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NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY OUARTERLY

"... The Back Number ... "

THE SITE OF WILLIAMS STATION, NEVADA

SIR CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE:
A REPUBLICAN BARONET
IN NEVADA

Fall-Winter Issue
October-December 1960

Volume III Number 4

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The Society's membership is open to the public; application for membership should be made to the Secretary of the Society, State Building, Reno, Nevada.

". . . THE BACK NUMBER . . . "

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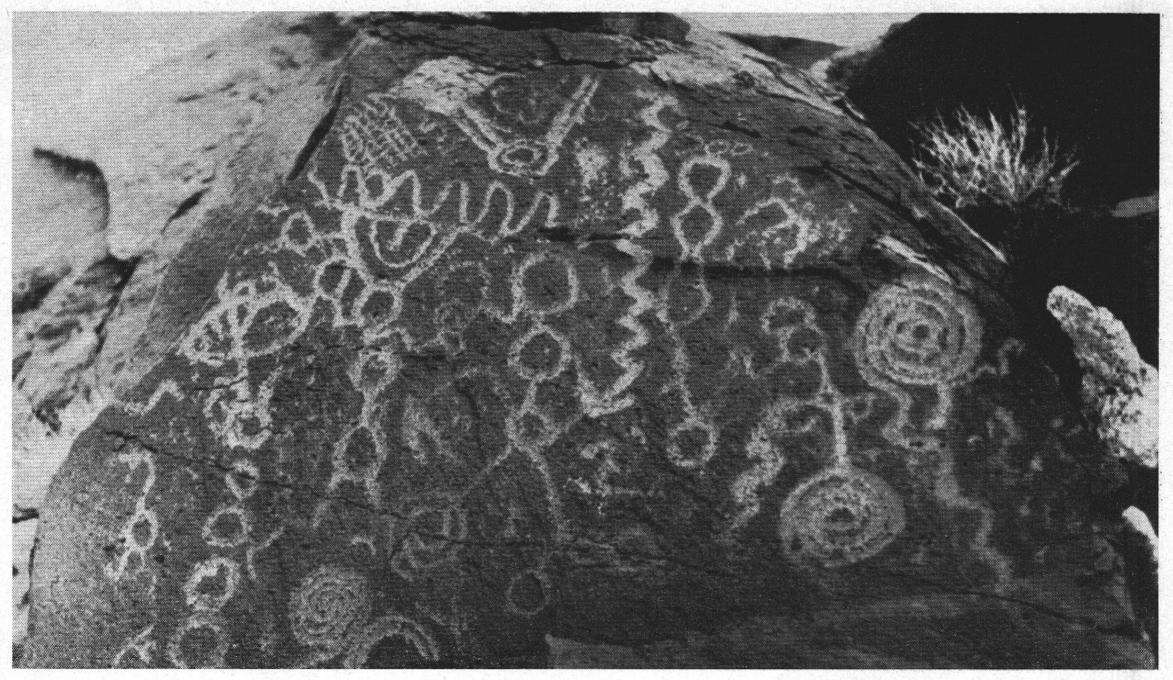
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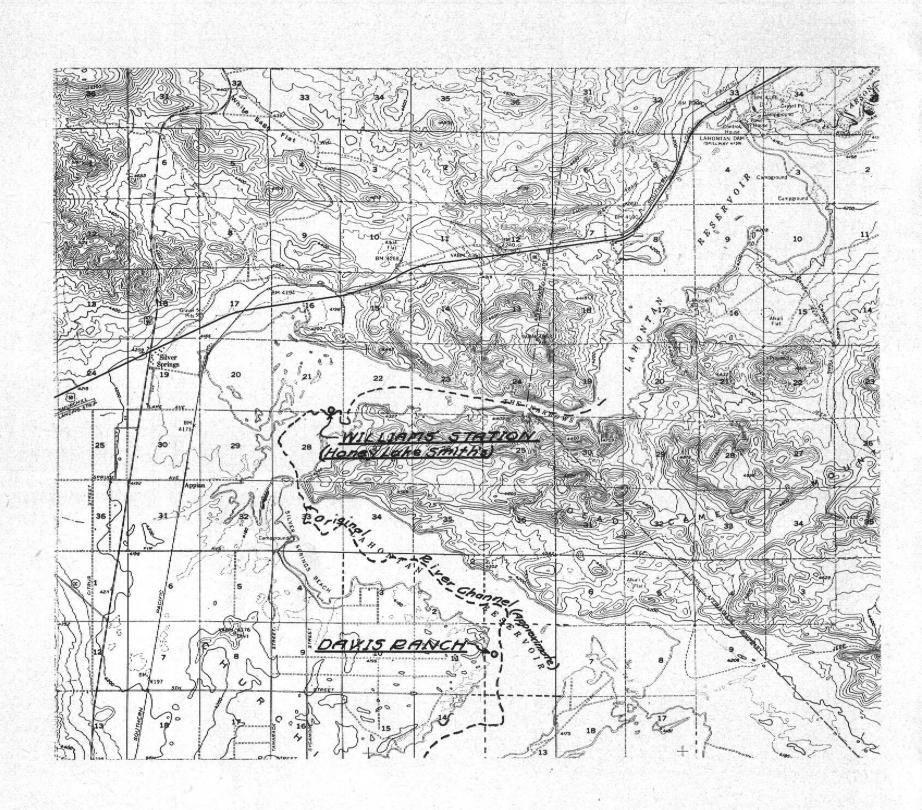
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Miss Laura Mills located this formation of petroglyphs during the search for Williams Station. It is a pertinent factor in authenticating the site of Williams Station as all contemporary history of the station mention the "Mountain of Hieroglyphics" as being in the area. These were found to be about one mile south of the station site on the Carson River where it cuts around the south end of the Dead Camel Range.



SITE OF WILLIAMS STATION, NEVADA

By VINCENT P. GIANELLA

Vincent P. Gianella, Professor Emeritus and former head of the Department of Geology, Mackay School of Mines, University of Nevada, needs no introduction to Nevadans. While teaching, he acquired the friendship of all the student body as well as that of the "rock" enthusiasts on the outside. He came to Nevada from a distinguished career as a working geologist that followed his graduation from Oregon State College in 1911. His Master of Arts degree is from Nevada; his Doctorate, Columbia. The Nevada Historical Society is continually in his debt for expert help.

In the past several years there has been an increasing interest as to the location of Williams Station where the massacre of several men on May 7, 1860, brought on the short-lived Paiute war¹ in which many lives were lost. This interest has developed further due to the celebration of the centennial of the discovery of the Comstock Lode and also that of the inauguration of the picturesque Pony Express mail service, together with the approaching centennial of Mark Twain's sojourn in this area, during which time he acquired much of the material for *Roughing It*; and later that of the admission of Nevada into the Union.

Williams Station is not shown on any available, reliable map; however, some of the older maps indicate Honey Lake Smith's in the area which, we had reasoned, was on or near, the site of Williams Station. Degroot's map of Nevada Territory, 1863, shows "Honey Lake Smith's, Williams Old Stn." at the east end of the bend.

The principal obstacle of the finding of the location of the station was the flooding of a large area, in this vicinity, by the waters of Lahontan Reservoir which was formed by the completion of the Lahontan Dam in 1915. (See map p. 4). In the fall of 1960, curiously just a hundred years after the massacre and the burning of the station, the culmination of a series of years of sub-normal precipitation had caused a recession of the water until most of the bed of the reservoir became relatively-dry land.

Samuel S. Buckland came to Nevada in 1859 and eventually established a station on the Carson River, at the place now known as Weeks. He had once been an associate of James O. Williams who, with a brother, built Williams Station. An article by Buckland² indicates that Honey Lake Smith built upon the ground

Buckland, Samuel S., Indian Fighting in Nevada-1879. Nevada Historical

Society Papers, pp. 171-174, 1913-1916 (1917).

¹For details of this war, see: Miller, William C., THE PYRAMID LAKE INDIAN WAR OF 1860. Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 37–53, 1957, and Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 98–113, 1957. Thompson & West, HISTORY OF NEVADA, p. 149, et seq., 1881.

where Williams Station previously stood. In relating events preceding the massacre, he stated that:

"The Indians came to Honey Lake Smith's on the Carson River at what is known as the Big Bend (the lower part of it) in the spring of 1860. Two men known as the Williams boys were keeping a station, or trading post, there at the time."

The Carson River flows northeasterly from Weeks for about seven miles and then north for two miles to the beginning of the Big Bend. Here the river swings around to the northwest and, in a distance of four miles, it comes to the western side of the Dead Camel Range where, turning sharply to the east, it passes through the Narrows. It continues its easterly course a distance of five miles where it again resumes its northeasterly

Township No18North Range Nº25East. Mount Biublo Meridian.

Township plat from United States Bureau of Land Management (formerly United States Surveyor General's Office). Survey made 1867–1868.

trend to the Carson Sink. The location of the station is also clearly described by Thompson & West³ as follows;

"There is a place on the Carson River where that stream cuts off the point of a foothill [of the Dead Camel Range] around which it sweeps at the lower terminus of what is known as the Big Bend, possibly a mile up the river from where once stood Williams, or Honey Lake Smith's Station."

Thus the trading post was near the eastern part of the Big Bend and a few miles west of The Narrows, where the river flowed through a narrow, and steep-walled canyon. The location of the station is three and three quarter miles east, and somewhat north, of the present village of Silver Springs.

As Honey Lake Smith's is shown at this place on the township plat of the Nevada Surveyor General's Office, from surveys made in 1867 and 1868 (see township plat p. 6), the site of Williams Station is thus made known. A visit to the area by Mr. Claude Mills resulted in the finding of the charred sills of a building on a small knoll on the north bank of the river. Here there was seen much scrap iron, a metal powder flask, numerous fragments of crockery, as well as mule, horse and oxen shoes, indicating an old-time settlement.

Late in November, 1960, the place was visited by several persons, together with Mr. Philip Cowgill and the writer and an examination confirmed our earlier opinion that here was the site of Williams Station. On November 22, Mr. Cowgill and the writer made a transit and stadia survey from an established section corner making use of the field notes of the survey of 1868. The old foundations, on the knoll referred to above, were found at the place where the early survey had designated "Honey Lake Smith's Old Station." The section line was seen to cross the meanders of the river as had been described in the field notes. The land surveyor, Mr. E. B. Monroe, while running the south line of Section 21 eastward, states in his notes for December 26, 1868; "As this line prolonged will cut several bends of the river I offset 5 chs [chains] N. and at 66.00 [chains] old adobe house (Honey Lake Smith's Old Station) 2 chs. south of offset line." Hence Williams Station is three chains (198 feet) north of the section line which is south of the river. The river flowed along the southern base of the knoll within a hundred feet, or so, from the station. The old channel of the river was well marked and contained a considerable flow of water at the time of our

³Thompson & West, History of Nevada. p. 19, 1881.

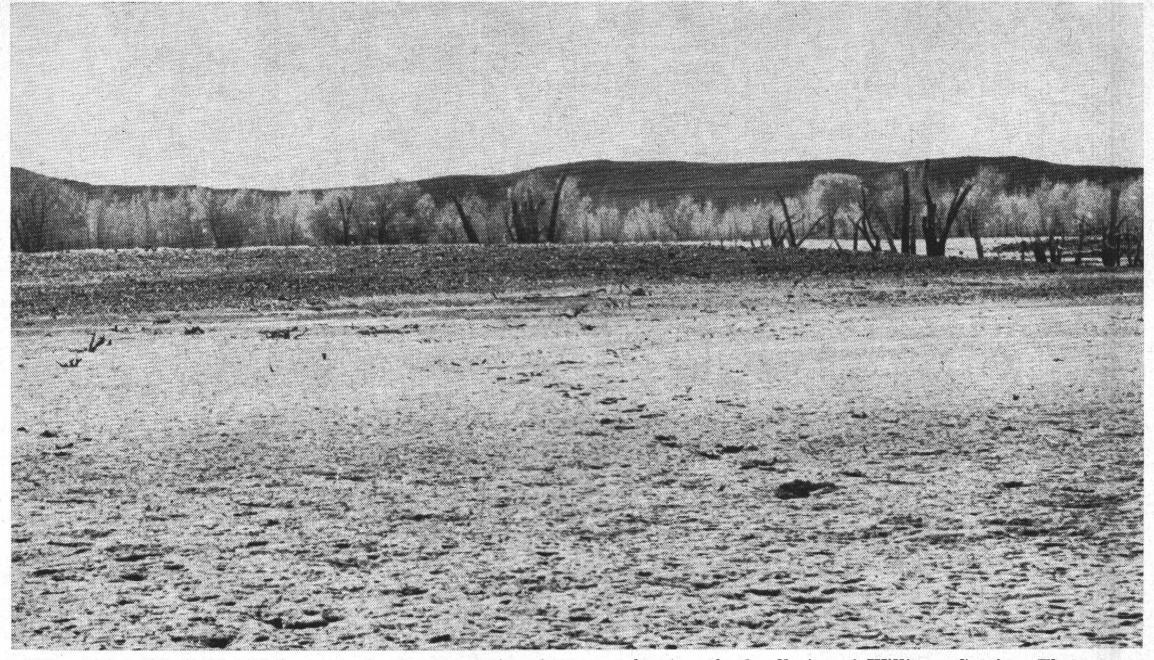
visit. We also readily recognized many of the features mentioned by Mark Twain⁴ when, on his way from Unionville, Humboldt County, Nevada, to Carson City, he stopped over at this place sometime during the winter of 1861–62. That winter is still noted for the great floods in Nevada, California and adjacent states. Twain remarks;

"We rode through a snow storm for two or three days, and arrived at 'Honey Lake Smith's' a sort of isolated inn on the Carson River. It was a two-story log house situated on a small knoll in the midst of a vast basin or desert through which the sickly Carson winds its melancholy way. Close to the house were the Overland stage stables, built of sun-dried bricks. There was not another building within several leagues of the place." 5

Twain tells of the Indians hurriedly moving out of the willows, along the river bottom, and excitedly informing the whites that a flood was coming, however, no attention was paid to their warning. Twain, who had retired early, was awakened during the night by the commotion made by the other guests and, he continues; "A glance revealed a strange spectacle, under the moonlight. The crooked Carson was full to the brim, and its waters were raging and foaming in the wildest way—sweeping around the sharp bends at a furious speed, and bearing on their surface a chaos of logs, brush and all sorts of rubbish. A depression where its bed had once been, in other times, was rapidly filling, and in one or two places the water was beginning to wash over the main bank."6 "We suddenly realized that this flood was not a mere holiday spectacle, but meant damage . . . "; and the crest of the flood was still to arrive, and; "At eleven o'clock only the roof of the little log stable was out of water, and our inn was on an island in mid-ocean. As far as the eye could reach, in the moonlight, there was no desert visible, but only a level waste of shining water." It must have been quite a flood as Twain further remarks that; "By the fifth or sixth morning the waters had subsided from the land, but the stream in the old river bed was still high and swift and there was no possibility of crossing it. On the eighth it was still too high for an entirely safe passage, but life in the inn had become next to insupportable by reason of the dirt, drunkeness, fighting, etc., and so we made an effort to get

⁴Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemons), Roughing It. Vol. 1, Hartford, Conn., 1872. ⁵Loc. cit. p. 217.

⁶Ibid. p. 218. Tbid. p. 220.



View to southeast toward lava capping on Dead Camel Range, showing the knoll site of Williams Station. The trees are along the Carson River. Low ground in the foreground is in the old channel referred to by Mark Twain. (Phil Cowgill)

away." And get away they did the next day, by crossing the still-flooding old channel, however, one must read Twain himself for the remainder of his humorous and entertaining story of crossing the channel.

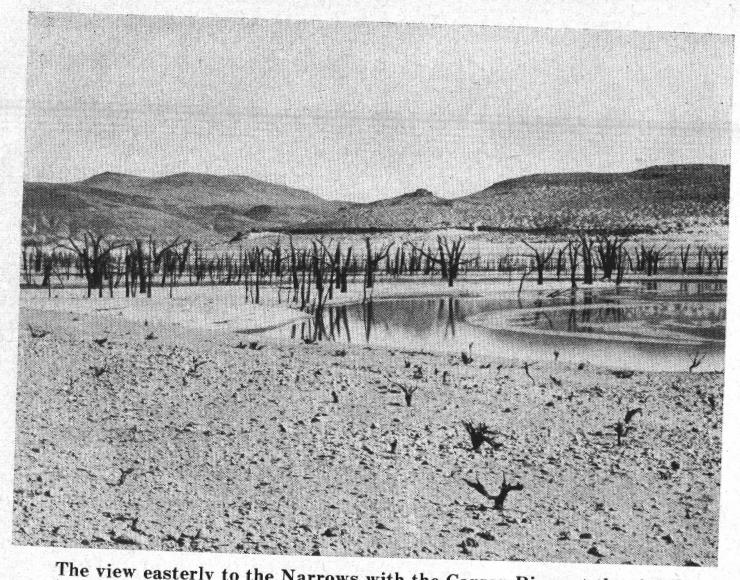
The knoll, upon which Williams Station stood, is probably a hundred yards long, parallel to the river, and about a hundred feet wide at its widest part, which is where the buildings stood. It stands, I would judge, about twenty-five feet above a broad level area extending for a mile or so toward the north. A large meander loop, an ancient abandoned channel, is "the depression where its bed once had been" as was recognized by Twain and may be readily traced around much of the periphery of this basin. It was this channel, filled with rushing water, that Twain, and also the stage coach, had to cross to continue the journey through Bucklands and on to Carson City.

Many ponds were found in the old channel as well as in the meanders of its present channel, and we had to wade through mud to reach the knoll, which lies within a sharp bend of the river. The Carson here follows a meandering course and makes several crossings of the south line of Section 21, T. 16 N., R. 25 E., as noted by the early surveyor and shown on the plat (p. 6). It was at these bends that Twain observed the flood waters; "sweeping around the sharp curves at a furious speed." He had fully eight days in which to observe the fascinating features of the river in full flood.

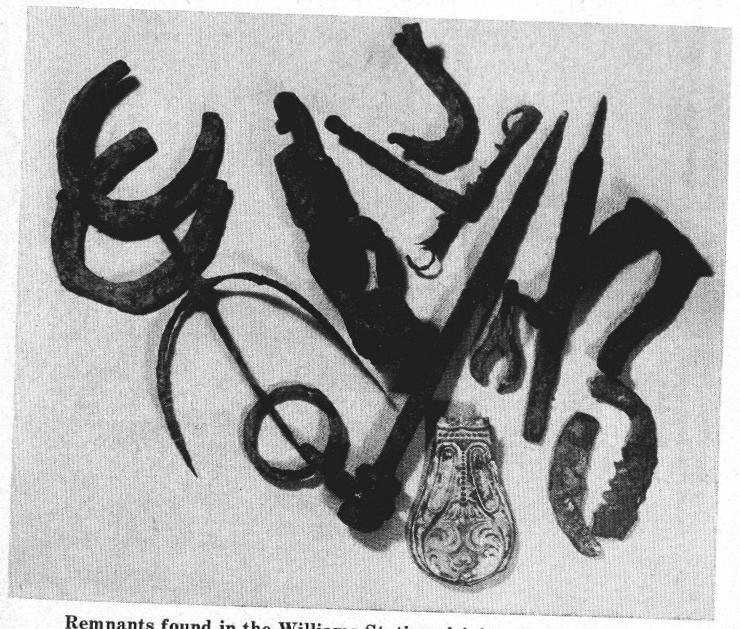
As the surveyor noted but "an old Adobe house" at Honey Lake Smith's, it would appear likely that the two story log house that was there when Twain was detained by the flood, was not standing seven years later.

There can be no doubt that the knoll, mentioned above, was that upon which Williams Station once stood. With a rise of forty or fifty feet, the water will again cover the site.

⁸Ibid. p. 226.



The view easterly to the Narrows with the Carson River at the right center and knoll in the foreground. (Phil Cowgill)



Remnants found in the Williams Station vicinity, November 1960. (Phil Cowgill)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- We wish to thank the following people who shared our hope—to locate Williams Station:
- LAURA MILLS—former teacher and now professional photographer of Fallon and her brother,
- CLAUDE MILLS, who spent endless hours on horseback searching for the site;
- FAITH and PHILIP COWGILL—for the pictures, and especially Mr. Cowgill for his survey that located Williams for all time. Mr. Cowgill is a licensed Civil Engineer and Land Surveyor of some 45 years working experience.
- VINCENT P. GIANELLA—for his enthusiasm and excellent story.
- MARION WELLIVER—edited the issue and represented the Historical Society.

CONTRIBUTOR'S COMMENTS

Although his home in Sloane Street, London and his residence in Trinity Hall, Cambridge were socially worlds apart from the American West, young Charles Wentworth Dilke found himself temperamentally pleased with boisterous Nevada. Born in 1843, Charles was descended from a long line of antiquaries and literary critics. After an active athletic and political career at Cambridge, he received his law degree in 1866 and immediately embarked for a tour of the New World. Dilke and a friend, William H. Dixon, slowly travelled west and eventually arrived at Salt Lake City where they became fascinated and favorably impressed by the Mormon society. Dixon returned to England from Salt Lake and in November 1866, Dilke, riding with an Irish miner, journeyed on to Nevada.

The account of Dilke's impressions herein reproduced was first published in 1868 in Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries. The work was an immediate success, passing through four editions.

Upon returning from his travels Dilke was elected to Parliament, and soon he became the center of a liberal movement which supported republicanism for England. Obviously his praguerine predilections were not entirely the result of the western tour, but the experiences in the United States reinforced his underlying radicalism. Sir Charles rose rapidly in Parliamentary circles and by the eighties had become a member of Gladstone's cabinet; however, his political prestige was destroyed when a fellow M.P. accused his wife of adultery and named Dilke as correspondent. A decade later, he was re-elected to Parliament and served in that body until his death in 1911.

Sir Charles was proprietor of The Athenaeum and Notes and Queries, an art collector and an authority on foreign affairs. But, the robustness and emotional courage of the men of the American West were always one of his great fascinations.

SIR CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE

A Republican Baronet in Nevada

Contributed by WILBUR S. SHEPPERSON

Wilbur S. Shepperson, Associate Professor of History at the University of Nevada, is a specialist in European history and an authority on immigration. Dr. Shepperson has been the recipient of numerous research grants and has published, both in England and the United States, authoritative studies on immigration. Along with being an internationally recognized scholar, Dr. Shepperson is recognized as an excellent teacher—a rare combination.



SIR CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE

A REPUBLICAN BARONET IN NEVADA

OVER THE NAMELESS ALPS

Salt Lake City to Austin

... On we jogged and jolted, till we lost sight of the American Dead Sea and of its lovely valley, and got into a cañon floored with huge boulders and slabs of roughened rock, where I expected each minute to undergo the fate of that Indian traveller who received such a jolt that he bit off the tip of his own tongue, or of Horace Greeley, whose head was bumped, it is said, through the roof of his conveyance. Here, as upon the eastern side of the Wasatch, the track was marked by never-ending skeletons of mules and oxen.

On the first evening from Salt Lake, we escaped once more from man at Stockton, a Gentile mining settlement in Bush Valley, too small to be called a village, though possessed of a municipality, and claiming the title of "city." By night we crossed by Reynold's Pass the Parolom, or Cedar Range, in a two-horse "jerky," to which we had been shifted for speed and safety. Upon the heights the frost was bitter; and when we stopped at 3 a.m. for "supper," in which breakfast was combined, we crawled into the stable like flies in autumn, half killed by the sudden chill. My miner spoke but once all night. "It's right cold," he said; but fifty times at least he sang "Wearing of the Green." It was his only tune.

Soon after light we passed the spot where Captain Gunnison, of the Federal Engineers, who had been in 1853 the first explorer of the Smoky Hill route, was killed "by the Ute Indians." Gunnison was an old enemy of the Mormons, and the spot is ominously near to Rockwell's home. Here we came out once more into the alkali, and our troubles from dust began. For hours we were in a desert white as snow; but for reward we gained a glorious view of the Goshoot Range which we crossed by night, climbing silently on foot for hours in the moonlight. The walking saved us from the cold.

The third day—a Sunday morning—we were at the foot of the Waroja Mountains, with Egan Cañon for our pass, hewn by nature through the living rock. You dare swear you see the chisel-marks upon the stone. A gold-mill had years ago been erected here, and failed. The heavy machinery was lost upon the road; but the four stone walls contained between them the wreck of the lighter "plant."

As we jolted and journeyed on across the succeeding plain, we spied in the far distance a group of black dots upon the alkali. Man seems very small in the infinite expanse of the Grand Plateau—the roof, as it were, of the world. At the end of an hour we were upon them—a company of "overlanders" "tracking" across the continent with mules. First came two mounted men, well armed with Deringers in the belt—and Ballard breechloaders on the thigh, prepared for ambush—ready for action against elk or red-skin. About fifty yards behind these scowling fellows came the main band of bearded, red-shirted diggers, in huge boots and felt hats, each man riding one mule, and driving another laden with packs and buckets. As we came up, the main body halted, and an interchange of compliments began. "Say, mister, thet's a slim horse of yourn." "Guess not-guess he's all sorts of a horse, he air. And how far might it be to the State of Varmount?" "Wall, guess the boys doen to hum will be kinder joyed to see us, howsomever that may be." Just at this moment a rattlesnake was spied, and every revolver discharged with a shout, all hailing the successful shot with a "Bully for you; thet hit him whar he lives." And on, without more ado, we went.

Even the roughest of these overlanders has in him something more than roughness. As far as appearance goes, every woman of the Far West is a duchess, each man a Coriolanus. The royal gait, the imperial glance and frown, belong to every ranchman in Nevada. Every fellow that you meet upon the track near Stockton or Austin City walks as though he were defying lightning, yet this without silly strut or braggadocio. Nothing can be more complete than the ranchman's self-command, save in the one point of oaths; the strongest, freshest, however, of their moral features is a grand enthusiasm, amounting sometimes to insanity. As for their oaths, they tell you it is nothing unless the air is "blue with cusses." At one of the ranches where there was a woman, she said quietly to me, in the middle of an awful burst of swearing, "Guess Bill swears steep"; to which I replied, "Guess so"—the only allusion I ever heard or hazarded to Western swearing.

Leaving to our north a snowy range—nameless here, but marked on European maps as the East Humboldt—we reached the foot of the Ruby Valley mountains on the Sunday afternoon in glowing sunshine, and crossed them in a snow-storm. In the night we journeyed up and down the Diamond or Quartz Range, and morning found us at the foot of the Pond Chain. At the

ranch—where, in the absence of elk, we ate "Bacon," and dreamed we breakfasted—I chatted with an agent of the Mail Company on the position of the ranchman, divisible, as he told me, into "cooks and hostlers." The cooks, my experience had taught me, were the aptest scholars, the greatest politicians; the hostlers, like Southerners, wore their hair all down their backs. I begged an explanation of the reason for the marked distinction. "They are picked," he said, "from different classes. When a boy comes to me and asks for something to do, I give him a look, and see what kind of stuff he's made of. If he's a gay buck out for a six-weeks' spree, I send him down here, or to Bitter Wells; but if he's a clerk or a poet, or any such sorter fool as that, why then I set him cooking; and plaguy good cooks they make, as you must find."

The drivers on this portion of the route are as odd fellows as are the ranchmen. Wearing huge jack-boots, flannel shirts tucked into their trowsers, but no coat or vest, and hats with enormous brims, they have their hair long, and their beards untrimmed. Their oaths, I need hardly say, are fearful. At night they wrap themselves in an enormous cloak, drink as much whisky as their passengers can spare them, crack their whips, and yell strange yells. They are quarrelsome and overbearing, honest probably, but eccentric in their ways of showing it. They belong chiefly to the mixed Irish and German race, and have all been in Australia during the gold rush, and in California before deep sinking replaced the surface diggings. They will tell you how they often washed out and gambled away a thousand ounces in a month, living like Roman emperors, then started in digging-life again upon the charity of their wealthier friends. They hate men dressed in "Biled shirts" or in "store clothes," and show their aversions in strange ways. I had no objection myself to build fires and fetch wood; but I drew the line at going into the sage-brush to catch the mules, that not being a business with which I felt competent to undertake. The season was advanced, the snows had not yet reached the valleys, which were parched by the drought of all the summer, feed for the mules was scarce, and they wandered a long way. Time after time we would drive into a station, the driver saying, with strange oaths, "Guess them mules is clared out from this here ranch; guess they is into this sagebrush"; and it would be an hour before the mules would be discovered feeding in some forgotten valley. Meanwhile the miner and myself would have revolver practice at the skeletons and telegraph-posts when sage fowl failed us, and rattlesnakes grew scarce.

After all, it is easy to speak of the eccentricities of dress and manner displayed by Western men, but Eastern men and Europeans upon the Plateau are not the prim creatures of Fifth Avenue or Pall Mall. From San Francisco I sent home an excellent photograph of myself in the clothes in which I had crossed the Plateau, those being the only ones I had to wear till my baggage came round from Panama. The result was that my oldest friends failed to recognize the portrait. At the foot I had written "A Border Ruffian": they believed not the likeness, but the legend.

The difficulties of dress upon these mountain ranges are great indeed. To sit one night exposed to keen frost and biting wind, and the next day to toil for hours up a mountainside beneath a blazing sun are very opposite conditions. I found my dress no bad one. At night I wore a Canadian fox-fur cap, Mormon 'coon-skin gloves, two coats, and the whole of my light silk shirts. By day I took off the coats, the gloves and cap, and walked in my shirts, adding but a Panama hat to my "fit-out."

As we began the ascent to the Pond River Range, we caught up a bullock-train, which there was not room to pass. The miner and myself turned out from the jerky, and for hours climbed alongside the wagons. I was stuck by the freemasonry of this mountain travel: Bryant, the miner, had come to the end of his "solace," as the most famed chewing-tobacco in these parts is called. Going up to the nearest teamster, he asked for some, and was at once presented with a huge cake—enough, I should have thought, to have lasted a Channel pilot for ten years.

The climb was long enough to give me a deep insight into the inner mysteries of bullock-driving. Each of the great two-storied Californian wagons was drawn by twelve stout oxen still, the pace was not a mile an hour, accomplished, as it seemed to me, not so much by the aid as in spite of tremendous flogging. Each teamster carried a short-handled whip with a twelve-foot leathern lash, which was wielded with two hands, and, after many a whirl, brought down along the whole length of the back of each bullock of the team in turn, the stroke being accompanied by a shout of the bullock's name, and followed, as it was preceded, by a string of the most explosive oaths. The favorite names for bullocks were those of noted public characters and of Mormon elders, and cries were frequent of "Ho, Brigham!" "Ho, Joseph!" "Ho, Grant!" the blow falling with the accented syllable. The London

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would find at Pond River Range an excellent opening for a mission. The appointed officer should be supplied with two Deringers and a well-filled whisky-barrel.

Through a gap in the mountain crest we sighted the West Humboldt Range, across an open country dotted here and there with stunted cedar, and, crossing Smoky Valley, we plunged into a deep pass in the Toi Abbe Range, and reached Austin—a mining-town of importance, rising two years old—in the afternoon of the fourth day from Salt Lake City.

NO GRASS, NO WATER

Austin and on to Virginia City

After dining at an Italian digger's restaurant with an amount of luxury that recalled our feasts at Salt Lake City, I started on a stroll, in which I was stopped at once by a shout from an open bar-room of "Say! Mister!" Pulling up sharply, I was surrounded by an eager crowd, asking from all sides the one question: "Might you be Professor Muller?" Although flattered to find that I looked less disreputable and ruffianly than I felt, I nevertheless explained as best I could that I was no professor—only to be assured that if I was any professor at all, Muller or other, I should do just as well: a mule was ready for me to ride to the mine, and "Jest kinder fix us up about this new lode." If my new-found friends had not carried an overwhelming force of pistols, I might have gone to the mine as Professor Muller, and given my opinion for what it was worth; as it was, I escaped only by "Liquoring up" over the error. Cases of mistaken identity are not always so pleasant in Austin. They told me that, a few weeks before, a man riding down the street heard a shot, saw his hat fall into the mud, and, picking it up, found a small round hole on each side. Looking up, he saw a tall miner, revolver smoking in hand, who smiled grimly, and said: "Gess that's my muel." Having politely explained when and where the mule was bought, the miner professed himself satisfied with a "Guess I was wrong—let's liquor."

In the course of my walk through Austin, I came upon a row of neat huts, each with a board on which was painted "Sang Sing, washing and ironing," or "Mangling by Ah Low." A few paces farther on was a shop painted red, but adorned with cabalistic scrawls in black ink; and farther still was a tiny joss-house. Yellow men in spotless clothes of dark-green and blue were busy

at buying and selling, at cooking and washing. Some, at a short trot, were carrying burdens at the ends of a long bamboo pole. All were quiet, quick, orderly, and clean. I had at last come thoroughly among the Chinese people, not to part with them again till I left Geelong, or even Suez.

Returning to the room where I had dined, I parted with Pat Bryant, quitting him, in Western fashion, after a good "trade" or "swop." He had taken a fancy to the bigger of my two revolvers. He was going to breed cattle in Oregon, he told me, and thought it might be useful for shooting his wildest beasts by riding in an Indian manner, side by side with them, and shooting at the heart. I answered by guessing that I "was on the sell"; and traded the weapon against one of his that matched my smaller tool. When I reached Virginia City, I inquired prices, and was almost disappointed to find that I had not been cheated in the "trade."

A few minutes after leaving the "hotel" at Austin, and calling at the Post-office for the mails, I again found myself in the desert—indeed, Austin itself can hardly be styled oasis: it may have gold, but it has no green thing within its limits. It is in cañons and on plains like these, with the skeletons of oxen every few yards along the track, that one comes to comprehend the full significance of the terrible entry in the army route-books—"No grass, no water."

Descending a succession of tremendous "grades," as inclines upon roads and railroads are called out West, we came on to the lava-covered plain of Reese's River Valley, a wall of snowy mountain rising grandly in our front. Close to the stream were a ranch or two, and a double camp of miners and of a company of Federal troops. The diggers were playing with their glistening knives as diggers only can; the soldiers—their huge sombreros worn loosely on one side—were lounging idly in the sun.

Within an hour we were again in snow and ice upon the summit of another nameless range.

This evening, after five sleepless nights, I felt most terribly the peculiar form of fatigue that we had experienced after six days and nights upon the Plains. Again the brain seemed divided into two parts, thinking independently, and one side putting questions while the other answered them; but this time there was also a sort of half-insanity, a not altogether disagreeable wandering of the mind, a replacing of the actual by an imagined ideal scene.

On and on we journeyed, avoiding the Shoshone and West Humboldt Mountains, but picking our way along the most fearful ledges that it has been my fate to cross, and traversing from end to end the dreadful Mirage Plains. At nightfall we sighted Mount Davidson and the Washoe Range; at 3 a.m. I was in bed once more—in Virginia City.

THE CUSSEDEST TOWN IN THE STATES

Virginia City

"Guess the governor's consid'rable skeert."

"You bet, he's mad."

My sitting down to breakfast at the same small table seemed to end the talk; but I had not been out West for nothing, so explaining that I was only four hours in Virginia City, I inquired what had occured to fill the Governor of Nevada with vexation and alarm.

"D'you tell now! only four hours in this great young city. Well, guess it's a bully business. You see, some time back the governor pardoned a road agent after the citizens had voted him a rope. Yes, sir! But that ain't all: yesterday, cuss me if he didn't refuse ter pardon one of the boys who had jess shot another in play like. Guess he thinks hisself some pumpkins." I duly expressed my horror, and my informant went on: "Wall, guess the citizens paid him off purty slick. They jess sent him a short, thick bit of rope, with a label, 'For his Excellency.' You bet ef he ain't mad—you bet! Pass us those molasses, mister."

I was not disappointed: I had not come to Nevada for nothing. To see Virginia City and Carson, since I first heard their fame in New York, had been with me a passion, but the deed thus told me in the dining-room of the "Empire" Hotel was worthy a place in the annals of "Washoe." Under its former name, the chief town of Nevada was ranked not only the highest, but the "cussedest" town in the States, its citizens expecting a "dead man for breakfast" every day, and its streets ranging from seven to eight thousand feet above the sea. Its twofold fame is leaving it: the Coloradan villages of North Empire and Black Hawk are nine or ten thousand feet above sea-level, and Austin and Virginia City in Montana beat it in playful pistolling and vice. Nevertheless, in the point of "pure cussedness" old Washoe still stands well, as my first introduction to its ways will show. All the talk of Nevada reformation applies only to the surface signs: when a miner tells you that Washoe is turning pious, and that he

intends shortly to "varmoose," he means that, unlike Austin, which is still in its first state of mule-stealing and monte, Virginia City has passed through the second period—that of "Vigilance Committees" and "historic trees"—and is entering the third, the stage of churches and "city officers," or police.

The population is still a shifting one. A by-law of the municipality tells us that the "permanent population" consists of those who reside more than a month within the city. At this moment the miners are pouring into Washoe from the north, and south, and east, from Montana, from Arizona, and from Utah, coming to the gayeties of the largest mining-city to spend their money during the fierce, short, winter. When I saw Virginia City, it was worse than Austin.

Every other house is a restaurant, a drinking-shop, a gaming-hell, or worse. With no one to make beds, to mend clothes, to cook food—with no house, no home—men are almost certain to drink and gamble. The Washoe bar-rooms are the most brilliant in the States: as we drove in from Austin at 2 a.m., there was blaze enough for us to see from the frozen street, the portraits of Lola Montez, Ada Menken, Heenan, and the other Californian celebrities with which the bar-rooms were adorned.

Although "petticoats," even Chinese, are scarce, dancing was going on in every house; but there is a rule in miners' balls that prevents all difficulties arising from an oversupply of men: every one who has a patch on the rear portion of his breeches does duty for a lady in the dance, and as gentlemen are forced by the custom of the place to treat their partners at the bar, patches are popular.

Up to eleven in the morning hardly a man was to be seen: a community that sits up all night, begins its work in the afternoon. For hours I had the blazing hills called streets to myself for meditating ground; but it did not need hours to bring me to think that a Vermonter's description of the climate of the mountains was not a bad one when he said: "You rise at eight, and shiver in your cloak till nine, when you lay it aside, and walk freely in your woolens. At twelve you come in for your gauze coat and your Panama; at two you are in a hammock cursing the heat, but at four you venture out again, and by five are in your woolens. At six you begin to shake with cold, and shiver on till bed-time, which you make darned early." Even at this great height the thermometer in the afternoon touches 80° Fahr. in the shade, while from sunset to sunrise there is a bitter frost. So it is throughout

the Plateau. When, morning after morning, we reached a ranch, and rushed out of the freezing ambulance through the still colder outer air to the fragrant cedar fire, there to roll with pain at the thawing of our joints, it was hard to bear it in mind that by eight o'clock we would be shutting out the sun, and by noon melting even in the deepest shade.

As I sat at dinner in a miner's restaurant, my opposite neighbor, finding that I was not long from England, informed me he was "the independent editor of the Nevada Union Gazette," and went on to ask, "And how might you have left literatooral pursoots? How air Tennyson and Thomas T. Carlyle?" I assured him that to the best of my belief they were fairly well, to which his reply was, "Guess them there men ken sling ink, they ken." When we parted, he gave me a copy of his paper, in which I found that he called a rival editor "a walking whisky bottle" and "a Fenian imp." The latter phrase reminded me that of the two or three dozen American editors that I had met, this New Englander was the first who was "native born." Stenhouse, in Salt Lake City, is an Englishman, so is Stanton of Denver, and the whole of the remainder of the band were Irishmen. As for the earlier assertion in the "editorial," it was not a wild one, seeing that Virginia City has five hundred whisky shops for a population of ten thousand. Artemus Ward said of Virginia City, in a farewell speech to the inhabitants that should have been published in his works, "I never, gentlemen, was in a city where I was treated so well, nor, I will add, so often." Through every door the diggers can be seen tossing the whisky down their throats with a scowl of resolve, as though they were committing suicide—which, indeed, except in the point of speed, is probably the case.

The *Union Gazette* was not the only paper that I had given me to read that morning. Not a bridge over a "crick," not even a pair of blacked boots, made me so thoroughly aware that I had in measure returned to civilization, as did the gift of an *Alta California* containing a report of a debate in the English Parliament upon the Bank Charter Act. The speeches were appropriate to my feelings; I had just returned not only to civilization, but to the European inconveniences of gold and silver money. In Utah, gold and greenbacks circulate indifferently, with a double set of prices always marked and asked; in Nevada and California, greenbacks are as invisible as gold in New York or Kansas. Nothing can persuade the Californians that the adoption by the Eastern States of an inconvertible paper system is any thing but the result of

a conspiracy against the Pacific States—one in which they at least are determined to have no share. Strongly Unionist in feeling as were California, Oregon and Nevada during the rebellion, to have forced greenbacks upon them would have been almost more than their loyalty would have borne. In the severest taxation they were prepared to acquiesce; but paper-money they believed to be downright robbery, and the invention of the devil.

To me the reaching gold once more was far from pleasant, for the advantages of paper-money to the traveller are enormous: it is light, it wears no holes in your pockets, it reveals its presence by no untimely clinking; when you jump from a coach, every thief within a mile is not at once aware that you have ten dollars in your right-hand pocket. The Nevadans say that forgeries are so common that their neighbors in Colorado have been forced to agree that any decent imitation shall be taken as good, it being too difficult to examine into each case. For my part, though in rapid travel a good deal of paper passed through my hands in change, my only loss by forgery was one half-dollar note; my loss by wear and tear, the same.

In spite of the gold currency, prices are higher in Nevada than in Denver. A shave is half a dollar—gold; in Washoe, in Atchison, but a paper quarter. A boot-blacking is fifty cents in gold, instead of ten cents paper, as in Chicago or St. Louis.

During the war, when fluctuations in the value of the paper were great and sudden, prices changed from day to day, Hotel proprietors in the West received their guests at breakfast, it is said, with "Glorious news; we've whipped at ______. Gold's 180; board's down half a dollar." While I was in the country, gold fluctuated between 140 and 163, but prices remained unaltered.

Paper-money is of some use to a young country in making the rate of wages appear enormous, and so attracting immigration. If a Cork bog-trotter is told that he can get two dollars a day for his work in America, but only one in Canada, no economic considerations interfere to prevent him rushing to the nominally higher rate. Whether the working-men of America have been gainers by the inflation of the currency, or the reverse, it is hard to say. It has been stated in the Senate that wages have risen sixty percent, and prices ninety percent; but "prices" is a term of great width. The men themselves believe that they have not been losers, and no argument can be so strong as that.

My first afternoon upon Mount Davidson I spent underground in the Gould and Curry mine, the wealthiest and largest of those that have tapped the famous Comstock Lode. In this single vein of silver lies the prosperity not only of the city, but of Nevada State; its discovery will have hastened the completion of the overland railway itself by several years. It is owing to the enormous yield of this one lode that the United States now stands second only to Mexico as a silver-producing land. In one year Nevada has given the world as much silver as there came from the mines of all Peru.

The rise of Nevada has been sudden. I was shown in Virginia City a building block of land that rents for ten times what it cost four years ago. Nothing short of solid silver by the yard would have brought twenty thousand men to live upon the summit of Mount Davidson. It is easy here to understand the mad rush and madder speculation that took place at the time of the discovery. Every valley in the Washoe Range was "prospected," and pronounced paved with silver; every mountain was a solid mass. "Cities" were laid out, and town lots sold, wherever room was afforded by a flat piece of ground. The publication of the Californian newspapers was suspended, as writers, editors, proprietors, and devils, all had gone with the rush. San Francisco went clean mad, and London and Paris were not far behind. Of the hundred "cities" founded, but one was built; of the thousand claims registered, but a hundred were taken up and worked; of the companies formed, but half a dozen ever paid a dividend except that obtained from the sale of their plant. The silver of which the whole base of Mount Davidson is composed has not been traced in the surrounding hills, though they are covered with a forest of posts, marking the limits of forgotten "claims": "James Thompson, 130 feet N.E. by N.": "Ezra Williams, 130 feet due E.": and so for miles. The Gould and Curry Company, on the other hand, is said to have once paid a larger half-yearly dividend than the sum of the original capital, and its shares have been quoted at 1,000 percent. Such are the differences of a hundred vards.

One of the oddities of mining-life is that the gold-diggers profess a sublime contempt for silver-miners and their trade. A Coloradan going West was asked in Nevada if in his country they could beat the Comstock lode. "Dear, no!" he said. "The boys with us are plaguy discouraged jess at present." The Nevadans were down upon the word. "Discouraged, air they?" "Why, yes! They've jess found they've got ter dig through three feet of solid silver 'fore they come ter gold."

Some of the companies have curious titles. "The Union Lumber

Association" is not bad: but "The Segregated Belcher Mining Enterprise of Gold Hill District, Story County, Nevada State," is far before it as an advertising name.

BATTLEMENTS OF THE SIERRA

Carson City and on to El Dorado

In a real "coach" at last—a coach with windows and a roof—drawn by six "mustangs," we dashed down Mount Davidson upon a real road, engineered with grades and bridges—my first since Junction City. Through the Devil's Gate we burst out upon a chaotic country. For a hundred miles the eye ranged over humps and bumps of every size from stones to mountains, but no level ground, no field, no house, no tree, no green. Not even the Sahara so thoroughly deserves the name of "desert." In Egypt there is the oasis, in Arabia, here and there a date and a sweet-water well; here there is nothing, not even earth. The ground is soda, and the water and air are full of salt.

This road is notorious for the depredations of the "road agents," as white highwaymen are politely called, red or yellow robbers being still "darned thieves." At Desert Wells the coach had been robbed, a week before I passed, by men who had first tied up the ranchmen, and taken their places to receive the driver and passengers when they arrived. The prime object with the robbers is the treasury-box of "dust," but they generally "go through" the passengers, by way of pastime, after their more regular work is done. As to firing, they have a rule—a simple one. If a passenger shoots, every man is killed. It need not be said that the armed driver and armed guard never shoot; they know their business far too well.

Close here we came on hot and cold springs in close conjunction, flowing almost from the same "sink-hole"—the original twofold springs, I hinted to our driver, that Poseidon planted in the Atlantic isle. He said that "some of that name" had a ranch near Carson, so I "concluded" to drop Poseidon, lest I should say something that might offend.

From Desert Wells the alkali grew worse and worse, but began to be alleviated at the ranches by irrigation of the throat with delicious Californian wine. The plain was strewn with erratic boulders, and here and there I noticed sharp sandcones, like those of the Elk Mountain country in Utah.

At last we dashed into the "city" named after the notorious Kit Carson, of which an old inhabitant has lately said, "This here city is growing plaguy mean: there was only one man shot all yesterday." There was what is here styled an "altercation" a day or two ago. The sheriff tried to arrest a man in broad daylight in the single street which Carson boasts. The result was that each fired several shots at the other, and that both were badly hurt.

The half-deserted mining-village and wholly ruined Mormon settlement stand grimly on the bare rock, surrounded by terrible weird-looking depressions of the earth, the far-famed "sinks," the very bottom of the Plateau, and goal of all the Plateau streams—in summer dry, and spread with sheets of salt, in winter filled with brine. The Sierra Nevada rises like a wall from the salt-pools, with a fringe of giant leafless trees hanging stiffly from its heights—the first forest since I left the Missouri bottoms. The trees made me feel that I was really across the continent, within reach at least of the fogs of the Pacific—on "the other side"; that there was still rough, cold work to be done, was clear from the great snow-fields that showed through the pines with that threatening blackness that the purest of snows wear in the evening when they face the east.

As I gazed upon the tremendous battlements of the Sierra, I not only ceased to marvel that for three hundred years traffic had gone round by Panama rather than through these frightful obstacles, but even wondered that they should be surmounted now. In this hideous valley it was that the Californian immigrants wintered in 1848, and killed their Indian guides for food. For three months more the strongest of them lived upon the bodies of those who died, incapable, in their weakness, of making good their foothold upon the slippery snows of the Sierra. After a while, some were cannibals by choice; but the story is not one that can be told.

Galloping up the gentle grades of Johnson's Pass, we began the ascent of the last of fifteen great mountain ranges crossed or flanked since we had left Salt Lake City. The thought recalled a passage of arms that had occurred at Denver between Dixon and Governor Gilpin. In his grand enthusiastic way, the governor, pointing to the Cordilleras, said, "Five hundred snowy ranges lie between this and San Francisco." "Peaks," said Dixon. "Ranges!" thundered Gilpin; "I've seen them."

Of the fifteen greater ranges to the westward of Salt Lake, eight at least are named from the rivers or valleys they contain, or are wholly nameless. Trade has preceded survey; the country

as we were starting before the break of day, the frost was terrible. To my relief, when I inquired after Hank, the driver said that he was at a ball at a timber-ranch in the forest "six miles on." At early light we reached the spot—the summit of the more eastern of the twin ranges of the Sierra. Out came Hank, amid the cheers of the half-dozen men and women of the timber-ranch who formed the "ball," wrapped up to the eyes in furs, and took the reins without a word. For miles he drove steadily and moodily along. I knew these drivers too well to venture upon speaking first when they were in the sulks; at last, however, I lost all patience, and silently offered him a cigar. He took it without thanking me, but after a few minutes said, "Thet last driver, how did he drive?" I made some shuffling answer, when he cut in, "Drove as if he were skeert; and so he was. Look at them mustangs. Yoo-ou!" As he yelled, the horses started at what out here they style "the run"; and when, after ten minutes, he pulled up, we must have done three miles, round most violent and narrow turns, with only the bare precipice at the side, and a fall of often a hundred feet to the stream at the bottom of the ravine the Simplon without its wall. Dropping into the talking mood, he asked me the usual questions as to my business, and whither I was bound. When I told him I thought of visiting Australia, he said "D'you tell now! Jess give my love—at Bendigo—to Gumption Dick." Not another word about Australia or Gumption Dick could I draw from him. I asked at Bendigo for Dick; but not even the officer in command of the police had ever heard of Hank Monk's friend.

The sun rose as we dashed through the grand landscapes of Lake Tahoe. On we went, through gloomy snow-drift and still sadder forests of gigantic pines nearly three hundred feet in height, and down the cañon of the American River from the second range. Suddenly we left the snows, and burst through the pine woods into an open scene. From gloom there was a change to light; from sombre green to glowing red and gold. The trees, no longer hung with icicles, were draped with Spanish moss. In ten yards we had come from winter into summer. Alkali was left behind forever; we were in El Dorado, on the Pacific shores—in sunny, dreamy California.



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