, and the fragrant, filling hay, with the soulful voice of the teamster lifted in curdling profanity. He would rise and go back to his home, and the bins of forage, for which his soul an-hungered. He stole down the hill like a ghost and approached the fires.

The cattle saw him and began to throw up their heads and sniff. Some labored to their feet.

"Something's scaring them beasts," said Si, stopping, filling his pipe, and looking anxiously at the herd. "What can it be? Can't be no wolves or painters in these mountains, and all the dogs was starved out long ago."

Their campfire of pitch pine sent a bright beam of light directly into the center of the herd, where Jo Wheeler had risen to his nimble feet.

"Keep quiet, boys, so I can listen," said Si. "Shorty, you circle down quietly to the right, and I'll take the left, and see if you can see anything. Make as little noise as you can and keep a few rods away from the herd."

The mule had by this time arrived quite near, and mentioned his hunger for regulation rations, his abject loneliness and his gladness at finding old friends in a series of brays so loud that they pealed back from the neighboring hills.

That was enough for Jo Wheeler. With a bellow of fright, and head and tail up, he struck out for the neighboring hills as if shot from a catapult. There was a rush as of mighty waters, as every one of the 500 cattle, with clattering horns and hoofs, dashed madly away in the gloom, leaving Si almost paralyzed with dismay.

(To be continued.)

"INITIATIVE and referendum" are simply big sounding words, which some men believe in because they cannot understand them. That is, the kind of men who always believe ardently in anything they can't understand, believe in them. Thinking men see no good to come from this chimerical system. There is no need of an "initiative" in this country where any day that Congress is in session any man can get almost any kind of a bill he wishes introduced. A "referendum" is equally unnecessary, where every member of Congress must come back at the end of two years to give an account of his stewardship to his constituents, and receive their instructions as to the policy they expect him to pursue in the future. If there has been any law passed that they do not like, they will not be reticent about it, nor will the gentleman of the opposite party, who wants his seat.

IF the Boers had done as well at the beginning as they are doing now, there would have been a different story to tell. But both sides seem to learn the trade of war, and it seems that the Boers are learning it faster than the British.

PERSONAL.

The veterans everywhere will learn with regret that Comrade P. H. Coney's eyes became so affected by the heat and glare of the sun at the Chicago Encampment that he has been suffering greatly with them ever since. An examination by an oculist showed that his right eye was in much danger of being lost entirely. For seven weeks he was confined to a darkened room and prohibited from reading and writing. He is now recovering slowly, and has hopes of regaining his normal condition.

Gen. Victor Vifquin will now be the subject of many editorials by the mushy writers who cannot see any difference between fighting for the Government and against it. He declined to make one of a party to give a public reception and honors to Gen. Fitzhugh Lee at Lincoln, Neb. He gave as his reason that Gen. Lee had borne arms against the United States. The gushers will have trouble finding any fault with Gen. Vifquin's record. After serving as a private soldier in the early part of the rebellion he received a commission as First Lieutenant and Adjutant of the 97th Ill., and came home Colonel of the regiment and brevet Brigadier-General for gallant service in the Mobile Campaign. He also received a medal of honor. He was Lieutenant-Colonel of the 3d Neb. during the Spanish war, and made the regiment what it was, in spite of Col. Bryan's demoralizing ideas. Bryan had no conception of military discipline, or apparent desire to enforce it, while Vifquin is a thorough soldier, and knows that a regiment without discipline is worse than worthless. Before the regiment was discharged he was much more popular in it than Col. Bryan.

The Second Corps has lost one of its best men in the death of Brig.-Gen. Richard N. Batchelder, retired, ex-Quartermaster-General, U. S. A., who died at his rooms in the Albany, in this city, Friday afternoon, Jan. 4, of angina pectoris. He was born in Laconia, N. H., July 27, 1832, and entered the army in May, 1861, as First Lieutenant and Quartermaster of the 1st N. H. His ability in this branch speedily attracted attention, and he was appointed in the Quartermaster's Department, with the rank of Captain. He was rapidly promoted, until he became Quartermaster-General of the Army of the Potomac, and accomplished a great work in supplying the army during the Gettysburg campaign. For his efficiency in this and in several other battles he received seven different brevets, the highest being Brigadier-General. He received a medal of honor for distinguished gallantry in action against Mosby's guerrillas, between Catlett's and Fairfax Stations, being at that time Chief Quartermaster of the Second Corps. At the close of the war he entered the Regular Army as Quartermaster and Captain, became a Lieutenant-Colonel in 1882, was appointed Quartermaster-General in 1890, and retired in 1896. He then went to his home in Manchester, N. H., but usually spent his Winters in Washington. He was devoted to the memory of the Second Corps, and one of the most active workers in the Survivors' Association of that Corps. He was a bachelor. The remains were interred in Arlington.

Speaker Henderson has been confined to his room for the past week by a severe cold.

Regular Army and Navy Union, U. S.

Tri-Mountain Garrison, No. 98, of Boston, Mass., held their installation meeting Jan. 1, 1901. The following officers were installed by Col. Robert R. Centro, National A. D. C.: Commander, John DuBois; S. V. C., J. F. McClusky; J. V. C., John J. Devlin; Adj't, Herbert W. French; Paymaster, Edward J. Nagle; Q. M., John J. Mahon; Chaplain, J. DeSouza; Surg., Alex. Jamieson; O. D., James H. Carle; O. G., Patrick O'Brien; O. W., O. H. Holm. Col. Centro delivered a stirring patriotic address, which received the enthusiastic applause of the large and appreciative muster of veterans, many of the civil war, who were present. In his address Col. Centro paid a marked tribute to the perseverance and ability of National Commander Morton in redeeming the Order from the cupidity of its former National officers.