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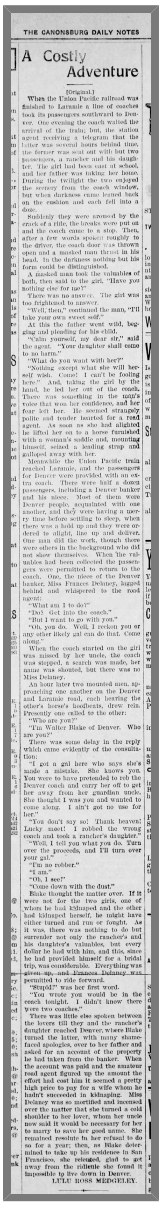

THE CANONSBURG DAILY NOTES

A Costly Adventure

[Original.]

When the Union Pacific railroad was finished to Laramie a line of coaches took its passengers southward to Denver. One evening the coach waited the arrival of the train; but, the station agent receiving a telegram that the latter was several hours behind time, the former was sent out with but two passengers, a rancher and his daughter. The girl had been visiting at school, and her father was taking her home. During the twilight the two enjoyed the scenery from the coach window, but when darkness came turned back on the cushion and each fell into a doze.

Suddenly they were aroused by the crack of a rifle, the brakes were put on and the coach came to a stop. Then, after a few words spoken roughly to the driver, the coach door was thrown open and a masked man thrust in his head. In the darkness nothing but his form could be distinguished.

A masked man took the valuables of both, then said to the girl, "Have you nothing else for me?"

There was no answer. The girl was too frightened to answer.

"Well, then," continued the man, "I'll take your own sweet self."

At this the father went wild, begging and pleading for his child.

"Calm yourself, my dear sir," said the agent. "Your daughter shall come to no harm."

"What do you want with her?"

"Nothing except what she will herself wish. Come! I can't be fooling here." And, taking the girl by the hand, he led her out of the coach. There was something in the man's voice that won her confidence, and her fear left her. He seemed strangely polite and tender hearted for a road agent. As soon as she had alighted he lifted her on to a horse furnished with a woman's saddle and, mounting himself, seized a leading strap and galloped away with her.

Meanwhile the Union Pacific train reached Laramie, and the passengers for Denver were provided with an extra coach. There were half a dozen passengers, including a Denver banker and his niece. Most of them were Denver people acquainted with one another, and they were having a merry time before settling to sleep, when there was a hold up and they were ordered to alight, line up and deliver. One man did the work, though there were others in the background who did not show themselves. When the valuables had been collected the passengers were permitted to return to the coach. One, the niece of the Denver banker, Miss Frances Delaney, lagged behind and whispered to the road agent:

"What am I to do?"

"Go! Get into the coach."

"But I want to go with you."

"Oh, you do. Well, I reckon you or any other likely gal can do that. Come along."

When the coach started on the girl was missed by her uncle, the coach was stopped, a search was made, her name was shouted, but there was no Miss Delaney.

An hour later two mounted men, approaching one another on the Denver and Laramie road, each bearing the other's horse's headlights, drew rein. Presently one called to the other:

"Who are you?"

"I'm Walter Blake of Denver. Who are you?"

There was some delay in the reply which came evidently of the consultation.

"I got a gal here who says she's made a mistake. She knows you. You were to have pretended to rob the Denver coach and carry her off to get her away from her guardian uncle. She thought I was you and wanted to come along. I ain't got no use for her."

"You don't say so! Thank heaven! Lucky meet! I robbed the wrong coach and took a rancher's daughter."

"Well, I tell you what you do. Turn over the proceeds, and I'll turn over your gal."

"I'm no robber."

"I am."

"Oh, I see!"

"Come down with the dust."

Blake thought the matter over. If it were not for the two girls, one of whom he had kidnaped and the other had kidnaped herself, he might have either turned and run or fought. As it was, there was nothing to do but surrender not only the rancher's and his daughter's valuables, but every dollar he had with him, and this, since he had provided himself for a lethal trip, was considerable. Everything was given up, and Frances Delaney was permitted to ride forward.

"Stupid!" was her first word.

"You wrote you would be in the coach tonight. I didn't know there were two coaches."

There was little else spoken between the lovers till they and the rancher's daughter reached Denver, when Blake turned the latter, with many shamefaced apologies, over to her father and asked for an account of the property he had taken from the banker. When the account was paid and the amateur road agent figured up the amount the effort had cost him it seemed a pretty high price to pay for a wife whom he hadn't succeeded in kidnaping. Miss Delaney was so mortified and incensed over the matter that she turned a cold shoulder to her lover, whom her uncle now said it would be necessary for her to marry to save her good name. She remained resolute in her refusal to do so for a year; then, as Blake determined to take up his residence in San Francisco, she relented, glad to get away from the ridicule she found it impossible to live down in Denver.

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