

GRANT'S HORSEMANSHIP.

I HAVE just read with great pleasure in your January number the vivid picture of General Grant's life at West Point. It will undoubtedly recall his own experience to every graduate, especially those who were there previous to the last few years, before the coddling system was introduced.

General Grant's horsemanship was widely known. I recall an incident that came under my own view and brought this knowledge very forcibly to some young Italian officers. In the spring of 1878 I happened to be in the city of Milan. Returning to the hotel one afternoon, I saw an immense crowd gathered and a group of Italian officers mounted, their horses grandly caparisoned, themselves decorated with the most brilliant of uniforms. In front of the doorway, held by three uniformed grooms, was a beautiful blood-bay horse, equipped with a new English pig-skin saddle. It kept the three busy to restrain his plunges; every moment it seemed as if he would leap on top of the holders and break away.

Going into the hotel, I asked what was the matter, and was told that General Grant was going to review the flower of Italy's army, the pride of all, the flying Bersaglieri. Taking my stand in the corridor in full view, I waited to see our famous general appear.

In a few minutes I saw the general coming down the stairs dressed in a plain black frock coat and trousers and high silk hat. He walked by unnoticed, unannounced, in his plain, unpretentious manner, towards the door. At this time one of the group of officers who had dismounted and were standing in the hallway to receive and escort him to the restless steed without, remarked loud enough for me to overhear, "Why does not General Grant come?" I said, "There he goes now," pointing proudly to the simply dressed figure. They looked at me with a doubting laugh, saying, "No, that cannot be he."

I replied, "I am a United States officer and know him well."

Meanwhile General Grant had come to a halt, having undoubtedly heard the remarks, as a good-natured smile lurked on his face. Finally, one of the officers,

being sufficiently convinced, approached and asked if he was General Grant. Receiving an affirmative reply, a look of utter astonishment overspread their faces; they hastened to make amends for their apparent rudeness, accompanying him to the waiting horse, who was making frantic efforts to shake himself free from the three stalwart grooms.

A more restless, wicked-appearing horse I have seldom seen. I was in mortal fear that our general would be speedily thrown and crushed to death by the cruel hoofs. From the sly winks and nudges that passed between these dandyish young officers it looked to me very much as if they had assigned to the general of set purpose a young, untamable horse that had never been ridden. My fears for him were somewhat removed when I saw General Grant's eyes lighten up with admiration as he gazed upon the horse. Whether it was that the general was not well or was merely assuming a sort of helplessness, I have never been able fully to determine; but in mounting he accepted the assistance of two officers (the horse fully occupied the attention of the three grooms), and from an apparent stiffness had some difficulty in getting his right leg over the saddle. So soon as he touched the seat, however, he grasped the reins, his form straightened, and the change in his appearance immediately so impressed those around with his thorough horsemanship that spontaneously a shout of applause went up from the crowd. The horse, after a few futile plunges, discovered that he had his master, and started off in a gentle trot. From that time on horse and rider were as one being. The Bersaglieri are the brag foot-troops of Italy, and perform all their manœuvres at a run. For two hours, most of the time with his horse at a gallop, General Grant kept both mounted and foot troops on the move. On his return to the hotel I could hear murmurs of wonder and admiration from his escort. They themselves looked much fatigued, but the general appeared as calm and unruffled as if he had been seated in a rocking-chair.

ALFRED M. FULLER,
Captain Second United States Cavalry.