

The Mail Robber; or the Stage Driver's Adventure.

Fourteen years ago I drove from Danbury to Littleton, a distance of forty-two miles, and as I had to await the arrival of two or three coaches, did not start until after dinner, so I very often had a good distance to drive after dark. It was in the dead of winter, and the season had been a tough one. A great deal of snow had fallen, and the drifts were plenty and deep. The mail that I carried was not due at Littleton, by the contract, until one o'clock in the morning; but that winter the postmaster was very often obliged to sit up a little later than that for me.

One day in January, when I drove up for my mail at Danbury, the postmaster called me into his office.

"Peter," said he, with an important, serious look, "there's some pretty heavy money packages in that bag," and he pointed to the bag as he spoke. He said the money was from Boston to some land agents up near the Canada line. Then he asked me if I'd got any passengers who were going through to Littleton. I told him I did not know, but "suppose I haven't," says I.

"Why," said he, "the agent of the lower route came in to-day, and he says that there have been two suspicious characters on the stage that came up last night, and he suspects that they have an eye upon this mail, so that it stands you in hand to be a little careful."

He said the agent had described one of them as a short, thick fellow, about twenty years of age, with long hair, and a thick, heavy clump of beard under the chin, but some on the side of his face. He didn't know anything of the other. I told the old fellow I guessed there wasn't much danger.

"O, no, if you have got passengers through; but I only told you of this so that you might look out for your mail, and look out for it when you change horses."

I answered that I should do so, and then took the bag under my arm and left the office. I stowed the mail under my seat a little more careful than usual, placing it so that I could keep my feet against it; but beyond this I did not feel any concern. It was past one when I started, and I had four passengers, two of whom rode only to my first stopping place. I reached Gowan's Mills at dark, where we stopped for supper, and where my other passengers concluded to stop for the night.

About six o'clock in the evening I left Gowan's Mills alone, having two horses and an open pung.

I had seventeen miles to go,—and a hard seventeen it was too. The night was quite clear, but the wind was sharp and cold, the loose snow flying in all directions, while the drifts were deep and closely packed. It was slow, tedious work, and my horses soon became leg-weary and restive. At the distance of six miles I came to a little settlement called Bull's Corner, where I took fresh horses. I'd been two hours going that distance. Just as I was going to start, a man came up and asked me if I was going through to Littleton. I told him I should go through if the thing could be done. He said he was very anxious to go, and as he had no baggage, I told him to jump in and make himself as comfortable as possible. I was gathering up my lines when the hostler came out and asked me if I knew that one of my horses had cut himself badly? I jumped out and went with him, and found that one of the animals had got a deep cork cut on the off fore foot. I gave such directions as I considered necessary, and was about to turn away, when the hostler remarked that he thought I came alone. I told him I did.

"Then where did you get that passenger?" said he.

"He just got in," I answered.

"Got in from where?"

"Well, now," said the hostler, "that's kind o' curious. There aint no such man been at the house, and I know there aint been none at any of the neighbors."

"Let's have a look at his face," said I. "We can get that much at any rate. Do you go back with me, and when I get into the pung, just hold your lantern so that the light will shine into his face."

He did as I wished, and as I stepped into the pung I got a fair view of such portions of my passenger's face as were not muffled up. I saw a short, thick frame; full, hard features, and I could also see there was a heavy beard under the chin. I thought of the man whom the postmaster had described to me; but I didn't think seriously upon it until I started. Perhaps I had gone half a mile, when I noticed that the mail bag wasn't in the old place under my feet.

"Hallo!" says I, holding up my horses a little "where's my mail?"

My passenger sat on the seat behind me, and I turned toward him.

"Here is a bag of some kind slipped back under my feet," he said, giving it a kick, as though he'd shoved it forward.

Just at this moment my horses lumbered into a deep snow-drift, and I was forced to get out and tread down the snow ahead of them, and lead them through it.

This took me all of fifteen minutes; and when I got in again I pulled the mail bag forward and got my feet upon it. As I was doing this, I saw the man take something from his lap, beneath the buffalo, and put it in his breast pocket. At this I thought it was a pistol. I had caught the gleam of the barrel in the starlight, and when I had time to reflect, I knew I could not be mistaken.

About this time I began to think somewhat seriously. From what I had learned and seen, I soon made up my mind that the individual

behind me not only meant to rob the mail, but he was prepared to rob me of my life. If I resisted him he would shoot me, and perhaps he meant to perform that delectable operation at any rate. While I was pondering, the horses plunged into another deep snow-drift, and I was again forced to get out and tread the snow before them. I asked my passenger if he would help me, but he said he didn't feel very well, and wouldn't try; so I worked alone, and was all of a quarter of an hour getting my team all through the drifts. When I got into the sleigh again, I began to feel for the mail-bag with my feet. I found it where I had left it; but, when I attempted to withdraw my foot, I discovered that it had become entangled in something.—I thought it the buffalo, and I tried to kick it clear; but the more I kicked, the more closely it held. I reached down my hand, and after feeling about a few moments, I found that my foot was in the mail-bag! I felt again, and found my hand in among the packages of letters and papers! I ran my fingers over the edges of the opening and became assured that the stout leather had been cut with a knife!

Here was a discovery. I began to wish I had taken a little more forethought before I left Danbury; but as I knew that making such wishes was only a waste of time, I quickly gave it up, and began to consider what I had best do under the existing circumstances. I wasn't long in making up my mind upon a few essential points. First, the man behind me was a villain; second, he had cut open the mail-bag, and robbed it of some valuable matter. He must have known the money letters by their shape; third, he meant to leave the stage on the first opportunity; and fourthly, he was prepared to shoot me if I attempted to arrest or detain him.

I revolved these things over in my mind, and pretty soon I thought of a course to pursue. I knew if I could get my hands safely upon the rascal, I must take him wholly unawares, and this I could not do while he was behind me; for his eyes were upon me all the time,—so I must resort to stratagem. Only a little distance a head was a house; an old farmer named Longee lived there, and directly before which was a huge snow-bank stretched across the road, through which a track for wagons had been cleared with shovels.

As we approached the cot, I saw a light in the front room, as I felt confident I should, for the old man generally sat up until the stage went by. I drove on, and when nearly opposite the dwelling, stood up as I had frequently done when approaching difficult places. I saw the snow-bank ahead, and could distinguish the deep cut which had been shoveled through it. I urged my horses to a good speed, and when near the bank forced them into it.

One of the runners mounted the edge of the bank, after which the other run into the cut, thus throwing the sleigh over about as quick as though lightning had struck it. My passenger had not calculated on any such movement, and wasn't prepared for it; but I had calculated, and was prepared. He rolled into the deep snow, with a heavy buffalo robe about him, while I lighted upon my feet directly on top of him. I punched his head into the snow, and then sang out for old Longee. I did not have to call a second time, for the farmer had come to the window to see me pass, and as soon as he saw my sleigh overturned, he had lighted his lantern and hurried out.

"What's to pay?" asked the old man as he came up.

"Lead the horses into the track, and then come here," said I.

As I spoke, I partially loosened my hold upon the villain's throat, and he drew a pistol from his bosom; but I saw it in season, and jammed his head into the snow again, and got the weapon away from him. By this time Longee had led the horses out and came back, and I explained the matter to him in as few words as possible. We hauled the rascal out into the road, and upon examination, we found about twenty packages of letters which he had stolen from the mail-bag, and stowed away in his pockets.

He swore, and threatened, and prayed; but we paid no attention to his blarney. Longee got some stout cord, and when we had securely bound the villain, we tumbled him into the pung. I asked the old man if he would accompany me to Littleton, and he said "of course." So he got his overcoat and muffler, and ere long we started on.

I reached the end of my route with my mail all safe, though not as snug as it might have been, and my mail-bag a little the worse for the game that had been played upon it. However, the mail-robber was secure, and within a week he was identified by some officers from Concord as an old offender; and I'm rather inclined to the opinion that he's in the State's prison at the present moment. At any rate, he was there the last I heard of him.

That's the only time that I ever had any mail trouble; and I think, that under all circumstances I came out of it pretty well.

TOO GREAT A TEMPTATION.—An Irishman, entering the fair at Ballinagone, saw the well-defined form of a large round head bulging out of the canvas of a tent. The temptation was irresistible; up went his shillelah—down went the man! Forth rushed from the tent a host of angry fellows to avenge the onslaught. Judge of their astonishment when they found the assailant to be one of their own faction.

"Och! Nicholas," said they, "an' didn't ye know it was Brady O'Brien ye hit?"

"Troth I did not," says he; bad luck to me for that same; but sure if my father had been there, and his head looked so nice and convenient, I could not have helped myself."

CORRESPONDENCE.

JUDGE DOUGLAS.

EPHRAIM, Utah Territory, }
Nov. 27, 1860.

Will the Judge now acknowledge that Joseph Smith was a true Prophet? If he will not, does he recollect a certain conversation had with Mr. Smith, at the house of Sheriff Backenstos, in Carthage, Illinois, in the year 1843, in which Mr. Smith said to him: "You will yet aspire to the Presidency of the United States. But if you ever raise your hand, or your voice against the Latter Day Saints, you shall never be President of the United States."

Does Judge Douglas recollect that in a public speech delivered by him in the year 1857, at Springfield, Illinois, of comparing the Mormon community, then constituting the inhabitants of Utah Territory, to a "loathsome ulcer on the body politic;" and of recommending the knife to be applied to cut it out?

Among other things the Judge will doubtless recollect that I was present and heard the conversation between him and Joseph Smith, at Mr. Backenstos' residence in Carthage, before alluded to.

Now, Judge, what think you about Joseph Smith and Mormonism?

ORSON HYDE.

FROM ONE OF THE MISSIONARIES.

ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Nov. 19, 1860.

EDITOR NEWS:—

We arrived here on the morning of the 18th, after a very pleasant passage of five days from Omaha—having been delayed at that point about a week, awaiting the arrival of a boat from below. The river is said to be lower now than ever before known; and I doubt not, if the era had not arrived when the railroad was about to supersede almost all other modes of travel, that some other means besides navigating the muddy Missouri would be required to transport the immense and rapidly increasing amount of freight demanded for supplies in the great west.

There is a feeling of intense interest here, as well as at other points on the frontier, relative to the construction of the Pacific railroad. The men of business and capital here, to show their zeal in the good cause and also, if possible, to secure their locality as are of the principal towns on the route, have subscribed a considerable amount towards the construction of a road, beginning at Elwood, Kansas, opposite this city—five miles of which are already built and a small locomotive put upon it. The road is graded some 15 miles further and has been surveyed about 140 miles. Being unanimously of opinion that the central line, by way of Salt Lake, is by far the most direct and feasible route; they also think that the Platte valley, touching at Kearney, Lawrence, Denver, and thence to Utah and thro' to California, should be the main trunk of that great national road.

I have been informed to-day, by Mr. J. H. Clute, Gen'l Superintendent of the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company, that the agent of the Pacific Telegraph Company is now on his way to Utah and intermediate points, for the purpose of making arrangements for putting up the poles and extending the line—which is now in operation up as far as Fort Kearney—to the interior and to ascertain at what point the line from California would meet that from the East—the whole to be completed next season.

Business is very dull here at present—no money—property diminishing in value daily. The dissolution of the Union is the only topic now discussed in the streets, offices, shops, factories, both by male and female. Some console themselves—while at the same moment filled with fears and mistrusting their hopes—that the dreadful impending evils will be averted. Others are not only ready to assent to the dissolution, but are bold in declaring their sentiments that they have now no more common interest or fraternal sympathies for the Yankees of New England than for the subjects of the British crown—and further, that this feeling is prevalent throughout the South. So far as I have been able to learn the private feeling prevailing here, there is a strong and growing current in favor of secession, though the interest of Missouri cannot be in all respects identical with those of South Carolina or other cotton-growing States further south. It is admitted by some of the best informed gentlemen in this region, that South Carolina is better posted relative to all political matters and the true spirit of the Government than any other State—that her statesmen and politicians stand at the head of all others in the country.

It will be superfluous for me to give you any items of recent news from "our glorious Union," or from the seat of political hostility, you have doubtless ere this learned of the critical state of existing affairs. Neither the editors nor the best advised politicians know which way the cat is going to jump. Some few of them feel very mad, to use a mild expression, and are in for a fight at all hazards. One of them remarked, in alluding to the wrongs inflicted by the North upon the South, that "A man can endure to be robbed, to be whipped, to be deprived of all his rights, civil and religious; but when he comes to be murdered, then is the time for him to cry out." I should be disposed to cry out or make some effectual resistance before the

murderer's blow was struck. Should Missouri be unwilling to join in secession with the cotton States, I have heard gentlemen avow their determination to at once make their homes in those States.

Whatever may be the result of the present crisis, it is not to be disguised that our country is in a deplorable condition. It is the universal complaint that political men do not care for the welfare of the country, so long as they are successful in gaining their point.—This has been, by a few, observable for many years past; but it was fondly trusted by the many that the evil day, peradventure, would be averted. Man proposes, but God disposes.

I expect to leave for Hannibal in the cars, at 6 o'clock to-morrow morning. The amount of travel by railroad is almost incredible.—Truly, "many are running to and fro" and we have some assurances that "knowledge will be increased."

To Young Men.

"Another sermon?" No, I don't want to preach to you, as you generally understand that word; but I want to talk to you. I feel interested in you, and I wish I knew how to reach your hearts and do you good. You young men who are idling away your precious time round yonder beer saloon; who are seen reeling home intoxicated, or tearing up and down the streets like savage bravados; or you who are seen at the corners of the streets engaged in noisy games, when old and young are flocking with happy hearts and cheerful faces to the Sabbath meeting,—it is to you, and many more I could mention, I wish to talk. But alas! I am aware you are the last ones who will be willing to listen to what I, or any one else may have to say to you.

I feel sorry for you when I see you wasting your time, ruining your characters, degrading your intellects, and destroying your future usefulness—my heart yearns over you, and I long to inspire you with nobler aims and desires. We stand on the threshold of a new era in the history of the world—we are on the eve of sparkling and important events, in which you must take a part—whether that part shall be noble or ignoble; whether you shall rise to be a respected and useful member of society, or remain in useless oblivion; whether your name shall rank among those of the honorable and noble, or be only uttered, or unremembered, with execration and contempt, is for you to decide. Don't laugh at this, nor turn away with a sneer. You may think the picture exaggerated, but it is not. You know some of the young men of your age—perhaps some with whom you associate, must fill the positions of trust, honor, and responsibility, without which society cannot exist; and why may not you be one of them? It depends on yourself. The moments, the hours, the days, weeks, months or years, which you are frittering away, are deciding your future character and position in life. If you will improve them, you may fit yourself for a life of usefulness and honor—if you continue to waste them, you are as assuredly sowing the seeds of future shame and disgrace.

You may say that wealth and influence alone ever attain to positions of honor and responsibility in society. This is not true. But even if it were, that is no excuse for you to idle away your time and contract bad habits. It does not need wealth nor the influence of friends to make you a man of principle, of integrity, of good judgment—a good member of society, a useful citizen, a dutiful son, a noble brother, a kind husband and father. All this you can be without wealth—and it is just this kind of men who are sought out, and in whom is reposed the public confidence, especially in emergencies of trouble and difficulty.

But supposing you never occupied any public capacity—is there not as great, or greater an opportunity for the exhibition of noble traits of character, of good principles, of exalted virtues in the private walks of life? If you seek only the applause of your fellow men, you are not actuated by the right motives. Is there no satisfaction or happiness in the secret consciousness of doing right? Yes, for your own sake, if for nobody else's, try to reform and to become what you know you ought to be.

SIRIUS.

IMPROVING THE TELEGRAPH.—An inventor in New York has recently made a machine that will telegraph fifteen thousand words in an hour. This is an increase of 700 per cent. In other words, the new invention will send as many words over a wire in a day as is now done in a week. Of the inventor himself, the *Scientific American* says: Under the naked rafters in the upper story of a house in Pine street, in this city, is the room of a man who is a very fair specimen of an American inventor. His beard is long, his hair is uncut, his person is neglected; but his mind is as clear as a crystal. The stock in trade of this man,—including his clothes, wash-basin, and a knock-nosed tea-pot—would not sell for two dollars, even at a Chatham street auction with Mrs. Toodles for one of the bidders. This man lives within himself, on less than a dollar a week, and yet he is developing a machine that will quadruple the value of the magnetic telegraph, whose value to the commercial community can only be estimated by hundreds of millions.—[Sac. News.]

—In England every child is required by law, to be able to read and write, before it is permitted to enter the coal and iron mines. Efforts are being made by the friends of education to extend the provisions of the salutary law, into all other branches of labor.