

VIFQUAIN.

Nebraska during the Civil War attempted to furnish a first-class lieutenant for the First Nebraska Regiment in the person of Victor Vifquain, who had been educated in the polytechnic schools of Brussels and Paris. But the territorial governor, Alvin Saunders, declined to commission the young Frenchman and so Governor Richard Yates employed him as a teacher of military tactics and drillmaster at Springfield, Illinois. In a few months Vifquain by his ability, promptness, and many soldier-like qualities and acquirements became famous among the patriotic recruits of Illinois and so impressed Governor Yates that he gave him a commission as lieutenant.

Fighting alongside of a New York regiment which lost its colonel in battle Vifquain by his courage became so conspicuous that the New Yorkers voted him their colonel. From that day on to the close of the Civil War Vifquain was in the fore and an enthusiast in the pursuit of dangers, battles and renown. At Blakely, a fortification of Mobile, under orders from General Canby, Colonel Vifquain charged a confederate battery which, from an eminence, was pouring an avalanche of death upon the Union troops. With defiant courage and patriotic determination, after the loss of hundreds of his brave comrades, Vifquain, sword in hand, scaled the works of the enemy and reared on high the starry banner of the republic and made his capture of the outpost complete, superb.

General Canby commended his gallantry. Congress passed a special resolution of thanks and gave him a medal commemorative of his bravery and success and Abraham Lincoln commissioned him a brigadier-general.

During President Cleveland's first administration Victor Vifquain was consul in Central America. His linguistic acquirements—he speaks French, Spanish and English—together with his good native ability and his experience of Europe and the United States combined with suave and most agreeable manners made him an efficient, popular and most useful officer of the government.

President Harrison superseded Victor Vifquain, a brigadier in the Union army, with Captain Sims of the Confederate army so that the general in "blue" retired to make place for the captain in "gray."

But President Cleveland, when he began his second term as chief executive of the United States, did not forget Victor Vifquain and when that name was mentioned to him by a member of his cabinet said:

"Oh, I remember him. He did well, very well indeed, at Colon. He is an able and worthy man and we must secure his services again."

In accordance with that estimate of his character Vifquain was made consul-

general at Panama and with honor, fidelity and great efficiency he discharged all the duties of that important mission.

But Vifquain, who never in war surrendered to the gallant soldiers in gray, was again superseded by a confederate officer whom President McKinley appointed soon after his inauguration to take the place of consul-general at Panama. The love for "the boys in blue" was not so ardent with Harrison and McKinley as their fervid desire for political power in the South.

Victor Vifquain is now colonel of the Third Nebraska Regiment and probably en route for Havana. Wherever that regiment may go, whatever adversaries it may confront it will find victory and glory by following Vifquain or it will find defeat and death. Vifquain is a soldier by birth, by heredity, by education and by experience on the field.

THE SALT MINES OF WIELICKZA.

The mines of Wielickza date back to 1044, and now have a length of over two and three-quarter miles. Above stands a large, gray building, containing the offices of those in charge of the mining operations. This building is interesting principally because it contains a large number of caps and uniforms worn by various royal persons, Austrian and otherwise, who have descended into this subterranean city. They are each labelled with the name of the visitor and the day of descent. In early times, this descent was made in a shaft worked by horsepower, but a hydraulic lift is now in use. Some visitors prefer, however, to descend on long, slanting stairways cut in the solid salt. Almost blinded by the darkness, and frightened by the eerie echo of his own footsteps, the visitor first enters some colossal chambers hollowed out by the laborer in the ordinary course of mining after a plan laid down by some master mind. He almost loses himself in the expanse of the Letow ball room, which, with its solid mural decoration, illuminated galleries, stalwart pillars, and shining chandeliers, is indeed a fit and welcome chamber for lovers of the dance.

In its history, which dates back to 1750, when it was dedicated to Letowski, the chief of mines at that time, it has witnessed many remarkable gatherings. These have taken place on royal visits, or for the entertainment of distinguished guests. One end of the room is adorned with a colossal Austrian eagle and with transparencies painted on slabs of salt. In an alcove at the other end of the room stands a throne of green, the crystals of which flash a green and ruby-red. It is on this that the emperor sits when he comes to the mines. The ball-room lies at a distance of 216 feet below the surface, being the first of seven stories in the mine. Three of these stories only are open to visitors, as they alone contain the marvels visitors go to see, and are called "Bono," "Kaiser

Franz," and "Erzherzog Albrecht," respectively, the last two being named in honor of celebrated Austrians. From the scene of gaiety and splendor it is but a step to the home of quietude and prayer. Here, off one of the main passages, is the noted St. Anthony's Chapel, the resort of thousands of the devout since it was hewn in 1698. The interior is beautified by an altar showing the Crucifixion, and on the steps of the altar are the forms of two kneeling monks. On the sides of the chapel may be seen smaller altars and statues of saints. Many times each year the priests of the district perform their pious duties in this simple chapel, not only in memory of St. Anthony himself, but as a tribute to the miner who, unaided and persevering, built the chapel as it stands today. The blocks of salt which he dug out have disappeared, but the lifework of the nameless laborer may last till the end of time.—Strand Magazine.

ENGLAND CAPTURED HAVANA.

While so much is said about the impropriety of letting go our hold upon Cuba it is of interest to recall a very significant episode in the history of Havana.

More than a hundred years ago—to be exact, on the 6th day of June, 1762—there arrived off the port of Havana an English squadron of thirty-two ships and frigates with two hundred transports. Upon board this fleet were twenty thousand British soldiers commanded by the Duke of Albemarle.

After a prolonged resistance the Spanish forces surrendered to this superior power and were permitted to march out of Havana with the honors of war, thus putting the English in possession of that city and subsequently of the most important defences of the coast, and also of the town of Matanzas.

The British held Havana more than one year and until July 6, 1763. In that period there was given the first impetus to trade and commerce in the island and also a visible improvement in its civilization. But by the treaty of peace made at Paris in February, 1763, England restored all to Spain and the flag of John Bull was hauled down.

THE CONSERVATIVE now cherishes a reasonable regret that England ever relinquished its hold upon Cuba. If that island had remained a dependency of Great Britain during the last century it would now be civilized and well-governed. And there would have been no American-Spanish war in 1898.

The official existence of a congressman is only two years, of a senator but six, of a president just four; and yet from the high prancing sentences promulgated by some of these classes one would suppose their terms of office were for a century and that they were clothed in all the regal and enduring splendor of an hereditary monarch.