

THE RATTLESNAKE RANCH.

HOW SEALY GOT EVEN.

By Franklin Austin.

Written by the author for a paper he published in Southern California in 1898, unsigned and copied by many of the Metropolitan Journals of the United States. Revised and rewritten for AUSTIN'S HAWAIIAN WEEKLY.

Joe Sealy was quite a character in his way. He had been a frontiersman, man and boy, for fifty years. He had moved on as "westward the star of Empire takes its way" until he had at last settled in Inyo County, California. He was one of the pioneers when the great Serreigardo mine was struck that yielded sixteen million ounces of silver before the vein gave out. Sealy had undeveloped mines galore. He might almost be said to be mine poor.

When Serreigarda was at its height, Lone Pine, was a mighty lively place, I can tell you. The games were going all night and at least one man was buried in his boots, every day—the highest record being nine corpses in twenty-four hours. But these good old days waned when the Serreigarda closed down. The little old town went into decay. Only a few old cronies like Sealy and the handful of Mexicans and Indians who had been there longer than the oldest inhabitant of the village could recollect.

At last times in Lone Pine began to revive. A few years previous to the opening of this story the government appointed a land agent who opened an office at Independence. Everybody took up government land and Sealy like the rest proceeded to make himself land poor as well as mine poor. Everybody took up 320 acres in the valley, under the irrigation act; and a company was organized to build a ditch to bring water out of the Owens River. Sealy had land in the valley too, but he knew his neighbors well, and was not sanguine that the harmony, displayed in the heat of enthusiasm, would be long enduring. While tramping through the mountain and upper mesa's, one day, he came across a canon in which flowed a perennial stream. His practiced eye at once estimated that the water could be brought to the beautiful sloping mesa above, at very small cost, giving him a little irrigation system of his own. He at once applied for the 160 acres running across the canon, giving him control of the water and having about 80 acres of tillable land on the mesa. He felt that if the ditch company terminated in a row, and his valley investments impaired, he had a ranch back of the hills that was worth something.

Remote from civilization as the little village at Lone Pine, people came across the desert and over the mountains to take part in the land boom. Among these was one Charles Alfred McDonald Farrell, a remittance Englishman, with a romantic turn of mind. It also developed later that he had some little money to boot. After climbing all over the awe-inspiring Sierra Nevada mountains, that tower 12,000 feet above the Owens Valley, he decided to locate. Farrell is a good fellow and made friends with everybody; but it soon became apparent that he was a sharp fellow too, and knew how to use his money to the best advantage. He hit upon Sealy's ranch almost at once and wanted to buy it, but his offer was very much lower than Sealy thought the location was worth.

Not long after this one of Sealy's mining prospects showed good indications and the mining fever was upon him again. He must have money and that quickly. So he went to Farrell and offered to sell. Believing that Joe needed money, the sharp gentleman, made a considerable cut in his offer. Sealy took the money mentally vowing, however, that he would "get even" some day. He was not favorably impressed with these fancy fellows any way. After the

transaction was closed, Mr. Farrell said blandly: "In case I have an opportunity of selling this ranch, Mr. Sealy, I hope you will give me permission of referring to you concerning it." An Englishman never feels exactly safe unless he has a reference.

Joe looked surprised, but answered politely. "Well, I guess, if you bring any fellow down to my cabin I'll talk to him for you."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Sealy. I shall doubtless avail myself of your kindness."

Shortly after this Frank Grason, a rich young man from New York, came into the valley. He was a California tourist seeking out of the way places. Being very much pleased with the west and was not at all averse to making investments. He found Farrell a very agreeable companion and guide over the mountains. Farrell suggested that he purchase his mountain ranch so that he might have an interest that would bring him back to the mountains occasionally; representing that there was a boom on in real estate and property was going up. "I will take you around to see Mr. Sealy," he said, "I refer to him by permission."

Joe Sealy was sitting in his old arm-chair smoking a pipe and ruminating over his hard-luck. He was in no mood to receive company but he had the reputation of being polite to every one in his own cabin. When the gentlemen entered he politely asked them to have seats.

Farrell introduced his friend and stated his business.

"Yes. That's one of the finest income paying properties I ever owned. You can't find nothing better for the money in New York;" and enveloped himself in smoke. Farrell looked puzzled.

"Why, Mr. Farrell did not represent it to me as income paying property!" exclaimed Grason.

"Yes. Paid me better than any gold mine I ever had; but I caught the mining fever again after I had been ranching a while and gave up the business. The ranch paid me from \$20 to \$50 a day depending as how hard I worked."

"What product did you raise, to make so much money out of," asked the New Yorker, innocently.

"Rattlesnakes." Answered Sealy, laconically. Grason shuddered.

"While I was standing on a hill one day, looking into the canon, viewing my new possession, I noted that there was a lot of rattlesnakes all mixed up under every sagebrush and a lot of 'em sunning themselves in the open. It popped into my head, instant-like rattlesnake oil.

"You know, a rattlesnake won't cross water. So I got a big stick and herded all them snakes into a bunch down by the creek and dug a ditch around them letting the water in. I had them all corralled in no time. I bought a big tryin' pot, (its in the back yard now) and built me a cabin. That's the cabin in the canon now. Every day I'd go in and knock a dozen or so of them snakes over the head and try 'em out."

"At first I did not know what to do with the oil. But one day I tried it on my old grandmother's rheumatic back and it cured her.

"That oil gave her five years lease of life—it did. Poor old dame is dead now. There was a dapper chap up here from the city about that time and I gave him sole agency for the oil, for rheumatism cure, at two dollars a gallon. I sold the skins for two dollars a piece and the rattles for watch charms at one dollar. Rattlesnakes breed like rabbits if you feed 'em right, so its easy and lucrative business. If you want to start up again I'll lend you my old pot. Better get some of those dapper friends of yours out from New York to help you. You'll make a fortune." And Sealy looked wickedly out of the corner of his eyes at the New Yorker while he pulled viciously at his pipe.

"No, thank you," said Grason shuddering. "I think I will go home and embark in legitimate business," and he shuddered again as if Rattlesnake oil had, somehow, affected his nerves.

War and Industry.

The *Literary Critic* has an article in review of Joseph McCabe's book "Can We Disarm," in which it gives the cost of wars in the two centuries, showing the tax it has been on industry. It is especially interesting in connection with the peace conference now in session at the Hague.

War has become a science, and it has given birth to enormous industries. The industrial community derives very conspicuous advantages from the military system, and does not clearly see definite compensating advantages in its abolition. So the industrial community, i. e., the great body of the nation, does not care to part with militarism just yet. It seems scarcely necessary to give laborious proof of the point, but there are many who do not realize how deeply militarism is rooted in the present industrial order. During the last two centuries England has spent £1,265,000,000 in the conduct of her wars, quite independently of the permanent maintenance of her army and navy. France has spent £830,000,000 in the same period in war alone. Russia has spent £335,000,000 in war during the last sixty years. The Anglo-French war of 1793-1815 was the first to make a lively impression on the economic world. It is said by Mulhall to have cost £1,250,000,000; and Mulhall's figures as to the cost of war do not represent their entire commercial "value;" he only gives the distinctly military expenditure. The Crimean war of 1854-56 cost £305,000,000, or £146,000,000 per year (as compared with £60,000,000 per year in Napoleonic times). The American civil war in 1863-65, in which nearly 4,000,000 men were engaged, cost £740,000,000 (£350,000,000 per year). The Franco-German war of 1870-71 cost France (including the indemnity to Germany and damage to property, etc.) £506,000,000. The Russo-Turkish war cost £190,000,000; the Chino-Japanese war \$225,000,000; the Hispano-American war cost America alone \$250,000,000. Mulhall's estimate that the principal wars from 1793 to 1877 cost £3,047,000,000 does not represent their full economic value; it does not include indirect consumption. For instance, he estimates the cost of the Franco-German war at £316,000,000. Bodio has shown that it cost France £506,000,000, and there is still a large margin in Germany not covered by the indemnity.

So much for the economic value of war to the industrial community. To this must be added the ordinary cost of the maintenance of armies and navies in times of peace; fully one-half of this is for direct employment of labor. England has an annual revenue of about £110,000,000. Of this she spends about £40,000,000 annually on her army and navy, and a further £25,000,000 in the service of the national debt (a war expenditure). Considerably more than half of the entire revenue of the country is absorbed by military expenditure. Russia's latest military budget amounted to 384,379,000 roubles. Germany's military expenditure for the financial year 1896-7 was £31,300,000 out of an entire revenue of £67,000,000. France had a total revenue of £136,900,000 in 1895; of this £25,000,000 were spent on the army, £10,000,000 on the navy, and £35,000,000 in interest on the national debt. Impoverished, starving Italy, out of her forced revenue of £67,000,000, spent £13,000,000 on the army and navy, and £23,000,000 on the national debt. Japan has suddenly dropped into the ways of civilized nations. She has resolved to spend £2,800,000 annually on her army, and to devote £12,000,000 to the improvement of her navy.

And the worst feature—or, rather, the most