

been deposited from sixty days to ninety days previous. Wanderers and travellers had dropped them in at odd times, trusting to the luck of Uncle Sam in the possibility of them ultimately reaching the friends and relations in the States or Canada to whom addressed. Trappers and hunters in the country wishing to communicate with each other used these means of doing so. Not being a salaried nor a regularly established office, it cannot be said that the government lost anything by the operation. Everyone who passed the spot had a right, or at least thought he had, to look over the mail to see if there might be a letter for him; and when some scout or hunter was on his way to the settlements, without leave from anybody, as a sort of implied understanding with all, he would gather up the accumulation and carry it off to be regularly posted. There seemed to be an unwritten law on the subject that the first one bound for the settlements should do as above stated. Remarkable as it may seem, the Indians never disturbed these embryo post-offices. They have a wholesome fear of mysterious things, and generally steer clear of things they do not understand. They fancied these lonesome boxes were in some manner associated with the telegraph wires and poles, of which all redskins from time immemorial have had the most superstitious dread. In the days before the war, St. Joseph, Missouri, was the western terminus of railroad communication; beyond that the stage coach, the saddle-horse and the ox trains were the only means of commerce and communication with the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific coast. Of course, such transportation of

necessity became carriers of the mail, and you can depend that it must have been a long time reaching its destination, too. Fancy now, in the days of telegraphy and express trains, of the United States mail even being entrusted to bull trains as a means of locomotion; but such was actually the case as late as the year 1860. There are no doubt many readers who have heard the story of the Pony Express and its long race against time across the plains? It was indeed a wild and dangerous ride, has perhaps never been equalled in the world. The story is of the mail, and may, therefore, very properly be classed among philatelic literature. In the winter of 1860 there was a broker in Washington trying to get \$5,000,000 for carrying the overland mail one year between New York and San Francisco. The proposition was so cheeky, and Wm. H. Russell, backed by Secretary of War Floyd, resolved to give the broker a wide berth. He therefore offered to bet \$200,000 that he could put on a mail line from Sacramento to St. Joseph that would make the distance, 1950 miles, in ten days. The bet was taken, and the 8th of April was fixed for the starting. Mr. Russell called upon his partner and general manager of business upon the plains, Mr. A. B. Miller, and stated what he had done, and asked him if he could perform the feat. Miller replied: "Yes, sir, I will do it, and do it by the pony express." To accomplish this, Mr. Miller purchased three hundred of the fleetest horses he could find in the West, and employed one hundred and twenty-five men. Eighty of these men were to be post riders. These he had selected with reference to their light weight and their knowing, daring and