

IN THE FAR WEST.

Recollections of Life on the Border.

An Anecdote of "Slim Jim."

Life in the military posts of the far west is not entirely bereft of enjoyable features. True, the every day routine of soldier duty—the roll-calls, guard mountings, drills, inspections, dress parades, etc.—grows monotonous and even hateful, and the harsh tones of the bugle grates unpleasantly upon the ears deemed to listen to them year after year, yet for all this there are

MANY SOURCES OF ENJOYMENT. And pastime created by the officers and soldiers to drive away the dull monotony incident to a life in a military post. Among soldiers, as among all classes of people, can be found the individual of a theatrical turn of mind, and there is scarcely a post on the border that cannot boast of its dramatic temple, usually built of pine logs, in which are produced plays and variety exhibitions for the entertainment of the denizens of the post. Many of the officers have their wives and daughters in the garrison, and the ladies apparently take a keen interest in displaying what dramatic ability they may possess. Through the winter seasons especially are these entertainments given, and I have seen talent displayed by amateurs that would do credit to many of the stock actors who have trod the stage for years.

BASE BALL.

This is a popular sport with the more athletic "boys in blue," and some of the posts contain really excellent clubs. Match games between the soldiers and citizen clubs of the neighboring towns are of frequent occurrence, and at these matches the western man's love for gambling causes large amounts of money to change hands. Football, cricket, croquet, horse racing, foot racing, target shooting and even glass ball shoots are extensively indulged in, and the great plenty of game induces the organization of match hunting parties, the side bringing in the smallest amount of meat to forfeit their captures to their antagonists. There is a ready market for deer antelope, elk, mountain sheep and bear meat, and the winners often realize a handsome sum when the wagers are paid and the game disposed of.

HUNTING.

The cavalry soldier enjoys greater facilities for hunting than does his infantryman. At the majority of the posts it is a standing rule to allow a cavalryman a leave of absence of twelve hours after each turn of guard duty, with permission to take his horse and rifle and go wherever his fancy may lead him. Some of them he away to an adjoining town, if stationed on the railway near a town, but the majority provide themselves with a liberal stock of ammunition and seek for sport in the chase. When the officers organize a hunting party they go in ambulances or army wagons, well supplied with tents and camp equipment, to the vicinity of some good hunting ground where they locate their camp and form this as a base, making forays upon the locally elk or fleet-footed antelope daily. They are attended by detachments of cavalry, as escorts, and by their garrison cooks and servants, who are usually private soldiers detailed for such duty.

When not hunting the officers seek various modes of amusement to while away the time that would otherwise hang heavily upon their hands. At each post there is a saloon and billiard hall, in which the clicking of the ivory balls can be heard day and night, while around the various card tables, many of every known description are played. Gambling among the officers is never indulged in.

PLAYING TRICKS UPON STRANGERS.

Is regarded as a rare sport by the soldiers, and unfortunate indeed is the "tenderfoot" who falls into their clutches. The "Indian scare" is the favorite sport in this line, the innocent victim being induced to accompany a party out from the post a short distance ostensibly to scout antelope. When near some gnarled pile of rocks a howling roar of soldiers disguised as Indians dash at the hunters, firing blank cartridges and emitting the most hideous yells. Of course the soldiers in the hunting party fall as if wounded and yell at the victim to run for his life, and then the fun begins. Such wild leaps are usually displayed by the frightened "greeny," who darts toward the garrison with every hair erect, forms so ludicrous a picture to those who are in the joke that spasms of laughter at once supplant the demonic yells which but a moment before tortured the pure mountain air. When he reaches the post the affrighted victim yells for the men to at once fly to the rescue of his wounded comrades, and then recites a story of a terrible combat with an overwhelming force of savages, in which he displayed unworried heroism and fought like a demon. When the bogus Indians come in, doubled up with hysterical laughter, the drape either acknowledges the sell and joins in the hilarity or sneaks crossfelled from the post and foots it to the nearest point.

CAUGHT A TARTAR.

One day while sitting in front of the headquarters at Ft. Steele, conversing with the lamented Maj. Thornburgh, then commandant of the post, I observed a long, lank, roughly dressed fellow standing up near the post-trader's store surrounded by a group of soldiers. He wore upon his cadaverous features an idiotic grin, and looked for all the world like a graduate from an inland Missouri farm. Suggesting to the Major that there might be something in store for us, we walked up to the crowd, and reached it just as one of the troopers asked: "Do you like to hunt, pardy?" "Hunt, wal I reckon I do. Back to hum I uster be the best hunter in the neighborhood, an' could knock the delights outen a squirrel nearly every pop the tops of the highest hickory trees. Oh! I'm no small pertaters when it comes to huntin'!" Here was such a victim as the fun-loving soldier seldom caught, and every heart beat high in anticipation of rare sport. The details were soon

arranged, and a party organized to go out upon the chase. A short time before the hunters took their departure the "Indian" could be seen sneaking away in the rear of the quartermaster's store houses, and hastening toward a rocky gulch half a mile distant. Determined to see the sport I joined the party of which our rural friend formed a member, and we set forth telling him the most improbable stories of the quantity of game to be found, and which, by the way, contained a blank cartridge.

When we reached a point about fifty yards distant from the gulch the "Indians" rose and poured in upon us a terrific volley of smoke—and then charged us yelling like demons. Every one of us but the stranger fell at the first fire, and in piteous tones we begged him to run for his life and send us help. Instead of doing so, however, he stared at the attacking party in a dazed manner, giving utterance to but the words:

"What is to gosh!" The firing party dashed right up to him, blazing away vigorously, but "greeny" never flinched. When they got almost close enough to poke him with their guns he said:

"Wat in the name o' common sense ails ye? Air ye crazy, or hev ye eat somethin' that kinder disorganizes yer innards an' cramps 'em up? Ye act like a drunk lunatic asylum turned loose!"

With renewed yells the party made a dash at him, when he coolly laid down his old musket and reaching back under his dilapidated coat tails produced a pair of vicious looking pistols of the bull dog pattern and leveling them at the now discomfited "Indians" said:

"Now, you fellers hev made yer play an' I'll make mine. Ground arms, every son-of-a-gun of ye, or I'll pump ye full of forty-four calibre bullets. Drop 'em lively!" and he cocked his murderous looking revolver. The guns went to the ground, and the squadron stood with blank dismay pictured on every face.

"Now every dead-durned one o' ye stand on yer heads!" "Oh! now, see here, pardy," said a soldier, "don't you know that were only jo—"

"Up with ye or a streak o' daylight 'I'll foller a chunk o' lead through yer anatomy in a holy minute!" The troopers obeyed and in a moment and a half a dozen pairs of legs waved wildly in the air. He held them in this position for fully a minute, when he permitted them to again assume a natural position upon their feet. Then he got his late companions in the line (I had sneaked behind a large rock) and for fully an hour he held the entire crowd together, putting them through the most

LUDICROUS ACTS AND CONTORTIONS. He would make them turn somersaults, walk on their knees and on all fours, lay down and roll over, make one of them hold up a stick and the others jump over it, like trained dogs; in short, he put them through every evolution his brain could conjure up until obliged to cease through sheer exhaustion. Then he told them to "Git for camp lively!" and sent them fleeing toward the post.

"That night he made it all up, apparently, and was investigated into a game walk on their knees and on all fours, lay down and roll over, make one of them hold up a stick and the others jump over it, like trained dogs; in short, he put them through every evolution his brain could conjure up until obliged to cease through sheer exhaustion. Then he told them to "Git for camp lively!" and sent them fleeing toward the post.

"When you never want to buy a watermelon till you plug it and see if it's ripe, or you're liable to get left. Good-bye."

We then knew that our late visitor was "Slim Jim, of Nevada," the best gambler, quickest shot and most daring desperado on the lines of the Pacific roads.

WYOMING KIT. UNHAPPY RUSSIA. Everybody Under Suspicion—Discovery of Dynamite Plates.

Berlin Letter to The London Times. My Russian correspondent writes: "The reactionary Slavophile course of administration, or whatever else it may be called, continues to make progress. The discovery of another couple of charges of dynamite in the Catherine canal, almost at the same spot where a similar store of explosive matter was found about a month ago, will only strengthen the present government in its opinion that the revolutionists were never so active and successful as during the quiet direction of affairs by Count Melnikoff. Some wonder and suspicion seems to have been attracted by the journey of the unfortunate ex-minister of the interior to Geneva, and there is a report that some of the forty-three spies sent abroad, many of whom have lately been recalled into active service from the retirement of comfortable pensioners, have already been put upon his track. Suspicion and mistrust have extended to every class, except, perhaps, the peasantry, and to this class of his subjects the czar in return shows himself particularly devoted that officials at court have been reported as observing that the peasants are now treated like nobles and the nobles like peasants. It is said that Gen. Baranoff, the emperor's friend and prefect of St. Petersburg, when presenting various deputations of different classes to his majesty, soon after the accession to the throne, placed the peasants first in order. There need be no wonder, therefore, considering the circumstances, that even a former minister should be unwarrantably suspected.

"The endeavors of the present Slavophile reactionists are to show that the pacification policy of the late ministry was an eminently dangerous one, and in conformity with this view the opinion of the present tenants of power on the merits and demerits of Count Melnikoff is expressed in a remark attributed by many to the emperor himself, giving to the count credit of having a vast deal of intelligence, but very little knowledge. As a set-off to this the other side has circulated the idea that the reactionists are making as much as they can, and a good deal more than is necessary, of the danger that silently accumulated under Melnikoff, and which the police under Bekhoff are now bringing to light, in order to frighten the count and strengthen their own position.

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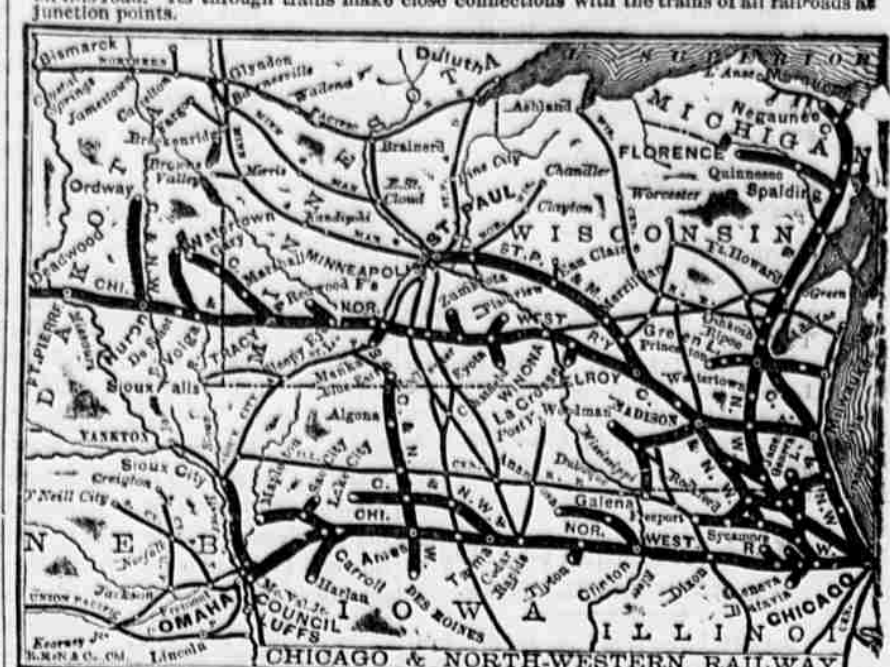
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