

stages go over the ranges, said to be seven in number, between Lyons and the park all winter through, going over one day and coming back the next. Some of the park families come down below for the winter, especially those who have children; but there are always some who stay through, who have to have their coal-oil and their provisions, and there is the postmaster, that venerable Institution, never to be forgotten by any visitor, who is no respecter of seasons. So the stage makes regular trips, though usually without passengers. Five hours on the high driver's seat, on a blustering winter day, is no trifle, even in anticipation; but you can bury yourself a foot deep in blankets if you choose, and if your nose does not freeze, the rest of you will not.

The driver is communicative, and not averse to telling his troubles. You learn how his fur gloves were stolen and how he was cheated in the matter of his overcoat—and how anybody can drive stages that likes to, but as for him, he has had about enough of it. He has long ceased to care for points of interest, but he knows all the lore of the trail and is willing to impart it. He shows you Button Peak and Coffintop, Calhoun's Gulch and Mason's, the roads to Antelope and Big Elk parks—and Collyer's Crag, and tells its story; how the Reverend Robert Collyer came over the road one day, and seeing that so many things bore the names of men, finally asked his driver what he would take to tell future travelers that that impressive monument was called Collyer's Crag. The driver considered, and found that he could afford to render that service for the trifling consideration of a drink of whisky. "Whoa!" said the reverend;—not to flee from the doomed vehicle, nor to enter upon a service of prayer for the driver's soul by the roadside, but to open his valise. And Collyer's Crag it has remained to this day. The word crag, it may be remarked, which to most people's mind belongs only in poetry, is in common use here; it is applied to the high and inaccessible rocks on the face of a cliff.

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We toil up the winding ascent of Rowell's Hill, and from the distant gateway of the summit specks appear traveling to meet us, which presently resolve themselves into a herd of black cattle, with two horsemen in their rear, and, circling about them as they spread over the mountain, a small yellow object, which barks in the unmistakable voice of a Scotch collie. And thereby hangs a tail—a tail with a white tip, to match the active feet, the fluffy breast, the collar and the stripe between the soft brown eyes.

There was a man who had a collie of ancient race, the which he loved passing well, even as did his wife and babies. But since dogs in town must not drive

anything, nor even bark except under protest (which is a great hardship) he took the little dog over the many miles of railroad and over the seven mountain-ranges and gave her to his friend in Estes Park, where there are no dog-poisoners and where cattle can be chased every day, not to mention the wild deer. But he stipulated that the dog should become part and parcel of the ranch, and stay there as long as she lived. So his friend kept her there all that winter, and all the next summer, and well into the following winter; but one day he decided to go down to the plains, to see his friends and sell some cattle, and he took the dog with him. And then as they drew down the last mountain, who should rise up out of Hubbell's stage to confront him but the owner of the dog, who according to all law and order belonged 500 miles away; so that the poor ranchman could do no less than wonder what kind of a world this is, anyway.

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Up and down we go over the well-remembered stretches of that grand road, skirting the shivery chasms, pounding through the quiet wooded depths of the valleys, whipping around corners where the wind smites us flat-handed in the face; and as we strike into the long level of Muggins' Gulch, the snow begins to fall in earnest. Presently we pass that ranch-house where, through the opening gap ahead, the far-off stony face of the Mummy ought to appear; but no Mummy—even the tops of the hills that enclose the road are hidden by the driving snow. A little further and the trail is buried; and the horses seem not to be equipped with that desirable instinct we read about; they cannot keep nor find the road. Much lurching and bumping results. In the course of time, we come to the brow of the Park hill and begin the descent. The horses are on stilts by this time, and stumbling continually; there are deep gullies, now on one side, now on the other, masked by snow-drifts. The sublime landscape beneath is hidden from view; all we can see is a vague white expanse 1500 feet below us; there is nothing to distract our attention from our immediate surroundings. The steep part of the road comes, with sudden curves; the stage slews wildly on the slippery surface; the driver hitches himself up in his seat and grins oddly. Then the snow arrives so thickly as to put blinders on the unhappy passenger's spectacles, and he can only hang on and wonder what is coming next.

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The people who winter in the park make themselves very comfortable, and the visitor leads a lazy and contented life. The great stone fireplace roars with the blaze of the pine-knots, and all the trees below timber-line are there for

firewood. The table is spread three times a day with the meat that Friar Tuck set before the Black Knight—learning courtesy from whom, the grateful guest refrains from impertinent questions. Out doors it still snows, and at night it freezes deeply; but the traditions of the place are unchangeable—you leave your doors and windows open, and pile on another blanket. And all day and until late at night stories are told around the fire. One learns many singular facts relative to the strange race of summer tourists. The daughter of the house tells gaily of the eastern ladies who became enthusiastic over the park beaver, and declared their intention of having collars made for themselves of beaver fur; and how they accepted eagerly her guileless suggestion that they have them trimmed with a cluster of beaver tails. The discussions of the young men are of guns and ammunition, and their stories are of the wild creatures of the mountains. One listens to the tale of the recent grizzly, who was taken in a trap, how he smashed the underbrush and snapped the young trees in his mad charges towards them, as they approached to photograph him first and then shoot him; one is even admitted within the outer gate of that seven-fold wall of mystery that surrounds the retreat of the last of the wild buffalo, in whose existence many will not believe.

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Altogether, I have not yet found a bad time of year to visit Estes Park.

A. T. RICHARDSON.

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