

HENRY T. CLARKE SR. WHOSE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN ENDLESS

Fifty Years of the Busy Life of a Man in Whose Veins Stirs the Animating Influence Inherited From Ancestors Who Have Been Identified With Big Things For Three Centuries

A SOLDIER of the common good, an architect of the state, a wilderness transformed, an empire builder, a broad-minded Christian gentleman—this is Henry T. Clarke, who has played a part of great activity and accomplishment as a pioneer of Nebraska. His fifty years of life here are crowded with important work, with the realization of high ideals, with the carrying through of big enterprises. Quick decision, rugged determination and high executive and organizing ability were qualities which enabled Henry T. Clarke to do the things he did for Nebraska.

He sprang from a line of ancestors who for hundreds of years were leaders in affairs, both in England and in this country, whither they came, urged on by that same spirit which brought their descendant to the far west. Among these illustrious ancestors was Dr. John Clarke, physician, theologian and statesman, who came to Boston in 1637. He helped to organize the state and stood among its leaders. He was sent on a state mission to England, and on October 9, 1653, he secured the royal signature of Charles II to the charter of the state of Rhode Island.

Mr. Clarke's mother was Sophia Tefft, a descendant of one of the pilots who steered the course of the good ship, Mayflower, and brought it safe to anchor off Plymouth rock. His father was a tailor and a man of culture, sternly and Puritanically religious and deeply devoted to the cause of education. He moved from Rhode Island to Greenwich, N. Y., in 1829, and there his son, Henry, was born, April 26, 1834. There the boy grew up and there he attended the little yellow school house, which stood on his grandfather's farm. It was a most humble place, and the children who attended were dressed in the simplest of homespun, but their blood was good, their training and environment were of the best and there, in the little school house, the seeds of virtuous ambition grew, and the boys were started on their ways to great careers. One little barefoot, homespun lad used to vie much in feats of boyish strength with young Clarke. He was known among the boys as "Ches" or "Chesie." Later the world knew him as Chester A. Arthur, president of the United States.

Having completed the course of study in the yellow school house, young Clarke graduated from the "academy," the pride of the village. This institution had been founded and built by his father. He was an industrious and very ambitious lad, and during the summers had worked in the small general stores of the place. In 1852 he left home to accept a position in a store in Columbus, O. Here his advancement was marvelously rapid. In the fall of that year his employers sent him on important business to several cities, and he went as far south as New Orleans.

Hears Call of the West

He remained in the employ of this firm until 1855. In his journeys about he had observed something of the growth of the country and the possibilities for a young man in the west. In 1855, having saved up a few hard-earned dollars, he decided to go west. He left Chicago in April, going to the western terminus of the Rock Island road, then still east of the Mississippi. There he bought a team and drove across Iowa to Omaha, where he arrived May 7, 1855. He spent several weeks traveling up and down the river, seeking for the most likely location. He went as far south as Kansas City, visited Lawrence and Topeka and finally decided to settle in Bellevue.

Even then, in the midst of the primeval wilderness of Nebraska territory, inhabited only by savages and wild beasts, he saw, with the far-seeing eye of the optimist and the captain of industry, the great possibilities of the country. He believed with his whole heart that Bellevue would be the eastern terminus of a great railway. Bellevue and its sponsor, Henry T. Clarke, lost by a vote of 7 to 6 when the Union Pacific directors voted on the proposition of terminus, and this in spite of the official report of Colonel James H. Simpson of the engineering corps of the United States army, who pronounced the route from Bellevue west better by 40 per cent than any other possible exit from the Missouri into the Platte valley. But all this was not determined until 1865, and prior to that time Mr. Clarke's efforts had been manifold and fruitful in the conquering of the west. He did extensive surveying in the country between Bellevue and Omaha and Sioux City, and he built the line of railroad from Bellevue to Omaha, now owned by the Burlington.

Among his fellow citizens in Bellevue in those days were J. Sterling Morton, clerk of the United States court; General Peter A. Sarpy; Fenner Ferguson, first chief justice of Nebraska; Logan Fontenelle; Henry Fontenelle and "Commodore Stephen Decatur," that mysterious enigma of the west. The latter was a clerk in Sarpy's store. Lieutenant Governor Bross of Illinois claimed him for a brother and came to Bellevue shortly after Mr. Clarke settled there to look him up. With Mr. Clarke he went to the store and spoke to "Decatur." "Decatur just looked at him out of the corner of his eye, screwed up his mouth and spat on the floor," says Mr. Clarke. "Then he got up and turned his back. Bross pleaded, but Decatur would not recognize him." It was said this strange man had left civilization because of a love affair. He left Bellevue later and married a Mrs. Thompson. Then he went to Denver and eventually became a member of the Colorado legislature.

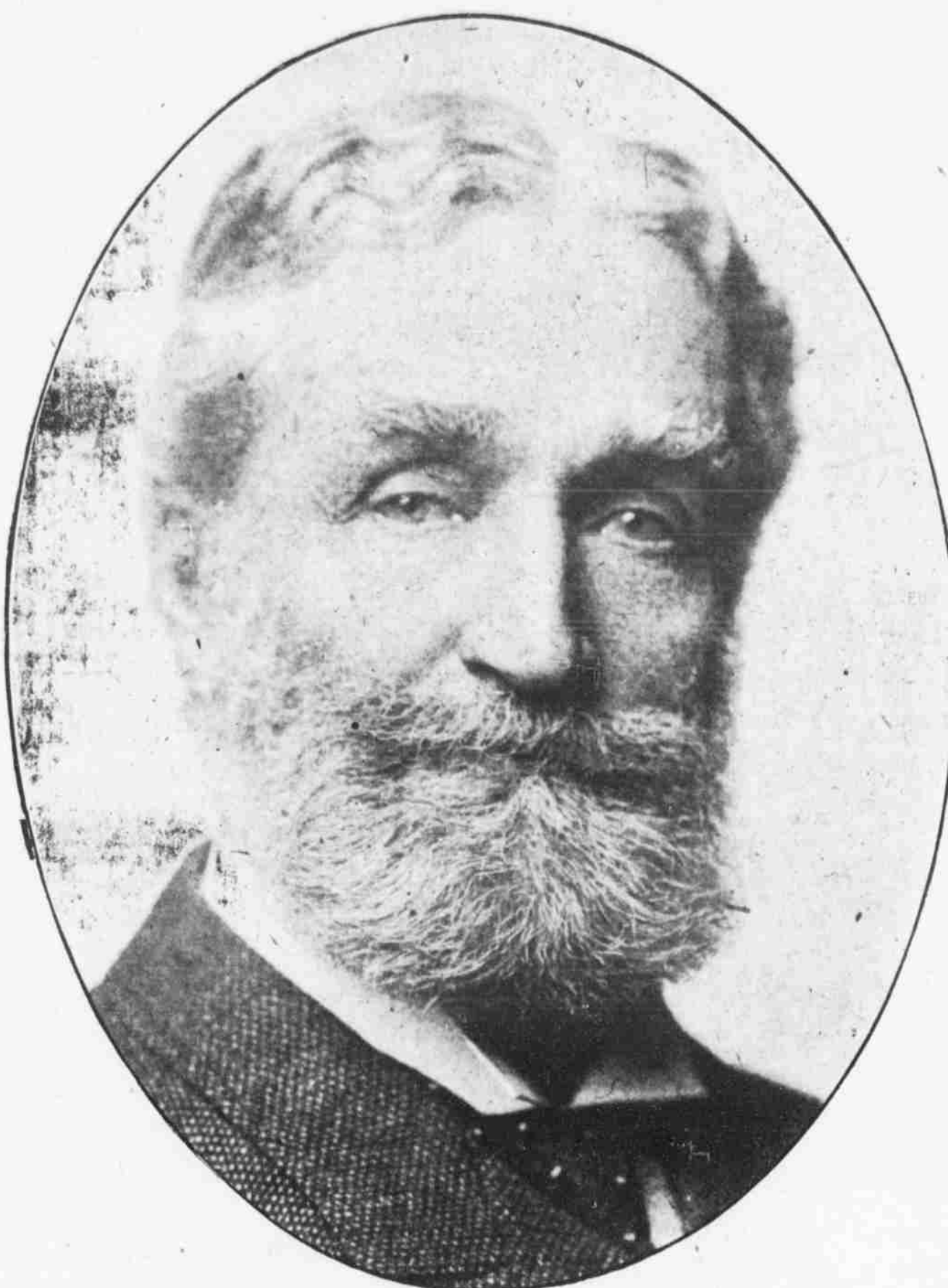
Contracts With the Government

Mr. Clarke first became steamboat agent at Bellevue and then branched into general merchandising. In 1862 he took the contract to furnish the government with corn and oats at Fort Kearney, 200 miles west of Bellevue. He acquired a large number of wagons, horses and oxen and later took larger contracts for furnishing the army with supplies. When he was through with this work, in 1864, he still had many wagons on hand and went into the freighting business to the far west.

"My train consisted of about twenty-five teams each, five yoke of cattle to a team," says Mr. Clarke. "Each team drew two wagons, the front one loaded with about 4,000 pounds and the rear one, attached by a pole, loaded with 3,000 pounds. The usual drive was fifteen and eighteen miles a day. We aimed to make two round trips from the Missouri river to Denver in the season. The stage made the trip from the Missouri to Denver in six days and nights, and the fare was \$125. I always rested my trains on Sunday, and, I think, made better time than those who drove seven days a week."

His cattle were stampeded by Indians and his trains were left helpless on the plains one night. This was on November 3, 1865, just after the corrals had been formed and the cattle turned out. One man was shot in the scrimmage following the stampede. Mr. Clarke bought enough cattle to get most of his wagons on to Denver and then made out a bill to the government. It was for \$9,547. The following year an Indian council was held at Fort Laramie, and there was Mr. Clarke with his bill. The Sioux chiefs acknowledged with simplest naïvete that their braves had driven away the cattle belonging to the white chief and that they had not been paid for. They signed this statement, and it was sent to the government. In 1898 Uncle Sam, slow but sure, as always, paid for the cattle stolen that night. The Indian chiefs and head men who affixed their marks to the document acknowledging the theft of the cattle were these: Spotted Tail, Hawk Thunder, Swift Bear, Blue Horse, Big Head, Boy Hawk, Sharp Nose, Tall Thunder, The Man That Walks Under the Ground, Big Mouth, White Tail, Standing Cloud and the Black War Bonnet.

With the completion of the Union Pacific road, freighting to the west stopped. But there was still work to be done, carrying goods northward or to the south from the steel highway. The Black Hills



HENRY T. CLARKE, SR.

country was filling up rapidly in the early '70s, and Omaha merchants wanted a short route to that country. Sidney, Cheyenne county, was the point at which goods for the Black Hills left the Union Pacific. Then the wagons had to go ninety miles west to Fort Laramie to get across the river. In the winter of 1875 Omaha merchants asked Mr. Clarke to examine the river for a bridge site straight north of Sidney. He did so and reported favorably. But not enough Omaha men could be found to finance the project. They were afraid of Indian depredations on so valuable a property. Then the promoters asked Mr. Clarke to build a toll bridge and accept a bonus. Without a moment's hesitation he decided to undertake the big project.

Famous Clarke Bridges

Mr. Clarke was no novice at work of this kind, for he had already spanned the big river with six bridges and had constructed miles of highway and railroad bridges. He sent one of his foremen to Moline, Ill., and another to Davenport, Ia., where the lumber was prepared. The iron was made in Milwaukee. The railroads, realiz-

ing the importance of the work, transported the material free of charge. The bridge was completed in June, 1876. It measured 2,000 feet in length and had sixty-one spans. It was in itself a powerful factor in building up the northwest, and was of inestimable value to the government during the Sioux and Cheyenne Indian wars in 1876 and 1877.

The government, at Mr. Clarke's request, built a blockhouse on the island, on which the center of the bridge rested. Here they placed a force of soldiers. At the ends of the bridge guards of cavalry were stationed. The rate for crossing was \$2 for wagon, driver and two horses, oxen or mules. For each additional animal or beast the charge was 50 cents.

But the bold and fearless battle which this young man was waging single-handed against nature and the Indians for the building of an empire in the northwest was only half won. The government refused to carry mails into the Black Hills country, or even above the Platte river, claiming that it was Indian country. With characteristic quick decision Mr. Clarke conceived and put in operation his "Centennial express to the Black Hills." He made arrange-

ments with the postal authorities and printed his own envelopes, which he placed on sale at Omaha, Chicago and throughout the country where there might be a demand for them. The envelopes were small, with an embossed green and white stamp, showing a running horse, with rider, and a railroad train. This stamp was for 3 cents and bore the mark of the United States. A note on the front of the envelope stated that in consideration of the 10 cents paid for it, Henry T. Clarke agreed to carry it from the Union Pacific railroad at Sidney, Neb., to Custer City and Deadwood, Dakota or other places the route supplied or from these places to the Union Pacific railroad at Sidney. Of the purchase price the government got 3 cents and Mr. Clarke 7 cents.

Advertising His Mail Service

On the back of the envelope was an advertisement of the "Sidney Short Route to the Black Hills, via the new 61 span truss bridge over the Platte river, forty miles north of Sidney. Guarded by the United States troops. Only 167 miles to Custer City from the Union Pacific railroad. Wood and water in abundance." The advertisement also stated that "Dear's Sidney and Black Hills stage line leaves this route and Snake river, running through to Red Cloud Indian agency in seventeen hours and to Custer City in thirty-six hours. The distance by this route is 182 miles. Passenger rates, Omaha to Custer City, first-class, \$45; second-class, \$35; third-class, \$25."

Passengers were taken from Sidney to Custer City and the other northern points in the four-horse coaches which Mr. Clarke put on for this purpose, soon after establishing his Centennial express. His post riders were men of nerve and many horses fell under them from exhaustion in the effort to get the mails through with the greatest rapidity. The riders had no stop between Sidney and the bridge, forty miles; one stop between the bridge and Camp Robinson, seventy miles, and none between Camp Robinson and Custer City, seventy miles.

Mr. Clarke was a member of the territorial house of representatives in 1862, and in 1864 was a member of the territorial council. He is the only surviving member of that council. He has been a leading candidate for governor. He was one of the incorporators of the Northwestern Electric Light company. He was a partner in the firm now known as the Leo-Glass-Andresen Hardware company, in 1879. He founded the wholesale drug house known as the H. T. Clarke Drug company, with a branch in Lincoln.

Interest in Education

In those pursuits which invariably make a strong man stronger—education, religion and philanthropy—Mr. Clarke has always been a leader. He built the first school house at Bellevue, a little structure of cottonwood boards. He has been one of the most powerful upbuilders of Bellevue college. He built the beautiful Clarke hall on Elk hill, at Bellevue, in 1882, and presented it to the synod of the church, together with two houses and 265 acres of fine land. He is a member of the board of trustees of the college and has been president of the board. He was also for several years a member of the board of trustees of McCormick Presbyterian Theological seminary of Chicago.

Three years after the young pioneer had set foot on Nebraska soil he went back to his old home, and there, on September 28, 1858, he married Miss Martha A. Fielding. Their married life extended over a period of thirty-three years. She died in 1892. They had seven children. Five of these are living, and their accomplishments and present high positions make them a family equaled by few in the state—a family that is continuing the fair name handed down through generations. Three of the boys have been members of the Nebraska state legislature. Harry Fielding Clarke was elected to the state senate in 1884, when he was 23 years old. He was the first Nebraska-born senator and the youngest member of the body at that time. Charles Hughes Clarke was elected to the senate in 1892 at the age of 21. He was the youngest man ever elected to that body. He died in 1893. Henry T. Clarke, Jr., was elected to the house in 1904 and again in 1906. He is now one of the state railway commissioners. Morris Gordon Clarke is a leading lawyer and banker in Okmulgee, I. T. John T. Clarke is an insurance man and investment broker in New York City. The only daughter, Gertrude, is the wife of Matthew J. Whiteall, owner of the Whiteall woolen factories at Worcester, Mass. This is one of the largest factories manufacturing woolen rugs in the world. The Whiteall home is one of the handsomest in New England. William Edward Clarke is dead.

Mr. Clarke was the first man to be made a Master Mason in Nebraska. The ceremony was performed in the old log trading post of Peter A. Sarpy, soon after Mr. Clarke became a resident of Bellevue.

Missouri River Gets Attention

Three score years and ten and three do not weigh heavily upon this quiet, but strenuous pioneer. He is still vigorous and hearty, active in body and mind. And he is still an altruist, busily working and planning for the future good of this country, for the development of which he has done so much. It has been truly said that he who plants a tree contributes unselfishly to the prosperity of future generations. Henry T. Clarke, at three score years and ten and three, is working for the good of the generations to come, and his work is along the line of national improvement of rivers, harbors and waterways, particularly of the Missouri river. No one who has had occasion to talk to Mr. Clarke has remained in ignorance of his passion for this work. He is an enthusiast on the subject and he is a pushing propagandist, losing no opportunity to pour out the projects with which his active mind is filled.

His plan is to get government appropriations for making the Missouri river navigable from Omaha to the south and to the north. He believes the river is better now than ever before and that it has more and greater advantages for navigation than the Ohio river, on which the government has spent such vast sums. He wants to have the river set to work at dredging itself by the simple force of its mighty current, directed along its channel by a system of cables and riprapping by means of sandbags. The system has been approved by engineers and is pronounced far superior to piling or other artificial attempts to pen up the mighty flood. Mr. Clarke has spent much money and time and put forth his best energies in getting the attention of congress directed to the Missouri river. He was the moving factor in organizing the Missouri River Improvement association and was its president. He has addressed the National Rivers and Harbors congress on several occasions and has spoken before similar organizations in meetings throughout the country. This is his hobby, but it is a hobby which he rides for the benefit of others than himself and of the generations to come. Short-sighted people who see no farther than the present generation, or selfish people who care not for the future beyond their own narrow spans of life, may take little interest in the efforts which he is putting forth in this direction. Columbus and his New World, Fulton and his steamboat and 100 other innovators went through similar experiences, and future generations rose up to call them blessed and to enshrine them in memory's hall of fame. When the Missouri river shall have been converted from a muddy, useless depreedator of thousands of acres of valuable land yearly into a well-behaved, well-governed transporter of the products of the fertile acres along its 2,000-mile course, the name of Henry T. Clarke will be remembered by a grateful people.

Part Played by Mule in History

OF MAN'S four-footed friends, the only one that has not been given its due meed of praise is the homely and uncompromising mule.

The loyal dog has been sung by poets, praised by philosophers and pictured on famous canvases. The faithful horse has been immortalized in epic strains. It gallops across many a stirring page of history and poses in bronze and marble in all the world's great galleries. The cow and the cat have both been worshiped in Egypt and India and have had altars, priests and temples consecrated to their service.

The elephant is worshiped in Siam, apotheosized in America and fed on peanuts at the circus. The reindeer is hallowed by the tenderest recollections of childhood's early faith in Santa Claus and the camel's seven stomachs exalt it to supernal heights in the imagination of sufferers from perennial thirst. Even the ass comes down to us with a halo of borrowed glory, dating from before the founding of the Christian religion. The Burro mountains of New Mexico were named in its honor. It is the mascot of the democratic party, and the souvenir postcard carries its serene countenance into almost every home.

But the mule—who so mean as to do it honor? Yet is it not abstemious, strong, self-contained, forgiving, industrious, willing and content? The most that can be alleged against it is that it is not over-brilliant and that it is superlatively stubborn. The first is but a negative failing; and as for the last, has not determination always been recognized as essential to greatness, or to even moderate success? Of how many men can it be truly said that their virtues are so many and the list of their shortcomings so brief? Yet in recognition of its worth the

mule has been given no more than the cheap and tawdry immortality of the comic supplement.

Wars have been fought for land, for fame, for food, for gold, for honor and for women; but it remained for this year of grace, nineteen hundred and seven, to place on record a war waged for a mule. Senor Irenos Selgado was exiled from the republic of Nicaragua on account of pernicious activity against the peace of mind and tenure of office of the duly constituted authorities, and showed his lack of judgment and good taste by settling in Honduras in close proximity to the international boundary line. One dark night thirty-five dashing cavalrymen of the Nicaraguan army crossed the line and boldly captured Selgado's mule. With a fine appreciation of the sanctity of property rights, Selgado made haste to tell the story of his wrongs to the Department of State.

As it happened, President Bonilla of Honduras imagines himself the Napoleon of the west, and was literally longing for a "casus belli," that his thirst for martial glory might be gratified. Plainly the wronging of the gray mule was an insult, and the honor of Honduras could be saved only by prompt and decisive action. Acting under his instructions, Senor Augusto C. Coello, minister of foreign affairs, opened diplomatic correspondence with Senor Jose D. Games, holding a like office in the Nicaraguan cabinet, giving full details concerning the outrage and demanding restitution and apology. The demand was couched almost in the terms of an ultimatum and elicited an equally spirited reply.

Alarmed at the loud barking of the dogs of war, President Roosevelt and President Diaz set the machinery of the two great re-

publics of the north in motion, and succeeded in having a board of arbitrators appointed. But the prospect of a peaceful solution of a question so vitally touching the sensitive honor of the two warlike nations was too galling to be endured. The interchange of diplomatic discourtesies continued and the feelings of all concerned soon grew so warm that war was the only recourse.

However, Selgado's stolen mule can never hope to leave so deep and lasting an impress upon human history as that made by Jim Butler's lost kicker in Nevada. Seven years ago Jim Butler started forth from Belmont to seek his fortune—as he had done many a time before. Most prospectors prefer the companionship of a burro on their peregrinations, but Butler was a large man, with a large appetite and large ideas, so he selected a mule as better suited to his size, his wants and his expectations. It is well that he did so, for even then his ample supply of "grub" was so nearly exhausted that one night he went into camp fully decided to start on the back track at sunrise next morning.

Perhaps the animal's intuition conveyed to it some inkling of its master's design, or perhaps its conduct was determined by blind chance. Anyway, it made plans of its own and proceeded to carry them into execution, so when Butler awoke in the morning the mule was gone. Although as cheerful a prospector as ever trod the wilderness, Butler knew that his finish would not long be delayed unless he found the beast that carried his food and water, so he started, literally for "dear life," to trace the tracks of the deserter. The chase was long, and hot, and heart-breaking, but the mule was found at last, grazing contentedly on a patch

(Continued on Page Four.)