

THE OVERLAND MAIL.

[Letter No. 3.]

Notwithstanding the dangers and hardships of a life on the road, it had its excitements and allurements for the venturesome and in the late summer and fall if the Indians were peaceful was pleasant and healthy, and many a laughable anecdote although three decades have passed, is often repeated that had its origin at the expense of Greeley, Captain Richard Burton, Lord Grosvenor and other "tender feet," and the fun was not always at the expense of the susceptible "Johnnies." "Overland Bob" Evans once refused to put Ben Holliday across Green river on his own ferry. Bob did not know Holliday and told him that he had received orders to put no one over but those connected with the company. He kept Ben there for twelve hours when some one came down from Robinson's and convinced Bob that Ben was all right. Holliday took Evans to California on a pleasure trip, paying his expenses and wages, as a tribute to his fidelity.

I remember Charlie McCarty telling Greeley that the dragroad at Pacific Spring was caused by the bears sliding down in the spring to get salt; that the country there was underlaid with rock salt, and that the bears rooted down through the soil and licked up the salt. Of course there is no salt there but the surface of the basin is underlaid with solid ice. You can remove the soil to the depth of a foot and dig out the ice in solid blocks. It is supposed by some to be a moraine remaining from the glacial period, by others that the surface of the bed rock is of the form of a shallow basin which at some time has been a lake which has become congealed and become covered with soil and the sun having but little effect at that point, it has not thawed. What a field for scientific exploitation is here afforded our local zymotologists and ice sharps.

Jim Bridger's crystal mountain story also furnished the boys stuff for many a confounding goose. Horace Greeley asked Bromley how long he had been in the country when, Jim, pointing to Pulpit rock, said: "You see that rock; when I came here it was a hole in the ground." It was said that Horace took out his tablets and make a note of it, but that when he arrived in Salt Lake and fell into the hands of the press gentlemen, he discovered that they were acquainted with Jim and so corrected his notes. At least the incident did not appear in "What I know about staging." Another source of amusement was the perseverance with which Holliday besieged Congress with sacks of mules' ears and trunks full of affidavits of Indian depredations, and an expert affidavit builder was sure to preferment it only to be dead headed over the road. One thing is certain he was not on hand when the genuine material for affidavits was being made. It is perhaps true that Holliday received a great deal of money from the government for damages in alleged Indian raids that had no foundation in fact and that those anti-fat phytologists in Washington who devote their skill to counteracting symptoms of obesity

in the treasury received the greater part of these appropriations.

In Overland days there was constant danger from the Indians and they most always had the advantage, as from behind rocks and brush and from ravines they would fire upon the team and the coach, and the driver, conductor and passengers, if any, would have to scurry out and screen themselves beside the wheels or behind sacks of mail until they found from where they were attacked, and then there was usually some lively shooting. The Indians would steal up to the station in the dusk of the evening or at daybreak and shoot down the station keeper or hostler as he came out of the door or the driver as he drove up the station. Riley Simpson was shot and killed by "Egan Jack," an Indian a few miles this side of Deep Creek as he was driving along the route. In 1863, Henry Harper was shot as he was driving into Elight Mile station by some Indians concealed behind the creek bank; they had killed the two men at the station before the stage came in. Judge Mott, then of Virginia, Nev., was a passenger on the coach. He climbed out to the front boot, and gathering the lines from the dylog driver with one hand and with the other holding him on he rushed the team to Deep creek, they having already come from Antelope some twenty miles west.

Harper and a passenger wounded at the same time both died. In July of this same year Canyon station was attacked. The westbound coach had just passed and the four soldier guards on it had just been relieved, and as it was coming daylight had gone to their beds, which were in a covered alley formed from the stable and haystack, and poor Will Riley who on the pony had often run the gauntlet at Egan Canyon was cleaning a horse in the station yard, when a shot was fired, the station keeper ran out and seeing Riley on the ground, mounted the horse and although receiving a fatal shot, lived to reach Willow Springs and tell the story.

The Indians set fire to the station stable and haystack and shot down the soldiers as they ran from the flames, scalping and mutilating them in a fiendish manner, and Riley's body they threw on the woodpile and burned so that but a small portion of his remains were recovered.

Soon after this, Wood Reynolds and — Smith, not ten miles from Jordan river, on their way from Fort Crittenden to Salt Lake City, with the coach, were killed and horribly mutilated, Reynolds being scalped, his chin skinned, his heart cut out and his right arm cut off, and it was learned that after being wounded unto death he wielded a monkey wrench, the only weapon he had, with such fearful desperation that the Indians thought there was "medicine" in his arm.

Again, in March, 1862, the Indians attacked the coach at "Split Rock" station on Sweetwater and Lem Flowers, William Brown, William Reed and another person, were wounded, but saved themselves by upsetting the coach and making a breastwork of it and its contents. These men had to be pulled over the South Pass on hand sleds, as

it was impossible for animals to travel through the soft snow. The writer should have been in one of the teams but was laid up at Pacific Springs, snow blind, and the poor man that cursed him. Johnson, a telegraph operator, was afterwards shot down by the Indians as he stood in the station door. Green River station in the spring of 1862 was raided and John Mulley, the keeper, was killed while out at the wood pile for wood, and his family and the driver staying there were kept in horrible suspense for hours but saved themselves from the shots through the doors and window by coating their bodies down by the lower logs of the building. The Indians made no attempt to get in, perhaps from not knowing how many persons were inside, and finally went away taking all the animals with them.

Soon after this they visited Wolf station and ran off the stock. On this occasion "Bat" Worley and the driver led a race for their lives. "Bat" was coming up the road on horseback, it was just in the evening and as he neared a large hollow the other side of Ham's Fork some twenty Indians mounted raised out of the hollow. Bat turned and they took after him shouting at him, but he was well mounted and soon met the stage from the east, gave the alarm the driver turned his team and with Worley urging the leaders and Reuben pounding his wheelers with an extra king bolt, they kept ahead of the Indians and got into the station but the Indians got all the animals at the station.

The driver's Christian name was Reuben and from that time he was nicknamed "Rush" Reuben. Soon after this the Indians raided Granger's station on Ham's Fork and fortunately got away with but a portion of the stock, the boys at the station pressing them so closely that they let some of it get away from them. An incident occurred at this raid although serious for the victim it was laughable. Anthony Cosgrove, the company blacksmith had a fine American stallion and at the time the horse was grazing with some other animals, and when Cosgrove saw his horse an Arrapaho brave was astride him, and he shouted out to Cosgrove. "Is this your horse, you American — — —? If you want him come and fight for him." Tony was a brave man, but unarmed, and he came back on foot, and perhaps the Indian's feared that the horse would get away from him if he got off, or shot off his back, was all that saved Tony's life.

Again, Tutweiler, with Mrs. Wines, wife of the superintendent, with her elster as passengers, was coming up Schell Creek Mountain one night, when the Indians fired on them from the cedars, killing the near wheeler. "Old Tut" put on the break, quietly got down, rolled the dead horse out of the way, put the near leader back to the wheel and with this improvised spike team made Spring Valley station in safety. Here was exhibited presence of mind and nerve that would distinguish a general on the field of battle.

Many of the circumstances and events occurring on the road have passed into the folk lore of the country,