



COMING BACK

A defunct used car can be cheaply doctored up so that it will just about carry the purchaser away. The trouble is, he stays away. You can't make customers by making enemies. We prefer to make and keep friends.

E. C. MOORE

101 TENNESSEE ST.

PHONE 37

A USED CAR IS ONLY AS DEPENDABLE AS THE DEALER WHO SELLS IT

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

Frank Beeson, from Albany, N. Y., reaches Benton, Wyoming, then—1868—western terminus of the Pacific Railroad. He had been ordered by physicians to seek a climate "high and dry." He is robbed of most of his money in his hotel and loses his last twenty dollars at monte in "The Big Tent," a dance hall and gambling resort in the "roaring" town of Benton.

Edna Montoyo, companion of a gambler, is believed by Frank to have cajoled him purposely into the game. Broke, disconsolate over his discovery that "the lady of the blue eyes," as he calls her, is what she is, and finally humiliated over his glaring "greenness," Frank repulses Edna when she begs him to go away with her, sobbingly telling him that she had made a mistake in letting him lose him money. He goes to take a job with

George Jenks, a teamster in a wagon train about to leave for Salt Lake City.

CHAPTER VII.

WESTWARD HO!

My new boots were burning, my thigh was chafed raw from the swaying Colt, and my face and throat were parched with the dust, when I arrived at the encampment of Jenks' train.

Some dozen white-topped wagons were grouped in a circle and figures were busily moving among them, and the thin blue smoke of their fires was a welcome signal.

I marked women and children. The whole prospect—they, the breakfast smoke, the grazing animals, the stout vehicles, a line of washed clothing—was homey. Jenks himself came out to meet me.

"Hooray! Here you are," he said. "You fetched all your outfit!"

"What you see," I confessed. "They stripped me clear."

"Wall, all you need is a blanket. You can pay for it out of your wages or turn it in at the end of the trip."

He conducted me on, along the groups and fires and bedding outside the wagon circle, and halted where a heavy man, of face smooth-shaven, except chin, sat upon a wagon tongue, whittling a stick.

"Shake hands with Cap'n Hyrum Adams, Frank. He's the boss of the train."

Captain Adams offered a thick hand which proved singularly soft and flatulent under the callouses.

"Glad to meet you, stranger," he acknowledged. "Breakfasted?"

"Not yet, sir. I was anxious to reach the train."

"Nobody gets hungry from the Adams' wagon, stranger," Captain Adams observed. He slightly raised his voice, peremptory. "Rachael! Fetch our guest some breakfast."

There were two women in view, busied with domestic cares. One was elderly, as far as might be judged by her somewhat slatternly figure.

The other promptly ladled food from a kettle to a platter, poured a tin cupful of coffee from the pot, and bore them to me; her eyes down, shyly handed them.

I thanked her but was not presented. To the Captain's "That will do, Rache!" she turned dutifully away; not so soon, however, but that I had seen a fresh young face within the bonnet confines—a round rosy face according well with the buxom curves of her as she again bent over her wash-board.

"Our fare is that of the tents of Abraham, stranger," spoke the Captain. "Such as it is, you are welcome to. We are a plain people who walk in the way of the Lord, for that is commanded."

"I ask nothing better, sir," I answered.

The pork and beans and the black unsweetened coffee evidently were what I needed, for I began to mend wonderfully ere I was half through the course.

"You are from the East, stranger?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir. I arrived in Benton only yesterday."

"A Sodom," he growled harshly. "A tented sepulcher. And it will perish. I tell you, you do well to leave it; you do well to yoke yourself with the appointed of this earth, rather than stay in that sin-pit of the eternally damned."

"I agree with you, sir," said I. "I did not find Benton to be a pleasant place; but I had not known, when I started from Omaha."

"Possibly not," Adams assented. "The devil is attentive; he is present in the stations, and he will ride in those gilded palaces even to the Jordan, but he shall not cross. In the name of the Lord we shall face him. What good there shall come, shall abide; but the evil shall wither. Not," he added, "that we stand against the railroad. It is needed, and we have petitioned without being heard. We are strong but isolated, we have goods to sell, and the word of Brigham Young has gone forth that a railroad we must have. Against the harpies, the gamblers and all the Gentile vanities we will stand upon our own feet by the help of Almighty God."

At this juncture, a tall double-jointed youth of about my age, carrying an ox goad in his hand, strolled to us as if attracted by the harranguing.

"My son Daniel," the captain introduced. "This stranger travels to Zion with us, Daniel."

The youth had the grip of a vise, and seemed to enjoy emphasizing it while cunningly watching my face.

"Howdy," he drawled.

I left soon to join Jenks' wagon and as I passed Rachael, she glanced quickly up. I caught her eyes with a blush. She was indeed wholesome if not absolutely pretty.

"Wall, those Mormons are good providers," Jenks commented. "They will share with you whatever they have for no pay, but if you rub 'em the wrong way or go to dickerin' with 'em they're closer'n the hide on a cold mule. You didn't make sheep's eyes at any of the women?"

Daniel hulked to me.

"You know me?" he asked.

"Your name is Daniel, isn't it?"

"No, 'tain't. It's Bonnie Bravo on the trail."

"All right, sir," said I. "Which ever you prefer."

"I 'laow you aim to go through with this train to Salt Lake, do you?"

"That's the engagement I've made with Mr. Jenks."

"It's four hundred mile, an' twenty mile at a stretch, without water. Most of the water's pizen, too, from hyar to the mountings."

"I'll have to drink what the rest drink, I suppose."

"I 'laow the Injuns are like to get us. They're powerful bad in that thar desert. Ain't afeared o' Injuns be ya?"

"We don't think much 'o Gentiles, yonder. We don't want 'em, nohow. They'd all better git about. The Saints settled that country 'an it's ourn."

"If you're a sample, you're welcome to live there," I retorted. "I think I'd prefer some place else."

"Haow?" he bleated. "Thar ain't no place as good. All the rest the world has sold itself to the devil."

We remained in silence for a moment while he waited, provocative.

"Say, Mister," he blurted suddenly. "kin ya shoot?"

"I presume I could if I had to. Why?"

"Becuz I'm the dangest best shot with a Colt's in this hyar train. Any time ya want to try a little poppin' ya let me know." And with this, he left me, with the uneasy impression that he and I were due to measure strength in one way or another.

About three o'clock with whips cracking, the Captain Adams wagon in the lead (two pink sunbonnets upon the seat), the valorous Daniel's next, we toiled creaking and swaying up the Benton road, amidst the eddies of hot, scalding dust.

It was a mixed train, of Gentile mules and the more numerous Mormon oxen; therefore not strictly a "bull" train, but by pace designated as such.



She paused, very small and alone, viewing us, her eyes very blue, her face very white.

"However, I could not help but see that the Captain's daughter is pleasing to look upon."

"How? His daughter?"

"Miss Rachael."

"Whoa, man! She's his wife, and not for Gentiles. They're both his wives; whether he has more in Utah I don't know. But you'd best let her alone. She's been jined to him."

This took me all aback. He was twice her age, apparently.

"And Daniel, his son—is he married?"

"That whelp? No, he ain't married, yet. But he will be, soon as he takes his pick 'cordin' to law and gospel among them people. You bet you; he'll be married plenty."

Later in the day as I sat resting upon a convenient wagon-tongue

Trudging manfully at the left fore wheel behind Mr. Jenks' four span of mules I played the teamster—although sooth to say there was little of play in the job, on that road, at that time of the day.

At sundown, having eaten our suppers, we were sitting by our fires, smoking and talking, when, as a construction train of box cars clanked by on the railroad I chanced to note a figure spring out asprawl, alight with a whiffle of sand, and staggering up hasten for us.

First it accosted the hulk Daniel. I saw him lean from his saddle; then he rode in, bawling like a calf:

"Paw! Paw! Hey, you-all! Thar's a woman yonder in britches an' she 'laows to come on. She's lookin' for Mister Jenks."

In a storm of rude raillery—"That's a boss on you, George?" "Didn't know you owned one o' them critters, George." "Does she wear the britches, George?" and so forth—my friend Jenks arose, peering, while the solitary figure, braving our stares, came on to the fires.

"Gawd almighty!" Mr. Jenks delivered.

It was My Lady—formerly My Lady—clad in embroidered short Spanish jacket, tightish velvet pantaloons, booted to the knees, pulled down upon her yellow hair a black soft hat, and hanging from the just-revealed belt around her slender waist a revolver trifle.

She paused, small and alone, viewing us, her eyes very blue, her face very white.

"Is Mr. Jenks there?" she hailed clearly.

"Damn! If I ain't," he mumbled, glowering at me.

"I wish to engage passage to Salt Lake," she said.

"We haven't no place for a woman, ma'am," Jenks demurred.

"There are other women in the train," Edna insisted.

"Where's Pedro? Where's Montoyo?" asked Jenks.

Her eyes blazed.

"He? That snake? I shot him!"

"What! You! Killed him?" Exclamations broke from the bystanders.

"No, I didn't have to! But when he tried to abuse me, I defended myself. Wasn't that right, gentlemen?"

"Right or wrong, he'll be after you, won't he?"

The question held a note of alarm. "I am only an employee, here."

"adam," I faltered. "If I had an outfit of my own I certainly would lobb you."

She flushed painfully; she did not glance at me direct again, but her unspoken thanks enfolded me.

The large form of Captain Adams came striding.

"What's this?" he demanded harshly. "An ungodly woman? Get you gone, Delilah!"

"I am going, sir," she replied. "I ask nothing from you or these—gentlemen."

"Them's the two she's after, paw; Jenks an' that greenie," Daniel bawled. "Ain't she purty, though! She's dressed in britches."

"Get you gone," Captain Adams thundered. "And these your paramours with you. No brazen bussy in men's garments shall travel with this train to Zion—no, not a mile of the way."

(To be continued next week.)

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