

ter's Fort, brought there by the returning trappers, who, with wondrous tales of the fertility of the soil and the genial climate of California, had induced some of their friends to return with them and settle in this beautiful land. The Donner party, as it is generally called, was one of those parties, and under the guidance of a trapper, was journeying to this then almost unknown land. Arriving at the Truckee, the guide, who knew the danger threatening them, hurried them forward, that they might cross the dreaded Sierras ere the snows of winter should encompass them. Part of the train hurried forward, but Mr. Donner, who had a large lot of cattle, would not hurry. Despite all warnings, he loitered along until, at last, he reached the foot of Donner Lake, and encamped there for the night. The weather was growing cold, and the black and threatening sky betokened the coming storm. At Donner Lake, the road turned to the left in those days, following up Coldstream, and crossing the Summit, near Summit Meadows, a very difficult and dangerous route in fair weather. The party who encamped at the lake that night numbered 16 souls, among whom were Mrs. Donner and her four children. During the night, the threatened storm burst over them in all its fury. The old pines swayed and bent before the blast which swept over the lake, bearing destruction and death on its snow-laden wings. The snow fell heavily and fast, as it *can* fall in those mountains. Most of the frightened cattle, despite the herder's vigilance, "went off with the storm."

In the morning the terror-stricken emigrants beheld one vast expanse of snow, and the large white flakes falling thick and fast. Still there was hope. Some of the cattle and their horses remained. They could leave wagons, and with the horses they might possibly cross the mountains. But here arose another difficulty, Mr. Donner was unwell, and could not go—or preferred to wait until the storm subsided; and Mrs. Donner, like a true woman, refused to leave her husband.

The balance of the party, with the exception of one, a German, who decided to stay with the family, placed the children on the horses, and bade Mr. and Mrs. Donner a *last* good-by; and, after a long and perilous battle with the storm, they succeeded in crossing the mountains and reaching the valleys, where the danger was at an end. The storm continued, almost without intermission, for several weeks, and those who had crossed the Summit knew that an attempt to reach the imprisoned party would be futile—worse than folly, until the spring sun should melt away the icy barrier.

Of the long and dreary winter passed by these three persons, who shall tell? The tall stumps (see illustration) standing near where stood the cabin, attest the depth of snow. Some of them are 20 feet in height.

Early in the spring a party of brave men, led by Claude Cheney, started from the valley to bring out the prisoners, expecting to find them alive and well, for it was supposed that they had provisions enough to last them through the winter, but it seems they were mistaken.

After a desperate effort, which required weeks of toil and exposure, the party succeeded in scaling the mountains, and came to the camp of the Donners. What a sight met the first glance! In a rudely constructed cabin, before the fire, sat the Dutchman, holding in a vice-like grasp a roasted arm and hand, which he was greedily eating. With a wild and frightened look he sprang to his feet and confronted the new comers, holding on to the arm as though he feared they would de-

prive him of his repast. The remains of the arm were taken from him by main force, and the maniac secured. The remains of Mr. Donner were found, and, with those of his faithful wife, given such burial as the circumstances would permit, and, taking the survivor with them, they returned to the valley.

The German recovered, and still lives. His story is, that soon after the party left, Mr. Donner died, and was buried in the snow. The last of the cattle escaped, leaving but little food; and when that was exhausted, Mrs. Donner died. Many dark suspicions of foul play on the part of the only survivor have been circulated, but whether they are correct will never be known, until the final unraveling of time's dark mysteries.

**No. 34 ANNEX. "Roll 'Em Through."**  
—October 17th, 1872, as an excursion train, loaded with passengers, most of whom were women and children, rounded the curve close below the tunnel, and with No. 6 train thundering along close behind, the timbering in the tunnel was discovered by the fireman to be on fire. The engineer, Johnny Bartholomew, comprehending the position at a glance, made one of the most brilliant dashes, under the circumstances, on record. The train passed through the tunnel safely, when to have stopped short would have been sure death. G. H. Jennings, Esq., of Brooklyn, New York, has put the following words in the mouth of the brave engineer: See page 175.

I ain't very much on the tancy,  
And all that sort of stuff,  
For an engineer on a railroad  
Is apt to be more "on the rough;"  
He don't "go much" on "his handsome,"  
I freely "acknowledge the corn,"  
But he has got to "git up" on his "wide-awake,"  
That's "just as sure's you're born."

Now, I'll tell you a little story,  
'Bout "a run" we had for our necks,  
When we thought "old Gabe" had called us,  
To "ante up our checks."  
We came 'round the curve by the tunnel,  
Just beyond the American Flat,  
When my fireman sings out, "Johnny!  
Look ahead! My God, what's that?"

You bet, I warn't long in sightin'—  
There was plenty for me to see,  
With a train full of kids an' wimmen,  
And their lives all hangin' on me—  
For the tunnel was roarin' and blazin',  
All ragin' with fire an' smoke,  
And "Number Six" close behind us—  
"Quick, sonny! shove in the coke."

"Whistle 'down brakes,'" I first thought:  
'Then, think's I, "old boy, 't won't do;"'  
And with hand on throttle an' lever,  
I knew I *must* roll 'em through!  
Through the grim mouth of the tunnel—  
Through smoke an' flame, as well—  
Right into the "gateway of death," boys;  
Right smack through the "jaws of hell!"

The staunch "old gal" felt the pressure  
Of steam through her iron joints;  
She acted just like she was human—  
Just like she "knew all the points;"  
She glided along the tramway,  
With speed of a lightning flash,  
With a howl assuring us safety,  
Regardless of wreck or crash.

I 'spose I might have "jumped the train,  
In hope to save sinew and bone,