

(See actual newspaper copies in Monarch District files)

ALPINE

A Stage Trip Down the Valley, Ending at a Camp of the Most Brilliant Prospects.
(From our own Correspondent)

Hour: 6:30 a.m. Scene: Barlow & Sanderson's stage office, Leadville. Four nervous passengers for the early coach, and a splenetic agent heaping maledictions upon the heads of the tardy drivers.

"What in _____ is the matter with 'Californy?'" reiterates the agent for the thirtieth time. And while the perturbed passengers are concluding the remark with the wish that his eternal disposition may be with the deities of flames, the target of abuse puts in an appearance with a loud call for his team. After doing this he turned to the agent, and begging excuse on the grounds that he had attended a protracted prayer meeting the night previous, informed him that the other driver was nowhere to be found. The information did not tend to alleviate the unpleasant feeling of all present, as the agent responded that everybody and everything would have to be crowded on to the first coach. Half an hour later the mail was aboard, the body of the coach weighted to the axles, and four large bay horses chewing their bits with eagerness to be off. "Good slick horses, but a little wild and touchy. Only killed two men and pulled one from the boot since they've been on the road!" Californy said loud enough for all to hear, as he unwound the reins from the break handle and seated himself. The passengers exchanged frightened glances, and one timid lady on the rear seat made an effort to reach the sidewalk, but "Cal" as he is commonly called, turned the last loose, and before the pasengers (sic) could realize it, they were speeding over the Malta road to Buena Vista at the rate of ten miles an hour.

I was unfortunately consigned to the interior, to make one of the requisite nine. Not a great number of people is conceded, but when compelled to live en masse in the limited space that the interior of a stage coach affords, one labors under the impression that stage companies have a spite against the traveling public, in endeavoring to condense it in a three by six conveyance, regardless of the numbers, or the comfort of the individual members. As a person present remarked: "It's like packing steers in freight cars for transportation to the wholesale beef markets." But I suppose the usage is perfectly legitimate, and correspondingly free from censure.

The nine occupants presented various phases of character, but were a unit in despising their respective fates for having to journey on a stage coach. On the back seat was a young couple but recently married -- the wife not being over eighteen years of age--who were so deeply interested in each other and their future, that the surroundings commanded scarcely a passing thought or attention. At least this was their state of feeling upon first starting. But consequent upon the jolting of the coach over the rough road, the young wife became deathly sick, and for the greater portion of the journey was deeply wrapped up in the mountain scenery, and held the window seat commanding a view of it, much to the sorrow of her spouse, who deserted it for her benefit. The third occupant of the seat was a timid and retiring little lady, whose presence would not be known or felt, was it not for an occasional "Oh!" or "My goodness!" involuntarily, but none the less emphatically pronounced as the coach bounded like a tempestuous ship, and its side ruthlessly collided with her head. Conspicuously seated in the center of the middle seat was the writer. Conspicuous only from persecution, and as a figure head of suffering and patience. On one side was the personification of all that is evil and cross in the female persuasion, while on the other was a retired public scavenger from a far eastern city, who came to Leadville with a view of engaging in business without having changed his clothes, which yet emitted an odor of a resurrected graveyard. A disappointed man, however; for one glance at the piles of refuse matter surrounding the city disclosed an offal

ALPINE (continued)

state of affairs, and further, more, that it never occurred to him that perhaps he had made a mistake in selecting a vocation until he feasted on the aroma of that fetid mass. With this prefatory explanation he abandoned himself to song, and until the coach filed up at the railroad station at Buena Vista, he wearied his indulgent audience by constant repetition of the following verse:

"No longer will I be a scavenger,
 But I'll build a boat and take unto the sea
 Where I'll fish fresh clams and wear wide pants,
 Along with my sisters and my cousins and my aunts."

When a fellow passenger remonstrated against the verse, because of its being set to Pinafore music, he declared that the air was from the Bohemian Girl opera, and a portion of the Gypsy Queen's song.

The front seat was occupied by a don't-care element that comprised an expert going to Silver Cliff, a young blood who was tired of dissipation, going-to-reform, a retired prospector with pockets well lined, going east, and three quart bottles nearly empty, going-to be filled at the first station. A happy triplet. Didn't care whether they got in Buena Vista that night, or in a week. All the same. Life was short, full of woe. Might as well bury it in oblivion when we can. And thus they viewed the situation among themselves.

Mother Cranky on my left made the occasion joyless by enumerating her complaints and physical disorders, and anathematising humanity in general.

The trio in front getting an inspiration from the persistent singing of the "sacavengair", called on Muse Pinafore, with the following impromptu result:

Expert

"When I was a lad I served a term,
 As boss mud slinger for a brick-yard firm,
 I stacked up bricks with a nicetee
 And was soon elevated to an F.C.B.
 I stacked them up so carefuller,
 That now I'm known as an expertee".

Young Blood

"When I was a youth and to college went,
 I spent all the money that my father sent;
 Fitting up my mind for societee.
 By filling up my bowels with bad whiskey;
 And I fitted up myself so splendidlee,
 That now I'm always on a D.B.D."

Prospector

"I learned my trade in a limestone quarry,
 And came to Colorado in a D.B.hurry;
 To hunt a big mine and the scenery see,
 Or learn, if I could, to be an expertee;
 I hunted for a mine so continuallee,
 That now I'm going home in a D.S.C".

By the close of the last verse all inside were stirred into a remarkable state of enthusiasm, and, fearful of results, I requested "Cal" to stop and let me on the outside. This he did, and made room for me in close proximity to his seat. The situation was but little better here, the passengers trying with closeted minds to invent a lie that would discount "Californy's" last. This they failed to do, and abandoning the effort, gave ear to the "Whopper" that he was firing

at me with all his characteristic indifference. "When I was on the Arizony route, in sixty-four, I hed the boss team of the mountains. I tell ye, them's what was hot times. Nuthin' but Injuns an' greasers-end the hardest et that. Wull, ez I was gettin' et! Th' Injuns bruke out this summer-hot ez blazes, too-end tried to captur' Maricopa Wells station end the stage outfit. But you kin bet I was on hand, end hitched up that team too sune fur enny use. Yes, I did. They was mi pets, you see, end I couldn't part with 'em. Well, I hitched up, es I sed before, and puttin' the spurs-no, not spurs- the lash, to 'em; I skinned out too quick. No gun, you know, end I had to make the Colorado river, tu hundred end fifty miles away, for safety. Well, now, ef I didn't mek them animiles paw dirt et's a caution. Why, sir, we cleaned that distance in jist ten hours by the watch. Injuns in our dust all th' way, too; end I could hev put them 'ere hosses through to San Diego without feed. There, what do you think of thet for an experience?"

I answered in all sincerity that it was decidedly airy and smattered of the Quixote or adventures of Baron Munchausen. This answer was too dim for his comprehension, and he asked what I meant. Whereupon I told him in the politest language at my tongue's end that it was a very clever lie. With a face bespeaking insulted dignity, he inquired in tones not calculated to soothe one's nerves, if I thought him a "tender-heels" or a rascal. I reasoned, and furthermore told him that I had been over the road in question, and knew from practical experience that he was either mistaken or imposing on the credulity of his hearers, by telling a malicious falsehood. It was no use, however, for the more was said the more his temper lost its equilibrium, and with a sensitive regard for the end of my rope I desisted; after which he settled down into a moody silence that remained unbroken- except by intermittent admonitions to the animals- until the coach reached Buena Vista, when he became friendly again, and secured me a seat with the next driver going to Cleora..

Stage drivers have always been a curiosity in the eyes of most people, and when a person from the east meets one, he looks in vain for the peculiarities of character that are accredited to them. In Van Hooker, or "Californy" as he is called, all these pleasing features of peculiarity can be found; and his acquaintances appreciate this fact, as it is a difficult task to obtain a seat in his boot going either way. Raised in the stage business since the early days of overland travel, graduating with such men as Hank Monk, and having traveled all the staging routes on the Pacific slope, his memory is stored with reminiscences and adventures that he never grows tired of telling. In appearance he is a man of medium height, with long, curly blonde hair- an acquisition of beauty that makes him a great favorite with the ladies- expressive eyes of an uncertain color; a nose that bespeaks boundless good nature, if size is the criterion, and an open face that is clothed in the scorching mantle of "old Sol". His dress is of California overall goods, with the exception of a jaunty cap that is resurrected from the revolution.

The town of precious growth, wasted ambition and busted bunko steerers reached, a change of coaches was made, and an hour allowed the passengers for dinner. All was commotion and excitement in the vicinity of the railroad station, consequent upon the arrival of the Denver train, which was nearly six hours late. But this state of affairs did not serve to disturb in any way the mental equilibrium of ye local politicians, who were clustered in various places on the station platform discussing the pending issue at Chicago. Blaine certainly held the prestige of favor, and was dwelt upon in immeasurable terms of patronizing regard, one of the disputants winding up a lengthy eulogy on him by saying that he "could exist on one leg for the remainder of life if Blaine was the next republican candidate for the presidential chair!"

Dinner disposed of, the coaches were found in readiness to depart. There being two from this point down the Arkansas valley, and a lack of harmony among those who departed from Leadville in such general friendliness, the pleasure and novelty of the journey was cut off short by the party splitting up and its members seeking relegation from each other. I, in accordance with the arrangements made, seated myself beside the driver, armed with two non-explosive cigars of local manufacture, and an orange of Florida extraction- that is to say, it was extracted from its native clime prematurely, and after being subjected to the curing process, was brought to Buena Vista by energetic business men, and disposed of by persistent street venders at ten cents a copy, as the most concise twelve chapter work in existence, under the title of "A Florida Orange; or how he was deceived." The volume is cheap as an instructor, but costly as an experiment. Yes, if you want to learn the extent of man's perfidy when he stoops to deceive, or how much one can be punished by misplaced confidence, buy an orange at Buena Vista, by all means; and, in order to get the worth of your investment, make an effort to eat it in sections, your fancy vainly endeavoring to waft you to the native heath where the balmy shades of its parent caress and fondle with a sensuous influence, while your digestive organs are a twelve-mule team pulling existence into all that is bitter and unwholesome in life.

Well, as I was going to tell, we started out, myself and the driver, Ed Livingstone, in the front boot. By the way, this driver is a phenomenon. Has no stories to tell, no lies manufactured from whole cloth or remnants, to clothe the romantic fancies of his passengers in, no wonderful or thrilling stage driving experiences to make his life interesting, and furthermore, never drove a fast team on a stage coach, always had the slowest "jim crow" stock on the line, and never went broke on pay night since he assumed the role of Jehu. Withal, not a person of very strong peculiarities, though is weak in spots. Fond of answering in monosyllabic characters; is very fond of cigars; and exceeding fond of Florida oranges.

The drive from Buena Vista down the valley would be prosy were it not for the way in which the horses buckled to their work and carried us over the smooth road. The variegated beauties of the verdant scenery had no claim upon my sensibilities, while mind and physical strength were waging war against my cigar which had evidently been stuffed with Welch rarebits or cottonwood bark, and was a serious sufferer from constipation- and trying to force it into subjugation to my desire. Useless endeavor, however; and I frantically chewed the smouldering remains- that is to say, the entire cigar remained, and smouldered, like a last ember of hope; and fizzled, like a prize-fighter after long training; and sputtered, like a fire cracker before explosion; and snorted, like a narrow-gauge locomotive pulling a heavy train up grade- until the Chalk creek station hove in sight, and the responsibilities of my journey were brought to mind by the driver shouting, "Change coaches for Alpine!" (I forgot to remark that Alpine was my intended destination.) After discarding my satchel with as much carelessness as if it was a mail sack, the coaches rolled out, leaving me alone- the one and only passenger for that place. In a few moments a coach came from out a stable close by, and hurriedly taking aboard the mail, was soon wending its way westward toward the mountains, with the sole occupants - the driver and myself on the outside. Ed Jenkins, the knight of the ribbons, in this instance, was another example of how reserved and dignified a stage driver can be when necessary, and did not disturb the subtle influence that the ubiquitous dame nature was exercising over me, by untimely or irrelevant remarks. I am certainly a lover of all that is grand, majestic, romantic or prosaic in nature, and under ordinary circumstances delight in feeding my senses on the ever varying scenes to be found on an occasion like this. But this was apparently no ordinary circumstance as I fell asleep when

ALPINE (cont)

^{but}~~BUT~~ a little way on the road and beat unconscious time with my head for a baton, to the inspiring crack of the driver's whip until Hortense post-office was reached, when the sudden stoppage of the coach threw me from my seat and nearly on to the back of the near horse.

The way mail sack was thrown out, and while being renovated, I took a stroll through the little burg that is so loudly clamoring for pretentious recognition at the hands of pleasure seekers. Not a large place, certainly, but one that is positively endowed with many charms of nature. Snugly ensconced in a sheltering nook of the Chalk Creek canon, ample protection from inclement wind storms is insured. On the north and south sides the micacious granite rises in a denuded state to perpendicular heights, its glistening white walls sending forth scintillations of warmth while the sun's rays play over its surface in evanescent figures. The scrub cedar and pinons deck the lower hill sides with the gladsome robes of spring; their more dignified neighbor, the pine, has a brilliant hue on his emblematic limbs of perennial verdure; while the water fed cottonwoods along the bottom of the gulch ^{are} is clothed in the garb of precocious growth. All is green, the hills, the trees, the bottoms, the grass, the - no, not the people -- and the very gravel and boulders in the vestal waters of the stream are made green by the reflex of the surroundings. A postoffice, hotel, alcoholic dispensary and veterinary hospital comprise the leading structures of the place. The hotel is an excellent one. It is owned by Steve Passino, an Italian gentleman of excellent culinary education, who personally attends to the cuisine, a fact that speaks for the house more than words.

In the postoffice I found Major George D. Merriam--a man with a history as long as the tail of a comet--presiding; surrounded in negligent order by multifarious documents of confidence from various sections of the country; a private arsenal in each corner of his sanctum--with which he anxiously awaits the advent of the bear that cleaned out Cleora last week--and census schedules scattered over the room in all directions. Of good parentage, excellent education, and a man who went around the Cape on a Massachusetts shingle; climbed the north pole to escape the persecution of mosquitos on the Amazon; hunted orang outangs in the Sandwich islands; fished for California salmon in the Twin Lakes, and traveled as boss wagonmaster for an itinerant circus at the antipodes; he presents a phase of the cosmopolite that is rarely met with.

The major is enthusiastically confident that Hortense is destined to be a famous watering place before many years, and the most popular resort for invalids in the state. "Why, my dear sir," he says, "we have an abundance of the most curative of waters, an excellent climate, splendid scenery and plenty of it, good trout fishing, the best of hunting ground, and a prospective railroad connection with the outside world. Is this not enough in itself, I would ask? And then when the railroad is completed to the Gunnison--which will in all probability be next summer--one can jump the train and be in perpetual winter in the short space of an hour, or, on the other hand, go down into the valley in the same time, where snow never stays more than a night after falling. Why, I tell you that the possibilities of our future are of the most inspiring nature."

With the closing of the last sentence the coach took its departure, and I once more resigned myself to the care of the sleepy god. It was no use, though. The good roads were left behind, and the coach was jumping and bumping like balls on a bagatelle table, over the boulders in the road. After receiving a couple of bruises, the sustaining of which would have done credit to an accomplished pugilist, I braced up, and stuck it out for the remaining eight miles, in a semi-unconscious condition. I had a sort of indefinite idea that I was going up gradually towards the heavens, between two darkened walls, that were shadowing the advance of twilight. Once or twice we crossed a bridge, and at times traveled by the side of a river that seemed as calm and undisturbed as a country frog pond. Then we passed through a forest of decayed and burnt trees, and climbing the hill beyond, Alpine, in all its romance of situation, burst upon the vision. This, in addition to the fact

that the driver put the cruel lash to the horses, and sent them tearing madly through the main street, served to brighten me up, and by the time the Arcade hotel was reached, I was entirely recovered. [Arcade]

Alpine--well named--is as near as I can figure it, fifty-eight miles from Leadville. It is situated on a shelving incline with mountains rising to lofty height on the north and south, and has a new and prosperous aspect throughout. The houses are principally of boards and of a substantial build and in some instances have a decidedly finished appearance. With the exception of two dance houses that are open nightly there is no especial feature of excitement. The inhabitants are plodding on in an industrious way, adding to their mining and real estate property daily, without ostentatiously placing the richness of their camps before the vision of the outside world. Everything about the place from the mountains down has an air of solidity and permanence that is born of slow and studied growth. Figuratively speaking, there is no mining camp in the state that has received so many "black eyes" as this; its circumstantial adversity almost putting in an appearance with its birth. The first serious set-back that it received is said to have emanated from those who were principals in its embryo prosperity; they, in their avarice, seeking to obtain all the most valuable discoveries by circulating the report that there was no mineral of consequence in the district. This the people would not believe, and with shrewd persistence held their property until the importance of the camp would be indisputably established. Subsequent occurrences of a different nature, but nevertheless tending to have the same influence, kept the district in a backward state until the present spring, when all branches of business and labor were renewed with an inspired vigor, owing to the sale of several mines, and the fact that capital was shedding its propitious mantle over the entire section, by instituting extensive developments on all of the purchased properties.

No class of people could live through so many years of adversity without becoming cynical; and, to strengthen this deplorable failing, correspondents of well known Leadville and Denver papers were unkind enough, for reasons best known to themselves, to write their respective sheets that there was no mineral of consequence in the country, and that Alpine was a "blasted hope." Making such assertions without ever having visited a mine in the neighborhood, did not endear the profession to the inhabitants, as, on the contrary, the effect has been to incite a bitter hatred for anything or anybody connected with the newspaper business.

Of the abundance of mines and smelting qualities of the ore there is no question in the minds of those who have taken the pains to inspect the district; and all that Alpine needs to insure her a prominence among the mining camps of the state is a smelter in operation.

June 4, 1880

E.D.C.