

EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY
BY H.E. SMITH

My Night in A Stage Coach

The boy sat on the front seat, waiting to be spoken to, looking straight ahead. When we were quite clear of the straggling huts of the miners on the outermost limits of town, I asked him his name.

"They call me Lewis Shively," he said. "How old are you, Lewis," was my next question. "Fourteen, next April, sir." "Do you live at home, with your father and mother?" "That man yonder is all the father or mother I have, and his stable loft is the only home I have had since he took me from the poor house. That was better than the stable though, for they taught me something there."

There were no complaining chords in the tones in which these bitter words were said, and while he was speaking he was drawing the whip gently across the horse's back, brushing off the snow that had fallen on it. "Have you been driving on this road long?" I inquired.

"Going on three years. It will be three years in March." "Is it could out there? Colder than in here, I mean?" "I think it is," he replied; the wind and snow cut so-but I don't mind it, sir! We get used to rough weather up in these hills." "I wish you would come in here; my coat will cover us both." "No, I can't" he said. "I must watch the road now. We have to go pretty close to the precipices, sometimes.

"How close?" I asked. "With in a few inches. I can't see now five yards ahead, the snow falls so heavily." "Do you think it safe, then, to go on?" "Quite safe, sir! And I don't mind the cold." But his teeth chattered as he said it, and the ruddy glow was all gone from his cheeks. I did not talk more then. There were, I discovered, wide cracks in the bottom of the stage, through which the wind poured mercilessly. I was chilled through to the heart in less than an hour after starting. I do not know how far we had gone, or how long we had been upon the road, when I heard the boy's voice, cheery and bright, asking;

"How are you now, sir? Feeling comfortable, sir?" I nodded my head, and crept closer into the corner. But he was wiser than I, and would not let me have the sleep I coveted. "You are in a hurry to get home," he said, for want of something better to say with which to rouse me.

"Yes," I replied. "I want to be at home on Christmas Eve." "The best days I ever knew were Christmases-a good while ago." He said it as if he were ever and ever so old, and what was saddest of all, as if he were done with Christmas forever. I told him of the tree I was to get, and how Christmas Day was kept in the great cities. He was most interested in the tree, making me tell him again and again about it. But after awhile, as if he were tired of it, he said;

"I never saw a tree like that. I know about Christmas, though-about the star and the shepherds, and the Christ-child you spoke of-that they laid in a manger." "Then you know all that anyone in the world need ever to know," I said.

Register of Deeds
Judy Lambert
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