

PONY EXPRESS DAYS.

JULY 30, 1897.—In my reminiscences of the Pony Express recently appearing in the NEWS I have given the riders of that express the credit for being quite a respectable class of people, but after seeing the parade on the Twenty-fourth I have changed my opinion and now consider them about the toughest citizens it has been my fortune or fate to be associated with. Think of it! After a lapse of thirty-six years and many of them were middle-aged at the beginning of that period. On the Twenty-fourth the "Woods," or rather the streets were full of them.

The Herodotus of pony history makes them but eight surviving, but then I have noticed on similar occasions old histories befuddled and figures by extraction instead of addition. I must have met and shook hands with a number sufficient to man a route from here to Alaska, and perhaps that end would be the most congenial for some of those grizzled old prevaricators, whose exploits are chronicled in "Leatherhead, The great Siwash of the Goshutes." As I remarked ex-pony riders on Saturday were as thick as leaves in valm-brases, all desiring to share, all deserving, if measured by their military capacities, the honors attached to the distinguished occupation of pony rider. And yet among these ex-riders taking part in the procession I saw but two representatives of the eastern road—Dobson and Covington.

Where were Thatcher, Graves, King, Worley, Wright, Little and Callahan? They are all Utah boys and were regular riders on the first division east. I discovered from some pony literature that the riders were paid \$150 per month. Now as it is a fact that they received but \$60 a month, \$90 must have been withheld from them as a guaranty, perhaps for their good behavior, and this being the case as figures don't lie, it has occurred to me that a convention of the surviving pony riders and the widows and orphans of those deceased, for devising ways and means for the recovery of this "back pay" would be just the thing. And which from my estimate of the number claiming to have been on those portions of the road infested with Indians would amount to about \$19,000,000, the sum received by R. M. and W. for a series of years of freighting. I purposely put it at this amount, so that the heirs and administrators of the gentlemen will have no difficulty in paying it. Consider the benefit such a convention would confer upon the city, that is, provided the city has a building large enough to hold them. Some prejudiced individuals may sneer at such a suggestion, but I assure these persons that this is not the pony concern that was bitten by the blue tail fly. I shall take the earliest opportunity to confer with some of those most prominent gentlemen whose escapes, figuratively, are dangling in the wickiups of the Goshute braves and endeavor to bring about a reunion of the pony express family and although the successful pursuit of the object indicated may prove a harder route than any of them have yet

struck, we can at least preambulate and resolve.

Of the overland and pony express literature, much of it is reliable and interesting, but some of the events narrated were pure romance, and the dates assigned for the occurrence of some incidents where at times when the pony express did not exist. Our correspondent, who was tomahawked with a saucer during these hostilities he so vividly describes seems not to have recovered his mental equilibrium and all recollection of events, dates and locality of their occurrence is totally obliterated from his memory. And any other gentleman whose romantic imagination has produced quite a crop of diminutive horse literature, has had his hair raised so often by those savage barbers out West that it has depressed his retentive faculty to that degree that he has no recollection of the locality of his native town and the sweet singer of the Wasatch might chant "The soldier of the legion" in urua major and it would awaken in him no memories of "The vine-clad hills of Blagen."

And such cases are not infrequent. Some of your readers will remember the misfortune of the man who was prospecting on the Colorado and discovered a forest of diamonds. The account of this wonderful find represented that it was a petrified forest, and in petrifying the trees had become pure crystallized caton. The prospector did not discover this at first and it being late in the afternoon, he turned out his mule to graze, built a fire at the foot of one of the petrified trees and proceeded to cook his supper, and after satisfying hunger, he put out the fire by pouring water on it from his canteen, brought up his mule and tied him to the petrified tree and the steam from the fire having washed the dirt off of it, the mule saw his reflection in the diamond mirror, whirled and let drive with both hind feet at it, striking the prospector on his bump of locality and objecting to being fastened to such an enormously valuable hitching post broke away, and the prospector, after lying senseless all night, awoke in the morning in a dazed condition and pulling himself together turned his attention to the object of the mule's antipathy and was astounded to behold it glittering, ebullient, dazzling and scintillating in the sun's rays like the symbol of the Inca's god, and overcome with awe at the stupendous grandeur of his discovery wept and worshipping with a frantic adoration worthy the ancient Peruvian intensified by the graceful genu-flections of the ghost dance, gave a regular pony rider yell, secured his mule which was browsing on some diamond shoots and sprouted close by, loaded up his kit and the owner of wealth surpassing that of Ormus and Ind, pointed himself for Salt Lake to amaze the world with the gigantic magnificence of his discovery and that a select, happy few of his friends might share in his fabulous wealth. And after eluding great numbers of admirers and friends secure in the selection of a few choice spirits he proceeded to return to the scene of his bewildering discovery.

But go where he would, cross and

recross his tracks, the party invariably fetched up in a cactus grove. The mule kick had disturbed his phenological conformation and the diamond find flattened out even as bad his bump of locality, and the mule, having curing a hard winter soaked his young diamonds to his uncle Kimberly continues to take the diamond cake. And thus it is with mortals afflicted in this way, some of them became possessed of an isolated idea and the idea chafing at solitary confinement rattles around in the vacant brain cells making the victim appear eccentric even persuading the sufferer that he can "write for a newspaper," hence the diversity of overland literature lately.

In making inquiries after the unfortunate discoverer of the diamond forest, I learned that some years ago he was employed by certain junketing officials to make an examination and report on the water system of Mars and that subsequently they telegraphed him through the medium of the sympathetic needle dispatcher, that their heads had shrunk to their natural size, that they were out of official business and were about to promote a Leviathan diamond trust, and would he loan them a few acres of his diamond ranch as a buoy to float the animals. As the sympathetic needle system permeates the universe he dispatched back that he had slid down "Plumb Bob" Walker's aerial electric gulf stream into Klondyke and made his pile, and was not banking after any lost diamond forest.

The gentleman that was tomahawked with a saucer has given us accounts of long rides and wonderful endurance of riders, compared to which Curcuab's ride to Khiva was a mere appetizer for a dipeptic stomach. Give us a rest. Why, when I was riding the pony and got tired I used to arrange with the boys on five or six routes to take a lay off and come to town while I rode their routes to rest myself. Pehaw! Ben Clark, Cal Haller, Ichabod and myself made a proposition to the superintendent of the road to wager \$1,000 that either of us would ride from Salt Lake City to St. Joseph, Mo., within schedule time, and it would not have been difficult, as by selecting the horses we could have gained twenty hours, and this divided into a few hours sleep on each division of the road would have been as much rest as we sometimes had in six days on our regular routes. Some persons not posted as to the petheric condition of the pony riders pure, may wonder where the \$1,000 was to come from. The answer is very simple. I had \$990 of that "back pay" bastening to me when the proposition was made.

In my correspondence heretofore I have been impersonal and avoided the pronoun I almost entirely, but for the benefit of those captiously critical persons who have expressed their doubts as to my knowledge of the overland history, I will affirm, on the compliments of Russell, Majors and Waddel that the following synopsis of my experience on the road is true O. King!

I went on the eastern road early in the spring of 1860, and was first em-