

SHERIDAN'S RIDE.

A Soldier's Valor and Poet's Fame
Linked in the Annals of War.

James E. Murdoch Describes the Ride from Winchester and Tells How Read's Poem Came to Be Written.

[F. A. B. in Philadelphia Press.]

It was the night before the battle of Cedar Creek. In the war office at Washington sat Mr. Stanton in close conversation with Gen. Phil Sheridan. There were some grave questions being discussed between them, for the talk lasted long after midnight. Gen. Thomas T. Eckert, superintendent of military telegraph lines, was in an adjoining room watching for sounds of alarm from the front or important telegrams from any of the advancing armies in the field. A new day was fast approaching the dawn and the war minister and the general still continued their earnest conversation. A click of the instrument caught Gen. Eckert's ear. It was Winchester calling the war office. His skilled hand touched the key in ready response and a moment later the words came:

"There is danger here. Hurry Sheridan to the front."

Quick as a flash the message was handed to the two men in the next room in close consultation about the campaign in the Shenandoah valley. Sheridan went to the instrument, and there was a moment of hurried talk over the wires between him and his headquarters, when Secretary Stanton gave directions to Gen. Eckert to telegraph the railroad authorities of the Baltimore & Ohio to clear the road and to at once provide relays of special engines to take Sheridan to the scene of the coming battle as fast as steam could carry him. Gen. Eckert worked the wire himself, and gave hurried directions to the railroad officials as to what to do in this emergency. While he sat with his hand on the key perfecting the train arrangements, Stanton and Sheridan had a few hurried final words, each containing bearing the marks of earnestness, not unmingled with anxiety. The train schedule was soon made, Sheridan left the war office, and was driven to the station with all possible speed. A panting engine had just backed in as he arrived, and jumping aboard, the engineer, instructed to make the relay house in the shortest possible time, pulled the starting-bar, and away sped the train. It had a clear track, and in much less than an hour, here an engine of the main line stood waiting to take him to Harper's Ferry, seventy miles beyond. There were no obstructions all the way up. Every moving train had been side-tracked and every other precaution taken to prevent accident to the on-rushing engine bearing Sheridan to the camp where his army lay. While this train was making its run all was anxiety in the war office. Every telegraph station reported its progress to Gen. Eckert, and he to Secretary Stanton, who still lingered that he might know when Sheridan reached his destination.

AT HARPER'S FERRY.

Three hours passed—dull, anxious hours to those waiting, every moment of which seemed laden with lead. Harper's Ferry at last reports Sheridan's arrival, and a fresh engine stood ready to take him to Winchester, thirty miles up the valley. Not a moment is lost at the hamlet among the rocks when Sheridan boards the waiting messenger, and, an hour later, word speeds over the wires: "Sheridan just reached Winchester." The run had been made in the quickest time ever known on the road, and the worn and anxious officials at the war office breathed a sigh of relief as the click of the telegraph announced that the journey had been completed.

Eighteen or perhaps twenty miles of turnpike stretched away up the charming valley that had been made desolate by the torch and tramp of armies. As that charming region, clad in the garb of summer, lay between the mountains, its bright colors reflected in the rays a beautiful sunshine, it was but a sad reminder of the once great granary that for more than three years of conflict had furnished untold supplies to the Confederate army. Sheridan had laid it waste. He had clinched with and beaten Early at Winchester, and while he was being carried with all possible speed back to the scenes of his operations, the tide of battle was ebbing and flowing upon a new field, and the fate of the day hung trembling in the balance. For several weary, doubtful hours the two armies had been in deadly conflict. When Sheridan arrived at Winchester the roar of artillery and the roll of musketry could be distinctly heard from the field of carnage along Cedar creek. Down the valley came the awful din, echoing louder and louder through the still summer air as the battle grew fiercer.

There was but short delay at Winchester, the chief town in the lower valley. There Sheridan mounted his favorite war horse, a large, beautiful, sinewy, black charger, who had borne his master through the heat of many conflicts. He is dead now and his body has been preserved, that men yet to come may see the animal whose endurance has been recorded in verse. Through the town and out over the turnpike which leads up the Shenandoah, Sheridan rode. Who, knowing the man, or aught of his character, cannot picture the restless rider urging his horse to the best to reach the field where the fate of his army was still pending in the hazard of war? He had only covered a few miles when the moving mass of debris that always surges to the rear of a battle field when the conflict is severe and doubtful, met his trained eye and told more plainly than words what was going on in front. It was a signal of distress, and none knew it better than he. The sight fired his heart anew and only added fresh impetus to his foaming horse. He reached the field after a sleepless night and a terrific journey, and the battle of Cedar Creek was won.

MR. MURDOCH'S LETTER.

This is the true story of Sheridan's ride—I might almost say official story. If he did not stop to gather the stragglers, as a poet's license has pictured, he did carry back the tide that was floating to the rear, because his presence had given fresh stamina to some wavering battalions. The manner of the man, his dash and courage, his reputation and successes, and those who had drifted back, believing the battle had been lost.

I have been sitting face to face to-day, the whole afternoon, with the man who vouches for the above written words. He is a strong, positive character, just passing three score and ten, years crowded with wonderful experiences. As he told this story, he warmed with the fire of the event and his blood was hot with indignation, for he had just read a statement that Sheridan got drunk at Winchester and did not go to the battle field, where the poet's pen has pictured him.

"Ah, but I'll put an end to all cavil about this story," said he. "What I have told you got directly from Gen. Eckert himself, who sat with his hand on the key, arranged and watched every stage of Sheridan's ride from Washington to Cedar Creek. He now mans the Western Union Telegraph company and will bear witness to these facts. But I have a letter from Sheridan. He said I were then, and are now, friends. When I heard of the ride, I wrote to ask him about it and to inquire if I had not ridden the same horse that carried him up the valley while with him at Chattanooga. Mr. Murdoch soon found among his papers the identical letter which Gen. Sheridan wrote in reply.

"I need not tell you how highly it is prized," said the veteran, "for you will see how carefully it has been kept through all these years."

"Who is there who has read this country's history that does not know James E. Murdoch—the actor, the reader, the man. It is he who tells this story and furnishes this clinching evidence of the truthful foundation of T. Buchanan Read's poem. Thousands who have watched his matchless representation of Hamlet, or sat under the spell of his dramatic readings, will be glad to know that, although he is passing 73, he is still in excellent health and spirits. He is a tall, robust man, with a clean shaven face that shows the broad, distinct lines of his strong countenance to the best advantage. His wealth of iron gray hair and his general carriage combine to make him a very striking character.

THE POEM SUGGESTED.

"The story of Sheridan's ride, above written, was but a tithe of the good things he told me. The recital of this matter naturally led up to all the incidents connected with it.

"I was not with Sheridan," he said, "at this time, but was at the headquarters of the army of the Cumberland. Soon after the battle of Cedar Creek I came up to Cincinnati and was visiting Mr. Cyrus Garrett, whom we called 'Old Cyclops.' He was T. Buchanan Read's brother-in-law, and with him the poet made his home. The ladies of Cincinnati had arranged to give me a reception, that finally turned into an ovation. I had given a great many readings to raise funds to assist their Soldiers' Aid society, and they were going to present me with a silk flag. Pike's opera house had been secured, the largest place of amusement in the city, and they had made every arrangement to have the reception a very dramatic event. The morning of the day it was to take place Read and I were, as usual, taking our breakfast late. We had just finished, but were still sitting at the table chatting. Mr. Garrett, the brother-in-law, who was a business man and guided by business habits, came in while we were thus lounging. He wore an air of impatience and carried a paper in his hand. He walked directly up to Read, unfolded a copy of Harper's Weekly, and held it up before the man so singularly gifted as both poet and painter.

"The whole front of the paper was covered with a striking picture representing Sheridan seated on his black horse, just emerging from a cloud of dust that rolled up from the highway as he dashed along, followed by the few troopers.

"There," said Mr. Garrett, addressing Read, "see what you have missed. You ought to have drawn that picture yourself and gotten the credit of it; it is just in your line. The first thing you know somebody will write a poem on that event, and then you will be beaten all around."

"Read looked at the picture rather quizzically, a look which I interrupted by saying: 'Old Cyclops is right, Read, the subject and the circumstance are worth a poem.'"

"Oh, no," said Read, "that theme has been written to death. There is 'Paul Revere's Ride,' 'Lochinvar,' Tom Hood's 'Wild Steed of the Plains' and half a dozen other poems of like character."

"Filled with the idea that this was a good chance for the gifted man, I said: 'Read, you are losing a great opportunity. If I had such a poem to read at my reception to-night, it would make a great hit.'"

"But, Murdoch, you can't order a poem as you would a coat. I can't write anything in a few hours that will do either you or me any credit," he replied rather sharply.

"I turned to him and said: 'Read, two or three thousand of the warmest hearts in Cincinnati will be in Pike's opera house to-night at that presentation. It will be a very significant affair. Now, you go and give me anything in rhyme, and I will give it a deliverance before that splendid audience, and you can then revise and polish it before it goes into print.' This view seemed to strike him favorably, and he finally said: 'Well! Well! We'll see what can be done, and he went up-stairs to his room.

THE POET AT WORK.

"A half hour later Hattie, his wife, a brilliant woman, who is now residing in Philadelphia, came down and said:

"He wants a pot of strong tea. He told me to get it for him and then he would knock the door and must not be disturbed unless the house was afire."

"Time wore on and in our talk on other matters in the family circle, we had almost forgotten the poet at work up-stairs. Dinner had been announced and we were about to sit down, when Read came in and beckoned me to come. When I reached the room, he said:

"Murdoch, I think I have about what you want." He read it to me, and with an enthusiasm that surprised him, I said it is just the thing.

"We dined, and at the proper time Read and I, with the family, went to Pike's opera house. The building was crowded in every part. Upon the stage were sitting 300 named soldiers, each with an arm or a leg off. Gen. Joe Hooker was to present me with the flag the ladies had made, and at the time appointed we marched down the stage toward the footlights. Gen. Hooker bearing the

flag, and I with my arm in his. Such a storm of applause as greeted the appearance, I never heard before or since. Behind and on each side of us were the rows of crippled soldiers, in front the vast audience, cheering to the echo. Hooker quailed before the warm reception, and, growing nervous, said to me in an undertone:

"I can stand the storm of battle, but this is too much for me."

"Leave it to me," said I; "I am an old hand behind the footlights. I will divert the strain from you." So quickly I dropped upon my knee, took a fold of the silken flag and pressed it to my lips. This by-play created a fresh storm of enthusiasm, but steadied Hooker and he presented the flag very gracefully, which I accepted in fitting words.

MURDOCH'S READING.

"I then drew the poem Read had written from my pocket, and, with proper introduction, began reading it to the audience. The vast assemblage became as still as a church during prayer-time, and I read the first three lines without a pause, and then read the fourth:

"Under his spurning feet the road
Like an arrow A'pine river flowed,
And the landscape bowed away behind,
Like an ocean dying before the wind;
And the steed, like a bark, fed with fur-

nosire,
Swept on with his wild eyes full of fire;
But lo! he is hearing his heart's desire,
He is snuffing the smoke of the roving fray
With Sheridan only five miles away.

"As this verse was finished the audience broke into a tumult of applause. Then I read with all the spirit I could command:

"The first that the general saw were the
groups
Of stragglers, and then the retreating troops;
What was done—what to do—a glance told
him both,
And striking his spurs with a terrible oath,
He dashed down the lines 'mid a storm of
hurrahs,
And the wave of retreat checked its course
there, because
The sight of the master compelled it to
pause.

With foam and with dust the black charger
was gray,
By the flash of his eyes and his nostril's play
He seemed to the whole great army to say,
'I have brought you Sheridan all the way
From Winchester town to save the day.'

"The sound of my voice uttering the last word had not died away when cheer after cheer went up from the great concourse that shook the building to its very foundation. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs and men their hats, until worn out with the fervor of the hour. They then demanded the author's name and I pointed to Read, who was sitting in a box, and he acknowledged the verses. In such a setting and upon such an occasion as I have been able only faintly to describe to you, the poem of Sheridan's ride was given to the world. It was written in about three hours, and not a word was ever changed after I read it from the manuscript, except by the addition of the third verse, which records the fifteen mile stage of the ride.

"But there's a road from Winchester town,
A good, broad highway, leading down;
And there, thro' the flase of the morning
light,
A steed as black as the steels of night
Was seen to pass as with a gleam;
As if he knew the terrible need,
He stretched away with the utmost speed:
Hills rose and fell—but his heart was gay,
With Sheridan fifteen miles away.

"This Mr. Read wrote while on his way, shortly after I first read the poem, to attend a birthday reception to William Cullen Bryant.

"Mr. Read read the poem, thus completed, at Mr. Bryant's birthday party. The great old man listened to every line of it, and then, taking the younger poet by the hand, said with great warmth:

"That poem will live as long as Lochinvar."

Mark Twain on Fred. Douglass.
[Washington Letter.]

I had recently placed in my hands a copy of a letter written by Mark Twain indorsing Fred. Douglass for the position of marshal for the district. It is a very characteristic letter, and as it has never been published I give it.

HARTFORD, Jan. 12, '88.
GEN. GARFIELD—Dear Sir: Several times since your election, people wanting office have asked me to "use my influence" with you in their behalf. To word it in that way was such a pleasant compliment to me that I never complied. I could not without exposing the fact that I hadn't any influence with you, and that was a thing which I had no mind to do. It seems to me that it is better to have a good man's flattering estimate of my influence—and keep it—than to fool it away with trying to get him an office.

But when my brother on my wife's side—Mr. Charles J. Langdon, late of the Chicago convention—desires me to speak a word for Mr. Fred. Douglass, I am asked to "use my influence," consequently I am not risking anything.

So I am writing this as a simple citizen. I am not drawing on my fund of influence at all. A simple citizen may express a desire with all propriety in the matter of a recommendation to office; so I beg permission to hope that you will retain Mr. Douglass in his present office of marshal of the District of Columbia; if such a course will not clash with your own preferences or with the expediencies and interests of your administration.

I offer the petition with peculiar pleasure and strong desire, because I so honor the man's high and unblemished character, and so admire his brave, long crusade for the liberties and elevation of his race. He is a personal friend of mine, but that is nothing to the point, for his history would move me to say these things without that, and I feel them, to

With great respect I am, General, yours truly,
S. L. CLEMENS.

Capturing a Widow.
[Arkansas Traveler.]

That's jes' the way with wimmin. My wife was the widdier Goostrer afore I married her, an' the first time I ever went to see her blame of she didn't fling a skillet over the fence at me. The next time she flung a churn-dasher, and the next time she flung a chip. Then she tuck up a han'ful o' leaves an' flung 'em, an' bless yer, the next time she invited me in to sop sorghum 'lasses. Oh, us men is a power in the lan'.

Inter Ocean: No matter how long a man may have been called Bill, he rises to the dignity of William when he comes in for \$100,000. There is a good deal of lift to money.

FROM THE COUNTRY.
Where the Rising Young Men of the City Hail From—City Born and City Bred's Deminacies.

[Joe Howard in Boston Herald.]

Bliss be that rural life which believes in honesty of purpose and steady action which recognizes the existence of things as they are, which believes in sentiment, which is not ashamed of feeling, where surcharged thoughts find relief in tears, where steadfast eyes rest clearly upon equally steadfast orbs. From the country New York and Boston and Philadelphia and Chicago and San Francisco get their young men. These metropolitans are born in these metropolises, but the young men with clear heads and with virile bodies, with muscles and nerves, with red hot blood, with ambitions and aspirations and desires and purposes come from the country. Heaven help the nation which depends for its guidance, its progress and its defense upon city born, city bred deminacies. I am not particularly familiar with Boston audiences, but I do not doubt you can find as many "slims" in your music halls and on your promenades in proportion to your population as we have here. New York is a city of the very rich and the very poor.

There are thousands of men here who started from nothing who spend to-day annually from \$40,000 to \$50,000 in their horse expenses. Their children are born on a plane of comfort to which their parents were strangers; affluence has taken the place of necessity. One would suppose, if he had not the evidences to the contrary before his eyes continually, that these men, having started humbly, having acquired a competency with great mental effort and physical weariness, would find pleasure in seeing their families reared in comparative comfort and ease, to be sure, but would take pains to impress upon the minds of their children the necessity of honesty and industry.

The contrary is the fact. I have in my mind a newspaper proprietor—not in New York city, and not very far from it—who was born in obscurity and in excessive poverty. He began life by selling papers on the streets, and running errands for such benevolent strangers as were willing to trust a tatterdemalion on the sidewalk. Precisely why he started with the purpose of becoming rich I don't know. The fact is sufficient. When he was 15 years old he went into a printing office and learned the job branch of that occupation. Little by little he grew, always frugal, always industrious, a sober-minded proper man. At the age of 35 he owned one of the largest job printing offices in the section of the country where he lived, and still resides, and to-day circumstances have favored him remarkably. He is chief proprietor in one of the best paying institutions in the country.

He has children, the eldest of whom, a son of 19 years of age, is pretty well along the road to ruin. I ran across him the other day. Instead of the vigorous Irish physique possessed by his father, the lad is small, slender, pale and dissipated. His eyes are weak and watery. He dresses in the extreme duds fashion, English peaky shoulders, wasp waist, nobby knees, long cuffs and toothpick shoes, and lawdy da's through life, a miserable, sickening, simpering simpleton. He has a horse and a coupe, a gold-headed cane and a package of cigarettes. He drinks champagne between the acts, occupies procenium boxes on first nights, "falls in love" with every pretty face he sees, votes life a bore, and shares the opinion of the sapient critic, to whom I alluded in my opening sentence, "that Lucia is a hackneyed opera."

Little Plants

["Gath."] The bankers and young capitalists in New York are turning their attention to the interior of the country. I talked to one of them during the week, who said to me: "The stock market is not favorable any longer. The magnificent development of the interior of our continent is what attracts the broker race. For instance, there is the town of Wyandot, opposite Kansas City. Kansas City takes its drinking water from the Kaw, or Kansas river. Along that river so many butcheries have been erected that the people are loudly complaining of their water supply. The suburb of Wyandot draws its water from the Missouri above the line of butcheries and packeries. Now, the sum of \$83,000 built the water works of Wyandot; for that amount we issued \$100,000 in bonds and \$200,000 in stock. Kansas City people are now asking to get their water supply from Wyandot. If we sell we shall expect proper reward for our sagacity and investment." Said my friend: "I think that in looking for the comfort and security of the clever interior communities of the country there is much more money than in fooling with stocks in New York, which are just now manipulated."

TRUCKLING TO BOSTON.

Mr. Joaquin Miller says that he sighs for a city where "the cruel civilization of modern empires is unknown," and where there is "rest and quiet and peace to suit the hour of dreams;" a city "hailed in from bustle and feverish rush for gain;" a city "placid as a moonlit lake and natural as a maiden's blush;" a city where "a poet may seek and find congenial ears and healthful hearts;" a city where "ambition slumbers and nature wields the scepter over all." Mr. Miller is evidently truckling for a pass to Boston.

Beecher Talks About the Greenness of the South.

"In Texas I told the people that their state was big enough for three, and they held up their hands in horror and said: 'No, only one state.' I said: 'Gentlemen, there are at least six citizens who will want to be senators of the United States, and they will be more powerful than your desire to keep the state in its present form.' In Texas as in every one of the southern states where I lectured I was received with more than hospitality—with cordiality, and the managers of the lecture tour had no reason to complain. I do not desire to go among a people more friendly. I spoke in every one of the southern states through which I passed, and I had not the most remote conception that I should be so well received. There are a great many foolish people in the south. There are some in the north, but I was surprised and delighted to see how all the people had survived the sectional feeling. The war and all its issues are substantially forgotten, and they are busy in building up again what had been wasted and destroyed, and there is now more material wealth in the south than there ever was. I appealed to audience after audience, if they could, would they bring back slavery, and they were not a single instance where they did not say that they were delivered from a great curse and that they would not bring it back again. I had no trouble in speaking there, and when I told them that I hoped Gen. Butler would be the Democratic nominee for president they received it with good nature, as you do. More than that young men in the south who used to have their living as pleasure-seekers are now workers. Manufacturing is springing up so generally that the attention of political economists has been directed to it and they are going to show that untaxed industry in this land can take care of itself. I also found in the south great interest in schools. They don't fare as well in this respect as we do in the north, but the wish of the people is for schools and they are pushing them out in every direction. The products of the south are admirable in that direction, and I can say the same as regards religion. New Orleans is retaining its old ascendancy as a commercial centre.

"As regards the negro, I received testimony most welcome. The colored people are increasing. The mixture has declined through the south; the white folks are white and the black folks are black. We are not going to have as much mixture as we used to. Education is much on the mind and the southern people of good sense and feeling are desirous of having the black people educated. When the colored people own land they prosper. The white people object to selling it to them, and for the same reason that people in New York and Brooklyn do not like to sell land to be occupied by an objectionable class. I was asked as to my views about social equality. I replied that the theory of religion was that all men were equal, but that practice indicated that social equality should begin at home, that men should grow into relationships that are necessary. The road of the colored people up to equality is by intelligence, virtue and religion, and they are traveling on that road. I believe that they have achieved liberty, responsibility and as much social equality as is good for them."

Disgusted With Dirt and Vulgarity

[Chicago Herald "Train Talk."] "No, none of my boys are in Chicago," said an old farmer from western Illinois, just returning from the Union stock yards, where he had sold three cars of hogs of his own raising. "No, sir, my boys are all at home. The three oldest are teaching school winters and helping on the farm summers. I've had all my boys in the city, though, and they know what it is. I showed 'em all around myself. I ain't one of these kind that sets boys go on thinkin' a city is the mosst place in the world, when it is just as easy as 'otnin' to show 'em different. I had my boys in some of the saloons along on State street, and on the west side, to show 'em the poor loafers, some of them evidently farmers' boys come to town to get rich. We all went up into the public library, as I wanted the boys to see the poor cusses there finding a good warm place to sleep, until 10 o'clock, anyhow. We was also in some of them dives along the levee, and I tell you the boys was disgusted with the dirt and vulgarity. My oldest boy went into the wine-room to see the girls and come out mad, saying they was nothing but paint, powder, and stuffing, and charged him \$3 for one little bottle of wine worth about 25 cents.

"I had the boys look in the morning papers to see how many situations there were vacant, and how many there were wantin' places. When we started for the train next morning arly we see a sign out 'Clerk wanted,' and thirty or forty fellows standin' around waiting for the doors to open. Oh, I tell you, the boys haven't any love for Chicago, and they are stayin' home and tendin' to business. James has a small farm of his own, and I'm going to give him half the money from them hogs to furnish his house with, 'cause he's to marry soon. Robert, the next, has the best team in our county, and the handsomest gal. My boys have seen Chicago with their eyes open, and are satisfied to stay at home, behave themselves, and take the old farm when I get through with it. I believe this keeping of boys in ignorance of what a great city really is, is wroog, so I do."

The Ink Plant.

[New York Star.] There is in New Grenada a plant, *Coryaria Thymifolia*, which might be dangerous to our ink manufacturers if it could be acclimatized to Europe. It is known under the name of ink plant. Its juice, chanced, can be used in writing without any previous preparation. The letters traced by its use are of a reddish color at first, but turn to a deep black in a few hours. The juice also spoils steel pens more than common ink. The qualities of the plant seem to have been discovered under the Spanish administration. Some writings, intended for the mother country, were wet through with sea water on the voyage; while the papers written with ink were almost illegible, those with the juice of this plant were quite unspoiled. Orders were given in consequence that this vegetable ink was to be used for all public documents.

Goat's milk is extensively used in Europe for feeding high-priced puppies. It is said to agree with them much better than the milk of cows.