

# THE MAYOR AND HIS COWBOY QUARTET

## Something About the Man Who Was Mr. Bryan's Earliest Presidential Promoter.

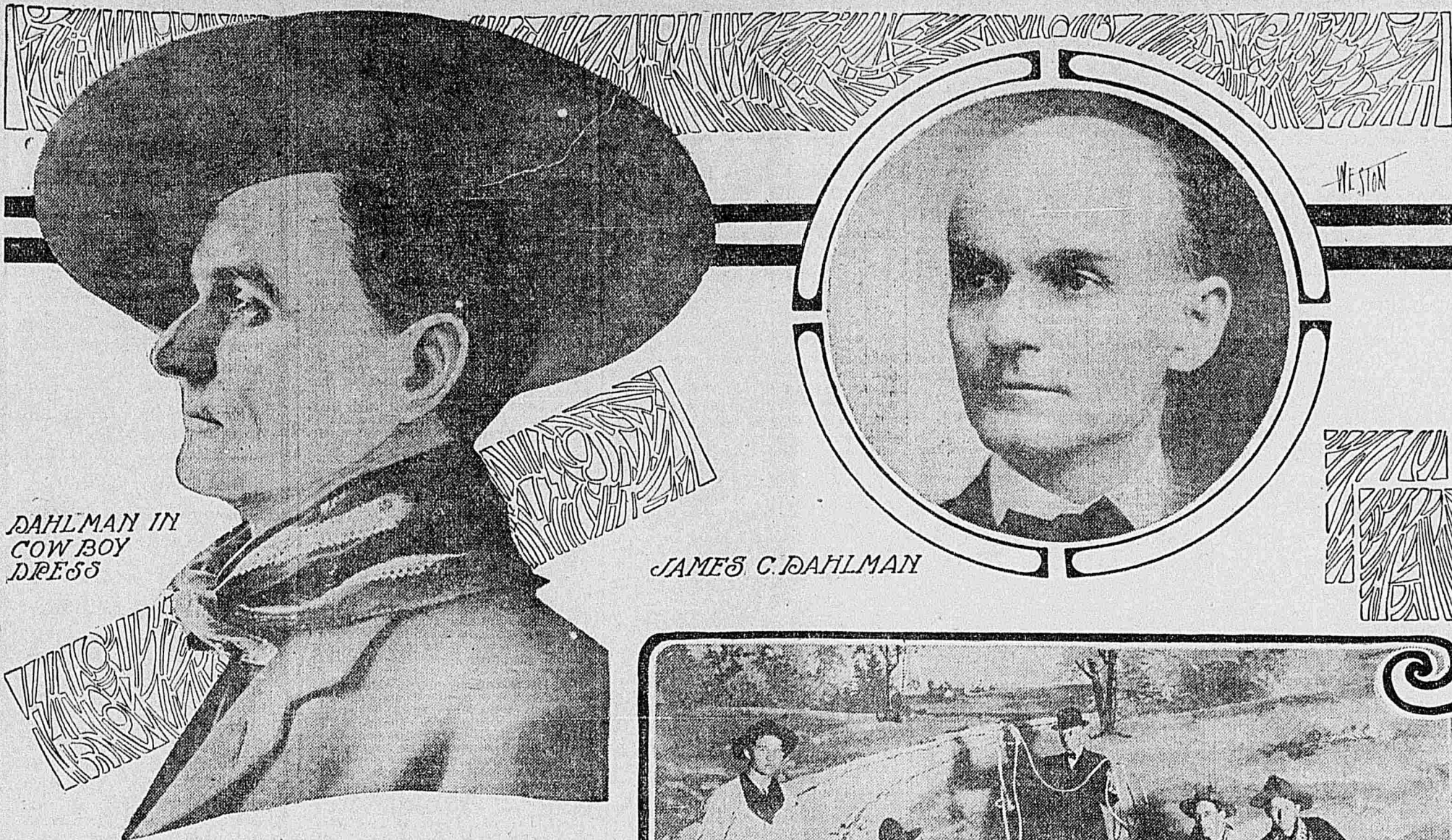
THE present has been called an uninspiring campaign. There is an impression extant that the campaign poets are having a hard time. One of the newspapers complains that the campaign thus far has produced no songs that may be described accurately in any language a family journal may employ with safety. The entire crop of this year's campaign poetry has been called dull and witless for want of better terms. The campaign poet has been accused of lack of spirit and, what is even more vital, lack of ideas. Listen to the wall, almost pathetic, of one of these pessimists:

"Bryan does not seem to stir them to jingle making as of yore. The two Bills have suggested no humorous verse. Who can be facetious, joyous, tuneful, on the subject of Mr. James Sherman of Utah? Even the suggestive and easily rhymable name of Kern has inspired no telling verse. If the oratory of the campaign is to resemble the poetry in lifelessness and lack of the stirring quality, this will be a dull campaign indeed. Perhaps it is just as well. The voters will have nothing of an amusing or inspiring nature to disturb their thoughts."

Now, what do you think of that? No campaign minstrelsy, indeed! And all the time the political atmosphere is fairly surcharged with it. How about Governor Haskell of Oklahoma, with his thousand and one campaign songs, every one of them distinctly singable and beginning to be sung daily, nightly, even hourly, in the hotly disputed districts of Everybody's Land? How about James C. Dahlgren, the unique mayor of Omaha, and his famous cowboy quartet? The fact is that the campaign poet is not in hiding. He is quite as numerous and as active as in former years, and after state conventions are over the fruit of his industry will become apparent.

Mayor Dahlgren promises to figure prominently in the national campaign. It might be more proper to say that he is already a leading figure in the campaign and decidedly one of the most picturesque. He is, in fact, the original Bryan promoter from away back. In March, 1896, there was a convention at Lincoln, Neb., to elect delegates to the national convention of that year. Mr. Dahlgren rose in his seat and offered a resolution to instruct the Nebraska delegation for Bryan. The latter was a delegate on the floor, and he did not want the delegation to go instructed, and he had considerable difficulty in convincing his enthusiastic supporter that the time had not come. Eventually Dahlgren withdrew the resolution, but he is entitled to the honor of being the first to set the Bryan boom afloat.

Who is he? He is a native of Texas and was born on a ranch. In his thirteenth year he resolved to emancipate himself from cotton picking and without consulting anybody he gathered his scant belongings into a bundle and "it out" in search of adventure. He found enough of it on the cattle ranges of northern Texas to satisfy him until he had reached his twentieth year. Then the microbes of migration got to work again, and young Dahlgren kept



DAHLGREN IN COWBOY DRESS

JAMES C. DAHLGREN

moving until he reached the great cattle ranges of western Nebraska.

Here he followed the typical cowboy life for three years and was then made foreman and was entrusted with the responsible mission of going to Oregon after a herd of 3,000 head of cattle. It took six months to drive this immense herd across the country on to the Nebraska ranges. Dahlgren admits that it was one of the most exacting responsibilities he has ever undertaken. The value of the herd was not less than \$75,000, and that a young man of twenty-three should have been entrusted with the sole management of such an undertaking is proof sufficient of the confidence put in his ability and integrity by the owner of the cattle. Seven other herds of the same size belonging to the same owner were driven over the same trail by as many different foremen. The owner provided himself with a fine pearl handled, nickel plated six shooter which he made up his mind to present to the foreman whose herd was in best condition on arrival at the end of the drive. Young Dahlgren was the recipient of the testimonial, and that pistol is one of his most valuable possessions even to this day.

### He Settles Down.

About that time he was appointed state brand inspector for the Wyoming State Cattle association, a position demanding the most careful attention to detail and the exercise of good judgment. In 1884 he was married and settled at Chadron, one of the new towns in the extreme

western part of the state, where the ranges were still unfenced and the cattle business still booming. He was elected a member of the city council immediately and then served four terms as sheriff, an almost unprecedented record of popularity and efficiency on the border.

Chadron and Dawes county were strongly Republican, but Mr. Dahlgren was elected mayor of the town and re-elected without opposition. In 1892 he went to Chicago and helped nominate Grover Cleveland, and four years later he did a like service for Mr. Bryan. From 1896 to 1900 he was chairman of the state committee and carried the state at each election for the Democratic party, the only period that state has been in Democratic hands since its organization except in 1890, when Boyd was elected on the Prohibition ticket. He became a member of the national committee in 1900 and in 1908 was appointed to the executive committee.

At the recent Denver convention he was on the committee of arrangements and contributed largely to the success of the gathering. It was at this national meeting that his cowboy quartet came to the front and converted the vast new Auditorium into a veritable temple of song.

By 1898 Dahlgren had outgrown Chadron. He removed to Omaha and after eight years of political inactivity came out as the Democratic candidate for mayor of that city. The municipal government had been under Republican control for seventeen years, and there seemed to be little likelihood that a change was impending. Dahlgren ignored all the conventional methods of conducting a campaign and went to work in a fashion that was entirely his own. First of all, he organized the quartet of singers which accompanied him on his stumping tour and aroused no end of enthusiasm. These vocalists were trained in full cowboy dress, as was also the candidate for the mayoralty. The opposition endeavored to make capital out of this informality, but it made a decided hit. The leading newspaper of the city declared that were Dahlgren elected he would write a veto message. In reply the candidate confessed that he was doubtful about the message, but protested that he could

write "Nothing doing" across the document. He was accused also of being a confirmed poker player. Dahlgren admitted it in a public meeting, adding that if any one present thought he could beat him he would be given an immediate opportunity. Instead of injuring his political prospects, these frank admissions won him so many votes that he was elected by about 3,000 majority.

### Still an Expert.

That he has not lost his cunning as an expert manipulator of the lassow was made evident on Mr. Bryan's return from his globe circling tour. In company with 125 other Nebraskans

Mayor Dahlgren went to New York to welcome their distinguished friend and neighbor. The party procured boats and rowed out in the bay to meet the incoming ship, and from one of these small craft Dahlgren roped Mr. Bryan as he stood on the deck of the incoming ship. Mr. Bryan declared laughingly that although he had been "roped in" at various times this was a variation quite new to him.

This is the rough and ready American who has done his best to advance the interests of his fellow Nebraskans and political hero and will continue in the effort until the day of election. He has volunteered to assist in the campaign in Indiana and New York, and



DAHLGREN AND HIS COWBOY QUARTET

## With His Cowboy Quartet He Will Make a Political Tour of Indiana and New York.

wherever he goes his cowboy quartet will be his bodyguard. Those who believe that campaign melody is among the "has beens" will be given an opportunity to see their mistake. It will not be long before the campaign poet's long harnessed muse will be turned loose on the great voting public. Bands of "sweet singers" are organizing in all parts of the country, and we are certain to have an opportunity to join in the chorus of—

THE BRYAN BATTLE HYMN.  
(Air: "Battle Hymn of the Republic.")  
The hosts are marching onward to the great redemption day.  
Their hearts are filled with courage, and them nothing shall dismay.  
Hark! Hear the mighty shouting that resounds along the way.  
As we go marching on.

CHORUS.  
Bryan, Bryan, halleluiah!  
Bryan, Bryan, halleluiah!  
Bryan, Bryan, halleluiah!  
As we go marching on.

Hear the chorus grandly swelling from the broad Pacific main.  
See the great and toiling millions haste to join the glad refrain.  
Freedom and redemption ever is the cry of all the train.  
As we go marching on.

The glory of the nation from despoilers may be freed,  
For Bryan is the watchword of our honor and our creed.  
And we'll sweep the tide of victory over just of gold and greed.  
As we go marching on.

The oppressed of every station send a prayer of hope and trust.  
Must we falter, then, my brothers, when our cause is right and just?  
Up and onward, Victory beckons. Conquer, then, we shall and must.  
As we go marching on.

This land our fathers gave us, heritage for you and me.  
Must we bear the yoke of oppression in this realm of liberty?  
By the God of all life's battles, shall this nation still be free.  
While we go marching on.

And on the succeeding evening, at precisely the same place and hour, we are quite as likely to be regaled with—

THE DEMOCRATIC MULE.  
Oh, why should the Democrat mule always kick.

Against everything our nation may do?  
He kicks and he-haws, he he-haws and kicks.  
And studies up charges with not a word true.

A fickle old beast is this Democrat mule.  
Sometimes he's for silver, sometimes he's for gold.  
But little he cares what standard we have—  
Anything for office if his motives were told.

But this ancient mule claims noble descent  
From Jefferson and Jackson, whose worth is well known.  
But if these noble men were with us today  
This Democrat mule they'd surely disown.

Bill Bryan's a-straddle this Democrat mule.  
And Bill street is leading the mule by the head.  
But the poor mule's so weak he can scarcely hold up  
The after election, when he will drop dead.

GEORGE H. PICARD.

# The Metamorphosis of William J. Conners; Once a Dock Laborer, Now a Millionaire Boss

IN the present presidential campaign there is likely to be less indulgence in what is known as "mud slinging" than is usually the case. The acknowledged personal worth of the principals in the contest interposes an efficient check to the "revelations" which have been sprung on many an ambitious candidate at a moment when he could afford least to encounter them. It has happened thus far that the minor personalities in the political drama now being enacted have been compelled to bear the burden of the game.

Perhaps the most conspicuous of these victims, in the Democratic camp at least, is William J. Conners, member of the New York Democratic state committee, reputed to be the real as well as the titular boss of the Democratic organization in the Empire State. In lieu of a wider field in which to exercise his wit and power of invention the campaign specialists of the opposition have selected Mr. Conners as best fitted to serve as the target for their keenest shafts.

One of the most agreeable features of the business, one that relieves it of much of its apparent ferocity, is that there is no one in the country who seems to extract more enjoyment from it than does William J. Conners himself. As long as all these political fun-makers confine themselves to the personal and physical characteristics of the boss they are welcome. It is only when his integrity is questioned that this man who has risen from the ranks assumes the defensive. Those who know him and the strict rule of business "squareness" by which he is dominated are quite as ready to frown on all attempt to belittle his sturdy preference for fair dealing, for it is the fashion in Buffalo, the native city, to believe that when it comes to the "bottom line" William J. Conners is as good as gold.

### A Hazardous Beginning.

Nor has Mr. Conners ever made any attempt to conceal the fact that his early life was a poor beginning for the long climb which rose before him. He was born fifty-one years ago in the first ward of Buffalo, down on the lake front. Those who are familiar with the locality will wonder the more

that any good could have come out of it. His parents were Irish Canadians, and he was the only boy. His father had been a sailor on the lakes in summer and a stonecutter on land in winter. The older Conners was thirty in his father's day, and when he had accumulated enough he invested his earnings in a small saloon near the Ohio basin. It was in the very heart of a district containing a dense population composed of freight handlers and grain scoopers, men who toiled all day and were likely to carouse all night.

It was a hazardous school for young Conners. That it made its unhealthy and even degrading impress Mr. Conners would be first to admit. His parents wanted him to have some education beyond that of the docks, and he was sent to the parochial school. He learned readily, but the confinement and the routine were not to his taste. After a year of it he declared that he needed no more; that he chose rather to roll up his sleeves and go to work.

His father gave a reluctant consent, and the boy went to work. His first job was that of cook's assistant on one of the steamers plying between Buffalo and Duluth. It was not an attractive life, but he kept at it four years, eventually becoming chief porter. About that time he realized that the great physical strength with which he was endowed made him fit for the better paid but far harder work on the docks, of which he had seen so much and which he could do without an apprenticeship. Here he worked, and worked hard, until he was twenty-two. He had risen to the position of foreman of freight handlers, but he was ambitious to get rich, and to become the proprietor of a saloon near the docks seemed to him to be a distinct forward step. He didn't have much working capital, but from the first business came his way, and he prospered financially. He had become popular among his mates along the docks, and they became his patrons when he went into business. Just then his father died, and the son became owner of two prosperous saloons.

He made money, but he did not like the business, said so frankly and was constantly on the lookout for something more to his taste. One day during a big strike on the docks a



WILLIAM J. CONNERS, MULTI-MILLIONAIRE AND POLITICIAN.

gutters in single file, like the orthodox boardman.

In order to draw trade the manager of a San Francisco establishment was engaged as showwalker a dwarf. The man is covered with spots, has enormous hands, big feet, a large head and is only four feet high.

Through the action of flood waters the great barrier wire netting fence shutting off northern Queensland

against rabbit invasion has been swept down in several places, and the rabbits are pouring through in thousands. All vegetation is disappearing before them.

A farmer named Wellstead found four blind baby rabbits on his land and took them home to his cat for food. Pussy was nursing her own kitten, and instead of eating the rabbits she proceeded to nurse them, and under her fostering care they are doing well. Pussy was more humane than her master.

Having made an appointment with a man who answered her advertisement for a husband, a widow in Burlington, N. J., was astonished to find he was her own son.

The new law which limits the hours of work for telegraphers will force the railroads to get at least 6,000, possi-

brilliant idea came into his head. He knew all about the trouble experienced by the steamship companies that handled their own freight, hiring men who were frequently on strike, and offering all sorts of inconvenience from the plan. The grain carrying steamers were saved all these difficulties because they unloaded with labor supplied by contractors who charged so much per thousand bushels. It occurred to Conners that package freight might be handled in the same fashion and that he was the very man to put the scheme into execution. It did not take him long to act after he had convinced himself of the feasibility of the proposition. He applied for the contract to load and unload all the steamers of the Union steamship line, one of the largest companies of the great lake region, and secured it. This deal was made in 1885, and since that time he has been adding constantly to his business until now he is handling all the package freight on every dock in Buffalo, says one, as well as that in most other ports along the great lakes. Thus he has become one of the most extensive individual employers of labor in America.

### His Social Aspirations.

Along in the nineties Conners had made so much money out of his grain handling contracts that he began to launch out in other business ventures—street railroads, breweries and several industrial enterprises. Success followed him after every advance, and he became a millionaire. With wealth came the longing for position and a burning desire to secure for his family an entrance into the company of the refined and educated. He forsook all his old haunts, moved into an exclusive section of the city, frequented the most expensive public resorts and soon became conspicuous as a prodigious spender and a wearer of huge diamonds and "extreme" clothing. All this he did and endured, not because the doing gratified his vanity, but rather because he knew no other way to attain his end and believed he was on the right track.

That this is the true explanation of his attempt to break into society is proved by his good natured willingness to accept advice in the matter from

those who were his real friends. "Jim," said one of these latter one day, "you are making a fool of yourself wearing all those diamonds. It is absolutely vulgar."

"Mebbe it is," admitted Conners ruefully. "I notice that them what has them wear them and them that hasn't don't." But he took the hint, and thereafter he appeared without the gems.

Shortly after Conners bought his fine house on fashionable Delaware avenue a street railroad company which had a line crossing the avenue near the new home sent up a lot of rails which were to be used for repairs. These rails were dumped on the pavement with such a resounding clatter that the entire neighborhood was aroused. "It must be Mr. Conners moving in," observed his next door neighbor, who was a wit.

After he had moved into the fine new house Conners had his garden planted in big letters formed out of foliage plants on the lawn in front of his veranda. "Goodness!" exclaimed an aristocratic passerby, gazing at the floral legend through her binoculars. "The poor man must think he is a railroad station."

The Conners of today, the Conners of Delaware avenue and the state committee, is not the man whose dominating ambition was to be the big man of the docks. The refining touch has been applied with such perspicacity that the metamorphosis is practically complete. It is only when he is very much in earnest that the old time grammatical perversions make themselves perceptible for a brief moment and a recurrence of the rich brogue of his early life mellow his speech. The William J. Conners of the present day is as quiet and proper in his dress and manner as if he had been born that way.

How does it happen that those who speak so uncharitably of William J. Conners forget that today there are hundreds of pensioners of this man in the old first ward of Buffalo who are being carried through their declining years in comparative comfort by his bounty and that the children of the poor in his old neighborhood are ready to call him blessed?

SILAS O. WOODSON.

## BRIEF AND PERTINENT.

The English bishop of Peterborough and a rural dean have acted as coal heavers for half an hour. The bishop was on a motor car trip in his diocese, and the car frightened a horse, drawing a coal cart. The horse bolted, and the car was overturned in the ditch. The rural dean sat on the horse's head until it was released from

the cart, and then the bishop, the dean and the bishop's chauffeur and valet helped the driver to reload his cart. An enterprising London firm sent out a number of dogs fitted with "boards" on their backs advertising their wares. The canine "sandwich-men" had the boards strapped on their backs, and they marched along the

gutters in single file, like the orthodox boardman.

In order to draw trade the manager of a San Francisco establishment was engaged as showwalker a dwarf. The man is covered with spots, has enormous hands, big feet, a large head and is only four feet high.

Through the action of flood waters the great barrier wire netting fence shutting off northern Queensland

against rabbit invasion has been swept down in several places, and the rabbits are pouring through in thousands. All vegetation is disappearing before them.

A farmer named Wellstead found four blind baby rabbits on his land and took them home to his cat for food. Pussy was nursing her own kitten, and instead of eating the rabbits she proceeded to nurse them, and under her fostering care they are doing well. Pussy was more humane than her master.

Having made an appointment with a man who answered her advertisement for a husband, a widow in Burlington, N. J., was astonished to find he was her own son.

The new law which limits the hours of work for telegraphers will force the railroads to get at least 6,000, possi-

bly double that number, of new telegraph operators. More men have risen high in the railroad world from the telegraph branch than from any other.

The arctic explorer, Captain Amundsen, says that in his next trip to the polar regions he will employ bears instead of dogs, and he hopes this to reach the pole.

Einshul has a disagreeable oriental humor. When he captured General McLean he forced him to dismount from his horse and ride a mule in order to show his inferior station and to take off his turban, since only a Mullah should wear such a head dress.

Every soldier in the Russian army is to be provided with a pocket compass with a luminous needle and 300 compasses, costing \$400,000, have already been ordered.