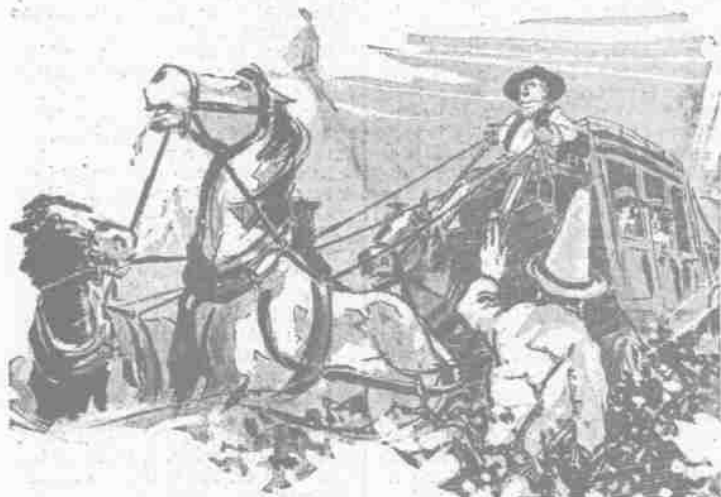


"BLACK BART, THE PO8," WAS THE GREATEST OF ALL BANDITS OF THE "WILD WEST"



"Don't Shoot, Boys, Unless Some One Fires First."

By Frank Parker Stockbridge.

(Copyright, 1913, by The Newspaper Enterprise Association.)

A mail stage, lumbering down the Sierras toward Sacramento.

A figure by the roadside—peaked hat like a circus clown's, linen duster, jute bagging wrapped about his legs—looming tall in the twilight.

Back in the chaparral half a dozen other slouch-hatted, jute-legged figures, crouching.

"Hands up!"

The driver throws his weight on the brake, heaves his horses to their haunches and OBEYS. The gaunt man by the roadside speaks—first to the group in the chaparral:

"Don't shoot, boys, unless someone fires first."

Then, to the driver:

"Throw out the box and the mail,

please, and line up the passengers."

Down tumble the "box"—the Wells-Fargo treasure chest—and the registered mail pouches. The passengers scramble out. The bandit apologizes profusely, solicitous especially lest the ladies may be alarmed.

"Drive on," he orders—their money safe in his pockets—"and don't stop till you pass the bend. And," he adds, as the driver gathers the reins, "if anyone asks who held you up, here's my card!"

He slips a bit of paper into the driver's hand. The heavy Concord coach rattles and creaks down the hillside as the gaunt figure plunges into the chaparral, treasure chest on shoulder, mail pouches dragging behind.

Around the bend driver and passengers scan the bandit's "card." On-