

“Bathe now in the stream before you,
Wash the war-paint from your faces,
Wash the blood-stain from your fingers,
Bury your war-clubs and your weapons,
Break the red stone from this quarry,
Mould and make it into Peace Pipes,
Take the reeds that grow beside you,
Deck them with your brightest feathers,
Smoke the calumet together,
And as brothers live henceforward.”

(Hiawatha.)

**REMINISCENCE OF THE OLD SANTA FE
TRAIL. BY W. H. RYUS, MAIL AND
EXPRESS MESSENGER AND
CONDUCTOR.**

Introductory.

W. H. Ryus, better known as “the Second William Penn” by passengers and old settlers along the line of the Old Santa Fe Trail because of his rare and exceptional knowledge of Indian traits and characteristics and his ability to trade and treat with them so tactfully, was one of the boy drivers of the stage coach that crossed the plains while the West was still looked upon as “wild and woolly,” and in reality was fraught with numerous, and oftentimes, murderous dangers.

At the time this story is being recalled, our author is in his seventy-fourth year, but with a mind as translucent as a sea of glass, he recalls vividly many incidents growing out of his travels over the Santa Fe Trail.

Having the same powers of appreciation we all possess, for confidences reposed in him, he lovingly recalls how his passengers would press him to know whether he would be the driver or conductor to drive the coach on their return. Some of these passengers declare that it was really beautiful to see the adoration many Indians heaped upon the driver, “Little Billy of the Stage Coach,” and they understood from the overtures of the Indians toward “Billy” that they were safe in his coach, as long as they remained passive to his instructions, which were that they allow him to deal with whatever red men they chanced to meet.

Sometimes a band of Indians would follow his coach for miles, protecting their favorite, as it were, from dangers that might assail him. They were always peaceable and friendly toward Billy in exchange for his hospitality and kindness. It was a by-word from Kansas City to Santa Fe that "Billy" was one boy driver and conductor who gave the Indians something more than abuse to relate to their squaws around their wigwam campfires.

The dangerous route was the Long Route, from Fort Larned, Kansas, to Fort Lyon, Colorado, the distance was two hundred and forty miles with no stations between. On this route we used two sets of drivers. This gave one driver a chance to rest a week to recuperate from his long trip across the "Long Route." A great many of the drivers had nothing but abuse for the Indians because they were afraid of them. This made the Indians feel, when they met, that the driver considered him a mortal foe. However, our author says that had the drivers taken time and trouble to have made a study of the habits of the Indians, as he had done, that they could have just as easily aroused their confidence and secured this Indian protection which he enjoyed.

It was a hard matter to keep these long route drivers because of the unfriendliness that existed between them and the Indians, yet the Old Stage Company realized a secureness in Billy Ryus, and knew he would linger on in their employ, bravely facing the dangers feared by the other drivers and conductors until such a time as they could employ other men to take his place.

Within the pages of this book W. Ryus Stanton relates many amusing and interesting anecdotes which occurred on his stage among his passengers. From passengers who always wanted to return on his coach he always parted with a lingering hope that he would be the driver (or conductor, as the case might be) who would return them safely to their destination. Passengers were many times "tender-footed," as the Texas Rangers call the Easterners. Billy soothingly replied to all questions of fear, soothingly, with ingenuity and policy.

Within Billy's coach there was carried, what seemed to most passengers, a superfluity of provision. It was his fixed theory that to feed an Indian was better than to fight one. He showed his passengers the need of surplus foods, if he had an idea he would be visited by his Red Friends, who may have been his foes, but for his cunning in devising entertainment and hospitality for them. The menus of these luncheons consisted chiefly of buffalo sausage, bacon, venison, coffee and canned fruits. He carried the sausage in huge ten-gallon camp kettles.

The palace coaches that cross the old trail today pulled by the smoke-choked engines of the A. T. & Santa Fe R. R. carry no provision for yelling Comanches, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, etc. They lose no time treating and trading with the Indians, and are never out of sight of the miraculous changes exhibited by the advanced hand of civilization.