

## WON BY PLUCK.

Jessie Banning's Long Struggle for a Peruvian Fortune.

Jessie Banning of San Francisco has just won a great triumph in her long contest for the rich strip of mahogany land along the west slope of the Cordilleras in Peru. Though she lost her father, ruthlessly struck down from ambush in the bitter strife, and her mother, who died from grief and dependency, she won a husband and a fortune. But for the timely and staunch assistance of George Flores it is doubtful whether she ever could have won against the machinations of the rich and influential men who were determined to capture the great mahogany tracts valued at \$600,000. When, disguised as a boy, she was wounded in trying to recover the Valdes deeds in order to prove her title, it was Flores who aided her to escape the hirelings who had her surrounded. When the Valdes deeds were recovered it was Flores who shrewdly preserved them till they were called for by the courts, though detectives and cutthroats were ransacking the possessions of everybody connected with the case, threatening the weak-hearted and even kidnapping those that were thought to know the whereabouts of the papers. Despite all their efforts the deeds were preserved and presented to the court at the opportune moment, and the wedding of Jessie Banning and George Flores dramatically closed the long and exciting contest.

Jessie Banning might be called an American girl, though she was born in Peru. Very early in life she was taken to California by her mother and attended the public school in San Francisco, where she formed many acquaintances. It was through her mother that she inherited the title to the great stretch of valuable forest lands which were so long in dispute. Joe Banning, her father, was very well-known in the Mendocino mountain ranges. In the early '70s he sold his timber claims in that region and went to San Francisco for rest and to see what chances offered for investments in new lines. There he met pretty black haired Anita Ramirez, who had come from Peru on a visit to an aunt, and he fell desperately in love with her. Marriage quickly followed. He took a wedding trip with her to Peru to visit her relatives and "see what kind of a country it was, anyway." Being a timber expert, he became keenly alive to the prospects in that country in furnishing fine woods, and when he saw the rich belt that his wife disputed title to he was ready to jump into the contest with all his American energy, pluck, shrewdness, and every cent at his command. The coteries of speculators who were trying their hardest to gobble the tract were not afraid of this new champion. They argued he was a foreigner, unused to the ways of the country, unfamiliar with its laws, and at a pinch, there was always a way of dealing with opponents who became too truculent or too successful.

With indomitable energy and perseverance he at last got his wife's claims in such shape that his friends declared he must win when the evidence was presented to the courts. The last missing link in the title was the Valdes deeds, and these, after a long and tireless search he had at last obtained. After an arduous two years' struggle his triumph seemed at hand. Then it was the other side showed how they proposed to escape from their desperate corner. Banning, with his wife, was passing out of a crowded theatre one night. In the pack of people nobody noticed who pressed next him. Suddenly he grasped the arm of his wife more closely, exclaimed, "I am stabbed," and fell to the ground. It was a mortal wound; he died three days later. Several arrests followed, but the real culprit was never caught.

This sensational episode in the contest was followed by the burglary of his house and the theft of the Valdes deeds. Mrs. Banning collapsed under all the strain. Taking her little daughter, she fled from Peru and again came to San Francisco to visit her sister. But her heart was broken. She pined away and in three years died. Jessie was kept at school till she graduated, then she went back to her relatives in Peru. Then for the first time she began to hear the stories about the strife over the tracts of valuable woods and the reasons why her father had been murdered.

The cowardly act incensed her. She spent all her spare time going over the records and the evidence, and when she realized the mass of crime and swindling operations that had robbed and crushed out the lives of her parents she resolved to make it the effort of her life to get justice and bring the guilty parties to punishment. So with little money, but with all her father's pluck, this frail girl took up the contest. It was good fortune more than chance that sent George Flores to her standard when she began her contest against the unscrupulous enemies of her father. Flores had been squeezed out of his holding in the rich Bella Donna mine by Leon Valladolid and some of his cronies. This Valladolid was one of the leading spirits who contested the rights of Miss Banning to the timber claims. Flores was the first to open up the rich ledge of the Bella Donna, but he needed capital to develop the mine with modern machinery. He went to Valladolid, showed him the prospects in sight, and offered him a share, providing he would furnish the necessary capital to equip the mine with machinery. Valladolid jumped at

the chance, put up the money, and in a year had the finances of the mine in such a shape that Flores was compelled to sell out to him for a song. Flores swallowed the bitter pill, but he yowed revenge. So when Jessie Banning reopened the case in the courts for possession of the great mahogany forests Flores went to her, told her what he knew, and offered to help her all he could. His was invaluable assistance, for not only had he heard Valladolid recount some of the inside workings of "the ring" to grab the forests, but his own fight with Valladolid had taught him the latter's methods.

The key of Jessie Banning's proof was the Valdes deeds, for they completed the rap, showing the unbroken title to the forest lands from the original grantees down through several generations to her mother. It was well known that these important papers had not been destroyed by the men who had stolen them, because they also conveyed certain rights and privileges which were being used by "the ring." It was the plan of the latter to wear out the Banning heirs and then produce the Valdes deeds. Jessie Banning was the only one who stood between them and success, and they didn't see how a girl like her could possibly defeat them.

Very early in the affair a bundle of papers purporting to be the original Valdes deeds were offered to her at a fancy figure. The arch conspirator had figured that she would snap at these forgeries and use them for the purpose of winning the suit. Of course at the proper moment they were prepared to step in and dramatically produce the deeds to be gross forgeries. Fortunately, Flores got wind of the matter and warned Miss Banning in time. But the trick, though it failed in execution, produced one momentous result. It revealed the headquarters of the plotters, and by a rare chance showed that the bona-fide Valdes deeds were in the same place. But how to get them? Jessie Banning knew that her father's secrets had been sold out to the other side, and she was afraid to trust anybody with the important task of recovering the deeds. Whoever got them for her might turn and offer to resell them to the other side for ready cash. In this dilemma she decided to try to recover them herself. There was only one way. Court processes were useless in trying to reach her enemies. She must do as they did when they took them from her father.

Her cousin was a daring lad of 17, and she pitched on the plan of disguising herself in a suit of his clothes and taking him with her on the adventure. She had selected a rainy night for the feat, and found everything clear in her reconnaissance of the house where Flores reported "the ring" met. Then fortune played a strange prank in the proceedings, which both helped and hurt her. It chanced that a burglary was being committed that same night in a residence almost directly opposite. The servants were awakened, gave the alarm, and a fusillade of pistol shots rang out on the midnight air. Of course all the households in the neighborhood were awakened by the racket and ran forth to learn the cause of all the confusion. The servants in the house where the ring met were among the number. Jessie Banning nearly collapsed in the uproar, thinking for a moment she was the cause of it. She was paralyzed with fright, but only for an instant. The next the quick-witted girl realized that the uproar was a golden opportunity offered to take advantage of the desertion of the servants; then she fell upon the desk containing the Valdes deeds stolen from her father's house.

With them safe in her pocket she made a jubilant rush for the broken window, forgetting for the moment that the gardens in that locality were being scoured by the householders, seeking for the burglars who had fled from the alarmed house across the way. Unfortunately for her she was observed as she dropped lightly from the window, and a vigilant servant fired a pistol at her. The ball grazed her side inflicting a flesh wound, but she pushed headlong into the darkness, followed by the shouts of those in close pursuit.

Suddenly, in her mad flight, she stumbled and went sprawling headlong into the water. It was shallow, with a stone bottom, but she dared not move lest she should get beyond her depth, and so lay at full length, with her head just above the surface. Her pursuers were close upon her. She could hear them calling to one another and beating the bushes in their fruitless search. Lanterns began to bob about in the darkness; she lay still, fearing to move lest she should disclose her hiding place. Two of her pursuers met near the water; one carelessly threw the light of his lantern in its direction, evidently with a view simply to disclose its location, and told his companion to be careful and not stumble into "the fish pond." Time and again her pursuers passed the pond, but they never thought of seeking her there. However, they were so persistent in their hunt and daybreak was so near that she knew it was only a question of little time when she should be discovered and dragged to prison, and that would be the last of the Valdes deeds and her long fight for her rights and justice.

Then came a figure drifting specter-like through the darkness in her direction and softly whistling. "You'll Remember Me," from the "Bohemian Girl." Jessie Banning could not with-

hold an exclamation of delight. It was Flores' favorite air, and she had heard him softly whistling it to himself in a self-same way.

"Flores, Senor Flores," she called softly. The shadow and the whistling suddenly stopped. "Senor Flores," she repeated and the figure advanced cautiously toward the fish pond.

"Where are you, senorita?" he whispered in a low, guarded voice.

"Here in the fish pond."

"Be brave, I think we can trick them yet," he responded. "S-sh! here comes one of them; lie low!" And as a man came up with a lantern Flores turned and pretended to search the bushes.

"Any signs of the robber?" asked Flores.

"Not yet, but he is somewhere in this square. Of that we are certain, and the place is safely surrounded. It is only a question of a little time and search. Senor Valladolid reports that his house was also robbed, and he and his servants have also joined the hunt. We will get the villains, sure, I am going for more lanterns." And he hurried away into the darkness.

When he was well out of hearing Flores picked up a bench on the walk beside the fish pond and shoved it out into the water toward the submerged girl. "Rest behind that," he said. "It may help to protect you from any light they flash on the water. I'll go and draw off the searchers to the other end of the square and bring horses to his end. Then we'll make a dash for it. Keep your courage up."

Flores had been gone only a little while when she heard shouts: "There he is!" "Help, help, surround him!" "This way with the lights, all of you!" "We've got him, we've got him!" Then from all directions she saw the lanterns and dark figures go bobbing toward the locality of the shouts. She arose out of the water, feeling that it was too good a chance of escape to miss, and that maybe she had better run and not wait for Flores.

Fortunately, he ran up breathlessly while she was hesitating, grabbed her hand, and dragged her away to the farther corner of the square. She was shivering and almost numb with cold, and he had to half carry her. But they reached the horses, and in a few moments they were galloping away.

And that was the way Jessie Banning recovered the stolen Valdes deeds. The Cuzco court has already given judgment in her favor. It is authoritatively whispered that within a month she will marry George Flores—The New York Mail and Express.

### QUANT AND CURIOUS.

One hundred years ago there were five carriages to each 100 people in England. Now there are 17.

Modern links only date from 1790, at which date the researches of Dr. Lewis in the chemistry of ink began.

The Sandwich Islands are almost as free from snakes as Ireland. There is but one sort, and that very scarce.

Green wood contains fully 45 percent of water, and through seasoning usually expels but 35 percent of this fluid.

There are no less than 3,000 different species of fish inhabiting the waters of America north of the Isthmus of Panama.

Seventy thousand cochineal insects go to a single pound of dried cochineal. The world's crop of cochineal is from 200 to 300 tons.

A white badger, which is almost as great a rarity as a white blackbird, was killed recently by the Axe Vale (England) badger hounds.

The ancient historians say that over 100 miles of the lower Nile were protected by artificial embankments and other works of engineering skill.

There is a happy father of 30 children who lives at Beveren, Belgium. He has been married twice, and his progeny is composed of 22 boys and eight girls.

At Burlington, Kan., the other day the janitor of the court house had the sheriff arrested for walking across the grass in the court house yard. The sheriff was fined \$8.

### To Prevent False Alarms.

The district commissioners of the city of Washington have recently adopted a new system of the fire alarms which is the invention of a resident of that city and which it is hoped will do away, in a very great measure, with the number of false alarms which have been bothering the fire department officials of that city for some time. It costs considerable money to answer an alarm of fire, and in the case at the capital there were sometimes as many as 200 false alarms in the course of the year.

The device adopted is known as the Campbell fire alarm box. It is fitted with a system of levers, which have to be turned before the box can be opened. Upon turning the levers a bright flash bursts forth from a closed cup above the box. This flash can be seen for several blocks at night, and will necessarily attract the attention of anybody in the vicinity.

### Kind-Hearted.

"But why," she asked after they had hummed along a block or two, "do you take this course. It doesn't seem to be a bit interesting."

There are several hospitals located out this way," he answered, letting out another notch. "I always like to make it as easy as possible for the victims."—Chicago Record-Herald.

## SOFT CRAB INDUSTRY.

HOW THIS POPULAR DELICACY IS PREPARED AND SHIPPED.

The Business Is Less Than Thirty Years Old, But the Annual Output Is More Than 25,000,000, Worth \$1,000,000—The Crab's Birth and Growth.

The popularity of soft crabs as an article of diet is of recent development. Previous to 1870 comparatively few restaurants in America served them. Small quantities were received incidentally at several places along the coast, where they were picked up principally by boys wading in shallow water. No dependence was placed in supplies thus obtained and there was no regular fishery at any place.

The soft crab industry was inaugurated about 1873 at Crisfield, Md. It consisted in catching the crabs immediately before molting and impounding them until after the shedding of the shells, when they were carefully placed in crates with ice and seaweed and shipped to market. The persons who inaugurated the enterprise were subjected to considerable ridicule and received from their neighbors the title of "crab breeders." Their success, however, resulted in the establishment of the business at many other points and within a very few years "crab breeding" became one of the most profitable and extensive of the fishery operations on the coast.

At present nearly if not quite 10,000 persons are employed in the industry on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States and about 25,000,000 soft crabs are secured annually. A fair valuation of these in the wholesale markets is about fifty cents per dozen, making the total value of the yield somewhat more than \$1,000,000. The crabs are collected at numerous points from Massachusetts to Texas and especially in the estuaries of Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina each about 4,000,000 and all the remaining states combined about 2,000,000 in number.

The soft crab is the common blue crab (*Callinectes hastatus*) at a certain stage in its development. During the summer the young crabs are hatched from the eggs carried under the "apron," which is doubled or folded under the thorax. From 10,000 to 50,000 are produced by each female. Although extremely small at first, they grow rapidly, and by October they range in size from one to three inches in length. At the beginning of winter these small crabs, and the adults as well, seek protection from the cold by retreating to deep water, where they enter into a condition of lowered vitality either on the bottom or half buried in the mud. On the approach of warm weather in the spring they return to shoal water and increase in size very rapidly.

At periods varying in frequency with the rapidity of growth the crab sheds its shell, including the entire external skeleton and the lining of the digestive tract. This moulting process is intimately connected with the growth of the crustacean, and it is only at the time of shedding that the crab increases in size. In the early stages of its existence this function is frequently exercised, but as it approaches maturity, moulting becomes less frequent. Adult crabs shed the shell probably only once a year, and very old crabs rarely ever moult.

A crab approaching the shedding process is known in the vernacular of the coast as a "peeler" and then a "buster." After moulting the crustacean quickly passes through the stages in which it is known as "paper shell" and "buckler" respectively, again becoming a hard crab.

Two principal forms of apparatus are employed in the fishery, viz: The dip net and the scrape or dredge. Dip nets are used principally in very shallow water and especially early in the season, since crabs moult much earlier in shoal than in deep water. It is also the favorite form of apparatus in those localities where the fishing is of small extent. The dip net consists of a single bag net of twine, attached to a handle four or five feet in length.

The scrape or dredge used in taking crabs closely resembles the ordinary oyster-dredge in form, but it is much lighter and the pocket is made of twine-netting instead of iron rings.

Two or three scrapes are attached to the sides of each canoe by means of long ropes and are thrown overboard at the fishing grounds and dragged along the bottom. At short intervals the canoe is "brought to," the scrapes are lifted and the contents dumped on a culling platform in the boat. There the crabs of suitable size and condition are quickly separated from the mass and placed in receptacles, while the refuse is thrown overboard.

The catch fluctuates greatly, depending principally on the weather conditions. Cold weather causes the crabs to seek deep water. Wind storms have the same effect and also interfere with the operations of the boats. The average daily catch for each fisherman is from 60 to 100 crabs, although some individuals occasionally secure 300 or 400 in one day.

Hard crabs, "peelers," "busters," soft crabs, etc., are all caught together. In most localities the hard crabs are discarded, as the market price is not sufficiently high to pay for shipping them long distances; but in some places where the fishery is extensive these are boiled and the flesh extracted and shipped to market, where it is used extensively in the preparation of "devil crabs." The "peelers," "busters" and soft crabs are sold by the fishermen at the same price each, ranging from \$1 to \$4 per

100, according to the supply and demand.

The persons buying these crabs are known as "crab packers," of whom there are a number in each fishing centre. They prepare the soft crabs for immediate shipment and place the "peelers" and "busters" in floats provided for the purpose, where they remain until moulting is accomplished. An expert can readily determine at a glance about the length of time that will elapse before a crab sheds its shell.

The moulting floats or pounds are made of light planks and scantling, with plain board bottoms and latticed sides. The size varies, but most of them are about 10 feet long, 3 or 4 feet wide and 15 inches deep, furnishing room for about 200 crabs. To increase the buoyancy and stability a ledge projects at half the height, corresponding to the water line. The floats are usually inclosed by a board fence, which serves as a breakwater.

It is interesting to watch a crab in the immediate act of moulting. The shell cracks along the posterior edge and, with many muscular contractions and movements, the five pairs of modified limbs known as claws or swimmers are withdrawn from their covering and the entire shell is finally loosened and the crab emerges somewhat larger in size than before. So severe is this ordeal that many die in the process. The newly moulting crustacean is exceedingly weak and delicate, and for an hour or two the slightest handling is injurious. Therefore, it is permitted to remain untouched for three or four hours, or until a filmy shell has formed, which serves to protect the animal if it is handled carefully.

Owing to the severity of the moulting process and the injuries received in capture, the death rate in the floats is very high, especially in hot weather. At times the loss from this source reaches 50 percent of the total number, and the average is 35 or 20 percent.

Two or three times daily the floats are examined and the soft crabs that have recovered somewhat from the moulting are carefully removed and packed in shipping crates with seaweed and crushed ice. To carelessness in the packing for shipment is due much of the individual success in the business. The crates used in the Chesapeake and North Carolina regions are of uniform size—about 4 feet long, 18 to 24 inches wide and the same in depth—and are provided with closely fitting trays, in which the crabs are carefully packed side by side in rows, with their legs or claws well folded up and their bodies lying obliquely so that the moisture may not run from their mouths.

Outfitter Johnny Dobbs, late of Cincinnati, has signed with Chicago, turning down an offer from New York.

Cheshbro, the sturdy Pittsburg pitcher, at present leads the League in percentage of games won and lost.

Shortstop Larkins, of Meriden, is pronounced a rising player in all departments—fielding, batting and base running.

Outfielder Johnny Dobbs, late of Cincinnati, has signed with Chicago, turning down an offer from New York.

"Loole" Bruce, the Indian pitcher, who graduated from the Philadelphia High School, has won all eight games he has pitched for Buffalo.

The news that John T. Brush, the baseball magnate, has sold out his interests in the Cincinnati National League Club and will in future devote his time to the New Yorks was welcomed.

There are but eight southpaw pitchers in the American League. They are Platt, of the Chicago; Siever, of Detroit; Plank, Waddell and Wittse, of the Philadelphia; Lee and Patten, of Washington, and Shields, of Baltimore.

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### THE NATIONAL GAME.

Utica has released infielder Dean. Cincinnati has released eleven men this season.

Burkett has fought his way into the 300 class at last.

Beaumont leads the Pittsburgs, with a fine batting average.

The St. Louis National team is proving a mid-season surprise.

Infielder Leon Demontreville has signed with the Lawrence Club.

New York's strange hold on last place in baseball is still unshaken.

Long, of Boston, never played such a game in the field as he is playing now.

Griffith, the Chicago pitcher, has a perfect fielding record in thirteen games.

Horace Fogel says he had Lajoie clinched for New York but for Colonel Rogers.

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### SPORTING BREVITIES.

Indications point to a fine rail and reed bird season about Wilmington, Del.

After fourteen years in the ring, Owen Ziegler announces his retirement to go into business.

The Doherty brothers, of England, won the international tennis championship in doubles from Ward and Davis.

Two of the most notable rival golf clubs along the Jersey coast are the Seabright and Mountain Beach Clubs.

Cornell expects seven men of her great varsity crew back at college next fall to form the nucleus of the 1903 crew.

The blind trotter Rhythmic won the \$10,000 Bunker Memorial at the opening of the Grand Circuit meeting at Brighton Beach.

The Canadian defender, the Trident, defeated the challenger, the Tecumseh, in the fourth and decisive race for the Seawanhaka Cup.

Younger brothers of the tennis champions are coming to the fore. E. P. Larned, H. H. Whitman and Irving Wright are playing in rare form.

George Spear, driver of the New York trotter Lord Derby, 2,067, was fined \$250 at the Grand Circuit meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, for restraining his horse.

An endurance bicycle run is proposed, the start to be New York City and the finish at Chicago. There are already enough entries to make the affair a big success.

The women golfers of the West are showing greater enthusiasm than ever before, and a large contingent will enter the women's championship to be held this fall over the Brookline Country Club links.

The stewards of the Paris Jockey Club have instituted an inquiry into the riding of American jockeys at the Bois de Boulogne races; the trouble is due to rivalry between English and American jockeys.

### Oldest Ship in the World.

What is stated to be the oldest ship in the world has recently been sold at Tenerife to be broken up. This is the Italian ship Anita, registered at the port of Genoa. The Anita which resembled Christopher Columbus's ship, the Santa Maria, was built in Genoa in 1548, and effected her last voyage at the end of March, 1902, from Naples to Tenerife, six or seven weeks ago. The Anita was of tremendously stout build, and had weathered countless storms and tornadoes in all parts of the world, but it was also the slowest ship afloat, taking 205 days on one voyage from Baltimore to Rio de Janeiro.

### BUSINESS CARDS.

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One of King Edward's Prerogatives. It is not generally known that King Edward since his accession to the throne has become the guardian of the children of the Prince and Princess of Wales and of his other grandchildren, over whom he has complete control, the rights of their parents being superseded. This was decided to be law nearly 200 years ago by a majority of 10 to 2 of the judges. The right was frequently used by the late George, who had a habit of quarreling with his sons. Before members of the royal family can marry they will have to obtain King Edward's consent or the marriage is void. George III. managed to secure this power by means of the royal marriage act, in consequence of his brothers marrying subjects to his great annoyance.