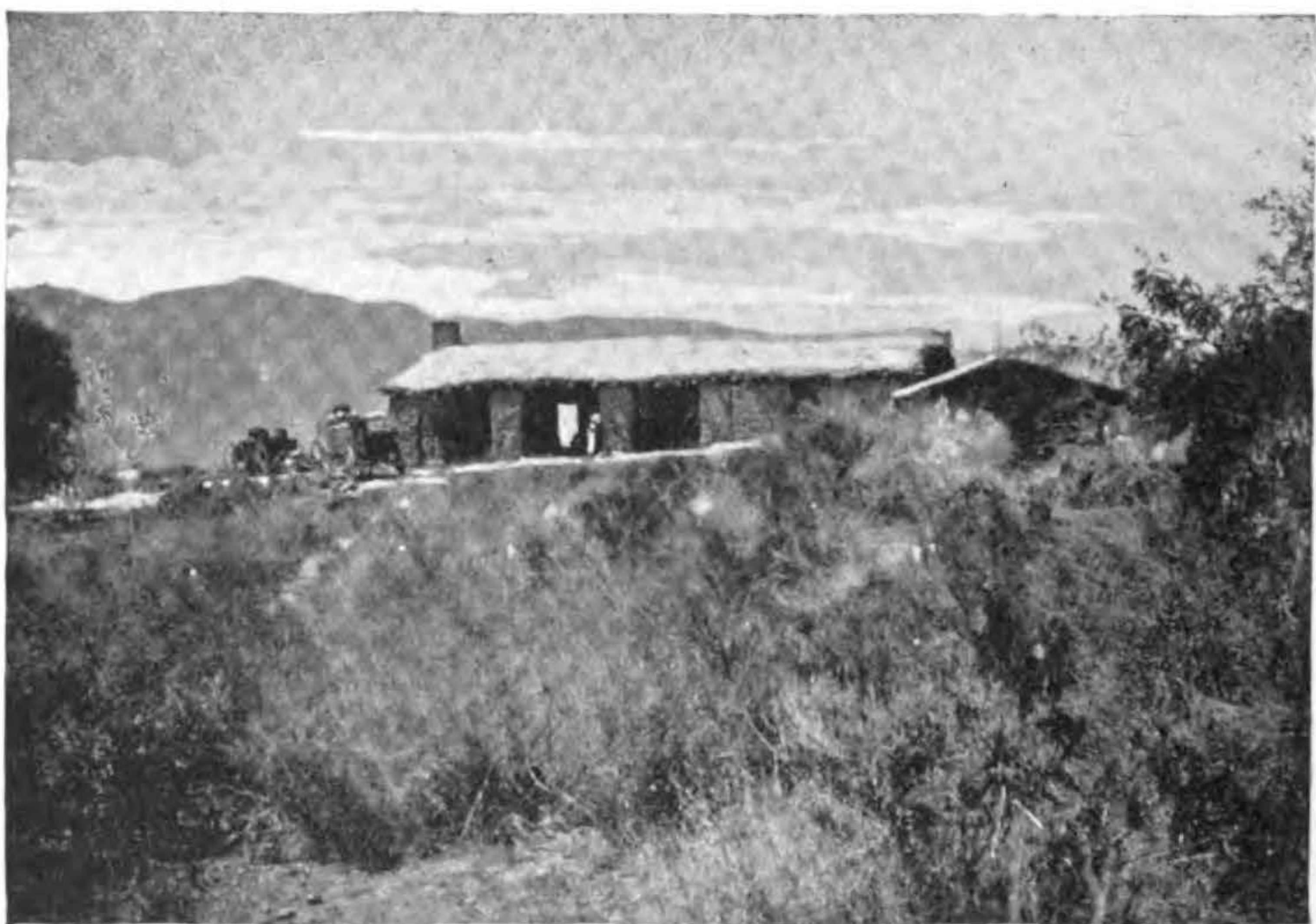


THE OLD STAGE-STATION.

BY R. HARRIS.

HAVE you relatives that crossed the plains in the early days by the "Overland route?" Have you ever listened to their true stories of hardship and suffering, of miraculous escapes from murderous Indians, of thirst on the great desert when luke-warm water was measured out by the spoonful?

To a native born (whose mother crossed the great deserts in those early days, and in after life would gather her children around the old stone fire-place of an evening and tell them the stories of the plains) there is perhaps nothing more interesting than those old thick, adobe-walled, mud-roofed, deserted stage stations.



Union Eng. Co.

THE OLD STAGE-STATION.

There are the great hand-hewn beams that support the heavy roof; perhaps transported from some distant range on human shoulders. There are the closely woven *tules*, bound to slender poles with neatly cut strings of rawhide — miles of them — all in turn covered with eight to twelve inches of dirt. There is the portico, held up by columns of adobe four feet square. There is the huge fire-place, from which the light is thrown across the main room, through the crumbling corridor, and into the dark recesses beyond. The pale moonlight drops in through the broken roof.

On the white wall is a stain — efforts have evidently been made to remove it. Through the plaster there are two little round holes. You take out your knife and dig away at the adobe; out tumble two little battered chunks of lead. They are pistol balls.

There in the corner lies a broken table, around which gathered the returning miner from the gold fields, the professional gambler and the reckless stage-driver. The little graveyard, just above the house, with its quaint little mounds of white sand, bespeaks the result of many of these sittings.

Below, in the flat, are the alkali springs — I can taste the water yet! All around are the ruins of old adobe corrals, where the desert teamster kept his mules; where he fed them hay that cost \$200 per ton.

Each old ruin has its own spectre—we wish they might haunt our lawmakers till they appropriate sufficient means to preserve an old station, ghost and all. For this is all we will have, soon, to remind us of "The days of old, the days of gold."