THE ROAD AGENT.

The pull is up hill for almost Open-sallor alone here, and the horses plod along slowly. The road is just as dusty, however, instead of blowing off to the west, it is all outside now. It hangs close around the edge in a thick, dense, yellow yellow cloud, almost shutting off the view from the passengers inside, so they can't look out. But the frantic cut of sandy hill-tops present only middle part at present. The dust occupies their attention to a large extent. It fills their mouths and eyes and nostrils, and clogs up their hair and sets in their pockets. It is disagreeable—very; and the man who has enough spirit left in him to keep up the conversation is called on to try his fellow passengers. They were all very friendly and jovial when they got into the stagecoach once with a little hand, but afterwards—on account of the dust. Dust is a great destroyer of good humor.

Back there a mile or so the sun shines brightly on the canyon road, making it look like a long yellow ribbon, but just about the shadow of the mountain on the west, which seems to close the upper end of the pass, cuts the light off in an odd, abrupt way, and presently it will be as comparative darkness for the rides of the heavy coaches is only a little distance before us.

Somebody the dust doesn't rise very high, or else the driver and the passenger on the box don't seem to fit, for we can hear them talking. Old Ben, through some unseen but easily imagined influence, has seduced from his usual taciturnity and is quite communicative to the heathen, lately brought over from abroad who sat back at Alpena and is during the box with him.

As the stage reaches the level, and rolls into the shadow of the mountain and we hail green, fresh pasts with the white, we hear the remnant of the secret passing out of the canyon a quarter of a mile away and exclaiming:

"Ben Gunn very big rocks—and trees growing on top. Uh-huh. Well, right there—maybe a couple rods y'go to Deer creek, you'll find a big rock sticking out on the summit of 'em."

"Yes" said the passenger's pleasant voice interrogatively. "Would you mind telling me what it is?"

Ben cleared his throat, spit impressively and liberally, and began:

"Well, 'twas this way. That morning it's opens you was loaded down with a hard stuff, didn't you'd go through that city. Now, look ha'd'n' how it, you ought to see how he's gotten to these parts—through my mouth 'cause he' that we was really t' start by in Colorado to th' mountain. Henry McGrill, th' silver speculator, arter he, an' his Mr. Mac Lell up with a pack in th' head 'Ben a hev' hedgehog in a sponge hitch t'ters.

"He talked on no was children pow'ful 'bout who we will get t' take Brown's place of he was sick, when lyin' yonder th' whistle.

"Why, fellers," says he, "Brown gotplanted with a bottle he night, an' he lays an' he doing much with a headache. Broken I's go in th' my name-sonny I get Hanny's sweed off gun."

"We took th' hint, of a while he, but Mac, he'd made up his mind an' was bent t' hev his own way. Fellers, we didn't hev no one right handy t' go 'long, so we had t' give in an Mac, whistle one of th' available men, piles up on th' box an' we pulls out. They won't no pass anyone.

"Well, we hop our pepers along right sharp, but we'y'tlin most lively till go' long town. Then Mac says, 'Ben, I'll be there's some money from Fr' so up t' them parts—I think I can a hit t' hend, pr' now.' Arter th' Mac, I'm full of logs. I was in, too, an 'twasn't nothin' but a hawk cousin the road.

"I'ritated up the critters a bit, however, an' we'y'tlin most lively th' town somebody pumps out f'm both sides an' nails th' leaders, an' they was so many guns starin' hitch my face th' it made me ashamed of myself. Mac cut loose t' th' sound of shotguns an' then begin of th' Winchester, giving two fellers a stomach up some more—but they was too darn many of 'em, an' they of about, so, no' Ben he never get no chance t' jump th' gun drop th' hedgehog t' hev shot, nohow, but he allus was a worry sour—sure nerve's sense. I mean only, 'Mac'——

Bill's dozen dusky forms leap from the roadside—the big coaches who got ahead early in the afternoon, and has been lounging and smoking in sleepy way about the dust, is suddenly wide awake, and so, on the inside, gets a good look at the muzzles of his two big revolvers—we hear Ben shouting, "Well, Mac do hev hard luck, and then we go t' t' get down into the road, where the pleasant tuned, boyish looking young man, who gave us back at Alpena, pro ceeds to business, and politely, courteously, but firmly without, relieves us of our equite change—and some too.

* * * * * *

That is my part of the story. Of course there were quite a number of other people present, including the youthful highwayman and his equally youthful partner, but, since, as a rule, on the above narrative. I did not mean that I correct it, what I tried to say was that this is the only one of the events from which came this vocation hole that I felt just in, and I think it has been shown that my part was entirely a passive one. Perhaps we had better call that portion of the story the gentlemanly road agent's business so get about everything else there was to get. The road is Bullinger's business.

Bullinger and I were traveling together, and it was his business—rather an odd notion of his—that we should go to Denver on our journey to Denver after the road agent incident. This odd notion was in the form of a little church book which he was in his left hand, and which, in addition to a card giving directions for the disposition of his body in case he should suddenly be called home while among strangers, mentioned a fifty dollar bill. It was an ordinary fifty dollar bill, but when Tom Jones finded it before my dazzled eyes in the hand of Mr. Bullinger that night I was quite sure that it was larger and more valuable than the opinions of a New York Stock Exchange. It took us to Leadville, anyway, and that was all we could from only Denver.

But not the end of the story.

It was about one week after the road agent affair, in which we had almost everything but our good name and the clothing we wore, when you for Ben I was thunderstruck to receive Bullinger's working cards. It was the first time I had heard from him for a year, and had my own idea that my friend Bullinger was a marrying man I should have established him, but when Tommie himself, in his own peculiar chirography, drew up to be an envelope containing such startling news, all set forth in the blunt style for which he was famous, I was thunderstruck in earnestness to suit the purchaser, and when there was a full score of Tommie's friends and acquaintances present, we shook hands and congratulated each other. And grief was one of them the day Bennie "stuck it" to Gulf hole he had been reaping away at over in the other side of the gulch, and excitement reigned supreme.

In the midst of the confusion, telegrams came and went, flying—brought and sent by special courier to and from the office at Alpena, also tales every and one day came one for him who cut how Bullinger honeymoned down in Ben was from Hallegan, who was now the big in Chicago, and summoned one in haste to that city, where I was sought to build in a transaction involving the sale of some mining property in which Tommie and I was interested.

Tommie met me at the station. He looked remarkably well, even for a person whose health and spirits had always been of the very best, and I told him so, adding that in my opinion his opinion he should be a regular Apollo in the matrimonial series.

He smiled happily, and took my arm to walk outside the train inclosure as he said:

"Don't did—that I did; no very just well till you see her, and you'll be sick of it."

He called a cab, gave the driver some brief instructions, and hoped in after me. We rode several minutes in silence, when Bullinger, leaning back in the cab with a contented sigh, and said, in a resigned tone:

"Billy, my boy—it's very near dinner time at our home—and there's no time for explanation. Only—if you think you can—see—wife—if her face is far sullen—please don't mention it, or act as though you noticed it. I'll explain after dinner."

I acquiesced wonderingly, and wondered yet more after I had met Mrs. Bullinger, for I was quite positive that I had never seen her before, and there was no opportunity during the course of the excellent dinner we presently sat down to to clear her. She was slightly above the medium height, and of a perfectly shapely rather slight figure. Her hair and eyes were dark, setting off extremely her clear olive complexion, and her features were of the an artist could desire. She was hardly what one would call a handsome woman, however. "Handsome" would be the letter word—or, perhaps, "striking." There was something about the firm set of her mouth which, not repelling, and the strong, rather masculine chin—for which I think, Old Ben would never have taken Mrs. Bullinger for the daughter of the little, white haired, sweet faced lady who sat opposite me, and who was also dressed as "mother."

No, I had never seen her up to half an hour ago, as I gave up ready for her and fell to wondering what Bullinger was going to "explain."

Dinner over, the ladies rose to leave us, smiling over the broad hint Tommie had just thrown out concerning a desire to smoke. As they reached the door Mrs. Bullinger turned and bowed mockingly to her husband, who was just reaching for his hat. "Hope, Mr. Tommie, that the cigars may prove dry company." Then, with a bright smile, she vanished.

I dropped into my chair breathlessly. "Why, I had a mind to stay and watch you! Then evidently there came before me that little scene in the mountains two years since—the duel, the hunt, the sleepy cowboy inside the coach, the dapper little chap who so politely took our money and watches. No wonder you that way when he finished his work and departed. "Her brother," I thought—"black sheep, but on family occasions. How much they resemble——

"Well, me boy?"

Bullinger was looking at me quizzically through the smoke, as having injured our cigars accessible. I suppose I looked enchantment. Of course it was all red. The idea of there being any connection between Tommie, between the stately creature who had just left us and the little rascal who conquered that holiday!

Bullinger spoke:

"Billy, my boy, I won't make a short story of my longer tale in consequence. You remember the little fellow who held us up two years ago?"

"Of course I do."

"Yes, very likely. Well I fancy I'd better begin at the beginning."

Three years ago a young fellow named Wilson, who had been employed as cashier by the L. and A. Stage and Express company, got into trouble over his accounts. The manager, Robinson, charged him with a shortage amounting to several thousand dollars. There was an investigation, and on the strength of certain circumstantial evidence which need not be stated, so it is immaterial, backed by the testimony of Robinson, the manager, Tommie, the superintendent, and Frank Robinson, son of the manager—who, by the way, had always been Wilson's bosom friend—the cashier was convicted on trial and sentenced to a long term at Canyon City. Strange to say, he offered no defense and made no defense except his plea of "not guilty."

"Well, it killed him. Instead of year the worry and disgrace, along with the hard work and close confinement—he had never been very strong—had wasted him to a shadow, and when at last he knew he couldn't live very long he sent for his mother and sisters to come to him.

"His mother was too ill herself to travel, and one of the sisters—a cripple—was obliged to remain with her, but the other came west.

"She found her dying—dying in prison. It was the old, old tale known of his trouble, and, naturally, she was terribly shocked.

"So much for the true history of the affair—that young Robinson, between whom and himself had existed a sort of Damon and Pythias friendship, was the guilty one; that young Robinson, who was the chief witness against Wilson, was the true Robinson and Tommie, who was a partner in law of old Robinson, had conspired to shield the guilty man by sacrificing an innocent one, who would not defend himself. The confession made by the dying man was not altogether a voluntary one. He some, was not known nothing except that he was innocent, caught a hint of the truth from him when he was raving in delirium—the rest she made him tell her.

"After years of hard work, he saved up enough to go to Mexico and hold his own against Robinson, and was coming to Denver to prove his innocence and——Then the guilty one's conscience got hold of him. The Robinsons were rich, and he was poor.

"About this time Tom Wilson and her younger daughter were obliged to go west on account of ill health, leaving the elder daughter, who was engaged to marry Robinson, Jr., behind. Not long after the indictment of the different firms of the L. and A. began. For the first few times there was only one cent against—little chap, but a savvy one, who got fished about by the papers a great deal. Just prior to Christmas there was a sudden lull of short duty on a line of stages, and not long after Forty's disappearance and three of the men were caught, the thing didn't know any more concerning the little rascal than the public at large.

"And—and Miss Wilson is"——

Bullinger's voice trembled with a sigh as he said:

"Well, I'm waiting for you. Let us join her," he said.

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LEGAL NOTICE.

In the Probate Court of the County of Salt Lake, Territory of Utah.

In the Matter of the Estate of Andrew J. McCracken, deceased.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, THAT the undersigned, administrator of the estate of Andrew J. McCracken, deceased, has filed his petition for authority and license to sell the interest of said deceased in and to the following described real estate belonging to said estate, and praying for said authority and license to sell said interest for cash, and that the hearing of said petition has been fixed by said Court for Tuesday, the 3rd day of May, A. D. 1892, at the hour of 10 o'clock a. m. of said day, at the Court House in said County of Salt Lake City, and all persons interested in said matter may appear at said time and place and show cause why said petition should not be granted.

The interest of said deceased in and to the following described real estate situate in Salt Lake County, Territory of Utah, and which is the subject of said petition, is the undivided one-half (½) of the following described lots or parcels of land, situate in said County of Salt Lake, Territory of Utah, to wit:

Lots Nos. 1 and 2 in Block 3, Plat "A" Salt Lake City Survey.

Lots Nos. 1 and 2 in Block 10, Plat "A" Salt Lake City Survey.

Lots Nos. 1 and 2 in Block 11, Plat "A" Salt Lake City Survey.

Lots Nos. 1 and 2 in Block 12, Plat "A" Salt Lake City Survey.

Lots Nos. 1 and 2 in Block