



THE AMERICAN PONY EXPRESS, EN ROUTE FROM THE MISSOURI RIVER TO SAN FRANCISCO.—FROM A DRAWING BY G. H. ANDREWS.

SOME of our readers may possibly be puzzled, when reading American news, to find most important intelligence from California, Oregon, British Columbia, and the Pacific side of the continent of North America contained in a short paragraph headed "By Pony Express"; and the questions naturally arise, What is meant by a pony express? where does it come from? where does it go? and why is it a pony express, and not a horse, or a stagecoach, or a railway express? For the purpose of giving some information on this point, our Special Artist has taken the trouble to visit the locale of the pony express, to see it arrive and depart at its eastern terminus, and also to get a view of its en route on the plains.

The great importance of maintaining a rapid communication between the States of the American Union situated on the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard has long been felt, and numerous projects for connecting them by railways have been continually before Congress, but to the present time scarcely anything has been done either towards the railway or telegraph. Between the Missouri River and California—a distance of 2000 miles—there exists a huge wilderness of prairies, arid plains, mountains, forests, and two huge mountain-chains—the

Rocky and the Cascade Ranges. Through the whole of this must an Atlantic and Pacific railway be carried when it is made, if it be made through United States' territory. The railway works were extraordinary in perforating and climbing the Alleghanias. Railways are now being made through the mountains in India, and in other places where tremendous obstacles have to be overcome, yet on none of the lines made or being made do such formidable barriers exist as are found between the Atlantic and Pacific States of the American Union. The present unhappy state of affairs—the waste of war—is draining the national exchequer dry, and deterring to a distant date the completion of the most important work the United States' Government has had in hand since the declaration of independence—the binding their eastern and western territory together with a band of iron.

Mr. W. H. Russell, of the firm of Russell, Major, and Waddell, extensive Government contractors for the conveyance of stores overland to the States on the west side of the Rocky Mountains, having observed the daily-increasing importance of a more rapid means of communication than then existed, hit upon the exceedingly bold idea of running a pony express from the Missouri

River to the Pacific Ocean, carrying a telegram from New York, or any other part of the States, to San Francisco in eight days, and a letter in thirteen. Those who knew the country through which the express must pass shook their heads, and said it would never do; the route was far north, the winter severe, the roads impassable, the snow lying often fifteen feet deep on the ground. It then took 115 days to make a quick passage between New York and San Francisco.

Mr. Russell was not the man to set aside a plan he had made up his mind he could carry out by any multiplication of difficulties: he therefore prepared to make the attempt. First he built stations all along the route and stocked them well and plentifully, then engaged a corps of fearless and trustworthy riders, and purchased about six hundred horses, the very best that money could procure. Having done all this and a great deal more that was necessary, on April 3, 1860, two parties started simultaneously, one from San Francisco, and the other from St. Joseph, on the Missouri; and, although the season was most unfavourable, the mud being in some places two or three feet deep, yet the entire distance, one thousand nine hundred miles, was run in seven days and a half,

carrying despatches from New York and San Francisco. This performance is the more remarkable because the early part of April is considered the very worst season of the year: the snows on the mountains are deep, and on the plains the rivers are swollen and filled with floating ice. Old mountaineers consider April as bad as any winter month on the mountains, and worse on the plains. The pony express, being "un fait accompli," continued to run regularly with letters once a week from each end, travelling invariably to a time schedule, until the month of June, when a source of trouble appeared which had long given cause for anxiety. The wild Indians of the western plains began to meddle with the express, and shot dead from his horse one of the couriers. His body was found a few days after, stripped of everything; but the bag of letters remained beside him untouched. The horse and the firearms are what the Indians want, and they wisely consider that meddling with the letters would only unnecessarily irritate Uncle Sam without doing them any good.

The dangerous ground extended about three hundred and fifty miles from Salt Lake, in Utah territory, west to Canon city. In this district the inter-