ASHLAND TIDINGS.

INDEPENDENT ON ALL SUBJECTS, AND DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF SOUTHERN OREGON.

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SUNSET.

Beyond the mountain's dusky mass
The sun his warm descent delays;
The lowering cloud its loth last rays
Suffuse with crimson veins, that pass
To melt in mellow haze.

O'er the great hills a ruddy sea
The cloud-rack lifts and underlies;
Above th' aerial headlands rise,
Glowing with hues that change and flee
To faint in orange skies.

There like a pilgrim band, depart
Of russet clouds a lessening train.
That as in distant heights they wane
Quick into delicate flame out-start,
And die in splendid pain.

Watch how the deeper fires die out;
The clouds that thicken from the west
Dark on the somber Catskills rest;
Gray grow the mountains round about,
And dim Taconic's crest.

From the broad valley comes no sound;
But from the thicket's close retreat
The birds sing drowsily and sweet;
The twilight throbs with peace profound—
Peace for the soul most meet.

Now draw the infinite Heavens near;
And swiftly blending into white
The last tints deepen into light
Intense and tremuously clear;
Day's message to the night.

The Stage-Driver's Story.

BY MRS. A. S. DUNWAY.

"Have we a very hard ride before us to-night, driver?"

"Middling, ma'am. You'd better take an outside seat, along wi' me. You've nothing to fear up here, ma'am. Aside from the danger of sea-sickness which you'll miss by being in the open air, you'll have an easier seat. The hind wheels of the old coach spring over the rocks like a whip-cracker, and with her load so light as it is, your spinal column will be telescoped before morning if you don't ride a top o' the for'ard wheels, where you'll have one jolt, and then it's all over till the next one."

I shuddered involuntarily. Not that I was a novice in staging. I had already pursued my journey in this way for five hundred miles eastward, accomplishing half the distance upon a sort of railway "buck-board," that plies in places between the Dalles of the Columbia and Baker City, of Eastern Oregon. I had also crossed the plains with teams before railroads were, occupying six months in the transit from Omaha to Oregon City, a journey full of incidents and experiences well worth remembering, many of which passed before me like a mental panorama as I looked out upon the wide expanse of sage and grease wood that lay in a spiritless level beyond the pleasant homes and irrigated gardens of Boise City.

The disciple of Jehu had mounted the box and gathered the "ribbons," six long, strong, unwieldy lines of leather, attached to the stiff, cruel Spanish bits of as many well-kept and well-broken sorrel horses.

The driver's a born gentleman, madam," said the landlord, aside.

"Doesn't he drink?" I asked, a little nervously.

"Oh, yes; but that's nothing. Most of them drink and gamble when they're off duty; but give 'em the ribbons, and you've nothing to be afraid of. Rankin reveres a respectable woman."

"All set, ma'am?" asked the driver.

"Yes; thanks."

The ladies of the Overland Hotel were congregated on the front stoop of the second story; and, as the driver, with a peculiarly graceful flourish of his long whip that ended in a snapping report like the explosion of a mammoth Chinese cracker, started the six sorrels into an eighteen-mile stampede through the ashlike plain, I looked back to answer the parting salute of the friends aforesaid, and in so doing lost my balance and came near falling from my precarious perch. Had I so fallen this story would not have been chronicled, for the horse's heels would have finished the work of demolition that the lumbering coach would have then and there inaugurated.

From my hotel window in Boise City I had several times observed the Boise river bridge, and was much surprised when we came to a ferry where we proceeded to cross in a clumsy boat. Peering through the thickening twilight, I saw, away about two hundred yards to the right of us, the ghostly frame work of the bridge I had seen from the window; and there it sat, high and dry among sand and boulders, mocking the lazy, shallow river whose bed had shifted to its present channel.

"The river took a new departure when the snow melted, and swinging round the circle has left the bridge beached, as you see it," said the driver, as chary of his words as though in the habit of retailing them at a dollar apiece.

I looked and marveled. There was something both solemn and ludicrous in the ghostly bridge, and our present efforts to cross the stream in a boat below it.

"The river looks little and harmless enough now, but you ought to have seen it when it plowed this channel," he added, closing his lips and tightening the ribbons as he again made artistic flourishes with his obedient whip.

"Please tell how it came about," said I, gazing earnestly at the ghostly bridge and anxious to beguile the time by conversation upon some theme, of the nature of which I did not much care, so it had some sort of bearing upon the road and its adventures.

"Nothing to tell, ma'am. Everybody knows water runs down hill. They know, too, unless they're idiots, that when it can't climb over obstructions, it plows through 'em. The piers o' that bridge were too broad and too close together. The water wanted its level; the bridge wouldn't give way and the soil did. It's clear enough how't came about."

After many miles of travel over the arid plain, our road changed from a comparatively level to a positively mountainous one. Horses were changed every twelve or fourteen miles, but the driver kept on; and for hours we toiled along over rocks and ridges on the margin of the zigzag heights, with only a few spare inches of rocky roadway between us and eternity.

Behind us, in the far, far distance, lay the rivers Payette, Weiser and Boise, gleaming like threads of molten moonlight among the sage and grasses, while away, away in the distant foothills, Snake river ran, looking like a monster anaconda as it wound its tortuous lengths through the ghostly solitudes.

Boise City lay asleep in the shadows, and a few lazy midnight clouds hovered above the church spires as if to protect them from intrusive eyes.

"What a beautiful night!" I exclaimed in transport, as I rose to a half standing posture.

"It was just such a night as this, only hotter, when my hay was burned on the ranch about sixty miles from Downieville," he said, and again relapsed into silence.

I wanted very much to ask about that conflagration, but the remembrance of the Boise bridge intimidated me, so I only said, "This would be a grand night to burn a hay harvest. The air's as dry as tinder and lighter than lucifer matches. I wish I could see a genuine pyrotechnic display among these wilds of nature."

"You needn't ever make a wish like that, ma'am; and I guess you wouldn't if you'd had my experience."

I halt cuspected that the driver's growing loquacity had been induced by the shy and rather frequent use of a mysterious flask, of which I could only see an outline, as he held it to his mouth under the cover of a soiled bandanna.

"I had as good a home and as true a mother in York State as ever blessed an ungrateful son, ma'am. I was young and passable looking, and, as my father had a good farm and was considered forehanded by those who knew him best, my prospects were average to say the least."

"Molly Winters was a pretty girl. Her eyes were as clear and blue as the sky over Alturas, yonder; and you wouldn't have thought there was anything on earth but constancy in 'em. She was deuced smart too. I never see the girl that could beat her at a churning or a washing; and she could make bread equal to my own mother. I loved her, and we were engaged, and I thought everything was right, and was going on in the old way, contented and doing well enough, as I thought, when who should come home from California but Hez. Rankin, my cousin, a snobby sort of stuck-up specimen, and what should Molly do but cut me clean and marry him. He was rich, and that was what did it; and he made his fortune in the gold mines; so I thought the most desirable thing left for me, since I couldn't have Molly, was a gold mine.

"My mother didn't want me to leave home. I was the baby, and she'd have died for me. Mothers are always true, wives and sweethearts never."

"I wouldn't slander my own mother in that way if I were you, Mr. Rankin. Was not your mother your father's wife? and wasn't she his sweetheart once?"

"I beg pardon, ma'am. There may be exceptions. At least there was one exception in my mother."

"And in mine too," said I.

"And in yourself, doubtless. But, as I was saying, I was determined to have gold, and plenty of it. I little thought that I'd fetch up at last at the end of those ribbons, with forty dollars a month and night drives and all the hardships of a frontier castaway thrown in."

"You were saying something about a conflagration on a hay ranch near Downieville," said I, anxious to change the subject.

"Well, yes, that was a fire! You see, Sam Withers and I had been prospecting at Red Bluff, and hadn't raised the color for a month or more, and grub got low, and Winter came on, and we weathered it through on mule straight, which isn't a very palatable dish, but all things considered is better than nothing, by a long odds.

"I wasn't lucky as a miner; I wasn't lucky as a marrying man; I wasn't lucky as a hay farmer, and I've never succeeded yet at anything but driving stage. Everything strikes their level sometimes, and I've hit mine at last."

"You must have encountered many embarrassing vicissitudes before you settled in this niche," said I.

"Well I'd say I had. Sam and I got through the Winter by the very skin of our teeth. I had four mules and sixteen horses left, for I'd been a packer till the process proved too slow, then I went a prospecting and reached a lower gait than ever, so I said to Sam, 'Suppose we go down into the Mokolumne Flat and take a hay ranch. There's money in it, and we'll herd the Indians and their horses off the wild grass till it matures and then we'll get Greasers and Kanakas to harvest it; and we'll have the mules and horses to pack it through to Downieville when its baled, and then we'll make some money.'

"Sam agreed, and I sold my two best American horses and bought grub, and hired the Greasers, and we guarded the hay, and when mowing time came I worked with the rest of 'em, day and night. I was ragged and bronzed and dirty as ever you see a fellow, but I looked forward to clean profits and a biled shirt in the Fall, and so I stood it. The hay was all cut and cured, and the men were baling it and waiting to be paid off, when we'd make some sales after the first pack train of it would be sold in Downieville, and I had been off to a rancherie for more grub. It always costs like the very dickens to feed Greasers, you know."

I did not know, but wisely concealed my ignorance.

"The day had been a mortal hot one. Some suspicious looking Vaqueroes had been lurking in the vicinity for a week or two, and I didn't feel altogether easy in my mind, and one night I waked with a stifling sensation, as if I was smothering in smoke, but I didn't mind it, though it's since clear to me that it was a warning.

"I'd been off all day with one of the mules after grub, and I'd been delayed a little, and when I got back to camp it was night, though it was light, like day, as it is now, almost, and the men were messing by a camp fire, and I knew something was wrong the minute I came in sight.

"'Guess what's up?' says Sam, and I could tell by his pale face that there was trouble.

"'The hay's burned,' says I.

"'How d'ye know?' says he.

"'Felt it in my throat,' says I, and as sure as I hold these ribbons I did feel it in my throat at that minute, like the smoke of a burning haystack, exactly."

I did not question the peculiar sensation.

"'What are you going to do now?' says Sam.

"'Let her rip!' says I. Excuse me, madam," and the man made a bow in the moonlight that would have done no discredit to Beau Nash; "excuse me, but that's the slang of the road."

"All right," said, "please proceed. I am deeply interested."

"'Let 'er rip,' says I, and Sam ripped out some awful oaths. Not that he swore as a general thing. He had to be awfully worked up before he would swear.

"Then the Greasers and the Kanakas wanted their pay, and there was nothing to pay 'em, and they're ugly devils when they're stirred up; so things looked blue. The Vaqueroes had tramped with the horses, and we had left only the one pack mule I had away after grub.

"I'll sell the mule and the men may divide the price among 'em, if they'll call it square,' says I.

"'Agreed,' says they, and there happened to come along a prospector whose mule had a sore back, and he gave me a hundred dollars for the only hoof the pillagers had left me. The Greasers and Kanakas divided the money, leaving Sam and me without a red of it.

"As fate would have it, Sam Withers struck luck right away, for the fellow that bought my mule gave him a job at once.

"'Never mind me, Sam,' says I, though I did think a little hard of him that he seemed ready to abandon me in my sorest streak. But I would have died before he should have known how miserably used up I did feel. Guess I was born under an unlucky star, for I've never had any good fortune, except as a stage-driver.

"Well, I went to Downieville. On my way a wagon overtook me, and I had a bundle of clothes, the only thing under the sun I had left, and I gave them to the teamster to carry in the wagon over to town and leave 'em at the hotel.

"Then I trudged on. It was night again; just such a night as this, madam, and I had only fifty cents—the price of the plainest meal was a dollar—and I didn't know where to go, or what to do. I've wandered a long way from religion, ma'am, but I remembered the Scripture and realized what it meant as applied to my case at least when it said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'"

"That was Jesus," said I timidly.

"It was me, madam, that night, and for several nights after, as sure as you're born."

I did not controvert further, and he continued his story.

"I went up to two or three different men when morning came and asked for work. Appearances were ag'in me, ma'am. I hadn't changed, or shaved, or washed, or brushed for two months, and the scallawag who took my bundle on to Downieville hornswaggled it."

"What?"

"Stole it, ma'am. Beg pardon. It's the slang of the road. So I had nothing to eat, no place to sleep, and nothing to wear. I bought me fifty cents' worth of crackers, and spent all my capital. I ate sparingly, strolled idly through the town by day, slept in an old stable at night, and woke every morning half frozen. My rations were reduced to three crackers a day. I couldn't look anybody in the face. I felt wolfish, and I believe I was wild."

Here his eyes glared upon me, and I could see by the paling of the harvest moon that daylight was dawning, else I should have been badly frightened.

"Do you know what I resolved to do next?" said he.

"Commit suicide?" I asked.

"No; it's strange, but I really didn't think of that. I meant to wait till dark, and then go and rob somebody's house! And I'd have done it, ma'am, but for a woman. She saved me. You see, Mrs. Chatham was keeping hotel at Downieville, and I'd often patronized her when I had money, but now for three days I'd been skulking past her house like a famished wolf because I was dead broke. I was walking aimlessly along the street just after I'd resolved to commit burglary, when she ran over from the porch and said, 'Mr. Rankin, is that you? Come over here.'"

"'What do you want?' says I.

"'I want you to come and stop at the hotel like a gentleman.'

"'But I've no money.'

"'That's no difference.'

"'Nor no good clothes.'

"'Brother Jack has clothes, plenty of them. Come right along.'

"I forgot that I was bent on burglarizing, and I was soon hid away in the bath room, scrubbing off the accumulated dirt and arranging myself in Jack's clothes.

"When I came to the dining room the widow asked me to sit at her table, and introduced me to Jack. He proved to be a fine fellow. He gave me employment, and I was soon in comfortable circumstances, the only trouble being that I would take too much liquor now and then, which, when Mrs. Chatham discovered my failing, caused her to set me afloat again, and so I'm destined to be a drunken stage-driver for the rest o' my days."

"But can you not break off the habit?"

"What good would that do? I never get drunk when on duty, and when I'm off I drink to kill memory."

"But, would it not be well to go home to your dear mother in New York State, and make her declining days happy? You don't imagine how devotedly she loves you."

"It's too late, ma'am. Besides, my cousin married Mollie Winters, and the sight of the old place would waken old memories, and drive me deeper than ever into drink. There's no more stage-driving in York, and I wouldn't do anything else; so I'll fight it out on this line to the end of the swing."

"What of the hereafter?" I could not help saying.

"I'll never find a hotter hell than this!" he answered, striking his breast, "and I can stand this, so I'll risk the other."

It was early morning now, and we drove up to a lonely station in the midst of an arid desert, where a pale woman with a fretful baby prepared us a hasty breakfast.

Rankin ate a few mouthfuls and excused himself. When next I mounted the box he had disappeared and a new driver took his place.

"Is this the terminus of Rankin's line?" said I.

"No, not when he's sober; but he takes periodical sprees, and I'll do double duty till he gets over this one rather than have him discharged. Don't report him please. There never was a better-hearted fellow; and if the old man knows of this spree, he'll be out of a job. Many a poor fellow that goes to the bad is more sinned against than sinning."

The "old man" thus alluded to was the gentlemanly superintendent of the line, and knowing him as I do, I could readily comprehend why it was that it was well understood among all the employes that the dissipation of any driver when on duty would be met with prompt dismissal should the facts be known at "headquarters."

Stage-drivers are always generous with each other. Their life is a hard and responsible one, and I often wonder how many letter-writers, and magazine and newspaper readers, ever stop to think of the hardships of these men in transmitting the mails from post to post across the continent. If there are degrees of exaltation in the great hereafter, where merit meets its just reward, faithful stage-drivers will occupy some very high seats, despite their temptations and falls. —Phrenological Journal.

Women with flat feet are poor housekeepers and bad calculators, and you won't forget it if you marry one. Choose a wife with a high instep if you want a hard worker and a shrewd planner.

A Syracuse undertaker went down the track to bury the victim of a supposed railroad accident. As he lifted the woman's body tenderly into the wagon she rubbed her eyes and exclaimed, "Hello, I guess I muzzer been asleep!" He dropped her.

"Tis said that absence conquers love," quoted a husband, in writing home to his wife, from whom he had been some time away. "I hope, dear, it won't be so in your case?" "Oh, no, she replied in her next letter, "the longer you stay away the better I shall like you."

Worthy magistrate: "What! a man can be cruel enough to maltreat his lawful wedded wife, and even hurl a plate at her head!" Prisoner: "But your honor, do you know my wife?" Worthy magistrate: "I have not that honor," Prisoner: "Then just go slow."

Improvement in a Fashionable Woman.

Some years ago a beautiful young married woman attracted a great deal of attention at fashionable watering places, notably Long Branch. She was a mere girl when she was married (only seventeen); had been brought up rather strictly, but was launched at once in the very gayest of society by her husband—a successful politician and a man of means. For a few years her name was in everybody's mouth, her dress was quoted, and the impression generally given that she was one of the most frivolous of the frivolous leaders, with a little tendency to be "fast." Gradually, however, her name dropped out of the watering place gossip, and became associated with New York charities. Still, few gave her credit of self denial, or real desire to do good. What would have been praiseworthy in others was in her ostentation or eccentricity. What became of her during the Summer months no one knew, except that she had a place in the country, and spent her Summer months with her children. The other day fate willed that I should make a brief but delightful visit in her vicinity, and I was interested to see what a few years had done for the gay belle of Long Branch and Saratoga seasons. I found a still young and handsome woman in a dress of conventional plainess, black (walking length), with deep linen collar and black bow. Her face had lost none of its beauty, but had gained in strength and sweetness, and she had developed administrative capacity of the highest order. The place which is now so beautiful was one taken by her husband for debt, and in a most discouraging condition. He himself dislikes the country exceedingly, prefers to live at hotels in Summer, and persistently refuses to consider the idea of making a country home. But the young wife, who was supposed to be so mere a butterfly, had thought the thing all out for herself. She was nauseated with the life she led, sick of the very name of watering place, and so heartily tired of fine clothes that she wished only to be where she would neither see them nor be obliged to wear them. She begged to be allowed to visit the depised country acquisition which had found so little of a welcome to her husband's hands, and was struck with its possibilities. It occupied a lovely site on the edge of a thriving and fashionable village. The seven acres of land which belonged to it contained some beautiful old trees, and sloped at the back of the house down to the edge of what was called the pond, but was in reality a lovely little creek, which looked like a lake, and was shut in by hills thick with foliage on the opposite side. She obtained permission to remain and begin her improvements, and, finally, her husband discovered that she really had found a vocation in rescuing his undesired property from its waste and dreariness, made it over to her entirely, to be her own and do with it as she pleased. And what a transformation has been effected! The house has been enlarged without destroying its cosiness. Its lawns are green and soft as those of any vernal region in England. There are masses of heliotrope and clumps of begonias, and beds of geraniums, but away from the shaded piazzas, rich hanging baskets, and red tubs of flowers, the general effect is of emerald green lawn, with terraced vistas through the noble elms down to the boat-house, which stands upon the water's edge

It is a large and hospitable establishment. The coach-house holds horses and carriages, and acres of kitchen garden stretched away to the left; the broad arms of the apple trees almost enfolding the currant bushes, and the corn waving its silken tassels in the wind. It is a home in every sense of the word, planned throughout, made and filled with divine sweetness by a woman who was once only a watering place belle. How infinitely greater she seemed, what heights and depths of grace and sweetness and dignity she seemed to have gained, as she stood with her radiant face, her marvelous form clad in its simple black dress, tossing her youngest boy in the air, three other children about her, and Long Branch and Saratoga years as well as miles away.—Jennie June's New York Letter in the Baltimore American.

How rapidly, says the Burlington Hawkeye, a man looses all interest in politics and national finances when he shuts a door on his own thumb.

One man asked another why his beard was so brown and his hair so white. "Because," he replied, "one is twenty years younger than the other."

A doctor to his son: "Johnny, wouldn't you like to be a doctor?" "No, father," "Why not, my son?" Why, father, I could not even kill a fly."

Very kind gent—"Do you know, my dear, that we have to-day the shortest day of the year?" Lady—"Very true! But your presence makes me forget it."

It is a fact generally observed, says the Troy Times, that the man who denounces the institution of marriage is generally the person who thought he was getting a rich widow, and didn't.

A mother on Cottage Hill saw her little daughter draw her sleeve across her mouth, and said: "Tilly, what is your handkerchief for?" "To flirt with, mamma," was the innocent reply.