

# COAST MAIL.

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## The Cowboys of the West and Their Code.

[Major Ben. C. Truman in the California Spirit of the Times.]

There still remains a dueling custom among a class of Americans known as the cowboys of the west, which nothing but the overwhelming approach of civilization and power of empire can effectually obliterate. The cowboy is ostensibly an owner or herder of stock upon unpurchased or unpaid-for ranges of nutritious grasses in the western part of the United States; but, in reality, he is a stealer of horses and cattle, a gazzer of adulterated spirits, and a shooter of men; and it may be said of him, with perfect truthfulness, that he fears neither God, man, or devil. He roams over a vast area of sparsely settled or unsettled country lying between the 29th and 47th parallels of latitude and between meridians of longitude 22 and 28. He is most numerous in Texas, Kansas and Colorado that he is never seen. He is an Apollo Belvidere in physical shape and beauty; he dresses in true frontier style—in a blue flannel shirt and flaming red necktie, dark pants stuck into high-legged kip boots and sombrero. He carries a wicked knife in a boot-leg, and one or more revolvers at his waist. His arms and ammunition are always kept in perfect order, and he is the most accomplished shot in the world. He is a matchless rider, and may often be seen by the traveler through Arizona and New Mexico tearing through the chaparral like lightning along side of a railway train, whooping like a Comanche, and sending harmless bullets through the headlight of the locomotive. He is at once generous, reckless, lawless, dissipated, desperate and dangerous, and dashes furiously through the hell upon earth of his own creating like a picture-quo devil to his grave. His "code" is to "always go well heeled and never let an enemy get the drop on him."

There are different grades and samples of the genus cowboy—there is the "Howler of the Prairies," the "Terror from the Upper Trail," and the "Blizzard of the States." Their manners and customs, however, are about the same, except that many of them have had superior advantages of education and home influences, while others were reared in the cradle of infancy at the start. Few of them live to be 30 years of age, and 99 out of every 100 who are sent to their last account fill dishonored graves through the medium of a deadly missile or the forbidding noose of the hangman. The writer has seen the redoubtable "Billy the Kid" (who, when only 19, had killed his eleventh man), and has heard him tell the story of his murderous exploits with marvelous nonchalance. He has heard "Curly Bill" shoot off the winkers of a man without harming the sight, and pick off the stoppers from liquor decanters at 20 paces without fracturing their necks. He has heard this renowned devil boast of his own private cemetery, which, he said, lacked only one of a score of graves; and has then observed him draw his six-shooter quietly and take off a button from a companion's coat. Both of these desperate fellows have been laid away in unknown sarcophagi, like hundreds of others of the same kind, and the graveyards they created keep gradually filling up.

Large numbers of these cowboys meet death by fighting duels, without the aid of seconds or other assistants; and either one or both of the combatants are killed on the spot. There is this spark of honor exhibited, generally:—an armed man will not shoot down an unarmed one; but will, in case of a quarrel with an unarmed person, direct him to go and get a weapon and return. Upon the reappearance of the challenged party, the spectators afford them ample room, and the shooting is commenced without further words and kept up until at least one of the combatants is killed or mortally wounded.

One of the most desperate duels ever engaged in by any of these fellows was that fought by a Mexican cowboy named Jesus Garcia and a young Philadelphian named Gus Davis at a camp on the River Pecos (New Mexico), August 7, 1883, and which has been described by a correspondent of the New York Sun, as follows:

"Gus Davis of Philadelphia came here several months ago, and was engaged as a cattle herder by John Shure, a wealthy stock owner. Davis soon showed himself to be a useful man, and gained the esteem of his

employer and the envy of the other herders. In less than three months he had resisted so many temptations to quarrel with his associates that he was nicknamed 'The Northern Coward.' One morning, about three weeks ago, while Davis was on duty looking after his cattle, Jesus Garcia, a Mexican, saluted him, as usual, with 'Good morning, Northern Coward.' Davis' endurance has its limit, and Davis thought he had been insulted long enough. The Mexican was at first surprised at the stand taken by the Philadelphian, but word brought on word, until each determined that the other must die. The quarrel soon brought all the neighboring cowboys to the spot. The mode of combat was speedily arranged. A chain 30 inches long was securely locked around their necks. A Mexican dagger (a two-edged knife six inches long) was given to each of the duellists. The obliging cowboys then lowered the men into a dog canyon, a descent of 75 feet. There they were to remain until one killed the other. A key to the lock was given to each, and no one was allowed to interfere further. The rest of the cowboys then went to work, as if nothing unusual had occurred. For some days nothing was known as to the result of the encounter. Yesterday, however, Davis, weak and emaciated, returned to camp, dragging after him the lifeless body of Jesus Garcia. The story Davis tells is as follows: 'The fight began as soon as we reached the bottom of the canyon. Being locked together, each was always within reach of the other's knife. After such deliberation as the few moments during our descent permitted, I decided that unless the first blow was fatal, the chances were decidedly in favor of the party assailed. I accordingly allowed the Mexican to strike the first blow. He plunged his knife into my side. As soon as I found his arm thus stretched forward, I cut the muscles of his right arm near the shoulder. Immediately his knife dropped. While he was stooping to pick up his knife, I sent my blade into his back. Before I could strike again he had picked up his knife and cut the cords of my arms, so as to render them both useless. Here we both stood for a few seconds, when I discovered that his hands had been reached. His body soon fell in the death struggle to the ground. The chain was so short that he brought me down with him. In a few minutes he was dead. I was so weak from loss of blood that I lay down by his side. We lay there for 5 days and nights until hunger drove me to make a last effort. I climbed the steep incline of the walls of the canyon and reached the camp, carrying Garcia on my back.'

**Why Prairies are Treeless.**  
[Popular Science Monthly.]  
Thomas Meehan believes that we have nearly reached the solution of the cause of the absence of trees from the prairies. It is not climatic, for timber belts flourish in all the prairie regions. It is not in conditions of soil, for the prairie soil is the most favorable to the germination of seeds, of trees as well as other plants, and artificial plantations are remarkably successful wherever they are made. The real cause is probably to be found in the annual fires which have swept over the prairies from time immemorial, killing the young trees before they can grow large enough to resist the heat. The seeds of the annual plants of the prairie vegetation, maturing every year, are shed and find protection before the fires come; the young trees, on the other hand, bear no seed and can leave no resource for a succession after they are burned. This theory is supported by the fact that an abundant growth of trees has set in wherever the fires have been stopped. The fires were made by the aborigines for centuries before the white men came, possibly for the express purpose, Meehan suggests, of preventing the growth of trees and preserving the buffalo pastures. The question remains how the prairies first came to be naked. They probably formed the bottoms of the lakes and marshes that were left after the retreat of the glaciers, and continued wet after the highlands were covered with trees. Man followed the glaciers so closely that he anticipated the trees on these spots, and having learned already in southern latitudes the value of burning began then before the trees gained a foothold.

The lower house of congress has passed a bill introduced by George authorizing the secretary of the treasury to pay Mrs. Louisa Boddy \$5,000. Damages for the murder of her husband, William Boddy, and two sons, November 29, 1872, by Captain Jack and his band, who were aroused by the expedition under Canby to dislodge them from the lava beds. The Boddy family lived near Lost River, Oregon, and lost not only their lives but all of their property during the Modoc war.

## Possible Annual Yield of a Forest.

The basis on which all sound forest management depends, says Col. G. F. Pearson, is the revenue which any forest can be made to pay—that is to say, the income which it will produce in proportion to the volume of the standing trees, or, in other words, its capitalized value. To this end a forest should be considered as so much capital, represented by so many feet of wood, while the amount of wood produced each year by its growth represents the interest thereon, and, in fact, is the revenue of the forest. It is evident that it is possible to cut and remove every year a quantity of timber equal to this annual increase of wood without diminishing the volume of the standard crop. The possible annual yield of a forest may be estimated on the basis of a calculation that a tree 10 feet in girth, which makes a ring of wood of only one-eighth of an inch in thickness, adds to its bulk at the rate of rather more than one cubic foot of timber annually for every 100 feet of the length of its stem; or, in other words, such a tree, if its stem be 30 feet in height, will in 30 years have increased in bulk by at least 100 feet of solid timber. At the same time, during these 30 years, the young trees which are springing up will have become perfectly hardy and capable of supporting the whole force of the summer heat and winter frost.

## The Boy in Politics.

[Boston Post.]  
"My dear little man," said a prominent politician as he came upon a boy playing in the center of Chestnut street the other day—"my dear little man, what are you doing?"  
"Makin' a p'litical rally," the youth replied. The politician went his way, but chanced to be returning by the same route an hour later, he found the lad sitting on the edge of the sidewalk contemplating his work.

## How He Did It.

[Wall Street News.]  
"During the craze for Union Pacific stock," said an old broker, "I furnished shares to 13 different clergymen in New England, all of whom sold their government bonds or took their savings out of the banks to buy with."  
"And how did they make out?"  
"Twelve of them lost three-fourths of their investment."  
"And what about the thirteenth?"  
"Oh, it was through him that I sold to the other twelve, and he made about \$5000."

## The Ways of Iowa Girls.

[Sioux Valley News.]  
When a Marcus girl wants her fellow to go home she takes down her back her hair. Let Mars girls take off their shoes. Sanborn girls say: "It's time for my dearest Charles to unclasp his cycling arms and hie away to his paternal domicile." Correctionists girls are more practical and less demonstrative; they simply say, "Sunny, time's up; git."

## Same Old Evil.

[Washington Republican.]  
This will be a memorable congress. During the present week one senator whistled aloud while the senate was in session, and the next day another fell out of his chair. Just such incidents as these occurred during the days of Daniel Webster and Benton, and yet there are people who lament the departed glory of the senate.

A bogus \$5 gold piece, said to have been for some time passing current on this coast outside of banks, has recently appeared in Chicago and other western cities, to the surprise of the government detectives. This coin, it is said, is manipulated by the "heaven Chinese," and so skillfully is the work done that it requires an expert to detect its spurious character. They put the coin on a small lathe, and with a hard instrument, like a graver's tool, they hollow the middle as deftly as it is possible to do. They fill the cavity with a mixture of platinum and lead, ream the coin, gild its edge, and the work is done. The coin is equal in weight to the genuine, and by some deft process the original ring is preserved. They take from a \$5 piece, \$2.50, and from a \$10 piece about \$7.50. Their work is almost perfect, but they are closely watched, and their natural timidity keeps the number of "artists" small indeed.

At Los Angeles, Cal., on the morning of the 25th ult. the body of J. E. Cordier, a plasterer who went there from Denver six months ago, was found hanging from a scaffolding in the rear of a new building on Spring street. It was a plain case of suicide, as he had taken the precaution to pin a piece of brown paper to the lapel of his coat, giving his address, and all arrangements he had made indicated a strong determination to kill himself. He leaves a wife and child in Denver. Among the witnesses at the inquest was a young Italian named Antonio Romasco, about 28 years of age, who discovered Cordier as the body was hanging to the scaffolding. He was a sufferer from heart disease, and the shock of finding the suicide so affected him that three hours after finding Cordier's body Romasco fell down dead. Romasco was an entire stranger in the place.

Apriarists have suffered so much by the late floods in southern California that there is no prospect of cheap honey from that source this year.

## A CRUEL FATHER'S DEED.

He Keeps His Daughter Imprisoned for Twenty Years.

LA SALLE (Ill.), February 30.—About 10 miles north of this city, close by the Mendota road, stands the old Reek homestead. In this house was enacted one of the most unnatural crimes ever brought to light—that in relation to the almost life-long sufferings of poor Maggie Reek, who was confined as a prisoner in her father's house for 20 years. The denouement occurred four years ago, at the death of her father, at which time the affair was discovered. Maggie Reek was a beautiful young girl of 16 when her tyrannical father locked her up in her room one night and kept her there from day to day, to subject her girlish will to his brutal commands. He refused to unbend his harsh edicts, and ere long the mind of the poor girl began to totter on its throne, and gradually reason forsook her and at the end of a year she was a maniac, quiet, passive and helpless. In this condition she was permitted to remain for 20 long years, shut up in a garret. A hole was cut in the door, through which was passed in the food given her. The room in which she was imprisoned was destitute of chairs, table, bed or even straw to lie upon. She was entirely nude, and during the long nights of winter and lengthy days of summer the poor creature was treated more inhumanly than would be a dog.

When rescued four years ago Miss Reek looked more like a wild beast than a woman. From crawling on her hands and knees around the room her body had become deformed and she presented a frightful appearance. She was locked up for so great a length of time that the memory of her faded from the recollections of her playmates and friends, and after awhile all inquiries as to her mournful fate ceased and she was completely buried as though the grave had engulfed her. It was not known what had become of her since her liberation four years ago. To-day she was discovered as a woman of 40, living with relatives at Mendota, Ill. Her reason is slowly improving and it is thought that she will be fully restored to health.

## THE SEA SERPENT.

His First Appearance This Season Off Staten Island.

NEW YORK, March 11.—The Star says: It was reported at Staten Island yesterday that Constable Albert L. Poillon had been attacked by a sea serpent. John Fisher, an oyster planter, corroborates the story. His son and Fisher were standing on the beach of Lower bay on Thursday afternoon when they saw what they took to be a large log floating with the tide from Quarantine island. Fisher took a boat and started to see what the thing was. Poillon and the boy noticed Fisher hastily pulling back and using quick strokes. When he reached the shore Fisher asked the other two to accompany him and look at the object, which he said was a monster fin-back shark. The sun had gone down and it was growing dark when the three men overtook the creature. It was moving at a good pace through the water. The parties shipped their oars in a noisy manner and were frightened to see the object of their pursuit rise from the water. It had a long black and thick neck, and a head as large as a powder keg. Before the fishermen had a chance to look at the dimensions of its body the monster raised one of its claws, about 20 feet long, and grasping an oar, placed it in its massive jaws and crunched it to pieces. The frightened fishermen pulled as fast as they knew how, and when they reached the shore, did not stop ransing until they reached Ettingville. Fisher and Poillon when chided by the neighbors with inventing the above story, went before a local justice of the peace and made an affidavit to the facts substantially as stated above. They think the serpent was 25 feet long.

## Poultry.

[J. H. Fishell in the Commercial Gazette.]  
G. J. says: "I am curious to know if Fishell's hens have kept up a supply of eggs during the past month, or only upon the milder days. Also, does he use any artificial heat in his hen-house? My hens never ceased laying since they commenced in the fall. Cold weather makes no difference. I use no artificial heat, except that which the sun generates through the glass windows."

I will repeat some of my former advice, and tell how I persuade my hens to lay in winter as well as some others do in early spring. I set my hens the last of February or first of March; feed my young chickens often, and all they will eat up clean; give clean water to drink, with a few drops of "Doughlass' Mixture" in the water, and provide them a large range for exercise, keeping their roosting places clear of filth and vermin; and when fall comes, I give them a warm place to roost in, and a shed to run under, and a house to sun and dust themselves in. I feed my laying hens food of various kinds—always warm feed—never cold, no matter what it is, and supply them with warm water, and road dust to wallow in, with gravel and shell, and now I never fail in getting all the eggs I can reasonably expect from each hen. I always scatter road dust on and under the roosting poles—never wood ashes, as that will ruin the valuable qualities of the manure.

The following is the description of my hen-house: I have a yard 22 feet square, poled in on the south side of hen-house. My hen-house is 11 by 16 feet, running east and west; two window sashes 10 by 18 inches, 6 lights on the south side, a shingle roof, weather-boarded and batten on the outside. Height 9 feet at front and 6 feet back, with a partition running through lengthwise, making a space 7 by 16 feet for staying in during cold weather, where their water and dusting-box are. The other, 4 by 16, is the place for nests and gathering the eggs. The roosting-place, at the west end, is 8 feet square, the same height as the house, and lined throughout with tarred felt, with a door and window for light and air, and an entrance to the roosts—a small hole cut through the partition to the hen-house, with a sliding door. The roosts are two feet high, all on the same level. The roosting-poles are two inches square, with the corners rounded. I aim to keep 20 fowls in each house or yard.

I have referred to a preparation called "Doughlass' Mixture." This preparation takes its name from a celebrated English fancier, who invented it, and it is often referred to in writing about poultry diet. For the benefit of those who do not know what it is, I here give the directions for making it: Put sulphate of iron (common copperas), eight ounces, and sulphuric acid, one-half fluid ounce, into a large bottle or jug, then

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