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TALES OF THE SIERRAS

J.W. Hayes

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Tales  
of  
The Sierras.



By  
J.W. HAYES.



J. M. Hayes

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Charles B. Furill.



H.P.C.

Yours Very Truly  
J.W. Hayes

# TALES OF THE SIERRAS

By J. W. HAYES

*With Illustrations by John L. Cassidy*



**Panama-Pacific Edition**

PUBLISHERS

W. H. C. CO., N. Y.

1912

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**Dedication**

TO MY BELOVED LITTLE SON

**BENJAMIN LADD**

WHOSE ADVENT INTO THIS WORLD HAS

BROUGHT ADDED HAPPINESS

AND COMFORT TO ME

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED





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## PREFACE

The opportunity has at length offered itself for me to comply with an oft-repeated request; namely, to collect my stories published in various periodicals, and add to them many of later date which have never before appeared in print.

In presenting "TALES OF THE SIERRAS" to the public, I do so in the belief that it will find general favor with its readers. I do not hope to "fill a long-felt want," but I do anticipate filling a niche all my own. I have not followed any well-trodden path in my style of literature, but have rather sought to be entirely original.

Some of my readers may think that my characters are too highly drawn, but I wish to assure them that such is not the case. The stories are founded on facts, with just enough of an elasticity of the truth to render them interesting and entertaining. There really existed an "Ezra Throckmorton," as I have described him, and the character of Melissa, the Countess, is a faithful portrayal of his sister. Visitors to Mount Dana, in the high Sierras, will have pointed out to them the monument of Jim Murphy, the "Hermit of Telegraph Hill," by the simple shepherd. This mausoleum, the grandest in the world, with its crude and weather-beaten inscription, defies the ravages of time, and will stand for ages. Many may read the story of little Edith Wythe and drop a tear for her untimely demise, marveling at the same time over the dauntless courage of her brother Dexter.

No irreverence is intended to the memory of President William Orton in my sketch of "Welcoming the

President." I merely wish to illustrate the freedom which life in the Far West engenders in the hearts of the people here.

I will be much pleased if the perusal of this book assists its readers in gleaning the lesson of looking at the happy side of life at all times, and thus making a truism of the lines:

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you,  
Weep and you weep alone;  
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,  
It has trouble enough of its own."

THE AUTHOR.





# THE THROCKMORTONS.



*The Throckmorton*





## THE THROCKMORTONS

**I**T was a proud day in the life of young Jack Hamlin when the superintendent at Louisville promoted him from messenger to a position as night operator at Mountain Top. There was little expected of a night operator at this point, but as the northbound express passed the southbound flyer at this place it was deemed necessary to maintain an office. It was an uninviting scene that met Jack's gaze on his arrival at Mountain Top. The little shack of a depot was in the midst of a small clearing, and was dirt-begrimed and inhospitable-looking. There were no other houses visible, but to the east of the station was a little clearing from which a tiny volume of smoke curled up to the tops of the pine trees, where the wind took it up, speedily melting it from view.

Jack's attention was attracted to a motley crowd of "natives," who looked askance at him when he jumped off the train; but it was not till the morrow that he became acquainted with the simple peasantry of the place.

The southbound Gulf express is due at Mountain Top at 6 P. M. Half an hour before this time, our observer, as he stood at the station looking eastward, saw a singular sight. A number of curiously clad "natives" were coming over to the station. They were walking single file, and their shambling gait was as grotesque-looking as were the garments that covered them. They were evidently members of the same family, judging by the step-ladder-like regularity of the sizes of the children. The father of the family had his trousers hitched up with one piece of a gallus, the other half of which seemed to have been handed down to his oldest hopeful. A chip hat, minus crown, partly

hid the fiery-red hair of the elder Throckmorton. A hickory shirt and blue jeans, with the aforesaid solitary suspender, completed the raiment of the aristocrat of Mountain Top. His wife, who followed half a dozen feet in the wake of her liege lord, was encased (that is the word) in a gown made of burlap, negligently tied at the waist with a piece of bale rope. Like her husband, she scouted any affectation of foot-gear. Behind her came Miss Melissa, red-haired and freckled-faced; shoeless, and with dress of the same piece of material that her mother wore. Then came young Ezra. He was the counterpart of the elder Throckmorton, minus the hat and whiskers. Next came the youngest Throckmorton, a wee youngster of 4 years, bearing the unmistakable form and features of the parent branch. Silently each walked on, and, arriving at the station, each member of the family took up his position on the company's fence, all in a row, like so many blackbirds; but with never a word. A few minutes later, a little further to the south, approaching the station over a winding trail, could be seen another family, almost identical in number and appearance with that of the Throckmortons. These were the Browns. They were not considered as good as the Throckmortons, for Miss Melissa had once been to Cincinnati to visit an uncle, and had returned with some "store clothes" and a real milliner-made hat, none of which she had ever since donned. This may seem to be a small thing for a family like the Throckmortons to put on airs about, but the Browns, after seeing and feeling the fine clothes of Miss Melissa, readily granted the palm of superiority to their neighbors.

The Browns sidled up to the vacant portion of the fence, each member of the family taking what appeared to be an accustomed seat. The heads of each family

now made a dive into their pockets, bringing forth a black-looking plug of tobacco. Biting off a piece, it was passed to the mother, from her to the daughter, then on down to the wee little one, all of whom took a chew, returning the remainder of the piece to the respective heads, who now for the first time seemed to recognize the presence of the other.

"I reckon the train do be late tonight," remarked Throckmorton.

"I reckon," sententiously replied Brown.

The members of both families "reckoned" clear down to the small boy.

There was a hole in the platform, half a foot in diameter, and all of the Browns and Throckmortons started a fusillade of tobacco juice at the unoffending spot, and it was remarkable to see with what precision each and all struck the hole. Miss Melissa seemed to be the most expert, and smiled a little loftily at Amanda Brown, who looked somewhat abashed.

"I reckon it won't rain tomorrow," ventured Brown.

"I reckon," patronizingly said Throckmorton; and there was the usual "reckonin'" all down the line again.

This desultory conversation was kept up until the train arrived and departed. There were no passengers for Mountain Top; there seldom were. The United States mail pouch was thrown off to the agent, and after the departure of the train the Browns and the Throckmortons filed up to the window to ask for mail. Each member of the two families would ask in turn for a letter, and, after receiving the customary "Nothing for you," from the agent and postmaster, would sadly shake his head and fall into Indian file. The retreat to the home was in the same order as they had arrived.

"These people have been doing precisely the same as this every day since I have been here, and that is seven years," said the agent to Jack. "They never have missed a day, and their salutation is the same now as it was when I first came here. They never get a letter, but it would be a matter of a 'feud' to the death if I deviated the least bit out of my customary way of replying to their questions."

Jack Hamlin was indeed glad when he was relieved from duty as night operator at Mountain Top. Laziness and shiftlessness seemed to be the pervading and besetting sin of the Throckmortons and Browns; and it did not look as if either family would ever rise above its present surroundings.

\* \* \* \* \*

Years had passed since Jack Hamlin was night operator at Mountain Top. The episode had almost entirely been effaced from his memory. He had followed the telegraph business at various times, but had never confined himself wholly to it. Still, the dots and dashes had a great attraction for him, and he never lost an opportunity of mingling with the craft when he could do so. It was therefore a day to be long remembered when he learned that a number of his boyhood friends, who had been attending an annual convention of the "old-timers" at Omaha, were en route to the Pacific Coast. He speedily joined them at the Hotel del Monte, Monterey, Cal., the paradise of America, where they were the guests of General John I. Sabin, of San Francisco. Joyous greetings and a general good time ensued.

The friends were sitting on the veranda of the beautiful hotel one evening, listening to the strains of

music from a string band in the banquet hall, when a peculiar voice attracted Jack's attention.

"Aw, it's so deucedly awkward to travel without one's valet, doncher know," Jack heard, and, looking up, saw a tall form and two foppishly dressed men of middle age.

One of the strangers had very red hair, and a countenance that Jack thought he had seen before, but he could not place it. He felt sure he had met this man somewhere in the past, but the environments were vastly different. Going over to the hotel register, he saw scrawled the name "Ezra Throckmorton, London, England." It all came back to him in an instant, and he recognized at once in the modern dude, who thought it "awkward to be without his valet," the long-ago Ezra Throckmorton of Mountain Top, who complacently used to wear the "off side" of his father's galluses, and who was always ready to join in the chorus at all of the "reckonin'" parties.

What a change had taken place! Hamlin did not hesitate to introduce himself and inquire after "Miss Melissa" and the Brown family.

"Melissa! Why, she married a Count," said Ezra, who was really glad to see Jack again. "She will be here today, but she will hardly thank you to refer to her youthful days. You see, we Throckmortons were always aristocrats, even when you knew us. The Browns knew it, too. One day the train stopped at Mountain Top and we were all there as usual. For a wonder, there was a passenger. It was a man from Pittsburgh, and he wanted to see father. It appears that he had learned of a coal deposit being on our land, and had come to purchase it. A fabulous sum was offered, but pa was true to his superior breeding and

demanded twice the amount offered, which was finally paid; and in the short space of one month we had parted with our mountain home, and were living in Louisville. Pa and ma could not stand prosperity, and both died a year afterward. Ma always wanted to go back to her old home, sit on the fence, wait for the train, and ask for the mail; and pa was just the same— But here is Melissa! She is now Countess Agonzal.”

It is an unmistakable fact that “fine feathers make fine birds,” and it would be impossible to recognize in the finely dressed Countess of today the little, barefooted, tobacco-chewing Melissa of years ago. And, just think! it was only a mineral deposit that created this metamorphosis. A pleasant evening was spent; and on his way to his Northern home Jack could not help thinking that “Truth is stranger than fiction.”





**S**UN LEE was the telegraph messenger at Bodie, Cal., when that mining camp was at the height of its prosperity. There were no boys in this camp who would take the position, and Sun Lee was engaged at a salary of \$50 per month and perquisites, the latter consisting of the "digs," which amounted to from \$2 and \$3 a day, which was thought to be a fair salary for a messenger.

It has been stated that our Mongolian brethren cannot learn the art of telegraphy, but this is not so. Sun Lee had been in the office but a short time when he mastered the alphabet, and night after night, when the line was idle, he would spend many hours in practicing, and soon he became proficient enough to notify the office at Virginia City that the Bodie operator "has went out." Of course Sun Lee was the admiration of Chinatown, and it was his great delight to be seen by his countrymen sitting at the operating table handling the key when they came in to send a message.

Nestling almost in the shadow of the great Sierras is the village of Genoa, and here Miss Minnie Lee presided as operator. She was of a highly romantic temperament, and the peculiar style of literature that she constantly perused kept her imagination inflamed, so she was always ready for anything daring or dashing if it appealed to the romantic or sentimental side of

her nature. She began to learn to telegraph about the time that Sun Lee was taking his first instruction, and the twain became speedily well acquainted over the wire. The Celestial, too, had a poetic side to his nature, and he and Minnie soon became firm friends. As time went on, the students became more and more interested in each other, but the wily heathen had never disclosed the fact that he was "foreign" born. He used to say, "My name is 'S. Lee' and yours is 'M. Lee.'" Of course, it was an easy matter for Sun Lee to keep his identity a secret, as the distance from Bodie to Genoa was over a hundred miles, the worst mountain stage road in the country, and there was no one at either of the towns sufficiently interested in the matter to disclose the true status of affairs to Miss Lee.

One evening Minnie read in the columns of *The Telegraph Age* an account of a "marriage by wire," and straightway called up Bodie and sent the item to Sun Lee, who remarked, "Why can't you and I do likewise?" The young woman thought it would be so romantic, so she readily acquiesced, and Sun started on the preliminaries, engaging an itinerant preacher to tie the knot at the Bodie end of the line, while a qualified minister was to perform the same office for the young woman at Genoa.

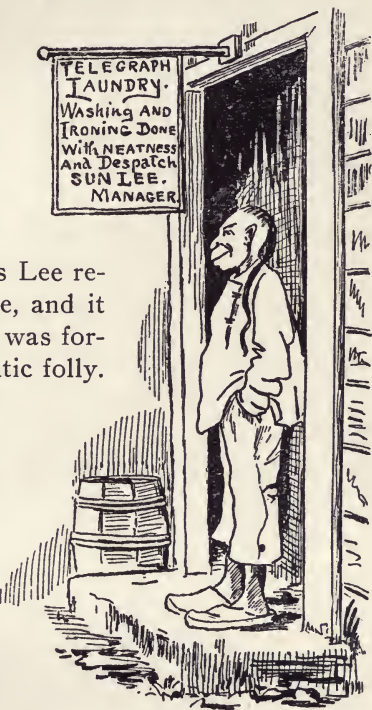
Sun Lee acted as operator, and the affair went off smoothly. Of course he did not kiss the bride or enjoy a wedding dinner, but repaired to his customary haunts in Chinatown on the night of his marriage.

The officiating preacher at the Bodie end gave the particulars of the case to a *Free Press* reporter, and the following morning the whole story was told in print, and being put on the wires, speedily became circulated



all over the Coast. Miss Minnie Lee (now Mrs. Sun Lee) had a big brother, who swore dire vengeance on his Oriental brother-in-law. The irate young man started for Bodie armed to the teeth. Sun Lee became apprised of this fact, and immediately decamped for parts unknown. It was discovered afterwards that there was some technicality about the ceremony which rendered it null and void, so Miss Lee resumed her maiden name, and it is quite certain that she was forever cured of her romantic folly.

Nothing was ever heard of Sun Lee after this in telegraph circles. The files of the San Francisco office fail to show that he ever applied for a position, but there is a suspicious-looking sign in Chinatown in that city which bears the following legend, that might perhaps throw some light on his whereabouts and present business pursuits:



“TELEGRAPH LAUNDRY.”

Washing and Ironing Done with Promptness and Despatch.

SUN LEE, Manager.





**I**T was a November evening in the year 186—. The scene was in the beautiful Antelope Valley of Esmeralda county, Nevada. The weather was a trifle chilly, just enough to make a campfire comfortable. Supper was over and pipes were drawn out, and the group of telegraph-line builders gathered around the campfire to while away an hour or two before turning in. This "turning in" process was generally very simple, and consisted merely of rolling up one's self in a blanket, and with a pine stump or tuft of grass for a pillow and the starry canopy of the beautiful Nevada sky for a coverlid. The wearied climber would then enjoy a repose not to be found in kingly palaces. These two or three hours around the campfire were the most enjoyable of the day, and were spent in spinning yarns, with occasional songs from those so gifted.

On this particular evening it was suggested that each of the motley crowd should relate some of his early experiences, and tell how it came to pass that he was so far away from home. The stories told were varied, interesting and thrilling, and all had a more

or less humorous side to them. One severe-looking man stated that he had been cashier in a great Eastern institution, but in an unfortunate hour he used some of the company's funds to speculate with, and the venture proving unsuccessful, he was obliged to decamp.

A mild-looking young man then told how, in a fit of anger, he had seriously wounded a fellow workman and fled to escape the penalty.

A ministerial-appearing old man was then pressed to tell his story. He protested that his tale was so uninteresting that it was not worth relating, but on further solicitation he stated that he had left his home in Vermont because he had *not* built a church. This statement elicited much merriment, but the story-teller went on to explain as follows: "You see, boys, I was once a preacher back in Vermont. My congregation gave me \$5000 to build a church with. I didn't do it; I came to California instead."

Jim Murphy was the next speaker. He said that he had been for many years an operator and lineman at M——, on the Ohio river. He had been addicted to the liquor habit, and he had come West simply to break away from old associations and boon companions, and the presence of the fiery liquor. His story was a simple one, and it indicated that Jim was in earnest, and that he was endeavoring to escape from the evils of intemperance by avoiding temptation. He was considerably jeered at by the rest of the "gang," who told him that if he was seeking to live a sober life he had come to a poor place. They recounted how the wine flowed on the other side of the mountains, and prophesied Jim's early fall from his good intentions. Jim looked firm and determined, and the

following day he asked for his "time," stating that he was going for a long hunt.

Jim Murphy was a man 50 years of age. He was very tall, with a strong, well-knit frame, and his powers of physical endurance were remarkable. Jim's adieu to his comrades was very brief, and with his blanket over his back, his cartridge belt buckled around his waist and his trusty rifle over his shoulder, he started up the mountains and was soon lost to view in the chaparral. Time passed, but Jim did not return. He was known as a sturdy hunter and familiar with all the phases of woodcraft, so his disappearance caused no alarm, or even ordinary comment. Meanwhile the line to Antelope Valley was completed, and the erstwhile preacher, the whilom cashier and the quondam linemen were discharged and speedily engaged in other business. But Jim Murphy—what became of him?

\* \* \* \* \*

About twenty years later a Portuguese shepherd, Pietro Sanchez by name, encamped one night with his flock in the mountain fastnesses of the high Sierras, near the headwaters of the Tuolumne river. Pietro was a simple fellow, well content with his lot, and, unlike the majority of Californians, he was not a goldseeker. The French have a proverb which says that "only the unexpected happens," and curiously enough, it was by rare accident that Pietro discovered very rich dirt near his camp. This news he conveyed to his friend and neighbor, a silver-haired old man, who had been his friend for many years. This old man was Jim Murphy, now familiarly known to the few mountaineers and prospectors as "Father" Murphy.

Although more than three score and ten, he was still keen of eye, firm of foot and strong of limb. He had come to this wild and almost inaccessible spot after he left the telegraph service, and since that time he had not sought for or mixed with any so-called civilization. He passed his first winter in the mountains in one of the numerous caves, and the following spring he erected a log hut. This habitation was built on the banks of Lake Tenaya, a beautiful mountain lake situated at the base of Mount Dana, one of the Sierras' loftiest and most rugged peaks.

About seven years after Jim established himself at Lake Tenaya, Pietro Sanchez came into the neighborhood, and the two men, diametrically opposite in disposition, soon became very warm friends.

Jim still had a love for the "dots and dashes," and he constructed a line between his cabin and the Portuguese's shack, and undertook the task of teaching the shepherd the mysteries of the Morse alphabet. It was a harder task than he had bargained for, and after six months of patient teaching the idea was given up and a code of interchangeable signals was arranged.

"Father" Murphy was proverbial for his kindness and hospitality. He lived alone with his dogs, had a few sheep and cows; his raiment was entirely of his own manufacture, and would today be more expensive than the finest broadcloth. Hunting and fishing parties would come up frequently from the Yosemite Valley to spend a few days during the summer at Lake Tenaya. "Father" Murphy's first request was that during their sojourn at his abode no liquor should be indulged in, and so well was this fact known, and so much was he held in reverence, that his request was always complied with good-naturedly.

And so it happened that when Pietro Sanchez told him of his discovery of gold, so close by, and on his property, "Father" Murphy soliloquized thus: "Gold! gold! the root of all evil. Why should we let it be known? Better far to live our lives in the present peaceful way than place ourselves in the way of temptation. Come, Pietro, let us say nothing about this find." Pietro promised to keep silent, but in some unknown way the secret was discovered, and two weeks later there was a rush to the new "diggin's." A town sprang up as though by magic, and the once peaceful and quiet region of Mount Dana was broken by the noise and clamor of civilization.

"Father" Murphy was sorely grieved, and his sense of propriety was greatly shocked, when he learned that whisky was the chief article of commerce at the new mining camp. He wanted to leave the haven of rest where he had been supremely happy for so long a time, and again seek another refuge, but where to go he did not know.

The tempter came one day and "Father" Murphy fell. The old hermit's possessions were found to abound with gold, and a marvelously fabulous sum was offered to him, and he accepted. A banquet was given to celebrate the event, and "Father" Murphy, in an unfortunate moment, looked on the wine when it was rosy. This was the beginning of the end.

A few weeks later found "Father" Murphy in San Francisco, rolling it as high as the highest roller. He seemed to be trying to make up for lost time. He had discarded his frontiersman's garb and affected a costume which had cost him a pretty penny at the most fashionable tailor's in the city. His companions were

of the most riotous and flashy kind, and his downfall came quickly. Attempting to cross a busy thoroughfare one day, in a state of semi-intoxication, he was knocked down by a passing vehicle, which rendered him insensible, and from the effects of which he died. He left no heirs excepting Pietro Sanchez, who was to be the sole legatee upon the fulfillment of one curious request.

When "Father" Murphy disposed of his property he retained a section which he had named "Telegraph Hill." This "hill" was an immense rock of granite, which rose out of the ground, piercing the sky to a height of 3000 feet. It was a beautiful stone, and it presented at a distance all the appearance of a huge tombstone. "Father" Murphy had been so impressed with the location and appearance of the rock that he determined to make it his mausoleum, and he had been at work at odd times hewing out of its adamantine sides an aperture large enough to contain his body. It had been understood between him and his Portuguese friend that this spot was to be his final resting-place, and Pietro had received full instructions how to arrange for the placing of the body.

The hermit had carved with his crude tools the following inscription: "Telegraph Hill. Sacred to the memory of James Murphy, telegraph operator and lineman. Born at Limerick, Ireland, A. D., 1801. Died ———. Beware of Temptation."

It was a labored effort, and many of the letters were "back-door," but there was a pathos about the whole which was little short of sublime.

Here is where the faithful Pietro placed the body of his friend. The ceremonies were simple, and the



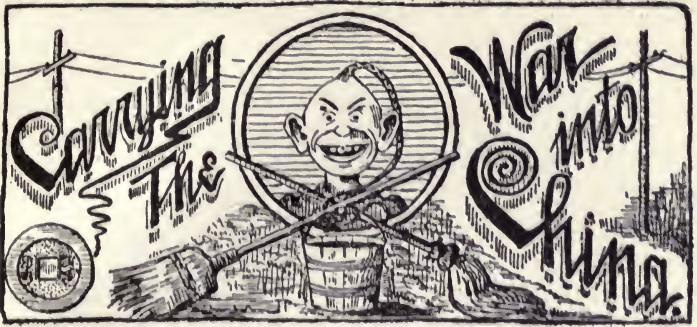
mourners few. The work of filling up the mouth of the tomb was done by an artist from San Francisco, and so cleverly was it executed that it would be impossible to detect where the opening in the rock was made.

There have been many more costly mausoleums erected to departed loved ones, but nothing excels in grandeur of construction, height, or sublimity of location the last resting-place of James Murphy, "the hermit of Telegraph Hill."

The mistake of "Father" Murphy's life was his flying from temptation instead of manfully holding his ground and fighting the battle to a finish. He fled and he had to fight the battle all over again. His twenty years of hermit's life, instead of strengthening him, only rendered him easier prey to his besetting sin when temptation came.







**T**HE advent of any new company, be it a telegraph or other enterprise, into a field already covered by a corporation pursuing the same line of business is apt to provoke much rivalry. It is not at all strange, therefore, that when the Postal extended their system to the Pacific Coast that competition between that company and the Western Union became rife. The prosperity of a new company depends at first largely upon the personal popularity of the officials in charge, and as a general thing official positions were offered to those who might be able by their acquaintance, or "pull," to command a goodly share of patronage.

The Chinese are enthusiastic patrons of the telegraph. They like quick answers and frequently they will insist upon appending the words, "Answer immediately, right away, quick, soon," to their messages when they think that it will insure more promptness in reply. This class of business is well worthy of being solicited, but as the Chinese are a conservative lot they do not care to experiment, and they generally stick to old methods of doing business and to well-known companies, rather than to try something new. So it must be that something out of the usual order of things has to occur to enable an opposition company

to obtain the business of an established concern. This vexed question solved itself in one of our flourishing Western cities and brought to the new company the coveted patronage, and the following shows how it happened:

Ah Suey was a Celestial from the Flowery Kingdom. He was an unusually bright Chinaman, strong in his likes and dislikes, and he was considered quite a Sir Oracle in Chinatown. His business was that of janitor, and his hieroglyphics were appended to a Western Union voucher as such a personage. This was accompanied by an explanatory note from the manager that the hen-tracks were the peculiar way in which Ah Suey had for signing his name. Ah Suey had an eye for business, and it is not to be wondered at that when the Postal opened its office that he applied for the janitorship, stating as reference that he was performing a similar service with the other company, and he wished to hold both places. He was readily engaged, but the Western Union manager thought that it was hardly right that Suey should work for both companies, and accordingly dismissed him. This action greatly incensed Ah Suey, and he determined on dire vengeance. He went about for a few days apparently in a brown study, but one morning he seemed to have discovered what he was looking for in the realms of thought. He had a most gorgeous Chinese sign painted in gold and black, and bordered with red, altogether making a striking effect. Ah Suey confidentially informed the Postal manager that the legend on the sign read: "This is the Chinaman's telegraph office." He asked permission to place the sign in the window, a request which was readily granted.

For several days afterward there was quite a heavy business done at the Postal, received from its Chinese patrons. So decided and complete had the change be-



come that it seemed it was not possible that the Chinese sign could have effected so much. Suey was in high glee, and he would chatter volubly in his monosyllabic language to his countrymen as they

dropped in to file their messages. Suey evidently had a secret, and one which he was not willing to impart. The story came out a few days later, however, and it showed how it was possible to carry telegraphic war into Chinatown.

On one of the principal streets in Chinatown is a bulletin board which conveys to the Chinese reader the current news of the day. This board is used also as a sort of an advertising medium, and Twin Wo Bing and Whoop La Sing will there inform their friends and countrymen that they have just received by the latest steamer, direct from China, a fresh supply of rice or opium, or whatever the invoice might be. Advertisements of the new play at the Chinese theater and news from the China-Japan war were inscribed on this bulletin board also. The corner was the most interesting in the Chinese quarter, and anything that was put on the board was regarded by the Chinese as strictly reliable. This was, of course, known to Ah Suey. The wily heathen had taken advantage of it, and as he did not care for expense when it came to being avenged upon a supposed enemy, he had emblazoned in the most conspicuous place on the board a card which was interpreted by him as follows:

“Notice—To all my friends. When you want to telglap, you no go to Western Union, no good. You go to Postal, velly nice bossee man there, heap likee the Chinaman. (Signed) Ah Suey.”





BODIE, CALIFORNIA



# WHISKY FLAT.

## CHAPTER I

### Choice Flowers in Barren Soil

**A** DISAPPOINTED prospector once remarked: "When God created the world He had a quantity of refuse dirt, lava and rocks left over, which He dumped down on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and man called it 'Nevada.'" This aspersion is hardly fair, for the truly rich state of Nevada is not only rich in its mineral wealth, but in its numerous and beautiful valleys of arable land, which require but the hand of the irrigator to produce any product under the sun. There are arid spots, though, some indeed so barren and waste that not even a snake or horned toad can be found in their confines. There are many places where rain or snow never falls, and where the sun shines 365 days in the year, never being interrupted even for a moment.

Such a place was Whisky Flat. This flat was ten miles wide, lying between the Tiobabe Mountains in the east, and the Del Norte Mountains in the west and north. Here the alkali and saleratus gleamed like snow in the sun's bright rays, and was doubly exasperating to the thirsty traveler. The stage road



from Red Horse to Mammoth City cut across this desert, the trail looking like a dark ribbon on a bed of snow, to the observer on the neighboring hill.

At the foot of the Tiobabe Mountains was a low, thatched cottage, the only dwelling in this wild waste. A few hundred feet back of this cottage was a small spring, which came with a gush out of the side of the mountain and found its way into a little reservoir.

This fountain of life was the means that rendered habitable the solitary dwelling. Every drop of the supply not used by the inhabitants of this remote place was utilized in irrigating a little garden of some two or three acres, and right well did nature respond to the call upon her resources. There were no "seasons" here, for each day was a facsimile of the day previous. The year around the grass grew in this little oasis and the weary stage traveler was always glad to get to this haven, for it was generally known that here would be found a good meal, which is a luxury that even a Nevada traveler can enjoy.

The inhabitants of this lonely place were three in number—a mother, daughter and son. The mother was a frail little woman, with a remarkably sweet face and voice. She gave evidence of having seen better days, and one need but to talk with her a moment to be aware that Mrs. Wythe was a lady of culture and refinement; and the next thought uppermost in one's mind was, what was she doing in such a strange place? Her daughter, Edith, was a shy, blushing girl of seventeen summers, possessing her mother's voice and manner, with an added earnestness. Dexter was a bright lad of fifteen years, full of mirth and good humor, and intensely devoted to his mother and sister. Both children assisted in the gardening, and made it possible for their little mother to eke out an existence in that desert home.

## CHAPTER II

## Whisky Flat, a Telegraph Station

The lonely telegraph wire which connected Bodie with Candelaria was in trouble. This was a serious matter, alike to the telegraph company and its patrons, for mining stocks were on the boom, and every five minutes financially made or ruined some speculator, and so it was that when the wire was down, all hands and the cook turned out to repair the trouble. The line ran by the little stage station known as Whisky Flat, then across the desert, turning east from the Tiobabe range to Marietta and other well-known mining towns, now deserted.

The day was unusually hot as Jack Hamlin thundered down the mountainside leading to the "Flat." He was mounted on a big American horse, which in earlier days had been used in the pony-express service, and whose instinct was to "get there" as quickly as possible. The little station was not visible to Jack until he was right upon it, on account of a sharp turn in the road. It was a pretty picture that greeted his eye. The cottage had just received a new coat of whitewash, and vied in color with the snow-white alkali desert that lay a little to the east of it. Honey-suckles and creeping vines covered the abode, and quite a number of old-fashioned roses and other flowers bloomed in the surrounding garden. A girl, bare-foot and dressed in a loose-fitting calico gown, was sitting near the spring, but the noise of the approaching horse and the sudden appearance of Jack startled her, and with a nimble and graceful bound she cleared the fence and disappeared inside the cottage, out of which issued little Dexter.

"Ki yi!" said the boy. "Where are you bound for? That's a mighty fine horse you have. He beats my old skate all hollow. You had better come in and rest, and I'll take care of the horse, if you will let me ride him for ten minutes."

The boy's hospitality was accepted, and in a few minutes Jack was in the modest parlor, where he introduced himself to Mrs. Wythe, stating that his errand in that vicinity was to repair the telegraph wire. He was received with every evidence of hospitality, and soon sat down to a most homelike meal. Jack's quick eye took in the surroundings, and he marveled to see so many evidences of refinement as were apparent on every side. Presently a youthful form entered the room, and Jack recognized the willowy figure which he had seen leap the fence so gracefully.

"My daughter, Edith," said Mrs. Wythe, and the girl blushed like a peony. She had changed her dress, and was now attired in a simple but becoming gown. Jack smiled a little at the thought of the graceful leap he had seen her take a little while before, but he was lost in admiration of her sweet face and simple, artless manner. Her face was one that betokens rare intelligence. Her deep violet eyes were full of expression, and were an index to her character. As she flitted hither and thither arranging the table for dinner, Jack could not help thinking that the young lady's face and form would have set the city belles wild with envy. Her hair had that indescribable hue that the Parisian woman is trying so hard to counterfeit and which resembles very closely the color of a new twenty-

dollar gold piece. Her step was light and her hands small and shapely. Her face was slightly freckled, but this seemed to add to, rather than to detract from, her beauty.

To Jack's surprise, she spread a white linen cover over the homely table and placed a bouquet of sweet-brier roses in the center. A brisk conversation was kept up during the progress of the meal, and Jack learned that Miss Edith had never seen a steamboat, locomotive, nor had ever been away from Whisky Flat since she was two years old. Notwithstanding this, she was on familiar terms with the poets, could speak French quite fluently, and was a comparatively good Greek and Latin scholar. Her aptitude for learning was great, and she seemed to absorb all book lore. The girl smiled deprecatingly as her mother recounted her accomplishments, and it was pleasant to observe her modest and unaffected demeanor. There seemed to be a great bond of sympathy between mother and daughter.

Hamlin related how he was out repairing the line, and said that he wished there was a test office at Whisky Flat, for it would be a great help in similar cases of line trouble. He also said that there was no reason why Miss Edith could not learn enough of the art to be of material assistance; and if she were so disposed he would then and there teach her the alphabet, and if she had memorized it by the time he returned from repairing the trouble, he would leave her his pocket relay and teach her how to make the letters. Edith was aglow with pleasure, and Mrs.

Wythe was equally pleased; and even little Dexter came in and asked to be enrolled as a pupil.

After dinner was over, Jack mounted his horse, which had been carefully groomed and fed by the attentive Dexter, and started on his wearisome ride across the hot desert.

### CHAPTER III

#### Rencontre With Indians.

A person traveling along the road or in the woods in an Indian country often meets a party of redskins; but the meeting partakes largely of an apparition, for the Indians are never seen until the traveler comes face to face with them.

Just as the desert had been crossed and Jack was urging his horse forward, he came upon such an apparition. They were four in number; villainous-looking, and all mounted; but there were only three horses, necessitating one of the number, a squaw, to ride behind her lord and master. There were many ejaculations as the party beheld Jack, who reined up as he approached them.

"Ugh," said one ugly-looking old buck; "tobac, tobac." "Yes," said Jack, "here is some tobac," tossing the old fellow a cigar. "Me tobac," squealed the next one, and the next, and each was treated to a cigar. "Me tobac, ME tobac," yelled the squaw, and Jack tossed her a weed, which she caught up with much dexterity. Matches were next demanded and were

readily furnished, and then a cry was made for "fire-water," but this demand was refused. "Gun, gun, lemme seeum gun," cried the leader, pointing to Jack's rifle which was slung over his shoulder. "Come and take it," said Jack, bringing the piece to his shoulder in an instant and looking down its long barrel at the



savage. "Ugh," cried the Indians, as they contemptuously filed by, none of them deigning to look behind as Jack kept them covered until they were well on their way.

A little further on it was discovered where the Indians had evidently camped, and where they had cut and stolen about a hundred feet of wire. Repairs were quickly made, and the joyful fact was immediately made known to the different offices.

Two days later Jack reappeared at the Wythe cottage on his return to Bodie. He learned that the Indian party which he had met were some renegades who had been disowned by their tribe and now wandered from place to place, making their home wherever night overtook them. Mrs. Wythe related that she had fed the Indians and their horses, in consideration for which they had left with the good lady the wire which they had stolen. Mrs. Wythe was a friend of the Indians, and during the whole of her fifteen years' residence in this wild and uninhabited place she had never been molested. Her house was full of peace offerings and presents from Indians who had been lost in the desert and found their way to her humble but hospitable cottage.

Edith beamed with delight on Jack's arrival, and she joyfully announced that she had mastered the alphabet and was ready for further instructions. The main line was speedily cut in, and an embryo telegraph office was established at Whisky Flat, and the fact was wired at once to the Tariff Bureau.

"I never liked the name of Whisky Flat," said Mrs. Wythe, "and I wanted to call our home Wythe's Station, but the stage-drivers and travelers would never agree to this, and I suppose that we will have to go down in history as being residents of Whisky Flat."

By this time Hamlin had evinced a deep interest in the family, and he strove by dint of delicate questioning to gather a little family history. He gleaned that Mrs. Wythe was one of a large family which had been reduced to poverty by the War of the Rebellion,



and, when Dick Wythe came home from California with reputed great wealth, she was urged to marry him. They came to California, but an unfortunate speculation in mining stocks exhausted all of his money. Fifteen years ago they had come to Whisky Flat to live, as her husband had discovered gold near by. The mine, however, had proven a failure, and he had gone away prospecting, leaving her with the two children, to do the best she could. She fortunately interested the stage company in her case, and Whisky Flat became an eating station, and she was thus able to support herself and her little family. But in all these years she had never been away from her home, and her children had only such advantages of education as she could give them. She had been a governess in Baltimore in her early life, and her books were her chief comfort until the children grew up, and then it became her greatest delight to impart to the little ones the knowledge which she had acquired. And so it happened that few young ladies with an hundredfold the advantages that Edith Wythe possessed were her equals in the accomplishments of the times.

An old-fashioned melodeon, a relic of Mrs. Wythe's girlhood days, occupied a space in the cosy parlor; and the balance of the evening was spent in music, both mother and children singing with much sweetness. After the stirring melodies of the ante-bellum days were rendered, the gospel hymn-book was opened and they sang "Oh, Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night?" The singing closed with "Abide With Me," and the following morning Jack bade the little group an affectionate good-bye.

## CHAPTER IV

**Edith Becomes an Operator**

A few months had passed by. The mining excitement at Bodie was at its height, and Jack Hamlin had almost forgotten his adventure at Whisky Flat, when one night, after everybody on the line had said "G.N.," there came a call over the wire. It was a timid, frightened call. "Bo" "Bo" "Bo" "Wf"—"Bo" "Bo" "Wf," it said. "Hello," said Jack, "that must be little Edith at Whisky Flat." He answered the call, but for a few minutes it seemed an effort for the operator at "Wf" to write; but this, however, soon disappeared, and Edith told Jack that she had been practicing constantly for the past six months, that she was up with the lark and never retired until the last office had said "good-night," and she was able to copy everything that came over the wire, even to the "stock markets," which are considered quite a feat.

Life in a mining camp is very uncertain at best, and as the diamond drill on the 1,200-foot level of Juniper cut into horse porphyry when it was deemed certain that there was a 27-foot vein of gold-bearing ore instead, there was a great drop in the stock market and this, together with the inability to show any good prospects in the Oro and Mono mines, settled the fate of Bodie. Jack decided that he could not hang his fortunes to a "dead horse," and determined to seek newer fields. Before going, Edith requested him to try and secure her a position as operator somewhere. She said that with the decadence of Bodie the stage which passed Whisky Flat was to be abandoned, and, that

being the family's sole means of sustenance, she found that she must now utilize her knowledge of telegraphy.

It was a memorable day in the lives of this little family when Edith prepared to start for Gold Mountain, where Jack Hamlin had secured for her a position as day operator. She was to "travel," and that was of itself a great event. Then "she was going to be among people." To be sure, Gold Mountain was not a large place, but it had a railroad, four stores, a town hall, and it was only a few hours' ride from Carson City, where Jim Farrell worked, whose sending was the fastest on the line.

It would be hard to picture Edith's impression of her first few weeks in "civilization." Following out her mother's instructions, she soon discarded her home-made frock for a smart-looking gown made by a San Francisco modiste. Other additions to her wardrobe made a complete metamorphosis in her appearance, and it would have been difficult to recognize the demure and shy miss of Whisky Flat in the winsome and comely operator of Gold Mountain. It was impossible to get a letter to Whisky Flat, now that the stage coach had been abandoned, and the nearest postoffice was twenty-four miles away, but the wire from Gold Mountain to Edith's old home was connected every evening, and she and Dexter talked away into the night, for the latter had also become a good operator.

Edith Wythe's pleasant face and frank, open manner soon won for her many friends and admirers. There was nothing but sunshine in the young woman's mind, and her sunny nature radiated and reflected itself on all who came near her.

## CHAPTER V

## Shoals

Percy Billings was the railroad agent at Gold Mountain. He was handsome, but rather rakish-looking, and it was whispered that he used to deal faro as a business, in San Francisco; but the report given by the Fidelity Trust Company, who were on his bonds to the railroad company, would indicate that he was of exceptionally good character and that his previous life had been without a blemish.

Edith's fair face and graceful figure attracted Billings, and he soon became very much enamored. To the simple, inexperienced mind of Edith, Percy was perfection and nobility personified; and she willingly placed her heart in his keeping. After a short engagement, Billings obtained her consent to a secret marriage. Edith acquiesced only after a struggle with herself, and on the assurance of her lover that it was for the best. Matters continued in this way for several months, Billings displaying much attention and devotion, and Edith lavishing upon him all the affection of her fresh young heart. One day a letter came to Billings, postmarked San Francisco, the address being in a lady's handwriting. He seemed to be very much perturbed upon reading the letter, and announced to the startled Edith that he was suddenly called to San Francisco and would be absent for a couple of weeks; but more than this he would not say. He left Gold Mountain that evening, never to return.

Edith waited for a week without hearing from him, framing an excuse for him in her own mind, that he was "too busy" or that "the mails were irregular"; but as weeks grew into months, she began to have many

misgivings, and finally determined to go to San Francisco and find her recreant husband. Accordingly, a few days later she landed in California's metropolis. She had once, accidentally, overheard her husband tell a friend that he was well known at the —— hotel, and it was thither that Edith bent her way.

This was a new and disagreeable experience to this young woman, who could not understand why the clerk looked at her so peculiarly; and why even the employes of the hotel acted familiarly with her. When she made inquiries for Percy Billings, the clerk's manner became even more offensive. She was told that he was stopping at the hotel, and would be in very soon; and a few hours later a meeting took place between Edith and her husband. He was furious to find her in San Francisco, and told her to return to her home; that he did not want to see her any more; and that he would absolutely have nothing to do with her. Surprised, ashamed, and mortified beyond measure, Edith repaired to her room, where she spent an hour in writing a letter, which she posted; and then, going down to the wharf, purchased a ticket to Oakland.

Just as the ferry-boat Piedmont was passing Goat Island on her way to Oakland, a little figure jumped from the side of the boat into the bay. The alarm was immediately given, the big steamer stopped, and a boat was put out into the dark water; but, owing to the intense darkness, the person could not be rescued. Several days later some fishermen discovered the body of a young woman near Oakland pier, and from articles in her pocketbook it was proven to be the remains of Edith Wythe.

## CHAPTER VI

## Retribution

A year later a party of gay San Franciscans was spending the summer months at one of the lakes in the high Sierras. Among the party was Percy Billings, gay and blase as of old. The fate of Edith Wythe never seemed to have worried or made an impression upon him, and he had long since stopped giving her a thought. He was now pursuing his former vocation, that of a professional gambler, for a livelihood.

The lake near by which he was camping was one of those remarkable bodies of water found in the mountains of California. It was fed by the snow from the Sierra Nevadas, having several inlets, but no visible outlet. Its depth was very great, and the water was so pure and its specific gravity so small, that it was impossible to swim in it. A rowboat would sink to its gunwale with very little weight, and the Indians were afraid to venture on this lake in their canoes, believing it possessed of the devil. There was a strong suction, which indicated that there must be a subterranean outlet at the bottom of the lake.

A quiet, handsome-looking boy was about to take a boat out for a row one afternoon, when Percy Billings came strolling along. "Your name is Billings?" inquired the boy. "Right you are," was the reply. Billings was invited to take a seat in the boat, which he accepted, and very soon the twain were a quarter of a mile out on the bosom of the lake.

It will never be known what was said by the boy to the man, nor just how it occurred, but the spectators on the shore heard cries from the boat and saw both men rise to their feet and clinch, upsetting the boat, and Percy Billings and Dexter Wythe went to the bottom of the lake.

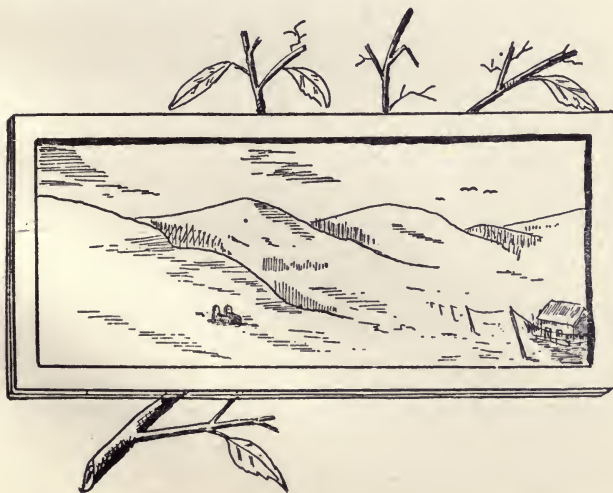
## CHAPTER VII

## Desolation

The lonely wire passing Whisky Flat still hangs to the tamarack poles, but now no current is vibrating its metallic breast; its day of usefulness is over. The mining towns that it once connected have passed into decadence. The spring still bubbles forth from the mountainside, refreshing the little garden as of old. An old man sits alone in the doorway. It is old Dick Wythe. He has returned from his long wanderings, and come home to rest and pass the remainder of his days at the old home where his wife and children spent so many happy years; but he has come too late. Yonder on the side of the hill, a short distance from the spring, can be seen two little mounds of earth, and there lie Mrs. Wythe and her daughter Edith. Dexter's body was never found.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is wonderful what a little circumstance will change our destinies. It is passing strange that such a little occurrence as a half a dozen renegade Indians stealing a few feet of telegraph wire should convert this once happy home into such a scene of desolation.







## LOST OPPORTUNITIES

**I** AM not given to grieving very much over what might have been," remarked a genial veteran of the key, "but were it not for a runaway stage-coach I should have been a millionaire twice over. I will tell you how it occurred:

"I was the operator at Treasure Hill, Nevada, a very prosperous mining camp in the early '70s, and you can just bet that things were booming in those days. I was also express agent, and my salary amounted to \$500 per month. Money in those times was no good excepting to buy whisky and gamble with, and of course we used to roll things high. I made lots of money speculating in mining stocks, and, being on the inside, I was generally pretty lucky. It was at a time when fortunes were made and lost, sometimes in a day, and so it was in my own case. Poles were poles in that country, for there was not a vestige of timber in a radius of 100 miles of Treasure Hill, and our telegraph line was run on the tops of the sagebrush over half the distance from Carson. The wire always worked well, for it seldom rained or snowed here, and the ground was generally warm and dry. The only trouble that we experienced was in case of loose stock running afoul the wire, breaking and dragging it for a long distance, but such instances were rare, and it seems a fatal coincidence that an occurrence of this kind has kept me a poor man all these years. Strikes and rumors of strikes had been rampant on the Comstock lode, and each stock took its

turn at going up and coming down frequently, like a skyrocket. The miners at the several points kept each other posted as well as they could of any expected rise; and everyone, women included, speculated as far as their means allowed them in the stock market.

“One evening about 10 P. M., a horseman drew up in our camp and was presently closeted with some of our wealthy mining men. An hour later they came to my office, and after whispered injunctions to me to ‘keep it under the table,’ I was informed that a big strike had been made at Crown Point, and it was expected to go up into the triple figures right away. Crown Point was selling for \$4 a share at the closing afternoon sales, and, after scanning my balance of cash on deposit in my San Francisco broker’s hands, I ascertained that I could purchase 1,000 shares, and this I determined to do at once.

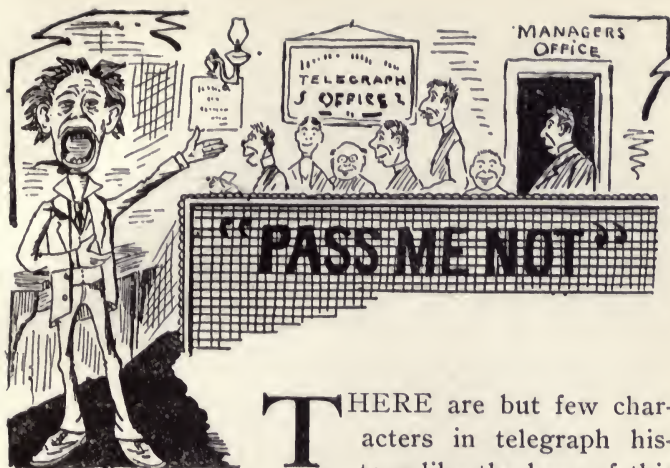
“My friends wrote out their orders to buy Crown Point stock, but, alas! I found that the wire was open. Not a bit of current could I detect, and I informed them of that fact. Of course, I could not tell where the trouble was nor how soon it would be repaired, so the miners determined to start one of their number out to Diamond Springs, the next office, some forty miles away, but I decided to wait and send my order when the line came up. This was my fatal mistake. My friends managed to reach Diamond Springs and get their orders sent in long before the opening of the Board the following morning, and they paid from \$3 to \$4 per share for the stock. I waited patiently all the following day, and about 4 o’clock in the afternoon the line came ‘O. K.,’ and the first question I asked was for the closing price of Crown Point. ‘There has been great excitement in Crown Point,’ said the

Virginia City operator, 'and it closed at \$450 a share.' My heart almost stopped beating at this, for it was out of the question for me to buy at this figure. The excitement continued, the stock jumping up \$200 and \$300 each day, and at the end of the week it had reached \$2,000 a share. All of my friends sold out at this figure, and I was the most disappointed man in Nevada. If I had gotten my order in for 1,000 shares, and realized \$2,000 a share, I would have been twice a millionaire. This seemed to be the turning-point in my career, for after this I never seemed to have any more luck, and little by little my savings went, until I was left a poor man. The cause of the wire trouble was a runaway stage-coach, which tore the wire down for a long distance, breaking it in many places. I am more than convinced that Shakespeare was right when he wrote: 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.'"

And the veteran resumed his pipe and soliloquies.







**T**HERE are but few characters in telegraph history like the hero of this sketch. He belonged to a class which is rapidly passing away, but who were of much service in cases of emergency.

Few operators had brighter prospects than had Hank Cowan. His reputation as an operator was known all over the country. His "copy" was like a picture; he could take anything, and his wrist was like steel when he sent the overland report. "Hank" was a handsome fellow; his only defect being a bad cut on his eyelid, which gave him rather a sinister expression, really entirely foreign to his nature. He possessed the kindest of hearts, and never forgot a favor shown him. His only fault was in his fondness for red liquor, and on this account he was always getting into endless scrapes. Many and many a time did he bravely try to overcome this evil habit, only to succumb after two or three months of excellent behavior, when off he would go again to hunt up another position, only to repeat the same occurrence in the new field. There were many stories told about "Hank,"

but they were all good-natured, for he was a man who would do no one a willful wrong.

There is an office in the West where, on payday, the manager exacted the operators to stand in line, and he would go up and down the line handing the men their wages. "Hank," in his peregrinations, arrived at this place and put in two nights' work, which was a fact that seemed to have been overlooked by the manager. Cowan stood in line with the rest, till he saw that he was going to be neglected; then he sang out in his clear tenor voice, to the tune of a beautiful hymn:

"Manager, manager,  
Hear my humble cry;  
While on others thou art smiling,  
Do not pass me by."

The plaintive air and words won the heart of the manager, who settled up with him.

It was somewhere about '77 that "Hank" worked for the "A. & P." in Chicago. He could always get along with that company better than with any other, for they were more lenient with his shortcomings. He secured board in a very nice part of the city, and was doing very well until one day he met some boon companions and became a participant in their riotousness. About midnight he essayed to find his way home, but in his boozy condition "all houses looked alike to him." A good-natured policeman who knew him came along and undertook to escort him home. Presently they arrived at his abode, and the policeman took him up to the head of the stairs. "Whasher name?" said Hank, who did not recognize his friend. "Never mind," replied the guardian of the night, "go

in and go to bed now." "Noshir, I want (hic) to know (hic) your (hic) name (hic, hic)." "Well, my name is Paul," said the watchman. "Paul, Paul?" said "Hank" retrospectively, as if trying to recall some image of the past. "I shay, Paul (hic), did you (hic) ever get a (hic) answer (hic) to that long letter (hic) that you wrote (hic) to the Ephesians (hic, hic)?"

History has not recorded the policeman's reply, but these were Hank's last days in Chicago.

A week later a postal card was received from Albuquerque, New Mexico, in Hank's well-known handwriting, reading:

"The bulls on the Cincinnati wire distress me. I think that I will quit. Please accept my resignation. Hank Cowan."







## WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT

**V**IRGINIA CITY, Nevada, was a bustling town in the year 1879. The amount of telegraph business done at this point was large, and the operators employed were the flower of the profession. There were not many social inducements to keep men there, but there was a spirit of freedom and bonhomie always manifested by the residents of this gold region that could never be experienced elsewhere. Every opportunity was taken to break the monotony of life in this mining camp, and generally the calendar was scanned in advance to see what would be the next day to celebrate. It was no wonder then that the boys in the Western Union office hailed with delight the visit to Virginia City of President William Orton, of the Western Union Telegraph Company, accompanied by General Anson Stager. Mr. Orton had been in failing health for some time, and the trip to the Pacific Coast was taken with a view to recuperation. The news had been heralded from Omaha, Cheyenne and Salt Lake City, giving the itinerary of the party and indicating that the several managers along the route were doing all in their power to entertain the noted visitors.

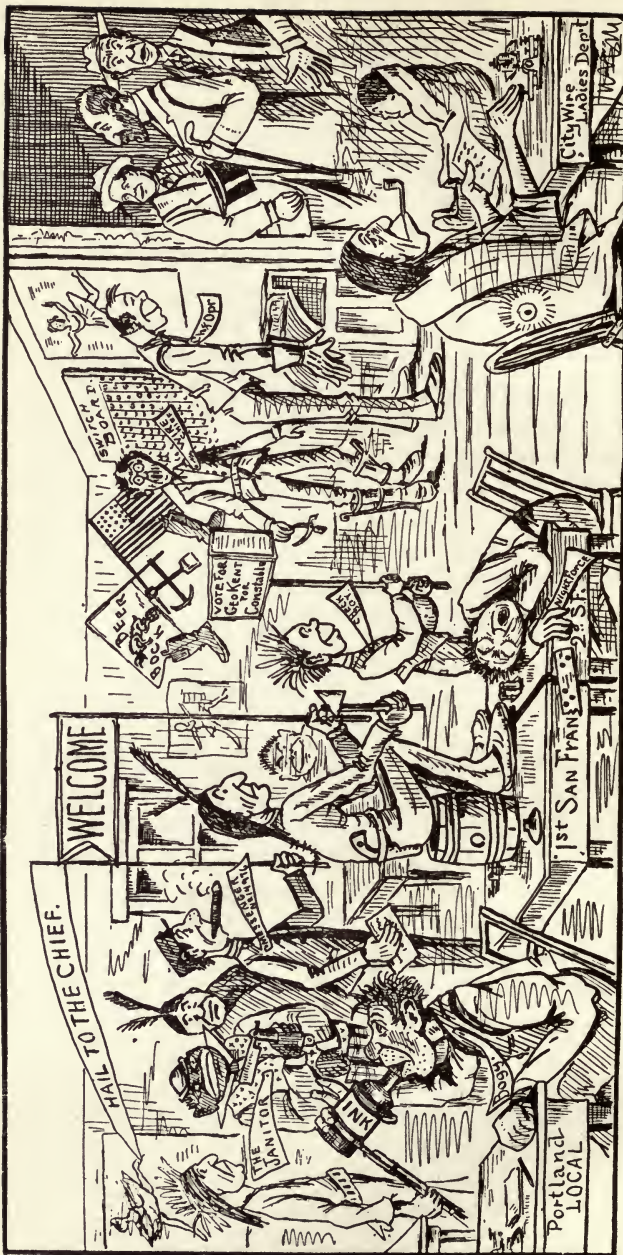
Eugene H. Sherwood, well known to the profession all over the country as "Sherry," was at that time an operator in the Virginia City office. He was full of pranks, and always ready for a lark, so he determined to have a little fun on the occasion of the contemplated visit. Yes, he had made up his mind to receive the party in true Western style, and in a way that they would not soon forget. He acquainted the worthy manager of the coming event, and requested that \$20 be donated for the purpose of "fixing up" the office.

The modest demand was readily complied with, and "Sherry" was appointed a committee of the whole to decorate the office according to his own best judgment. Here was a chance for a first-class frolic, and "Sherry" was quick to improve it.

A troupe of British blondes and high kickers had visited the city recently, and left as a reminder their Venus-like pictures and forms in the usual grotesque attitudes on the dead walls throughout the city. Accompanied by a sable companion, "Sherry" carefully took down all of this paper, and a few hours later these fairy figures were gracing the walls of the operating-room. Next, Captain Sam, of the Piute tribe, was interviewed, and he soon made a bargain to produce seven braves, squaws and papooses, together with himself, at six bits a head, all to be on hand the following morning at the office, there to welcome the "great father of the wiregraph." A number of Indian dogs and curios to be in this retinue were included in the contract with Captain Sam. Sundry guns and small arms and old boots, with a number of miners' picks, shovels, and other implements, were borrowed from the Miners' Union, to lend a business effect to the adornments of the office. So quietly and effectively was this work planned and executed that the said worthy manager had no suspicion of what was going on. Mr. Orton and party arrived about 10 A. M., and, accompanied by General Stager and Superintendent Frank Bell, of the Nevada district, repaired at once to the telegraph office. Superintendent Bell was particularly proud of this office; not so much, however, for elaborateness of its furnishings (which did not exist), as for the great revenue that the company derived from it. It was,

therefore, with an important air that he led the procession up the stairway and into the operating-room. He was the first to enter, and his eye took in at a glance the situation, and he was for a moment speechless with consternation and surprise. General Stager had a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he viewed the startling effect of "Sherry's" work. Turning to Mr. Orton, he smilingly whispered a few words, and both of the gentlemen entered immediately into the spirit of the fun. President Orton was introduced to all of the operators, and to each he spoke pleasantly for a few moments, inquiring where each belonged and their prospects, present and future. His kindly face and pleasant talk won the hearts of all the employes, and it is possible that "Sherry" had some little compunction for the unusual mode of reception. Captain Sam and his braves were in turn introduced to the guests, and in true Indian fashion asked for "four bitta" to remember him by. Each of the Indians received a silver piece, and the guests took their departure, thus ending a very pleasant episode. "Sherry" greatly enjoyed the result of his "entertainment," but he could see from the look of chagrin on the face of Superintendent Bell that a day of reckoning was bound to come. Messrs. Orton and Stager left for San Francisco the same evening, and all of the employes that could do so went down to the depot to bid them good-bye. Mr. Bell took the party to California, and on his return interviewed the doughty "Sherry," who was prepared for the worst.

"I had intended to discharge you," said Mr. Bell, "and I told Mr. Orton so, but he would not listen to it, and insisted that he enjoyed his reception at the Virginia City office more than at any other point on



THE PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION IN VIRGINIA CITY OFFICE

the route; and that, instead of discharging the promoter of the entertainment, I should grant him thirty days' vacation with full pay."

This was a happy and unlooked-for denouement to the reception, and endeared President Orton more than ever to the little band of operators. It was not long afterward that these same wires, that had told of President Orton's journeying, conveyed the news of his untimely demise, followed soon after by that of General Stager; and no one regretted it more than the warm-hearted boys of the Virginia City office.

"Sherry" is now at Fremont, Ohio. Time and misfortune have not changed his dauntless and cheerful spirit; and to any visitor to his native town he will recount better than I have done how he welcomed the president to Nevada's metropolis.





## “WHAT’S ’ATIN’ YOU?”

**I**T will be interesting to the telegraphic fraternity to know that one of their craft is responsible for a number of so-called slang expressions and quaint sayings in daily usage, although the author crossed the River Styx many years ago.

James P. Doody was his name, and, as an operator, he ranked as a constellation by himself. Born of Irish parents, he had imbibed the true appreciation of the humorous for which that race is noted, and his life was apparently one huge and constant joke. He was well and favorably known in New Orleans, Memphis, and throughout the South generally, and during his telegraphic career he had traveled far and wide, always leaving some very pleasant remembrance behind him. He took much pride in his profession, and to him is accredited the saying: “Once an operator, always a gentleman.”

“What’s ’atin’ you?” is a very inelegant expression, and Jim seems to have been responsible for its introduction into polite society. He was working in Omaha at one time, and the late H. C. Maynard, of Chicago, was sending “C. U. B.” to him. The wire was working hard, and Jim had to break a good deal. This seemed to vex the sender, who ejaculated a little petulantly: “What’s the ‘18’ with you?” (which means in telegraphic parlance, What is the matter with you?). Jim quickly retorted: “What’s ’atin’ you?”

Some of the boys in the Chicago office overheard the remark by Mr. Maynard and Jim’s rejoinder, and almost immediately the phrase came into common usage among the operators of Chicago. The wires

soon conveyed the expression to the remotest parts of the country, until now it is not an uncommon thing to hear an Indian in Southern California assert his indignation by asking, "What's 'atin' you?"

One hears, very often, the expression, "I'll do it—nit," and would hardly think that Professor Morse's alphabet, purposely mutilated, made it possible to give birth to such a meaningless expression. Everybody knows that the letter "i" in telegraphic characters is represented by two dots, thus: ".."; and that the letter "o" is a dot, space and dot, thus: ". ."

Jim Doody, with his extravagant love for something new and odd, instead of replying to a question over the wire, "I cannot," or "I will not," would substitute intentionally an "i" for an "o," and say, "I cannit," or "I will nit." This was taken up by the railroad operators too; they in turn communicated it to the train hands, who, always ready and eager for something new, took it up and passed it along, until now one's ears are tortured by hearing it on every side. Even the negro minstrel seems to have found something ridiculously funny in Jim's idle remark, for there is an alleged joke going the rounds telling of a man who seemingly had no affection for his mother-in-law and was rebuked by his wife, who said: "Why, Charlie, mamma thinks a great deal of you. Just see her over there now in her room knitting a pair of stockings for you." To this Charlie sarcastically replies: "Yes, I like to see my mother-in-law—knit."

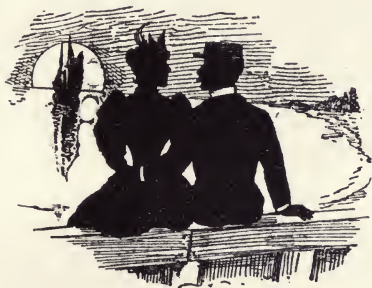
Many another slang saying originated in the fertile brain of Jim Doody. Some fell by the wayside and



were speedily choked up, but the few that I have mentioned seem to have fallen on good ground, for their spirit still goes marching on.

Bright, genial characters like Jim Doody are not met with every day, and their friendship and acquaintance do much to break and brighten the dull monotony of life and teach us to believe that

"A little nonsense, now and then,  
Is relished by the best of men."





## PIONEER AND MODERN TELEGRAPHY ON THE PACIFIC COAST

**P**RIOR to the year 1857, the science of signalling by telegraph in all the vast country north of California was confined to the very primitive method of campfires, so generally in vogue from time immemorial among the North American Indians. There was no "wig-wagging" or "telegraphing from balloons" in time of war in those days, but the gently ascending smoke of the fir tree, by day, or the sight of its flame by night, discernible a score of miles away, was among the tactics adopted by the early settlers as well as by the aborigines themselves.

When the news reached the '49ers in this part of the country of the exploits of the telegraph, the same being told by later comers to this country, the stories were generally discredited. Later on the enterprising newspapers of San Francisco received, contained a few hundred words of telegraph news from the East each day, but even this was not sufficient to satisfy the doubting ones, who could not conceive how it was possible to send letters and words over an inanimate piece of iron.

It was not until the year 1857 that a practical demonstration was made, when Messrs. Johnson and Robertson, two sound-operators, arrived in Portland and began soliciting subscriptions to build a line to California. They met with some success in raising funds and built a line through the dense woods up the Willamette valley as far as Dayton, Oregon; but at that point their funds and enthusiasm gave out simultaneously, and the enterprise was abandoned. Two years later a more determined effort was made by

J. E. Strong to build a line to connect the City of Portland with the California Telegraph Company, which then had for its northern terminus Yreka, in Siskiyou county, California, and which at that time was famous as a mining camp.

This line was completed to Eugene, Oregon, a distance of 125 miles, and there work was suspended and practically abandoned, owing to the loss of the ship *Ben Holladay*, which had on board the wire and other material for the completion of the line to Yreka, off the coast of Chili. In 1863 "Commodore" R. R. Haines, now manager of the Postal Telegraph Cable Company, at Los Angeles, Cal., was selected by Colonel James Gamble to prosecute the building of the line from Eugene south, to meet the California line. It is due to the Commodore's energy and intrepidity that the line was completed the following February. The wire used was number 9 in size, and the insulators were of the crudest and most primitive character. The country most all of the way is densely wooded, and the wire was to a large extent attached to timber.

Dr. O. P. S. Plummer, now a practicing physician of Portland, was the first manager of the Portland office. The doctor was a crack operator in those days, and could read more that "didn't come" than any operator in the country. He had been working the "overland" at San Francisco when the late James H. Guild, for so many years superintendent of the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Telegraph System, was operator at Carson City, Nevada. For the first six months of the doctor's administration in Portland, he was manager, operator, lineman and messenger. People soon got acquainted with the telegraph, and notwith-

standing the exorbitant rates a very good business was done. The rate from Portland to San Francisco was \$3.00 for ten words, and \$1.25 for each additional five words or fraction thereof. The rate to New York was \$8.50 for ten words, and 75 cents for each additional word. About this time there was a strong speculation in mining stocks, and the telegraph began to reap a golden harvest. More operators and other assistants were soon employed, and Portland became a leading factor in the California State telegraph system.

There was but little growth to the country or to the telegraph in Oregon up to 1882, when the writer first came here. One through wire to San Francisco, one way wire part of the way, and a railroad wire from Portland to Roseburg was practically the entire system. North of Portland was one lonely little wire which crossed the river at Vancouver, Washington, on a cable, and passed through a thick jungle following the Columbia River as far as Kalama, Washington. At this point there was a set of repeaters, and here is where the line branched off to Astoria on the west, and Seattle, Tacoma and Victoria on the north. When Portland wished to send to Astoria, the north was cut off, and vice versa, so that all the telegraphic facilities that the Territory of Washington had in 1882 was practically one-half of a wire, and that was amply sufficient for all purposes. An official of the Western Union Telegraph Company remarked to me about this time that if all the country north of California could be eliminated from that system, the company would be a great gainer thereby.

During this period Henry Villard was quietly prosecuting his Northern Pacific Railroad scheme,

and the eyes of Eastern capitalists were being turned yearningly toward the great Pacific Northwest. Railroad and telegraph lines were being built in every direction, many paralleling each other, and telegraphic affairs were booming. Much capital was brought into the country, and many fortunes were made, and I might add, parenthetically, as many were lost in this mad rush. The Portland office assumed metropolitan airs, and it became very soon the mecca for many a globe-trotting artist of the key. Many have basked in the gentle showers for which Oregon is so noted, and have gone away to tell the story to others, but many have remained and are sincere in their statements that "there is no country like it."

From the nucleus of less than 500 miles of pole line and 1,000 miles of wire in Oregon in 1882, we have today over 4,000 miles of pole line, 10,000 miles of wire.

About the spring of '87 there was a rumor of a rival company entering the field, but no credit was given to it, as it hardly seemed possible that an opposition company would defy the frowns of the dreaded Rockies and the uninviting appearance of the Bad Lands to come out this long distance to compete with the older company. But the appearance of Mr. Henry Rosener accompanied by Colonel A. B. Chandler about this time confirmed the report. The company prosecuted their work very vigorously under the direction of Messrs. Stronach, Atchison and Robeson, all expert line constructors.

The new company was seriously handicapped for quite a long time by its meager facilities, but its advent was warmly welcomed by the business men of the Coast, who gave the new enterprise a goodly share of

patronage. Now, however, they have outgrown their swaddling clothes, and are as businesslike and pretentious as even their older contemporary.

The total number of people depending upon the telegraph for a livelihood twenty-two years ago in this state was less than fifty, but now there is an army of at least 7,000 pursuing telegraphic, telephonic and other electrical avocations. The entire system is new and strictly up to date.

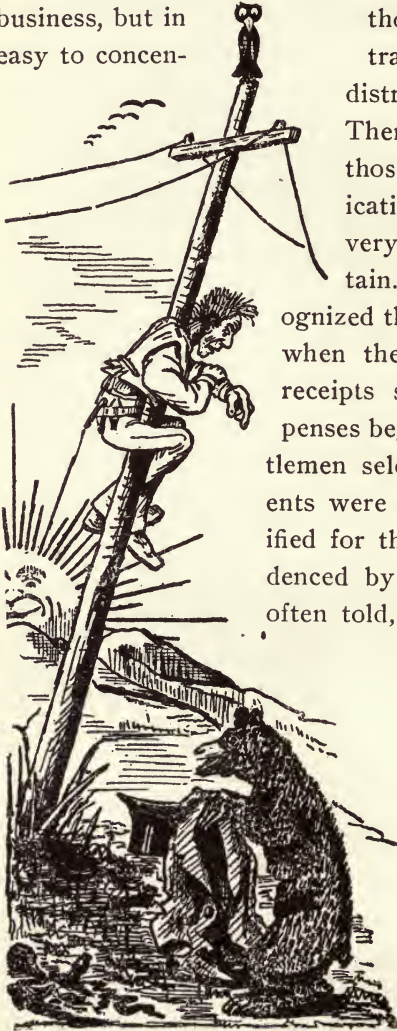
Although the telegraphic facilities were very meager during the latter '60s, the vast country west of Salt Lake City, operated by the Western Union Telegraph Company, which is administered now so ably by Mr. Frank Jaynes, superintendent at San Francisco, was then divided into five districts, all under Colonel James Gamble, of San Francisco.

Frank Bell was superintendent for the State of Nevada, and he had for his coadjutor the late Peter H. Lovell, who had charge of the White Pine line. This was a single-wire line that had been erected prior to the building of the Central Pacific Railroad, and which had for its ramifications many erstwhile prosperous mining camps which today are as completely wiped off the map of the "Silver State" as if they never had existed.

Commodore R. R. Haines was the superintendent of the Southern California and Arizona district, which extended from the Mojave Desert on the north, to Tucson, Arizona, in the east.

Dr. O. P. S. Plummer was the superintendent of the Oregon district; General F. H. Lamb was superintendent for Washington Territory and British Columbia, while Frank Jaynes looked out for Central California.

It would seem at first thought that there was a superabundance of officials for the company's facilities and business, but in those days it was not so easy to concen-



trate and handle such a district as it is today. There were no railroads in those times, and communication by steamer was very irregular and uncertain. The company recognized the important fact that when the line was down the receipts stopped and the expenses began; and the five gentlemen selected as superintendents were each eminently qualified for the position, as is evidenced by the stories that are often told, to this day, of their hardships and exploits in their respective districts.

A superintendent in those days did not have a "snap." There were no chief clerks, claim clerks, error clerks, stenographers, or any other such coterie of assistants that lighten the burdens of the modern



superintendent, but a practical knowledge of dots and dashes, and the ability to climb a pole were the qualifications and requirements essential to a successful superintendent.

The telegraph in Oregon has had its quaint as well as its useful side, but probably the funniest and most daring message that ever passed between a President and a Governor (although the occurrence took place several years ago, it is still fresh in the minds of many) was during the Coxie exodus. President Cleveland wired Governor Pennoyer some move relative to the militia, which called for the following terse but pointed telegram:

“Salem, Oregon, June 10, 1893.

“Grover Cleveland, Washington, D. C.:

“You mind your business and I’ll mind mine.

“SYLVESTER PENNOYER,

“Governor.”





## BILLY M'GINNISS' "WAKE."

SOME years ago a queer character named "Billy" McGinniss had charge of a section on one of our Western railroads. The original name of the station where he was located was "Hell-to-Pay," and it was known by that name for a long time; but with the completion of the railroad and the issuing of maps and time-cards, it was deemed advisable to change it to the more euphonious name of Eltopia.

Billy was Irish by birth, and he had a strong love for his native land, and it was with much chagrin that he found that his section men were all Germans, with not a single man from his own beloved country.

He was somewhat of an operator, having had for his tutor the irrepressible "Dick" Tubman, who was operator at the "front" during the construction of the road. And so it happened that Billy McGinniss would fill his subordinates with awe when he occasionally invited one or two of them to see him "touch the wire to Yakima."

Billy was a hard taskmaster, and he made it a point to see that his sturdy laborers did not "sojer" with their work. He had the reputation of getting more work out of his men than any other section foreman on the road. He gloried in his record, but his men cordially disliked him and his driving methods. The end came one day when Billy was laid low with a fever, and he expressed his conviction that his last hour had arrived. He called in his most trusty man, and to him he detailed his last wishes. The estate was not large, and, after sundry bequests, he devised that the sum of \$50 should be used for the purpose of holding a wake. Billy's last request was that this money should be spent in whisky, beer, cigars, pipes, tobacco and sandwiches, and that his section men

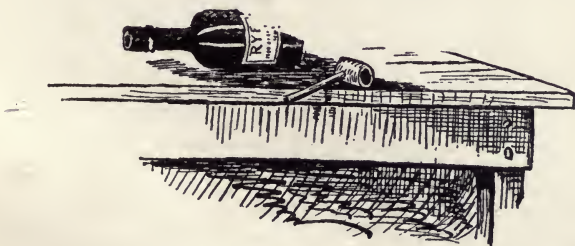
gather around his remains and “wake” him in the true “ould countrae” style. There were no other inhabi-



“BILLY TOUCHING THE WIRE TO YAKIMA”

tants excepting these German section men in this wild and lonely place, and the refreshments had to come from Spokane. Billy died as he had expected, and the section men proceeded in a conscientious manner to fulfill the last wishes of the departed. Pipes were filled, and beer and whisky glasses clinked merrily as the mourners drank "Ge soon tight" to Billy. They would fill their glasses and then walk over to where the corpse was laid out, and, mournfully shaking their heads, would solemnly drain the contents, and then proceed to refill their pipes.

It is said to be the custom on occasions of this kind to recount the good deeds of the deceased and to bewail his demise, but, try as hard as they might, the Germans could not recall a single noble deed that they could commend. This fact seemed to smite their consciences, for the men did not think that it was quite right to partake of Billy's hospitality and not even say a good word to his memory. A liberal libation finally quickened the heavy brain of the Teutronics, and at a signal from their leader each replenished his glass and gathered around the bier, assuming a grotesque, mournful air. Gazing at Billy's countenance, every trace of past resentment seemed to disappear as the spokesman ejaculated: "Vell, Pilly vas a goot schmoker, anyvay!"





## A MESSENGER BOY'S TRIP TO LONDON

**I**T was midnight in the City of San Francisco, and that gay metropolis was alive with pleasure-seekers returning home from their various places of amusement for which that city is far famed.

In the district messenger office on Sutter street, near Kearney, messenger No. 47, known to the force as "Chicken," had just gotten back from a "dig" to the Presidio.

"Chicken" had returned but a few minutes when a richly attired lady entered the office, accompanied by a 4-year-old girl, and asked the clerk to let her engage the brightest messenger on the force.

No. 47 was called, and the lady looked at him with a critical eye, and, apparently satisfied with her inspection, said: "I have a very important mission to send you on, and money is no object in this matter. I was on my way to Australia with my little daughter here, and I was to leave tomorrow, but this afternoon I received a cablegram, advising me to return to London or send my little girl home, as much depended on it. It is impossible for me to go, as I have engaged a stateroom for tomorrow's steamer for Australia, leaving here at 8.20 A. M., and I want to send my daughter by you to London, England, with tomorrow night's train.

"I will pay you well for your trouble, and we will now proceed to figure up the expense. The fare to New York, including meals and sleeping berths, will not exceed \$150—we will call it \$200. Now, you will require some new clothes and a trunk, say \$100 more. For your expenses across the Atlantic and back I will allow \$400. Then your return fare to San Francisco,

\$200 more, and, let me see—your time, and an extra fee for good service; say, altogether, \$1,000. I will give you a check for that amount now, and I will expect you to start for London by tomorrow night's train."

"Chicken" was surprised and delighted with the anticipated trip and with the very liberal fee that he was to receive, and the more he thought of it, the greater was his joy.

The lady figured with the clerk how much "Chicken's" time would amount to for a month, and generously handed over a check for \$100 for the boy's services.

After kissing the little girl good-by, and cautioning the boy to be careful with his charge the lady departed, and "Chicken" took the car for his home, accompanied by the little girl.

Arriving there, "Chicken" imparted to his father his good luck. The old gentleman, however, was a close figurer, and he saw an opportunity of purchasing the corner grocery store on which he had had his eye for a long time. He scouted the idea that the boy needed any new clothes, and asserted that a tourist sleeper was good enough for anyone, and that a basket or two of provisions were all the meals necessary for the boy and his charge. A steerage passage across the ocean would be a picnic for the boy, and \$150 would cover all the expenses of the trip, thus leaving him the balance to purchase the grocery store.

"Chicken" hardly liked the turn that affairs had taken, but he feared his father's ire and resolved to make the best of it.

Bright and early the next day father and son were up, and long before banking hours they were down



town. They stopped en route at Spear-street wharf, and there "Chicken" caught a last glimpse of the lady, who waved her handkerchief to him from the departing steamer.

Promptly at 10 o'clock the twain appeared at the Nevada Bank, upon which the check was drawn, and were curtly informed that the maker of the check was unknown. This deeply incensed the old man, who fell to belaboring his son with his cane, in the midst of which "Chicken" awoke and found that his comrades had been putting ice down his back during his sleep.





## A PIUTE DETECTIVE

### Tale of a Nevada Telegraph Operator

**T**O the dense mind of our North American Indian a joke is an unknown quantity, and it is quite certain that he could not appreciate one were he to meet it alone and unlabeled coming down the street or in the woods. To him everything is stern reality, and he has little time for a joker or his fun. All Indian legends and traditions, when related by themselves, are told in a semi-poetic manner, but stripped entirely of anything that would in the least smack of the jocose. Whether it was really an accident, or designed, that a Piute squaw made the hero of this sketch the victim of a practical joke, I will leave the reader to decide.

A quarter of a century ago there was no better known operator in the Canadas, Buffalo, Chicago, Omaha or St. Louis than George E. Millar. He was large in stature and big of heart. He was the office poet and the author of many a humorous story, and his presence in any office was considered an acquisition. About 1878 he was chief operator for the Atlantic & Pacific Telegraph Company in St. Louis, but, filled with a desire to improve his condition, and believing that he could do so in the Far West, he accepted the managership of the Pioche, Nevada, office, which place was then at the height of its mining prosperity. Two years later found him at Austin, Nevada, a solid little city of about 2,000 inhabitants. A burg in an Eastern state of only 2,000 population would be reckoned as a place of little revenue to a telegraph company, but things were different in Nevada. Out of the 2,000 inhabitants of Austin there

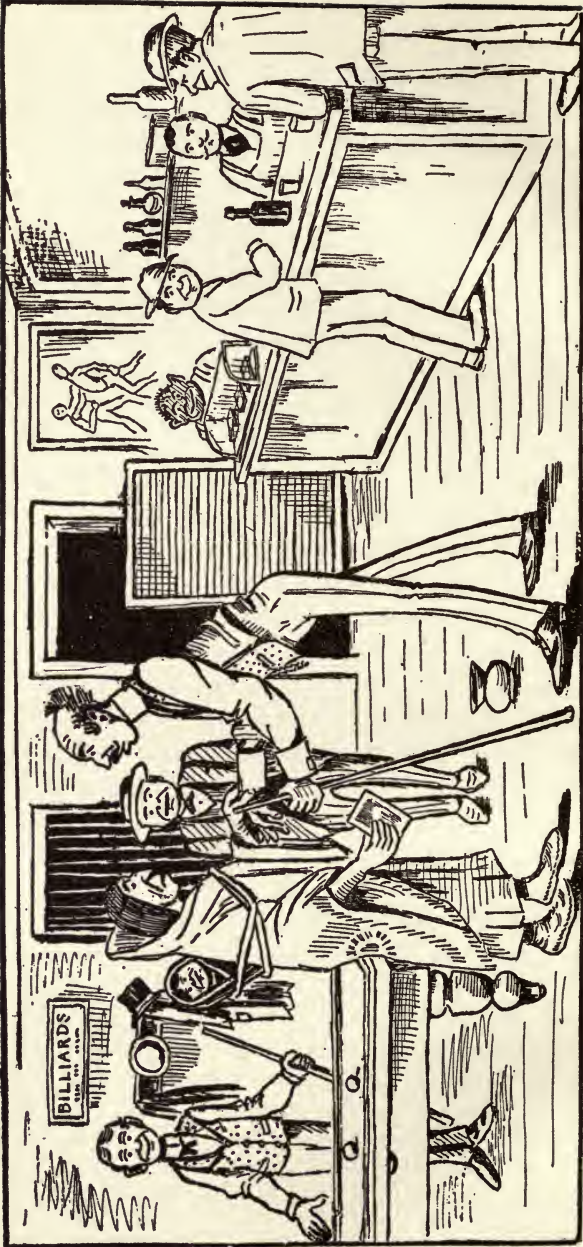
were 1,977 men and about two dozen women and children. The population was a very cosmopolitan one, being composed of all shades, colors and conditions under the sun. Outside of a few storekeepers the entire working population were miners, and the camp was a rich one.

Among these miners one might find doctors, lawyers, professors, clerks, musicians and every grade of genteel or laborious vocations, working side by side with never a jar. There was not the usual roystering and riotousness in Austin that so generally prevails in other mining camps. Women were few, and such a thing as a hired girl was out of the question, for the men of Austin were by far too gallant to allow a woman to work. As soon as one came to the town she was besieged by the "philosophers" with offers to marry, and such women were soon mated. It was no easy task, therefore, to supply the demand for domestics, as even the Chinese were above working in the kitchen in those days, and the housewife in her needs was forced to fall back on the sturdy Piute squaw.

The belle of this little community was the mayor's daughter, and naturally enough she received attention on all sides. Nevertheless George soon found favor in her eyes. Miss Margaret was arbitrary in her demands for her lover's attention, and he rarely attempted to remain away from her longer than was necessary. One evening he was prevailed upon by one of his friends to pass a few hours in playing a social game of billiards. George was for a time unable to decide between love for his old pastime and the duty he owed to his affianced. Yielding to his friend's solicitations, however, he consented to while away the evening with him and not to make any apology to

Miss Margaret till the morrow. Margaret had arranged differently, for, after waiting until the usual time for George to put in an appearance, she called in her Piute squaw to assist in bringing the recalcitrant George to time. A happy thought struck her, and she immediately began to put it into execution. Going to her photograph album, she produced a picture of George and his friend, whom she suspected of being accessory to his delinquency. "See, Mahala," she cried, "look here! You see this big man with littee hair on his head. Now you see this littee man? You go down town and find them, and tell them to come home quick; I want to see them."

Mahala seemed quickly to take in the situation, and flinging her papoose over her shoulder started down town to find the truant lover. She first visited the hotel, and there became an object of attention with the miners. She approached each one, and after earnestly consulting his features, would scan the photograph, and, with a shake of her head, pass on to the next one. She went through the bar-room, out into the street, and into the next refectory, where the same routine was gone through with. After a tiresome search of more than an hour, she entered the well-appointed billiard parlor of "Jack" Frost, which was filled by the devotees of that pastime. Holding the photograph in her outstretched hands, and with her embryo savage on her back, she presented a ludicrous picture, and as a detective she would have put any member of the Pinkerton force to shame. She glanced around, and presently her quick eye lighted on George, who was at the end of the room. Evidently she could not believe the testimony of her sight, as she glanced at the picture and then at George. The latter



"UGH! YOU 'SQUAW, SHE LONG TIME NO SEE YOU; YOU GO HOME MUCHA QUICK."

was innocently watching his friend attempting to make a difficult "masse" shot. Approaching the unsuspecting George, Mahala ejaculated in her guttural tones, distinguishable to all in the room: "Ugh, you squaw, she long time no see you; you go home mucha quick." A glance at the photograph was enough to tell the story, and a laugh from the bystanding "philosophers" showed that it was appreciated by them. Mahala was dismissed, and cigars and refreshments were ordered by George, who speedily sought the road to Margaret's domicile, and it never occurred again that it was necessary to press Mahala into the detective service.







## ACROSS THE SIERRAS

“GIVE me liberty or give me death,” was the slogan of the great and patriotic Virginian, and the sentiment has thundered down the ages of time ever since, until the breast of every schoolboy has beaten in response to the inspired Patrick Henry.

“Uncle Sam” is an indulgent parent and is always kind enough to provide Sunday and holiday hours for all of his employes, and so it happened that the post-office in the City of San Francisco was open to the public only between the hours of 10 A. M. and 12 M. of a bright Sunday morning. There was an unusually large crowd gathered in and around the depository of the mail. Merchants, great and small, elbowed with their clerks; bankers, stenographers, male and female, with a fair sprinkling of wealthy and refined ladies, had gathered to receive their letters, being too impatient to wait on the more tardy carrier of the morrow. It was a very cosmopolitan assemblage, and one that could be seen no place in the world except in San Francisco.

Mounted on a dry goods box, on the corner opposite the postoffice, was a strange, intense-looking man. He was surveying the immense assemblage, evidently not looking for any particular person, but viewing the crowd as a whole. Suddenly and with the roar of a lion, the man drew a revolver from his hip pocket, and in a hoarse voice distinguishable throughout the multitude, he cried out: “Gimme notoriety or gimme death!” The words were immediately followed by the report of a pistol. One, two, three, four, five, six, they rang out and a great shout went up from the crowd.

"I'm shot!" "I'm killed!" was the cry that went out from many throats. The bloodthirsty villain was speedily thrown from his perch on top of the dry goods box and dragged into an adjacent saloon. Cries of "Hang him!" went up from the crowd and a rush was made to seize him, but the timely arrival of the "hurry-up wagon" which conveyed the man to the Tombs saved his life.

At the prison the man gave his name as "Hank" Bogardus, and his business that of a comedian. He sent for his friend, Marcus Wiggin, and the two were closeted for an hour. Appearances looked very blue for Bogardus, but it was observed that Mr. Wiggin had a merry twinkle in his eye as he left the prisoner's cell, which was not considered ominous for the prisoner.

It was found that notwithstanding the close proximity of Bogardus to the crowd, and the apparent deliberation of his aim, there was really not a person who could show a scratch on his body. To be sure, there were holes through different persons' hats and coats shown in evidence of narrow escapes, and one man displayed an alleged bullet-hole in his trousers which indicated that he had had his back to the enemy, but there was not a single drop of blood shed.

The morning journals vied with each other in their accounts of the dastardly occurrence. Pictures of Banker Brown, who had his silk hat shot off his head, and a cut of Dr. Pillbox, who exhibited a bullet-hole just one-fourth of an inch above his heart, and a diabolical-looking illustration of the would-be homicide were among the chief items of news the following morning. All the papers were loud in their denunciations of the prisoner and his attempt to commit wholesale murder, and labored editorials were pub-

lished essaying to find a severe enough punishment to meet the crime.

The hero of all this excitement remained in his cell all night, calm, serene and even smiling, which betokened, according to all the traditions of the police department, a great hardness of heart.

The courtroom was filled the following morning by a large crowd of curious people anxious to see the prisoner and hear the full particulars of the shooting. There were present, also, many witnesses against the prisoner, with their Sunday clothes in evidence. Many wore their war-stained hats proudly, and some brought their tattered garments carefully wrapped up to present as testimony against the prisoner.

As Bogardus entered the courtroom loud mutterings greeted him on all sides. It was evident that the people were highly wrought up, and nothing but "Bogy's" blood would satisfy them.

Attorney Wiggin smiled through it all. After the charge had been read and the enormity of the crime had been expatiated upon by the prosecuting attorney, Mr. Wiggin arose for the defense.

He said he would prove that his client was not a murderer; that his pistol was loaded with blank cartridges; that the prisoner was a practical joker and that the day of the shooting was the first of April. It is hardly necessary to add that Mr. Wiggin succeeded in fully establishing his client's innocence of any intentional crime, and he was immediately released from custody. He wanted notoriety and he got lots of it and to spare. The heroes who had displayed the alleged bullet-holes were heroes no longer, and those who could left town until the affair was forgotten by their friends.





# Digging Wells by Telephone.

**T**HERE have been many curious and interesting stories told about Thomas A. Edison, but the following has never before appeared in print:

In the late '70s Willis J. Cook, affectionately remembered by all old-timers as "Biff" Cook, arrived in Omaha direct from New York City. "Biff" was a handsome young fellow, easy of manner, with the jauntiest of airs, and fully capable of being equally at home in the presence of even such an august personage as a railroad president as with a section foreman. "Biff's" apparel was always well fitting and of the best fabric, but his wardrobe was never too bulky, and to fill up the recesses of his trunk he had curios of all kinds and descriptions. He possessed much admiration for Walter P. Phillips, and every article from that gentleman's pen found its way into "Biff's" scrap-book. One of his most interesting relics was some hundred or more sheets of "press" copies by the "stars" of those days, and it may be imagined that some of this copy could hardly be reproduced in these days of "mill" writing. Occasionally "Biff" would show these sacred pages to a dear friend, and together they would debate as to the relative merits of the different "copy." There were representations from all over the country, including specimens from such

artists as Thos. P. Wheeler and John L. Cassidy, of St. Louis; C. H. H. Cottrell, of New Orleans; Ernest W. Emery and M. J. Burke, of Salt Lake; W. A. Manning, of Cleveland; Thos. H. Berry and Frank Medina, of San Francisco; Thomas R. Taltavall, of New York; James C. Delong, of Chicago, and many other bright satellites. But of all his treasures "Biff" prized most highly a half-dozen diagrams with accompanying notations in the well-known handwriting of Thomas A. Edison. He told us the history of these drawings one night in about the following words:

"It was in '74 and '75 that Ned Fullum, Jim Largay, Fred Baldwin and myself were nightly detailed to report at Edison's office, where we put in three to five hours 'dotting on the quadruplex.' Of course it was a snap, for many times we would not have a thing to do, for Edison would be engaged in working out some apparently difficult problem, and us boys would sit around and tell stories. Edison was just beginning to make himself known in telegraphic and electrical circles, and one evening I told him that he was getting up a great reputation as an inventor; and I observed that a paper down at Sandusky, O., had recently printed an item, alleged to be humorous, to the effect that he could invent anything at all, even to a machine which if merely talked into would bore a hole in the ground deep enough for a well. Edison gave a little chuckle, and sat down at his desk and straightway fell to figuring and drawing all sorts of diagrams. A half hour or so afterward he came over to me with these very same drawings in his hand and remarked: 'Well,

here you are. Here is your automatic well-digger.' Edison then illustrated his diagrams, saying: 'You have here a transmitter, similar to the telephone. By speaking through this transmitter the vibrations of your voice revolve a cogwheel which moves into another, that into another ad infinitum, all gaining momentum and velocity as they move along. At the end of numerous cogs and kinks there is placed a gimlet and it merely depends upon how long you wag your jaw to determine how deep the well will be—but, my boy, where would be its commercial value?' "

Years have elapsed since then; the bright spirit of Willis J. Cook has passed on and the "Wizard of Menlo Park" has solved much more difficult problems than digging wells by telephone.







## ENTERPRISE IN EMERGENCY

**I**T is not of recent years only that the great dailies of New York City showed unmistakable enterprise in endeavoring to serve their readers with the very latest news and from any clime under the sun. The correspondents were just as alert and keen to scoop their rivals 30 years ago, and hardships were not reckoned in the premises when there was an opportunity to get ahead of a competitor.

It was in the year 1867 that the whole country was more or less agog with excitement regarding the annexation of Alaska, and news of the favorable termination of that commission was looked forward to with much interest. The New York Herald, then under the management of the elder Bennett, took the lead as a purveyor of news, and expense cut little figure when it came to furnishing its readers with the latest intelligence. The proprietors of the other big dailies of New York were equally ready, but hardly as enterprising as Mr. Bennett.

The American commissioners were to leave San Francisco on the old side-wheeler Sierra Nevada for Sitka, Alaska, where they were to meet the Russian commissioners and make the final arrangements for the formal session of the vast territory of Alaska. Some 20 or more representatives of the press accompanied the American commissioners, all the leading papers of the country and some foreign journals being among the representation. They were the brightest men on their respective staffs. The New York Herald's correspondent was Mr. Timothy O'Shaughnessy, who was well known under the nom de plume of "Dr. Byron Adonis." He was a tall, well-built Irishman, 30 years of age, possessed of indomitable

energy and always ready with some expedient in cases of emergency.

The commissioners of the two great nations met in Sitka and speedily transacted their business; and the Sierra Nevada steamed away on her return trip. The first telegraphic station en route was Victoria, V. I., and it was at this point that all the newspaper correspondents hoped to file their specials; and as business was done at a telegraph office in about the same form as is usually in vogue at the present time in a barber shop, "First come, first served," they were all determined to make a mighty effort to be the first served.

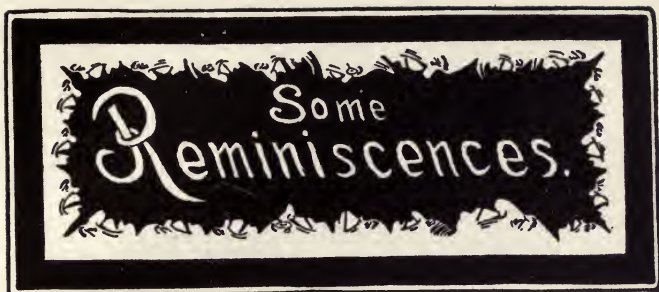
A short distance out from Sitka, the Sierra Nevada broke her shaft and she was obliged to make the journey with one paddle, and when the ship reached Nanaimo she put in for repairs. This place is 40 miles from Victoria and the only means of reaching the latter place overland was through a trackless forest. "Byron Adonis" sized up the situation in an instant and resolved to get to Victoria some way. He departed unnoticed, and after a most perilous and thrilling experience, he arrived at Victoria, hatless, bootless and with his clothes torn to tatters, as the result of his encounter with the heavy underbrush. John Henderson, now of Portland, Ore., was the manager and only operator at Victoria at this time, and he was laid up with a broken limb. "Byron Adonis," as he rushed in on Henderson, with his fiery red hair standing on end, a roll of manuscript in his hand and with a "whoop-la" demanding that it be transmitted immediately, was an apparition indeed. When Henderson recovered from

his surprise he informed the correspondent that the line was down. Overwhelmed with chagrin and disappointment, "Byron" asked what was to be done next, and was told that he could probably get some of the siwashes to row him over to the mainland, some 20 miles distant, where he could no doubt get his matter through.

Without further parley the correspondent rushed away, and speedily struck a bargain with a couple of Indians to row him over to Swinomish, Wash., where he filed his specials for the New York Herald, which were published the following morning in that paper and telegraphed back to the Pacific Coast papers. The special was full and comprehensive, and of course the score or more of other papers were badly scooped, so they did not file any of their matter after this, as "Byron Adonis" had done it up brown. This was a red-letter day in O'Shaughnessy's history. He returned to Victoria, where he celebrated his success in high style. The Herald seemed to have appreciated their indefatigable correspondent's enterprise, for he was rewarded by being appointed resident correspondent for that journal in the City of Mexico.

Although this occurrence took place more than 30 years ago, there are residents of the staid little city of Victoria who remember and speak of the time when red-haired "Byron Adonis" scooped all his contemporaries by his exercise of "enterprise in emergency."





## Some Reminiscences.

**T**HE hero of this sketch became an operator in 1860 and was among the first to offer his services to his country for \$125 per month and rations, to put down the rebellion. He still holds to the belief, however, that his letter of application which cited the fact that he did not indulge in any "spiritual" liquors was the prime factor in his being accepted and placed under General Thomas T. Eckert's jurisdiction. This was 40 years ago, and Fred Loomis, the bright lad of that period, is rapidly growing into the sere and yellow leaf.

Fred's experience extends beyond the confines of the operating-room, for he has held many responsible positions with the different railroad companies. At one time he was conductor on a railroad in Nevada. The road had once been very prosperous and had been a valuable piece of property, but the decline in silver killed it. Fred was conductor of the accommodation train and it was indeed what its name stated—an accommodation train. The train was bound north one day and was half way on its journey over a stretch of 100 miles, when a lady boarded it at a station named Diamond Springs. She had ridden ten miles or so

when she discovered that she was going in the wrong direction. Hastily calling the conductor, she told him of her mistake. "Oh, you want to go to Eureka instead of Palisades, do you? Well, that is all right. I will



fix it for you." And ringing for the train to stop, he directed the engineer to reverse his engine and start south with his solitary passenger.

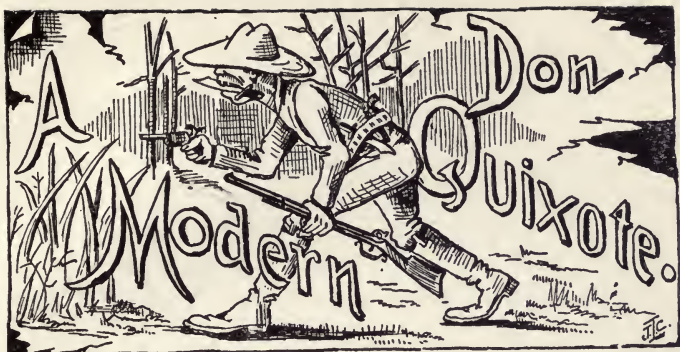
Some time afterward Fred left Nevada and was offered a passenger run on a more prosperous Pacific road. He had a friend in the person of the president of the road who seemed to have all confidence in Fred's

ability to run any kind of a train. It was different, however, being conductor of a combination freight, express and passenger, with a little dinkey engine, and a great modern train of a dozen or more cars. Fred was all right, he thought, after he got it started, but exactly how to start such a train he did not know. The hour for departure of his first train had arrived. The engine had whistled, signifying that all was ready, but Fred was in a quandary how to start the ponderous mass. He solved the problem, however, when he called out to his brakeman: "I say, there, brakie, you give the engineer the 'usual sign' to go ahead."

Loomis was once ticket agent for a Western road. There was an old lady who traveled a good deal, always accompanied by a little boy for whom she purchased a half-fare ticket. The twain made the trips quite often, and Fred became well acquainted with the old lady, but the boy he could not see excepting the top of his head. Reaching out of his ticket window one day to pat the small boy on the head, he accidentally let his fingers rest on the urchin's chin for a moment, and then quickly ejaculated: "Why, little Jimmie, you are badly in need of a shave." The old lady paid full fare for "Little Jimmie" thereafter.







**A** YOUTHFUL mind is quick to grasp impressions, good or bad, and flashy and trashy novels in the hands of the youth go a long way toward cultivating impressions which, once formed, are very difficult to eradicate. There is perhaps no greater reader of rosy-tinted literature than is the modern telegraph messenger, and it very frequently occurs that the youngster's idea of life is gleaned from the pages of his favorite author, and such heroes as "Snaky Snodgrass" and "Cheyenne Charlie" are as realistic to him as are the more sedate but

reliable stories of George Washington and Andrew Jackson.

Some years ago there lived in the City of Cleveland a boy named Sim Blossom, who worked in the capacity of messenger for the telegraph company. Sim was an ardent devourer of yellow-backed literature, and he generally spent all his "tips" in acquir-



ing a library of his beloved authors, and every spare moment he would devote to the perusal of these works. After a careful study of this sort of fiction for several months, Sim could see how he could improve on the methods in vogue for recapturing the stolen heiresses from the doughty redskins, and he longed to be out with his rifle and other paraphernalia of Indian warfare and hunt the Comanche in his den, and the blood-thirsty Sioux in his lair, so to speak. He was particularly anxious to appear at some time as a hero and to have his deeds of valor "go thundering down the ages." Sim at various times had imparted to his youthful associates his plan, which was to provide himself with a complete armament both for the defensive and offensive, and go to Ogallalla or Beowawe, where he thought he would go at once into the business of reducing the Indian population. Several of his companions expressed a desire to go into business with him, and all began their preparations for this long journey.

Sim was 19 years old, tall and lank, with very cross eyes, which gave him a rather villainous appearance, but he was far from being a desperado. In fact, he had an unmistakable belief in the "bogie-man" and other such bugaboos of childhood; but strong in the belief that his mission was a worthy one and that he would be crowned with glory and laurels, he departed quietly one evening with a ticket in his pocket, the destination of which was Omaha. His companions backed out at the last moment, but Sim was not to be daunted, so he set out alone. He brought with him a goodly supply of his favorite books to study en route, and his accoutrements were numerous and varied. He had a big rifle to kill big Indians and two smaller side arms with which to dispose of the squaws and pa-

pooses. He brought quite an assortment of knives with him, consisting of bowies, Barlows and sundry razors, evidently expecting to do business with some of the colored population. He had forgotten nothing that he thought might render him very formidable to the red men of the plains.

I will not dwell upon the experiences and vicissitudes of our hero after his arrival at Omaha. He found the people of that thriving city just like the denizens of Euclid avenue of his

own city. A trifle more independent and prosperous, perhaps, but just as peaceful and order-loving. He was made much sport of by the loungers around the depot, who wished to examine his "layout," and in the course of this inspection some unkind frontiersman appropria-



"THE BIGGEST INJUN  
IN OMAHA"



SIM IN THE WILDS OF  
OMAHA

ated his most sacred stock in trade, his favorite novels.

Not having anything to refer to, he was entirely at sea as to what to do. For several days Sim wandered around Omaha aimlessly. He had been convinced that his errand was a foolish one, and he was now anxious to return home.

Meek and hungry he finally reached home, but he never went to visit his former associates at the telegraph office.

These occurrences took place many years ago and more wisdom has fallen to the lot of Sim Blossom. He has not, however, overcome his love for gore, for he is now following the avocation of "peanut butcher" on one of the "Big Four" trains.



## OYSTERS CAUSE WIRE TROUBLE

**O**N the Atlantic Coast and throughout the Middle States, when there is any trouble with the wires it is generally occasioned by the elements. It may be ice and sleet in the winter, and it may be a heavy wind or rain storm during the summer months; but most interruptions to the wires are due to some such causes, and the lineman does not look for anything out of the usual run of things in trying to locate a break. It seems that the conditions of things is different on the Pacific Coast. Imagine a line repairer in the East looking for wire trouble with a feather duster in hand and having feather dusters as part of his outfit or accoutrement. It is not at all unusual, however, to have such an incident occur in the southern part of Oregon.

Some years ago the wires between Roseburg, Ore., and the California line had not been working well for some months and the chief operator at Portland was nonplussed to determine what the trouble was. Every repairer that he had sent over the line had reported the wires free from obstruction, but for several hours in the morning there would be a heavy "ground," which would disappear as the day advanced, only to come in again toward evening. The chief made a personal trip over the line, and upon close inspection of several poles discovered that they were covered with a thick mass of cobwebs. There was generally a heavy fog in the morning and evening and the thick fog on this mass of cobwebs formed a very good "ground."

The different linemen were speedily equipped with feather dusters and were given instructions to care-

fully brush away the cobwebs from each pole, and the mysterious trouble disappeared.

Some linemen would be apt to object to carrying with them the paraphernalia of a housemaid; but even such cases of wire interruptions are not so ludicrous as the following, which recently occurred in Portland:

Superintendent Thatcher, of the Oregon Telephone Company, was at work one day in his private office when a young Englishman rushed in and exclaimed excitedly: "The oysters are interfering with your wires." "What do you mean?" said Mr. Thatcher. "Just what I say," replied the man. "The oysters are at your poles, and your wires will soon be all on the ground." This was an entirely new experience for the superintendent, so he proceeded to investigate. On his way down street he met a reporter for the Oregonian in search of an item and he acquainted him with the singular case of alleged line trouble. The reporter in turn communicated the fact to some bystanders, all of whom joined the procession to the scene of the trouble. Several blocks away there was a new building in the course of erection and the Britisher triumphantly pointed out to the bewildered telephone superintendent the spectacle of a hoisting derrick elevating material to the fourth story of the building, and ejaculated: "There, see the 'oysters and the 'oisting machine; they will surely break down all your wires!"

The cause of all this great commotion was not the succulent bivalve, so instead of engaging a French chef's services, Superintendent Thatcher sent for a lineman to act in an official capacity.

## THE CARSON CANNING COMPANY

**T**HE State of Nevada is not remarkable for its diversified industries, and agriculture exists there only as the wants of the people demand it. Mining is the chief industry, and the great markets of California are ransacked to furnish food and raiment for the sister state. It is no wonder then that the following advertisement in the Carson Appeal occasioned a little surprise in the minds of the citizens of that beautiful little city:

CARSON CANNING COMPANY.  
OFFICE:  
TELEGRAPH CIGAR STORE,  
CARSON, NEVADA.

The location of the office of this new company seemed to somewhat solve the question, for the proprietor, Jim Farrell, always had a bright eye open for any possible chance of capturing the nimble dollar, and he was ably assisted by his coadjutor, Jack Marshall. Stocks were booming, and the people of Carson merely gave the advertisement a passing glance, turning their attention to the more engrossing topic of the rise in the mining market. The card continued to appear in the columns of the Appeal and the office of the Telegraph Cigar Store received daily, by mail, catalogues, price-lists, etc., from different manufacturers all over the country. Some of these tradesmen had lithographs to offer, some had new brands and styles of tomato and other cans to sell, but all wanted to do business with the new concern.

There seemed, however, to be an air of mystery surrounding the Carson Canning Company, and neither of the twain who comprised the company was disposed to say much about it. Both were great jokers, but in what manner they proposed to perpetrate their fun was difficult to determine. However, it all came out one day.

The San Francisco train brought with it one morning a dapper little drummer from the Bay City. He registered at the Ormsby Hotel, where he inquired for the location of the Carson Canning Company, and was directed to the Telegraph Cigar Store. Repairing there, he met the urbane and smiling Jim Farrell, whom he plied with numerous questions. He stated that he represented a label firm in San Francisco, who were anxious to do business with the Carson Canning Company, and he wished to display his wares and samples, which he had brought with him. Jim told him there was to be a meeting of the board of directors of the company that evening at 7 o'clock, and if he wished he might attend it and canvass the matter with the board. The drummer promised to be on hand promptly, and Farrell lost no time in sending for Jack Marshall, and the pair had a secret conference, the result of which was that the services of half a dozen Indian boys were secured. They were to be on hand at 7 o'clock that evening at Farrell's office, each boy bringing along two Indian dogs, and the canning company would do the rest. A large number of oyster cans, fruit cans, dishpans and other varied tinware in a more or less dilapidated state were secured and placed in the back room of the office, ready for business.



Promptly at 7 o'clock the drummer appeared at Farrell's office to meet the board of directors. He was in an especially good humor in anticipation of a handsome order from the canning company. He treated the loungers-about very liberally, and then requested to be introduced to the board of directors. "I will now introduce you to the whole plant," said Jack Marshall, and he disappeared into the next room, from whence he soon emerged, accompanied by a shower of dogs waist-deep, each canine having attached to his caudal appendage an article in the tin-can line. At a signal from Jack, there was a temporary dispersion of the board of directors, who made way for the canines, who disappeared to view down the street in clouds of cans and dust. "This is the Carson Canning Company, and you see we are plentifully supplied with labels, and will not require anything in your line at present," said Jack to the very much astonished drummer. The latter took the joke very good-naturedly, and his firm, too, appreciated it. The columns of the Appeal, however, no longer contain the card of the Carson Canning Company. Its mission seems to have been fulfilled.





# Bran Again.

**J**IM BRANAGIN was the night operator at Hamburg. There was nothing remarkable in this fact, as Hamburg had been the starting point for many an embryotic "Bert Ayres"; and neither can it be stated positively that Hamburg derived its name from being the nursery of this kind of talent.

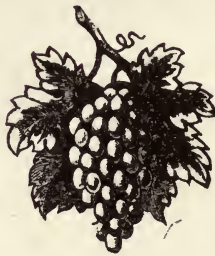


Like all up-to-date night operators, Jim was the acknowledged leader in his little community, and quite curious were some of his assertions.

One evening he related to his guileless listeners, who flocked around the depot after train time, how he came to be named Branagin. "You see," said Jim, "my forefathers were born in Ireland, in the County Tipperary; and were for many generations millers by trade. The farmers would bring in their wheat to be ground and they always received honest and fair treatment; and being known as honest and upright, they always prospered. One day, however, misfortune came. A neighboring farmer brought a load of wheat to be ground into flour. When he called the following day to get his grist, he was surprised and nonplussed to find that he had a quantity of bran, but not a particle of flour to show for his wheat. He was assured


that this was the result of the grind just as they received it; so he went away, but not altogether satisfied. Shortly afterward this same farmer brought another load of wheat to the mill to be ground. His consternation and disappointment were great when he discovered that the result was exactly the same as before. 'What,' he exclaimed, 'bran agin, bran agin.' And the name of Branagin was given to the world forevermore."

It is not generally known under what flag Jim is now traveling, but the night operators at Hamburg may hear this story related by the loungers there to the present day.





# Colonel Dickey's Paper Weight.



**F**ARTHER back than even the present old-timer can remember, the route between Chicago and San Francisco had been repeatedly traversed by Aaron B. Hillicker; his fine, artistic penmanship, his rapid sending, his merry laugh and jokes were well known. Hillicker was a man of good education and breeding, possessing rare musical talent, and considerable ability as a comedian. This latter qualification he brought into use occasionally when positions were scarce in the telegraph service. Aaron was a great romancer, and he was prone to delude the "tenderfoot" who had aspirations to travel with the setting sun.

He related a story one evening that vied in blood-curdling and romantic finale with the deeds of the renowned "Leather-Stocking." He stated that prior to the completion of the Union Pacific railroad, he was night operator at North Platte, Nebraska. The Indians were very hostile, and their particular animosity seemed to be directed against the men of the telegraph. One night he was startled by a call from the operator at Julesburg, the nearest station west, who told him to run for his life, as the Indians, fifty in number, and mounted, were traveling in his direction and would reach him by daylight. Hillicker

waited till the break of day, when looking towards the west, he observed a troop of mounted men rapidly approaching the station, and decided that they must be the looked-for Indians. Hastily descending into a cellar, he went through a subterranean passage till he reached the Platte river. Here his canoe was in hiding, and into it he embarked, pushing it out into the stream, where the current of the river speedily distanced the Indians, and brought him to a haven of safety.

The story was greatly embellished, and it made an impression upon one of his hearers, who undertook to verify it, and a few days after visited the prosperous little city of North Platte, where he inspected the Platte river and its "current." He returned, convinced that the railroad agent's description of the river—"It is a thousand miles long and two inches deep"—fully described it, and he was further of the opinion that Aaron had been romancing again.

Hillicker told a story shortly afterward, which was intensely interesting. "As I was going from Omaha to Salt Lake City, I stopped off en route to visit my friend, 'Nip' Jones, at Cheyenne. 'Nip' was a great hunter and an all-round sportsman, and about the first thing he asked me to do was to go hunting with him. We provided ourselves plentifully with eatables and started out, meeting with fair success. We camped for lunch near a stream, along the banks of which grew some cottonwood trees, and there we spread our repast. We did full justice to the meal, but there were a couple of ham sandwiches left over, which, not caring to pack with us, we threw away. A year later I returned from Salt Lake City, and again paid my friend 'Nip' a visit. Once more we had a hunt, going over the same grounds as before. We stopped for luncheon at the identical spot as of

yore; and, lo and behold! there we found the sandwiches we had left on our previous expedition, but they were as hard as a stone and completely petrified. They looked just as natural as when we ate their comrades a year ago, and were very inviting-looking to a hungry person. I brought them to town with me and gave one to Manager Snyder, of Cheyenne; and the other is used as a paper weight down at Colonel J. J. Dickey's office. Come down and I will show it to you." But his tenderfoot friend did not accept the invitation—he had been to North Platte.

It was somewhere in the '60s that Hillicker was working in the San Francisco office, when he was offered an engagement at the Bella Union theater, then a reputable place of amusement. The engagement was quite successful, but Aaron was a living example of that old saying: "The fool and his money soon part," and it was but a short time after the theater closed for the season that he found himself without position or money. He had, however, no misgivings, and started out to find his opportunity. It came in a peculiar manner. It was nearing the Christmas holidays, and the streets of San Francisco teemed with people in holiday attire. Aaron's attention had been called to a large quantity of false hair, done up into whiskers, exposed for sale in one of the bazaars, and he found that he had just enough money to purchase the entire lot. He took the mass to his lodgings, and, with the dexterity known to the profession, he speedily converted the hair into false mustaches, and then started out to dispose of his wares. Selecting the corner of Pine and Montgomery streets as a location, he proceeded to business. Gazing at the passing crowds in an unutterably comical way, he would quickly clap some hair on his smooth upper lip, and changing his expression from that of a very

pleasant-looking young man into a rakish, piratical-appearing fellow, he would startle the lookers-on by the ejaculation: "Well, they're whiskers! Get a mustache. If you can't raise 'em you can buy 'em; if you can't wear 'em, take 'em home 'nd let little Willie wear 'em. Hang 'em on the Christmas tree!"



Then, with the most comical expression imaginable, he would pull his chin and conclude his speech with the remark: "If you can't go coffee you can goatee."

Hillicker cleared \$200 from this little speculation, all the stock in trade he possessed being some coarse hair and his comical gestures, together with his little speech and facial expression.

Probably one of the greatest pieces of Hillicker's romancing was the following, which was told by himself:

"I was working at Cornucopia, a mining town in Nevada, in its palmy days, where I got quite interested in the question of quick transit, and after several weeks of hard study, I thought I had solved the problem which would make speedy locomotion perfectly safe, easy and comfortable. I unfolded my plans to a newspaper man who undertook to assist me in the new enterprise. Money was plenty, and we readily formed a company, with the capital stock placed at \$1,000,000. Much secrecy was attached to our movements, for the idea was quite new and had never



been copyrighted. I do not mind telling about it now, though. The apparatus was in the shape of a balloon, with the regulation car attached to it, in which I placed an electrical appliance which was destined to revolutionize traveling. The balloon was to be filled with gas, and was to reach a height of at least 20,000 feet, high enough to clear the highest mountains. After this altitude had been reached it was proposed to turn on the electro-magnetic current, which would have the instantaneous effect of casting off the earth's attraction and gravitation, rendering it for the time being a planet by itself. The earth travels from west to east, and all it was necessary to do was to compute time accurately, and when you figured out that your destination had 'rolled around' to you, merely turn on the current and again become a part and parcel of the earth. Of course, it was very essential that you compute your latitude correctly, for otherwise you might strike Cape Nome when you were really wanting to travel to San Francisco. I figured that it would take about 21 hours to land us from Cornucopia to New York City, for we would have almost the entire globe to review while we were resting in the mid-heavens, but to go from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean it would require less than four hours to make the trip. This was indeed quick transit, and the way that I worked the problem out I could see that it was very feasible.

"A sudden close-down of the Grand Prize mine, and the insolvency of my principal backer, temporarily disarranged my plans, but the idea will yet be consummated, and the question of speedy traveling will have been solved. Just think! the New York morning papers will be read in San Francisco the same morning they are issued in New York City, beating even the telegraph. The only thing I am sorry for in my inven-

tion is that it gives the East the best of it in the race, but I am working on a device to equalize even that, and when it is completed I will give my secret to the world."



It has been a long time since the writer has heard of Aaron B. Hillicker, but it is very probable that he is still living not far from the shadows of the Wahsatch Mountains. A copy of the Salt Lake Tri-

bune recently printed the following item, and it is easy to tell that our friend Aaron was the hero:

“Last night Patrolman Smith arrested a telegraph operator who was en route home. It was a very beautiful, moonlight, starlight night, but the operator was proceeding homewards with his umbrella up, and it was for this offense that he was taken by Policeman Smith, who apparently imagined that such conduct was a penitentiary offense. The operator was not at all disconcerted, and in reply to the chief's question as to what he was doing with his umbrella up, very mildly replied: ‘Why, you durned goose, you don't suppose I want the moon to shine on me, do you?’”





## THE COWBOY DISPATCHER

**I**N the broad expanse of our whole country there is no more varied scenery and such kaleidoscopic panoramas of mountain and valley as one will see by journeying from Portland to San Francisco via the overland route. The beautiful Willamette Valley is traversed; the wooded Callapooia Mountains are crossed; the picturesque Rogue River Valley, with its lovely streams and snowclad peaks, is passed through; the Valley of the Shasta, the grandest of them all, is reached; and finally we arrive at the headwaters of the Sacramento river, when we are fairly in California. This is a favorite ride with the annual tourist, who greatly appreciates it; but some people are never content, or rather they grow blase by having too much of a good thing.

Gus Rosenspitz, a commercial drummer, in following his line of business, often traveled over this route. He, however, could see nothing in the beauties of nature, and all of the delights of the climate were lost on him. Gus was a practical joker, and his chief source of pleasure during his travels was to board the rear car, and, just as the train was pulling out of a station and was well under way, to accost the people on the platform in a loud and rude manner with exclamations like the following: "Yust see that country shake! Dot man there dot is wearing his grandfather's hat." Or, "Hello, you fellow there with your pants in your boots; when did you get out of the penitentiary?" Or even, "You there! I know you; you yust come out of the workhouse in Sacramento." No one was exempt from Gus's tirade once he got started, and his boorish conduct was distasteful alike to passengers and employes. Gus was very careful

never to start his shouting until he was sure that he was perfectly safe. But one day he caught a Tartar.

Jack Hamlin was a dispatcher for the Southern Pacific road, and, being fond of hunting and fishing, he determined to spend his summer vacation in the Shasta Valley; so it occurred that one very warm day in July found him at the desolate little station known on the map as "Hornbrook." He had come in from his fishing grounds to post a letter on the afternoon California express train. Jack was attired in a neat buckskin suit, affecting the true cowboy style. A rather rakish-looking hat adorned his curly head, and a Colt's revolver, stuck in a cartridge belt, made him appear a typical man of the mountain. Jack was a handsome fellow, full of courage, and would not brook an insult from any one.

It was on this day that Gus Rosenspitz was making his usual semi-monthly trip to San Francisco, and he was probably a little more than ordinarily hilarious. Station after station that he had passed during the day had witnessed his tirade, and when he beheld Jack Hamlin standing alone at Hornbrook, he was impatient to have the train start so that he might roast the "cowboy." As the train pulled out, Gus gave a yell to attract Jack's attention, and then shouted: "Oh, see the cowpoy! Say, you ain't a cowpoy! I know you, and you are a horsethief! You yust escaped from San Quentin!" These were a few of the epithets that Hamlin heard. He could not understand it at first, but it dawned on him that he was being insulted, and his hand sought his hip pocket; but Gus, seeing the move, dodged inside the door, where, with still ruder grimaces and shouting, he urged the "cowboy" to shoot. A sudden thought seemed to inspire Jack, for he started on a run in pursuit of the train, which was now going at a lively speed. This action pro-

voked the most uproarious laughter from the joker, who now cried out: "See that cowpoy trying to catch the train that goes to San Francesco!" Jack kept after



the train, which presently whistled for "down brakes." A brakeman appeared on the rear end, and the now anxious Gus asked: "Vot is the matter?" He was told that the train was about to back into a siding to allow the northbound train to pass. Gus involuntarily

exclaimed: "Und the cowpoy is coming!" Negotiations were made in vain, with the several porters and train hands, to hide him, pending the arrival and departure of the Northern train, and finally Gus took refuge in the undesirable portion of the train known as the "blind baggage," where he remained till after the train had started again on its Southern journey, when he left it, coming into the smoker, where he almost fell into the arms of the "cowboy." Jack was serene and placid as his right hand played carelessly with his revolver. Gus was speechless with fright, and tried to mumble out an apology, but the words came slowly and incoherently. "Don't be mad, Mr. Cowpoy!" he ejaculated; "dees vas one of my leetle shokes." Gathering a little courage from Jack's smiling face, he continued: "You see, I travel so much und I get very tired und I likes to have some fun. Dees vas yust von of my leetle shokes, und I didn't mean anytings py it." He further protested that he had never seen the "cowboy" in San Quentin or any other place, and his apologies were heartrendingly painful. Jack musingly said: "Oh, it was only a 'shoke,' was it? Well, I am glad of that, for if I thought that you meant it, I would have to kill you," and he playfully toyed with his gun. Again and again Gus denied that he had intended an insult, and declared over and over that it was "yust a leetle shoke."

After inquiring his name and business, and listening to further protestations from the very much frightened Rosenspitz, Jack remarked: "Well, now let's see! The fare from Hornbrook to Sisson's is \$3.00; return trip is the same; hotel expenses; laceration of feelings—say, altogether \$20.00. Your 'leetle shoke' will cost you just \$20.00." He glanced menacingly at his cart-



ridge belt, and Gus lost no time in producing the gold piece.

"Now, come with me," said Jack, and leading the way they started back to the Pullman. In passing through the tourist car Jack noticed a poorly attired woman with a young babe. He asked the porter if



he knew whether she was in poor circumstances. That functionary replied: "Yes, Boss, she am very poor. She has not eaten a bite since we left Portland." Courteously approaching the lady, Jack gracefully lifted his hat and said: "I have just found a twenty-dollar gold piece a-rolling up hill, and I have no use for it. Will you allow me to present it to you?" The offer was

thankfully accepted, and the money was deposited in the poor woman's hand, much to Gus's chagrin. Arriving at the Pullman car, Rosenspitz was compelled to apologize to the passengers for his boorish behavior, promising never again to indulge in such unseemly conduct.

The overland train still makes its daily trips between Portland and San Francisco, and Mr. Gus Rosenspitz makes his regular semi-occasional pilgrimages over the road, but his familiar face and figure are never seen any more on the back platform of the Pullman sleeper. His lesson was salutary and complete.



## Song of the Daisies.

By Ebangeline Hayes, Aged 9.

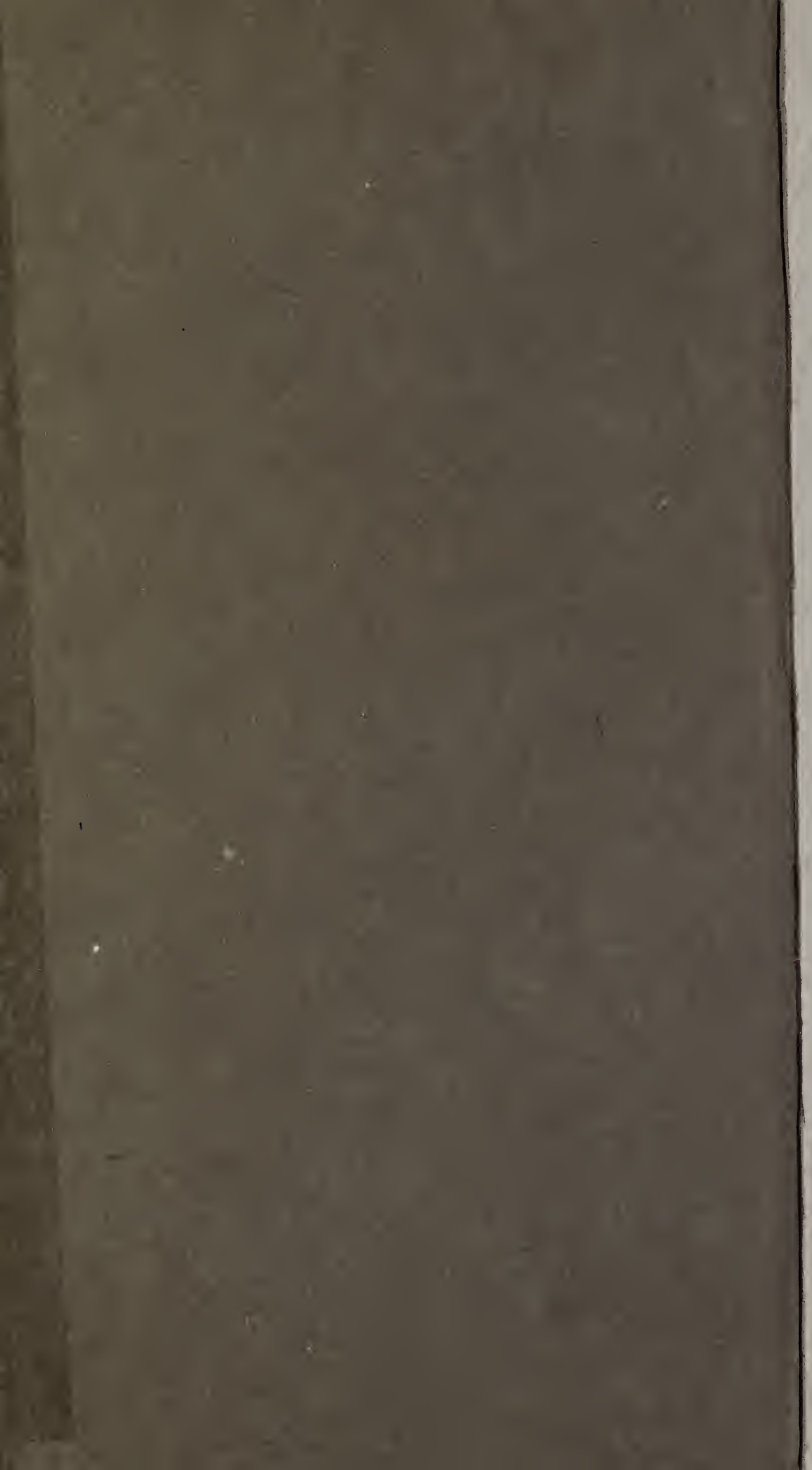
Did you eber see a daisy  
With a little yellow eye,  
Like the sunbeams shining downward  
Reflected from the sky?

Daisies should teach us lessons  
Of patience which brings blessings,  
Of love which brings us light  
And takes away our night.









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