



# A "Tenderrail" On An Inspection Trip

BY JOEL L. PRIEST



"Section twenty-wan, house at Hot Springs."

THE voice of the roadmaster rises sonorously over the roar of the wheels under the "rubberneck wagon." From his accent one might almost suspect the roadmaster of being direct from a certain country famous for its inexhaustible supply of American policemen. We are leaving Ogden behind us at the rate of 40 miles an hour and the pale dawn behind the eastern hills is beginning to glow with the first bright rays of the upspringing sun.

The discerning reader, if he has survived this far, has doubtless discovered that it was very early in the morning. It was, in fact, earlier than that. They have a pleasant little habit of rising early in the morning on these Oregon Short Line annual inspection trips. They really have the original early bird beaten something like thirty ways from the deuce, whatever that may mean.

Darkness covered the face of the Ogden yards when Oscar laid violent hands on the writer. It was 6 o'clock, and that's some early in Ogden or anywhere else. My spirits were lower than a snake's, er—, stomach at the thought of crawling out of a comfortable bed and facing the chilly breeze. But Oscar was obdurate. When the boss tells him to get everybody in the car up at 6 o'clock Oscar gets them up. If they were actually dead, instead of dead asleep, Oscar would do his best to resurrect them.

Breakfast helped me some. By the time I had waded some bacon and eggs, fried potatoes, hot biscuit and jam, a little fruit and a cup of coffee—just a little snack to pick at—into my system the world somehow looked brighter. Then it was "Ho!" for the "rubberneck wagon." It was "a nipping and an eager air" that greeted us as we walked forward.

## "THE RUBBERNECK" CAR.

The "rubberneck" was attached to the front of the locomotive. Perhaps a description ought to find a place here. At the beginning it may be said that the "rubberneck" presents a decidedly deollete appearance. There is very little to it except a glass door and two windows in front, two tiers of seats rising from front to rear and all kinds of chilly atmosphere between the forward and the aft, as W. W. Jacobs or Joseph Conrad would say.

I asked the boss why, instead of leaving both sides of the car open in that low-necked, V-bodied fashion he didn't have glass windows all around it. His reply was comforting, as comforting as the fellow who asks his sick friend what hymns he would like sung at the funeral. "We don't put the glass in," he said, "because, running ahead of the engine this way, we might hit something. Everybody ought to have a chance to jump, and if they jumped through a pane of glass it might hurt them." He didn't seem to think it would hurt a bit to leap lightly from a train traveling at 60 miles an hour out upon a pile of nice, soft ties, or a feathery combination of crushed stone and lava rock.

## SLIGHTLY WORRIED.

And just when I was rapidly trying to figure out whether or not my accident policy covered a ride in the "rubberneck wagon," and concluding that, in simple justice to my family, and not because I was the least bit frightened, the boss gave the signal and we were off. I wasn't in any hurry at all, but the engineer seemed to be. It was most careless of him, for he couldn't see the track very well from his cab "way back behind the "rubberneck" that way.

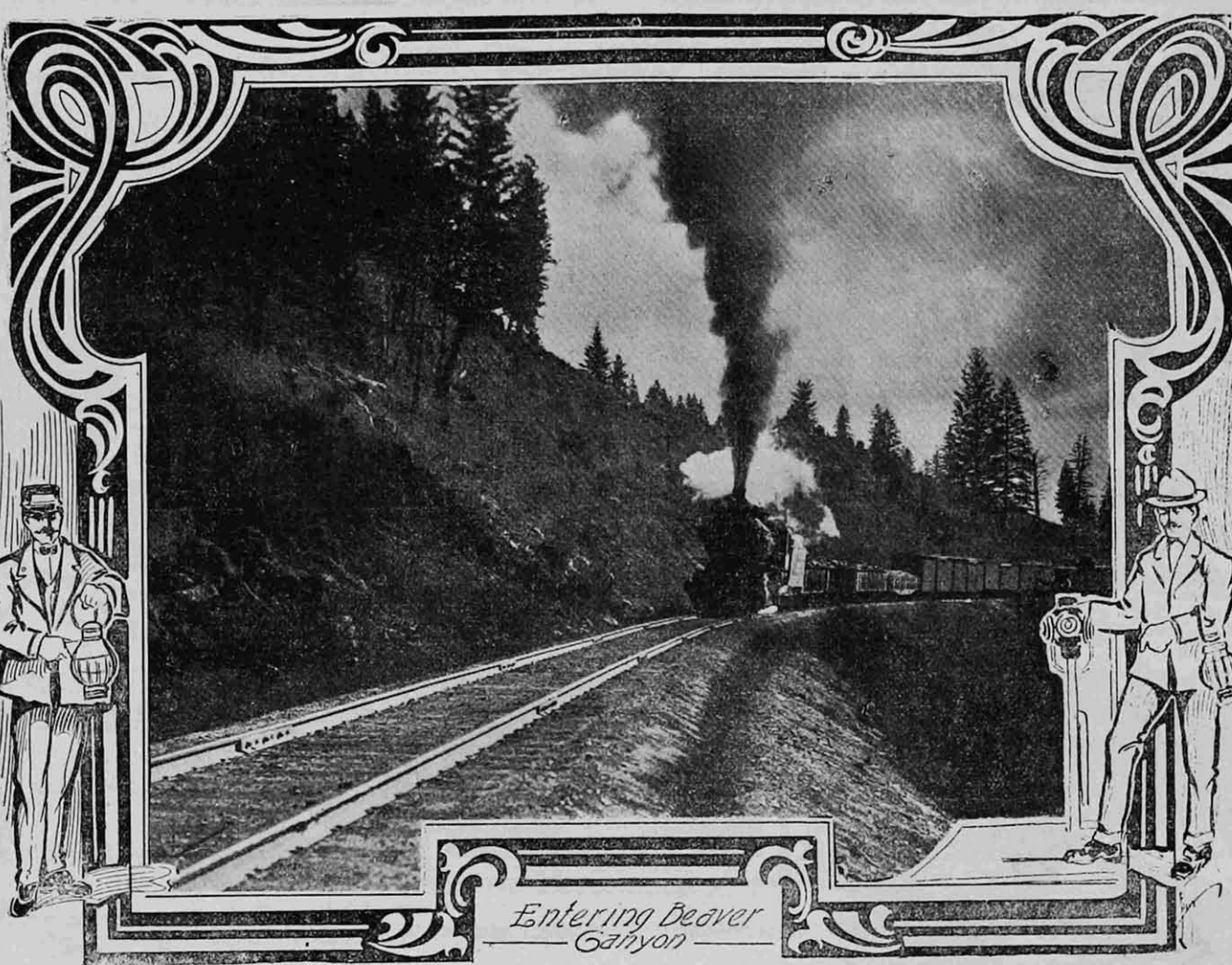
But nobody else seemed the least bit worried. The boss lit his pipe. So did the chief engineer. And at last I permitted my toes, which were glued to the soles of my feet, slowly to uncurl. After all, it wasn't a bit bad. The track was as smooth as a billiard table, the "tow lines" on either side stretched ahead of us as straight as ever crow flew. The fresh, sharp air of the morning sang in our ears and our lungs bulged with ozone.

Still the first stop was some comfort, because it afforded an opportunity to stretch stiffened legs and warm chilly feet. The little station at Hot Springs was as immaculate as soap and water could make it. One could have eaten on any part of the floor and the walls and ceiling had been put through a thorough cleaning. If the writer had been marking he certainly would have given that station "ten," which is the highest mark. The sectionhouse and the pumphouse were also found to be in good shape and the inspection of the Utah division was on in earnest.

## INCENTIVE TO EMPLOYEES.

The Oregon Short Line is one of perhaps a half-dozen roads in the country that annually sends out a special train loaded with officials for a general inspection of the system. On these occasions every mile of track, including main line, branches and spurs is carefully gone over. As an incentive to section foremen to have their allotment of track in first class shape, and to station agents to see that their buildings and grounds are in irreproachable condition, handsome gold medals are distributed among those that have done the best work.

The train this year consisted of three private cars, a standard Pullman and the "rubberneck" wagon. The latter, as has been said, being pushed ahead of the locomotive, with a Pullman car immediately behind the observation car and immediately in front of the engine. The writer does not pretend to know why the Pullman is also pushed ahead of the engine. He has a strident private theory, though, that it is because, in the event that some-



Entering Beaver Canyon

thing is run into, there will be two chances for the party in front to get killed; first, with the Pullman, and second, with the engine.

The system of marking is very strict. An agent may have his station in elegant shape as regards cleanliness, but if he has allowed an excursion poster to remain on the wall one day after the last date for selling tickets he will not be given a perfect marking. If the water barrel at the end of the station is partly empty, down goes that station agent's mark.

The track inspection is even more strict. The perfect mark is 25, but no section has ever received it. The inspectors proceed on the theory that a perfect track does not exist this side of that happy land where everybody is supposed to get exactly what is coming to him. It may be very hard indeed to say what is the matter with a particular section of track.

## SECTION FOREMAN'S DREAM.

The "tow line," which is the narrow path that stretches along the side of the track just at the edge of the ballast, may be as straight as the proverbial distance between two points; the alignment and surface may seem to measure up to the most critical requirement. Nevertheless that section will not receive "25." As likely as not it will get the skiddoo sign, which means "good." The best section foreman can hope for, the most beautiful picture he can conjure up in his dreams, is 24½.

Twenty-four means very good, 23 good, 22 fair and 21 poor. No man connected with a division is allowed to mark his own division. Gentlemen from other divisions very carefully attend to that. To ask a man to mark his own division would be like asking a mother to point out the imperfections in her babies. Why, Best Beloved, it simply could not be done.

But the gentlemen from the Salt Lake division can see the imperfections of the Utah division as clearly as the woman in church can see the "perfectly horrid" combination of colors on the hat in front of her. Trust them for that. But the Utah division has its chance on the Salt Lake division, the Idaho division has a positively uncanny nose for imperfections in the Montana division, and so on the game of "mark, mark, mark with care" goes on.

Nor should any reader get the impression that the markers are unfair. They are not. Nobody knows how the fellow has rated a section, a section house, a station building, a pumphouse, roundhouse, shop, spur, branch or siding, but the men who do the marking can always give an excellent reason for it. And when the entire trip is over the cards are handed to a young man in the chief engineer's office. He finds the totals, strikes an average and on his figure the medals are awarded.

## EXCUSES UNAVAILING.

There is no appeal from the finding. Nothing may be set up as an extenuating circumstance. No section foreman or roadmaster can plead that

his track was particularly hard to work, that he was not given enough men and supplies, or anything of that sort. No station agent can come forward and say that he didn't have time to get his station into shape. No excuses are accepted from roundhouse foremen, shop foremen, pumpmen.

The markings are made on the condition of the track and buildings at the time the inspection party passed over or visited them. Everybody has had abundant notice. Several weeks before the inspectors started out word was passed along the line. Every operating or maintenance employee knew almost to the minute just when his work would be looked over. It was like sending out couriers and a brass band. "Hear ye, hear ye, the big inspection party is coming."

Happy the section foreman, proud the agent on whose breast is pinned the honor medal. The prize is treasured out of all proportion to its intrinsic value though that is not by any means inconsiderable. It is worn on state occasions and is handed down to the children of the recipient as a precious token.

Elbert Hubbard has written, "Remember my son that at the last God doesn't look for medals; he looks for scars." Still, a medal is a handy thing to have around the house, just the same, and the hope of winning one has sustained many a tolling section foreman in his daily grind.

## AMBITIOUS FOREMAN.

There is one man who has the section beginning at Reverse, in Idaho, at the top of Medbury hill. He has won two medals. For two years his sectionhouse has won the premium section sign. This year his seven or eight miles of track looked as if he had gone over it with a scrubbing brush. To the layman it looked absolutely perfect in all respects. That foreman is not after a third medal, and if he doesn't win it will be through no lack of effort on his part.

If he wins, some day soon the fastest train on the Oregon Short Line, that ordinarily whistles through Reverse without a suggestion of hesitating, will stop there. The division superintendent will get off and he will pin on the breast of that section foreman the honor prize. That will be a great day for the entire population of Reverse—which consists of the section foreman and his family. The same thing will happen to any other section foreman who wins the medal.

The purposes of the inspection trip are manifold, also. The first idea is the establishment of an esprit de corps among the employees, to instigate a feeling of friendly rivalry as to their way. A small lead mule of one team was thrown on the horns of a bull clear over its mate to the other side, while the mate, being now next the pursuer, was gored until his entrails gushed out upon the ground. Several pack mules were killed in a similar manner. One man was thrown 10 feet in the air and came down with an ugly four inch gash, three inches deep, in his thigh. A sergeant was knocked down and trampled, having three ribs broken. There were numerous other injuries but luckily no fatalities to the men. A bull had fallen near one of the soldiers who sometimes acted as butcher and the latter, knife in hand, approached to cut its throat. The animal suddenly bounded to its feet and charged with such fearful accuracy as to carry off the would-be butcher's cap on its horn; it ran but a few rods and fell a second time—this time stone dead. The surgeon's steward followed him, scrambling to its feet and tumbling down at intervals, until the last fatal shot, which took effect near the curl of the pate, brought it down to rise no more. It was afterwards found that two balls had passed through the animal's lungs, two through the heart, and two had passed into the head. The twice-forfeited heart was kept several days and exhibited by the surgeon as evidence of the vitality or desperate courage with which the animals could fight after receiving their death wound. The colonel himself tells how he was standing near a corporal when a splendid coal-black bull at a hundred yards distance came charging upon them. The corporal brought his musket to his

For men and officers the trip is absolutely invaluable. The writer, a poor tenderrail who finds difficulty in distinguishing a frog from a firebox and a lot of solid information, mixed with no little amusement, while traveling with the inspection party. He learned, for instance, something about the passionate fondness most animals have for sojourning on a railroad track.

## IDIOSYNCRASIES OF KINE.

One can see the beasts so carefully well from the "rubberneck wagon." Most of the right of way is carefully and stoutly fenced, but do you know the average horse, cow, steer, bull, calf or sheep will sit up all night or miss three meals in a row watching for a chance to slip through an open gate and chew gravel ballast on a railroad track? It's a fact.

And you can never tell, when you see them, whether they are going to run spang in front of the car or away from the track. Usually they wait in the exact geographical center of the roadbed for the train to come up. Sometimes they emit a playful bellow when you get within ten feet of them and spring blithely down the bank, looking around at you with a wagging light in their eyes as though they were saying, "Well, I certainly threw a big scare into you that time."

At other times, with the boss or one of the superintendents tooting frantically with the air whistle on the front of the "rubberneck," they will wait until the train comes practically to a dead stop before they calmly step aside. It's great sport, all right—for the cattle. But your toes curl right up against the soles of your feet in the observation car. There, I've been trying to say "observation car" for at least a thousand words.

## ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

One day on the Montana division, while the train was running at a high rate of speed, a band of horses appeared dead ahead at a road crossing. There wasn't time to stop. It looked as if the car would bump squarely into the middle of the bunch. The assistant general freight agent was sitting "way down in front talking to a division superintendent. Both jumped at the same time for the rear of the car. And, Best Beloved, neither hit until he reached the extreme rear, either. If Curtis, or the Wright boys, or Farman or any of the other man-birds had seen that flying stunt they would have trembled for their laurels. It seems too tame a conclusion to say that the train missed the horses, but this narrative is strictly truthful. Not a horse was hit.

Another time, coming up the Northwestern line, a new road that is being built by the Short Line from Blake's Spar, in Oregon, down the Snake river, we rounded a sharp curve and saw a rock in the track ahead of us. There wasn't time to come to a full stop, though the boss worked the emergency airbrake at his right elbow for all he was worth. We hit the rock. It broke the cowcatcher on the observation car. But we stayed on the rails. It was all over so quickly that the

tenderrail, looking down the thirty-foot drop into the Snake river, had only time to think, "Gee, but that water looks cold."

Looking back over that last paragraph I find I have done it now. They told me that if I ever spoke of a pilot as a "cowcatcher" again they would never let me take another trip with the inspection party, so help them goodness. But maybe they'll forget before another year rolls around. I know I want to go again.

## THINGS EPICUREAN.

Riding in the open air that way, from early morning until the shades of night have fallen, produces an appetite that wouldn't balk at a pair of cast-iron shoes. I once found myself the Gummy Gus of the party, for I couldn't help asking the boss, with considerable frequency and no little earnestness, "Well, when do we eat?"

The train was always tied up for thirty or forty minutes at the noon hour, while all hands sat down at bountiful tables in the private cars. And children, children, how good everything tasted! How in the world they ever managed to carry enough provisions will always remain one of the deep, dark mysteries of the trip to me.

After luncheon it was back to the "rubberneck" for ours. There we stayed until it became too dark to see the roadbed properly. Then we tied up for dinner and the night. Those were among the pleasantest hours of the day, the hours between dinner and early bedtime. It was sure enough early bedtime, too, children. The boss made everybody turn in not later than 10 o'clock, and, truth to tell, we didn't need an awful lot of driving, with the inexorable Oscar and his 6 o'clock performance looming darkly ahead of us.

## SPEAKING OF STRONG MEN.

They were talking about strong men in one of the cars one night. "Do you remember Jerry Johnson?" asked a division superintendent. The man's name was not Jerry Johnson, by the way, but that is close enough.

"Jerry was about the strongest I ever knew," the superintendent went on. "He used to brake for me when I was running freight. I remember one time a switch was spiked, that is, a spike was driven into the tie against the slide rail so it could not be opened. Just for fun one of the boys told Jerry to throw that switch. He went over and gave it a yank. He tore the spike loose and lifted four or five ties with it."

"Didn't you know that switch was spiked, Jerry?" I asked him.

"Is that so?" says he, "I thought she come over a little hard."

One time, according to the same superintendent, Jerry was swinging down from a brake ladder sniffing at a hot box while the train was lumbering along at the rate of twenty miles an hour when he was struck by a projecting cathead, the "chute" broke, "The chute was broken," concluded the superintendent, "but Jerry's grip was not even jarred."

## "MOUNTAIN MARY"

One afternoon as we neared the station of Orchard, on the main line between Mountain home and Nampa, the boss told me to get off and listen to what took place. A fine, motherly-looking woman is the agent there. When Mr. Manson, superintendent of the Salt Lake division, stepped off the car she greeted him with a smiling, "Hello, Ed." With A. B. Stevenson, superintendent of the Utah division, it was "Hello, Steve." And they were just as glad to see the boss as they were to see them. For years ago, all three were railroad telegraph operators together. "Ed" and "Steve" frequently talked over the wire with this agent—they called her "Mountain Mary" then—and they were and are the best of old-time friends. And, softly in your ear, Superintendents Manson and Stevenson never fail to give her the highest mark on her station report. "Don't you imagine for a minute that she doesn't deserve the highest mark, either."

## DAD ALLEN, SOUTHERNER.

Old Dad Allen runs the pumphouse at Owyhee. He is a veteran of the Confederate navy and about the spryest pumpman along the line. Independent? Well, "Dad" would make the some-what celebrated Declaration look like a War Cry editorial. He fears neither God, man nor general superintendent. Dad's creed is to so live that he can "look every man in the eye and tell him to go straight to"—the place where naughty people are said to meet their finish. "Dad" goes just a little stronger. He believes in telling people every once in a while to go there just on general principles.

They asked him once if he could secure any letters of recommendation. The old fellow squared his shoulders and answered, "You may write, or say, to Wade Hampton, Fitzhugh, Lee, or to any other pishon in Virginia or North Carolina." Somebody did write to Wade Hampton about him—this was years ago—and he received by return mail a glowing eulogy of "Dad" Allen. About six months ago "Dad" walked up one morning feeling just a trifle peaked. Down he sat and wrote a letter asking the boss to get him a bottle of "Dad" Allen's. He was feeling better, so he wrote, in effect: "Please excuse my rash act. I do not want to retire. I am good for at least ten years yet." He very probably is. The tenderrail's recollections of the inspection trip are all of the pleasantest. When he is quite sure that nobody around him is the least bit familiar with railroad operation or maintenance, he discourses, with what seems to him a fair imitation of one who knows, about surface, alignment, tow lines, frogs, switches, signals, interlocking plants and the like.

He never before realized the difficulties of grades and curves and other conditions met and overcome in the operation of a railroad. And unless the copy reader's blue pencil is absolutely merciless he will go on record as saying, after his careful and thorough examination, that the Oregon Short Line is one of the best railroads that was ever laid on ties. If he had his way that would give a "25" to every section, a "10" to every section house, round house, shop and station.

He has even forgiven Oscar for those little 6 a. m. unpleasantnesses.

# THE BATTLE WITH THE BULLS, Mormon Battalion's Only Actual Fight in Mexican War

(Continued from page four.)

the colonel was published forbidding firing at game. He felt that wild and vicious as the animals were, the wounding of them would render them more excited and dangerous than if left undisturbed. The men had no reason for taking submitting to being gored to death without at least an attempt at self-protection, and disregarded the order. Traveling along now, one day five miles, another day 12, another 17, and so on, they came at length to the San Pedro river, a tributary of the Gila. Here they first saw Mexican wild horses, while the cattle seemed every day to become more numerous. Following down the San Pedro two or three days they camped on the night of the 11th December in a small canyon.

## THE BATTLE.

Here occurred the famous "Battle with the Bulls." Though commemorated in song and story, it is not a familiar incident. History passes over it lightly, because few writers of history ever heard of it. Levi W. Hancock's 19-stanza poem, "The Bull-Fight on the San Pedro" is never recited by youthful declaimers, nor do open-eyed youths pore spellbound over Sergeant Tyler's description of the battle. Hancock's lyric and Tyler's narrative are alike unknown save to few, and of the little band who took part in the novel conflict, hardly any still survive.

The river bottoms near the point where the camp was made were covered with a luxuriant growth of grass so coarse and tall as to resemble cane. Into these tangled covers had rushed for shelter scores of wild cattle upon the approach of the small advance guard. From the higher banks on both sides of the stream they had watched the approach of the soldiers, and, at

first more curious than startled, had waited for the rumble of the on-coming wagons before stampeding to the bottoms. Whether their strength of numbers gave them courage, or whether curiosity made them insolent, the fact is that the bulls soon began to issue forth, seeming to assemble from all directions. Halting now and then for a moment, pawing up the ground, sniffing and belching, then advancing slowly, their sleek and beautiful forms and majestic appearance gave them an impressive if not a terrifying character. It was soon seen that this was to be no holiday exchange of compliments.

On they came with slow step, but unwavering purpose. Presently the roar of muskets rang out from one end of the soldiers' line to the other. The colonel must have been little less surprised than the bulls at this evidence of disregard of his orders as to loaded guns and firing. There was no time now, however, for reprimanding any one for disobedience; indeed it was not long before the commanding officer was himself shouting out quite unnecessary orders to load and fire. In a few seconds the engagement became general, and the fighting was fast and furious. It was noticeable that the animals farthest away were the most inclined to turn tail and retreat. Those in or near the melee, even when not wounded, seemed insanely bent on goring or trampling down everything in their path. With blazing eyes, and lowered crests they charged time and again through the line, their hot breath, like dragons' blight, withering all before them. Some of the men threw themselves down and allowed the maddened beasts to run over them. Some climbed upon wagons and poured into the charging foe a deadly fire at short range. Some climbed small trees, of which there were a few in the vicinity. Some dozed behind mesquite bushes to reload their pieces and

were kept busy side stepping by their pursuer on the opposite side of the bush. Returning to the charge, the bulls stove in the end-gates of several wagons in which lay sick men, and gored cruelly team and pack animals which could not get out of their way. A small lead mule of one team was thrown on the horns of a bull clear over its mate to the other side, while the mate, being now next the pursuer, was gored until his entrails gushed out upon the ground. Several pack mules were killed in a similar manner. One man was thrown 10 feet in the air and came down with an ugly four inch gash, three inches deep, in his thigh. A sergeant was knocked down and trampled, having three ribs broken. There were numerous other injuries but luckily no fatalities to the men. A bull had fallen near one of the soldiers who sometimes acted as butcher and the latter, knife in hand, approached to cut its throat. The animal suddenly bounded to its feet and charged with such fearful accuracy as to carry off the would-be butcher's cap on its horn; it ran but a few rods and fell a second time—this time stone dead. The surgeon's steward followed him, scrambling to its feet and tumbling down at intervals, until the last fatal shot, which took effect near the curl of the pate, brought it down to rise no more. It was afterwards found that two balls had passed through the animal's lungs, two through the heart, and two had passed into the head. The twice-forfeited heart was kept several days and exhibited by the surgeon as evidence of the vitality or desperate courage with which the animals could fight after receiving their death wound. The colonel himself tells how he was standing near a corporal when a splendid coal-black bull at a hundred yards distance came charging upon them. The corporal brought his musket to his

shoulder, awaited coolly the onslaught, took deliberate aim, and only touched trigger when six paces separated gun muzzle and beast. The animal fell headlong.

## A STRICKEN FIELD.

How long the carnage lasted, history fails to tell us. That it was quite long enough for the Battalion boys, admits of no reasonable doubt. Neither are we informed what caused the enemy at last to draw off. The laureate already referred to merely says:

"Whatever cause, we did not know,

But something prompted them to go;

When all at once in frantic flight,

The bulls ran bellowing out of sight—"

which is succinct, even if not satisfying. As is the case with most battles, there is great discrepancy in the estimates of the number killed, wounded and missing.

None of the men were killed, though several were seriously wounded. Wagons, harness and pack saddles showed signs of the rough treatment they had undergone and a number of mules were killed outright or had to be shot to end their sufferings. These casualties can be arrived at with tolerable accuracy. The losses on the attacking side are more difficult to establish. The poet says:

"At least a score of bulls were found,

And two mules dead upon the ground;"

But as we know he was mistaken as to the mules, we need not accept his figures as to the bulls—he may have said "score" just to help the rhythm of his line, and may have been employing poetic license. Sergeant Tyler makes no attempt to give accurate results. He says two of the soldiers who had stayed behind fishing, and overtook the

detachment after the fight, counted nine bulls lying dead in one place along the trail. As it was a running fight, and not less than 20 were scattered about where the engagement ended, and as probably a large number were seriously if not fatally wounded but were able to drag themselves away from the scene, the number slain would probably not fall far short of 60. One writer positively declares that 81 were killed outright.

The historian of the Battalion intimates that the choicest cuts from the choicest blockheads were taken for the cooks, and that without delay or further interruption the expedition hastened on, coming soon to the Gila river, then to the Colorado and at last to San Diego.

The muster out of the organization; the reenlistment of one company; the start back of the remainder toward the Great Basin—these are facts of California and Utah history with which most people are acquainted. Nor is their great part in the discovery of gold near Sacramento. It was the first record of the discovery that electrified the world. It is an admitted fact that Capt. Sutter would not have been able to dig his mine to the time he did if he had not managed to hire the help of these men. The "unforeseen incident" previously referred to had a direct part, therefore, in this stupendous event also. The Utah have been settled a year earlier, but the discovery of gold in California might have been delayed no one knows how long, had it not been for Capt. Allen's call for his able-bodied battalion, and Brigham Young's ready determination that the call should be complied with.