

**EARLY HISTORY OF CLOUD COUNTY
BY H.E. SMITH**

My Night in A Stage Coach

I thought of the little children waiting for my yonder; of their bitter disappointment if I did not come. Then I did not come. Then I said: "I am very anxious to go, and I am willing to pay well for being taken." The landlord leaning over the bar, asked:

"How much?" I told him what I was willing to pay. "I'll go and get the stage ready," he said. After all, it was only the higher price-he had been waiting for.

In five minutes the stage was at the door. It was an ordinary box wagon on good strong springs, having a cotton cover open in front. The horse was a half-starved, jaded-looking beast. I took all this in as I stood on the porch waiting for the driver. Getting impatient at last, I asked:

"Where is the driver?" The landlord, without speaking, pointed to an ill-clad boy standing at the horse's head. I looked closely at him. He might be, I thought, fifteen years old, or he might be not more than ten. His eyes were clear blue, and he, hearing my question, turned them full upon mine, a frank, boyish smile rebuking the distrust my words implied, and lighting up every feature of his delicate face. His complexion was like that of a girl, his mouth small and tender, his hair yellow, his figure slight and sinuous.

I looked at him, standing there shivering with the cold, out through the driving storm, along the snow-covered mountain road we were to travel together and asked: "Are you not afraid to go?"

The landlord interrupted:

"it don't matter if he is afraid. He belongs to me. He shall go." "No," I said; "he shall not go, if he is not quite willing." "I am not at all afraid," the boy replied, "and I am quite willing to go. I have gone often and often, through worse storms than this."

There was an earnest, manly grace even in the way he shook the gathered flakes from his tattered cap, and in his voice there was such a hearty, cheery ring, that from that moment I trusted and loved the boy.

I jumped into the stage, took the back seat, drew my great frieze coat close about my legs, and we drove off among the gaping, sooty crowd of miners into the lonely mountain road; into the cruelest storm of wind and snow that I ever say.

**Register of Deeds
Judy Lambert
(continued)**