THE RALEIGH REGISTER.

J. C. L. HARRIS, Editor.] "Ours are the plans of fair delightful peace—unwarped by party rage to live like brothers." [W. M. BROWN, Publisher.

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THE CHANGING BEACON.

A STAGE-DRIVER'S STORY.

BY NATHAN E. URNER.

It was on top of the stage-coach, just as we were bowling out of the narrow, precipitous streets of Yreka, by the blending star and dawn-light of a summer morning not very long ago, that the following thrilling adventure was related by Hank Miller, the driver, who had held the ribbons over the same road almost from the time that Yreka became a settlement, consequent upon the development of the northern mines; and it happened in this wise:

Just as we swept down the rocky road that leads along the Shasta River, at the base of the Sierras, through whose gloomy gorges our route was presently to wind, a bright little blaze sundenly burst out upon the summit of one of the tallest and most sharply defined mountains on the left, known as Pyramid Peak, that attracted the attention of all of us outside passengers

"It's only a hunter's camp-fire, gentlemen," said Hank, noting our looks of inquiry; "but I recall a blaze of a different sort that burst out on that same peak a dozen years ago, that meant nothin' short of life and death, and led me into one of the ugliest scrapes I ever crawled out of with a whole skin."

Our flasks and cigar-cases were at once at the old fellow's disposal and it needed but little more persuasion to put him in a communicative mood.

"It happened just about this time in the morning," said he. "I was bound from Yreka to Happy Camp, a lively little mining town at the junction of the Klamath and Indian Creek, with three gents and one lady inside; and one old fellow, a wool-grower from Butte Creek, out here on the box, beside the mails, and a heavy load of dust in the charge of an express-agent—one of the chaps inside.

"Now, there'd been lots of stage-robbing all over California for years, as you must know; but we'd been sort of quiet up here in Shasta county for a long time, notwithstanding a report that Gomez and some of his band had recently been seen in our vicinity, since the *vigilantes* had made it too hot for them down in Tulare and the Valley of the San Joaquin. Indeed, we had grown so secure that, upon this particular day I speak of, it had been decided to let the old stage slide, without the military escort that had up to that time accompanied us for the protection of the mails and treasure. But just as we bowled down the slope, and came in sight of the river here, I happened to look around, and there, right on the top of the pyramid yonder, all at once flared up the brightest little flame in the world, very much like the one you're looking at now.

"At first I thought it was nothing but a bear-hunter's camp-fire, but it soon began to change from white to red, from red to yellow, from yellow to blue, from blue to violet, and so on through a long range of lovely, changing colors, like a bonfire at a barbecue, and then I knew it was a beacon of some sort, and stopped to think.

"Bill!" I called out, bringing the team to a dead stop right alongside yon stunted cedars, and speaking to Bill Coombs, the express-agent, as lively and daring a chap as ever slung his eye along a seven-shooter's tube, "d'ye see that queer fire on the pyramid?"

"Yes," said he, poking his head out of the window and looking up at me, while, at the same time, I could hear the young lady passenger at his side beginning to find fault, in a shrill, rasping way, at our stopping on the road.

"What d'ye make of it?' said I.

"Nothin,' 'cept it's mighty purty with the different colors goin' an' comin' in the flames,' said Bill. "What do *you* make of it?'

"I sort o' think it's a robber's beacon, to let Gomez and his gang know—perhaps twenty miles away, at Panther's Pass—as how we've started from Yreka without the usual escort," said I. "You know Gomez used to be an assayer in the Sonora quicksilver mines, afore he took to murder and thieving, and his knowledge of chemicals would just enable him to provide for all them different colored lights up there."

"By Jove! I believe you're right," cried Bill, while once more the girl began to laugh and jeer in a scornful way, and say if I didn't push right ahead she'd sue the company for damages. "What are you going to do, Hank?'

"I'll show you," said I, and making the turn, I climbed the long hill we had just come down, and blew a big blast on my stage horn, as a signal for the agent to show up.

"In the meantime, the lady-passenger never gave her tongue a rest, but worked herself up into a high dudgeon, calling us fools, calves, babies, cowards and the like, till you'd thought she'd burst. She was a thundering handsome, spirited creature, with eyes as black as night, and a figure as springy and graceful as a leopard's, who had come to Yreka as a passenger by the southern mail coach a week or two before, from no one exactly knew where originally, and had booked herself as Mrs. Meadows, for Happy Camp, where she gave out she expected to meet with relatives from the coast; though she was generally suspected of being some sort of adventuress, or grass-widow, on the track of a runaway husband. In spite of the mystery about her, her beauty had caused a sensation in a region where, barring squaws and Chinawomen, the usual proportion of males to females was about one hundred to one, and I stood her nonsense a good while afore I found it in my heart to say, without a practice of unkindness, though:

"Madam, robbers or no robbers, we're not going to eat up another rod of this turnpike without a squad of troopers at our heels; and them as don't want to travel can have their money returned by the company's agent, as soon as he comes, and lay over for to-morrow's coach."

"I won't lay over a day or an hour, Mister Driver!" says she, poking her head out over Bill's shoulder, and flashing her black eyes on me; "and since you're all so scared, I hope, if you do meet any robbers, they'll thrash you out of your boots!"

"I trust you're merely relieving your mind by what you say, ma'am," says I, "for otherwise your words might throw certain suspicion on you, from the consequences of which all your beauty wouldn't save you."

"With that, she shut right up, and drew in her head; but I gave Bill Coombs a warning look, and from the look he gave me in return I was sure he would keep his weather-eye on madam, and take her in hand if she should attempt to show her claws.

"Just then the agent came galloping up, on his big sorrel. He wasn't in the best humor in the world, but when I showed him the changing beacon on the pyramid, where it was now beginning to fade away with a beautiful yellow and purple lusture, like the last flickerings of a fine sunset, and mentioned my suspicions, he became thoughtful, and almost at once agreed with me.

"I'll tell the colonel at once," said he. "Go on at an easy pace, and before you reach Redwood"—a steep ridge midway between Yreka and Panther Pass—"you'll be joined by the troops."

"As I again turned in the road, the agent explained things to the passengers, with the probability of danger ahead, and offered to buy back the tickets of all who might elect to remain over. But the whole crowd voted to see the thing through. The old sheep breeder at my side shifted his pistols into easy reach, and rather seemed to relish the outlook than otherwise. The lady, as I have said, remainded stubborn and scornful; and Bill and the other two insiders were old frontiersmen, not used to backing out from anything.

"Well, we again took to the road, the particolored beacon on the height gradually dying away into nothingness, as the sweeter though grayer light of the dawn began to bud and bloom along the range, and in less than an hour, just before reaching Redwood, we were overtaken by Sergeant McFadden, with eight troopers of the Ninth Cavalry at his back, though there were but six horses, two of which carried double soldiers, disguised in heavy blankets and old hats, but with their carbines on the half-cock, under the disguise, for the purpose of reinforcing the stage-top with two extras. The exchange was made at once, and with the extras propped among the luggage, behind the sheep-breeder and myself, dangling their heels ove the side, we again bowled along at a livelier gait, being down-hill most of the way; McFadden and his men following a few rods in the rear, and hugging the turfy roadside all they knew how, in order to deaden the sound of the horses' hoofs.

"I wish our present route took us through Panther Pass, gentlemen, so that you could see for yourselves how the land lies. Though the deepest, wildest and and gloomiest pass in these mountains, inclosed on both sides by steep, smooth-faced rocks, the road itself is broad and level, except where a little brook, known as Rocky Run crosses it, without tree, bush or brier in the immediate vicinity to hinder a square, open, hand-to-hand scrimmage; though it has always been a favorite halting spot for mail-robbers both on account of the heavy shadows cast by the tall cliffs, which, save at high noon, make a constant twilight on the road, and because of a narrow trail that runs through the precipices to the right which can easily be held by a dozen determined men against a hundred; and, in event of a repulse, affording a splendid retreat into the very heart of the Sierras, where all the soldiers at Uncle Sam's beck could never follow successfully.

"Well, now, as we made the turn by the three cedars, at about half-past eight, and began to roll down the long hill leading to the Panther Pass, with the rocks every minute getting higher and the road darker, you can bet your lives there was more anxiety than merriment in and on that coach. You might have thought it was empty, so far as word or breath was heard, and save the rumble and the hoof-beats, the pass was as silent as the sepulchre as we entered it.

"All was dusky, hushed and peaceful, and, as we were crossing the run without hearing or seeing anything unusual, I began to think that my suspicions had played me false, and that the colored signal had no more to do with the robbers than with a Chinese holiday, when suddenly a dozen or more horsemen—all wearing half masks, and armed to the teeth—slipped out in front of the team, as swiftly and silently as though they had grown out of the ground, or been shed out from unseen doors at the side of the rocky wall.

"Though I trickled leaders with my whip at the root of their tails, after a knack I had, so that they at once began to plunge and rear like mad, the whole team came to a dead stop, with a strong hand at each of the wheeler's bridle-rein, and we were covered by their guns and pistols almost before we realized our position.

"Then Gomez—whom I recognized by his tall, slender form, and the two fingers lacking on his left hand, having seen him once before down in Tulare, before he took to the road—Gomez himself, on a big roan horse, that obeyed every turn of his wrist like a charm, covered me with his jewel-mounted revolver, and sung out, in his broken English:

"We've got you dead, Hank! Tell the senors to be quiet, and peaceably surrender the mails and express treasure, and no harm shall come to any one."

"Just as he said that, I heard a faint, gurgling noise going on inside the coach. Do you guess what it was? No? Well, neither did I at the moment, though I found out afterward. It was the black-eyed beauty trying to sing out a warning to Gomez that the cavalrymen were close behind, but slightly prevented by Bill Coombs' clutch upon her windpipe, while with the other hand he cocked his revolver, and his companions also lay back in the coach, ready for the word.

"Sure enough, senor, you've got the pull on us this time," says I, wishing to parley a bit, and wondering what had become of our escort. "I suppose that fancy beacon on the pyramid was the work of one of your gang, advertising you of our coming this time without the military."

"That is about the size of it!" said he, with a grin under his half mask. "But chuck down them mail-sacks, and don't palaver."

"It was evident that they thought they had a soft thing, and were going to take their time about it; for now, for the first time, as I turned and began to fumble among the mail-bags, several of them pushed up the coach-windows on either side, and the rest of them lowered their gun-muzzles and became more carelessly-like. But just then a shriek came from inside, and "Mrs. Meadows," having torn her throat from the expressman's grip, yelled out at the top of her lungs:

"You're trapped, Gomez! Fly, fly! The troopers are coming!"

"The assailants drew back in momentary dismay, and Gomez, grinding out an oath, drew a bead on me, and fired.

"You can see for yourselves the furrow in my cheek that his bullet made, gentlemen. But no great harm was done.

"In return, I gave him a bullet in the shoulder as quick as a wink; the wool-grower killed one of their horses at the first fire; the two soldiers behind us threw off their blankets, and popped away with their carbines right and left; while Bill and the other insiders, making no further attempt to hush up the gal, opened out at the coach-windows as lively as you please; the volley with which the robbers greeted us going at random, and not doing much damage, for they were thoroughly panic-stricken, and were already making off for the secret trial I've spoken of.

"But, just at that moment, McFadden and his men—who had ridden up so cautiously in the shadow of the cliff as to be entirely unperceived—burst upon them with the sabre, yelling like fiends, heading off their retreat, and engaging them hand-to-hand. Lord, but it was dusty!

"I only had a misty recollection of keeping the team together with one hand; of shooting around indiscriminate-like with the other; of seeing the wool-grower tumble down all of a heap on the foot board; and of hearing the crack, crack of the repeaters, mingled with shouts, curses, yells, and the snorts of frightened horses; and then, when everything sort of cleared up like, the whole thing was over and done, and we were masters of the field.

"There was only one killed on our side—one of the soldiers just behind me, who was tumbled off the hox with a bullet in his heart—but there were lots of wounded.

Bill Coombs had been shot through the arm that was holding on to the treasure-chest; the sheep-breeder had been pinked through the left lung by a ball that stunned but did not kill, and several of the horse-men had received scratches.

"Four of the robbers had succeeded in reaching the secret trail, and making their escape; but all the rest, eleven in number, were killed, mortally wounded, or made prisoners.

"At the edge of the brook, with his legs in the running water, that was fast becoming tinged with blood, lay the body of Gomez the outlaw chief, with two bullets in the breast, and one of his hands severed at the wrist by a sabre-cut.

"Our prisoners were soon secured, and for some time no one said a word as we gathered about the dead bravo. For, seated upon the bank, and supporting the gory head in her lap, with features whiter than her lace collar, and a stony, horrible despair in her black eyes, was our lady passenger.

"She was Gomez's wife, and was on her way to join him when she took passage at Yreka, under the name of Mrs. Meadows; and it turned out that it was a confederate of hers who had lighted the queer fire on the pyramid, to apprise the outlaws of our taking the road without an escort.

"Gentlemen, that is about the end of my story," said Hank Miller, with a sigh, at closing. "Thank ye, sir! I *will* take another pull at that flask; likewise another cigar."

"But you haven't quite finished," we cried, cheerfully accommodating his requests. "The young woman—the outlaw's wife, you know?"

"Oh, there ain't much more to tell," said Hank, gathering up his lines, and flipping the off leader. "Only two of my team were killed, and, as their places were supplied from among the riderless horses after the fight, there wasn't much delay, after all. The dead robbers were buried where they fell, and the four that were captured were hanged the following week at Yreka. As for Gomez's wife, the law let up on her, and she shortly afterward disappeared, no one knew whither.

"That's all. But you can judge now why it is that I never see the most innocent fire up there on the pyramid without bringing once more, to mind the Changing Beacon."—*Saturday Night.*

MURDER WILL OUT.

Some four years ago a man by the name of Benjamin Smith, of Abbotsburg, N. C. was murdered at Lumberton while attending a circus, and on Saturday last officer J. N. VanSoelen, Deputy U. S. Marshal, arrested one Ben McAlister charged with the murder of the said Smith. It appears from the evidence of two colored men that Ben confessed to them that he killed Smith. The following is the substance of the statement made to them: "That in November, 1874, while the Great Eastern circus was performing at Lumberton, Robeson county, the defendant, Ben McAlister, was guarding a portion of the tent, when Mr. Benjamin Smith went to the side of the tent and attempted to lift up the canvass, when the defendant gave him a severe blow, which it was thought at the time had killed him; that he and two other men connected with the show, one white and the other colored, then wrapped Smith up in a blanket and carried him to a ravine a short distance from the tent and deposited him upon the ground, when the other two men returned to the tent, McAlister remaining with the wounded man with the view, as he expressed it, of satisfying himself as to whether he was really dead or not; that shortly after the two men departed Smith began to show signs of life and returning consciousness, upon which McAlister recalled the two men, informing them of the fact, whereupon they "made a finish of him." The three men then wrapped the body up in the blanket and conveyed it to an unoccupied house or barn near by."

He also confessed to having killed a person in Cumberland county some years ago, for which he was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to the penitentiary for a term of years, but succeeded in effecting his escape.

McAlister has been committed to jail and will be sent to Robeson county for trial.—*Wilmington Post.*

CONFESSED LYING!

Here the other day R. *M.* Douglas, Marshal of the Western District of North Carolina, was so berated by the press and people of the West for his numerous iniquities, that verily there was "none so poor to do him reverence." Now he goes to the Attorney General with a pocket full of indorsements from Democrats and comes back secure and rejoicing.—*Tarboro Southerner, Dem.*

Either these "Democrats" are the most arrant *liars*, or the most consummate knaves, that ever stultified themselves and disgraced humanity. It is well known that, the clamor against Marshal Douglas and his deputies, pending the last canvass lost the State to the Republicans, as the people were made believe that the charges so persistently urged against them were true; to which they now give the *lie* by signing petitions to retain him in office, and not only that, but ask Congress to not abolish the Western District, that a few months since, they were rampant for! Why such injustice to *Mr.* Douglas? To Judge Dick? Why charge him with crimes, and then endorse his innocence? If they have lied upon him, and by endorsing him now confess they did, if it was not done willfully and for a *purpose!* It is proper that amends should be made. But did they not know they were *lying*, and the purpose was to defeat the Republicans in the State; or, charging him falsely, to accomplish a political end, what meanness to praise him now in the hypocrisy of their souls. *Mr.* Douglas certainly will know what value to place upon such deceitful friends. But the object being accomplished—the State irretrievably lost to the Republicans, by this clamor, whether *Mr.* Douglas was in the fault or not—and these Democrats now endorse him innocent—by them he is preferred to any other Republican, if his position is not conferred upon a Democrat. Generous souls! For their *happiness*, let *Mr.* Hayes continue Mr. Douglas in office. But it is plain that, their first choice is a Democrat, and that Mr. Douglas is second choice, to keep out some other individual.

As to the Federal Court we have not indulged a serious thought that it would be abolished, or was so intended. Mr. Hayes has only three years more to serve, and at the end of his term the Democracy confidently expect to come into power, and from present indications we anticipate they will for reasons unnecessary here to state. The present House of representatives is largely Democratic, and the Senate by 1880 will pass into their hands. Then of course the offices of Mr. Douglas, Judge Dick, and others will pass into the hands of Democrats, like ripe apples fall to the ground. Do you not see the milk in the cocoanut?

And yet these self-convicted liars and calumniators, are the men who tirade against Returning Boards, Electoral Count, as if themselves possessed one scintilla of an attribute of common honesty! What is their endorsement of any man worth, after such shameless meanness and confessed lying? No wonder they are condemned and denounced, as they should be, by honest men in the Democratic party for there are such.—*Statesville American.*

DR. EUGENE GRISSOM.

The transactions of the American Medical Association for 1877, has just been published, and it forms a large and valuable work. The next meeting will take place in June, at Buffalo. One of its most important labors will be the revision of its organic law concerning the representation, and also to prescribe more definitely the character of the publications.—The enormous attendance at the annual meeting it has been found necessary to reduce. The whole matter of reorganization was referred at the Chicago meeting to a select committee of five, to report this year, consisting of Drs. N. S. Davis, of Pennsylvania, D. W. Yandell, of Kentucky and Eugene Grissom, of North Carolina.

When it is observed that four of these gentlemen are ex-presidents of this, the highest medical body in America, the distinguished compliment to a North Carolinian and our fellow citizen, can be appreciated. We believe the facts have never appeared in any of our State papers, and desire to make a record to the credit of the Old North State.—*Farmer and Mechanic.*

AN ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE—TWO CONVICTS SHOT DOWN BY THE GUARD.—Last Friday, just as the train from Fayettville reached Deep River, within a short distance of the point where the convicts were at work on the Western R. R. extension, the passengers were startled by the sound of rapid firing, which those who heard it described as similar to the opening of a picket line in battle. It proved to be the convict guard firing on two prisoners who, while at work, attempted to escape, and ran the gauntlet of the sentry on post, resulting in the death of one and the wounding of the other. They were both negroes; the dead man's head was almost blown to pieces, and the wounded man was shot in the wrist.

We are glad to learn that the work of engineering and the grading by convict labor are progressing as rapidly as the friends of the road could desire, the surveying party pushing ahead steadily and the working force from the penitentiary being well managed and rendered very effective.—*Fayetteville Gazette.*

ADDRESS ON EDUCATION.—James H. Harriss, colored, of Warren county, formerly a well known politician, addressed the colored people of Wilmington at the Court House, last night, on the educational and material advancement of their race.

W. H. Moore presided over the meeting, and Alex. A. Jones and W. K. Price acted as Secretaries.

On motion of G. W. Price, *Jr.*, a committee of three, consisting of James Lowrey, Geo. W. Price, Jr., and Alex. Sampson, was appointed by the Chair to conduct the speaker to the stand, and at the close of the address, which was listened to with much attention by the large number present, Geo. L. Mabson moved that a vote of thanks be tendered the speaker, which was unanimously agreed to, and the meeting then adjourned.—*Wilmington Star.*

What holds all the snuff in the world? No one nose.