

JOE.

Why He Didn't Ride on the Trucks, and How He Fooled the Train-Robbers.

W. R. ROSE, in Cleveland Plain Dealer

The heavy overland train had halted at a water station. There was an ominous thumping beneath the dining car. A bolt was being replaced and a brake rod bent into shape.

Many of the passengers were taking air on the little platform. There would be a wait of at least half an hour.

The boy strolled about, keen eyed, alert, watchful. He was a boy of perhaps eighteen, a well-built boy, bronzed by the sun, toughened by the prairies. He had worked on a ranch for two years. Now he was going back to Chicago.

He wasn't quite sure of the way he would get there. He had been loitering on the platform for two hours waiting for this train. When it started he meant to slip onto one of the trucks and cling there. He knew it would be dangerous, and that it might mean death if his grip relaxed. And then there was the stifling alkali dust. But he had no choice in his means of transportation because he had no money.

He had drifted out beyond the Rockies largely through the love of adventure. He had fallen in with a ranchman who worked him hard, fed him sparingly and promised him little. And their relationship ended when the ranchman deserted him and left him quite penniless.

But the life had done a great deal for the boy. He had come out on the plains a scrawny, loose jointed vagabond of the streets. He was going back a robust youngster stronger than most men, and sound as a dollar.

He was not a bad-looking lad. Straight as an arrow, clear-eyed and smiling, his rough cowboy garb looked well on the fine young figure. A lady carrying a child was slowly pacing the platform. By her side, clinging to her skirt, was an older child of less than five.

The child caught the boy's smiling glance. The boy loved children and he hadn't seen a child for more than a year.

The child pushed a chubby finger at the boy.

"Joe," he said, and looked up at his mother.

The mother looked at the boy. She was a handsome lady, tastefully dressed—although pale and careworn.

The boy pulled off his soft hat.

"That's funny, ma'am," he said, "because my name really is Joe."

The child let go of his mother's gown and ran forward.

"Hello, Joe," he said.

"Hello yourself," cried the boy and caught the little fellow up and gave him a playful shake.

"Carry me, Joe," said the child.

"May I, ma'am?"

"You'll find him heavy," said the lady.

"Not for me, ma'am," the boy replied. "I haven't seen a child for more than a year, and I like the feel of him."

He moved along at the lady's side, the child in his arms prattling and playing. The lady looked at the boy curiously.

"You should feel quite honored," she said. "Eddie picks his friends carefully. He is a very shy boy."

"Eddie love Joe," said the child and softly stroked his cheek.

The lady sighed.

"I foresee trouble," she said, "when you and Eddie have to part. He will be very hard to manage. Do you live in this—this neighborhood?"

And her blue eyes turned towards the monotonous prairie.

"I've been living on a ranch over to the south, ma'am, but I'm going east."

"On this train?"

The boy hesitated.

"That's my intention."

She looked from the boy to the child. The curly head had dropped on the boy's shoulder. The child was asleep.

"Have—have you arranged for your accommodations on the train?"

"Not yet, ma'am."

The lady again looked from the boy to the sleeping child. And the babe in her arm faintly wailed.

"Would you mind accepting a section in the car I occupy?" she suddenly asked. "I have two. I will explain later why I ask this," she hurriedly added. "And I will be only too glad to pay for the services I ask from you."

The boy's dark cheek flushed.

"If this means that I can be of some use to you, ma'am," he said, "I'll be only too glad to do anything I can. There'll be no talk of pay if I can work my passage."

"All aboard," cried a warning voice.

"Come," said the lady.

The boy, with the child in his arms, followed her as she stepped to the Pullman platform. The porter stared at the lad doubtfully, but the look on the lady's face restrained him.

The two sections were side by side and the boy carefully placed the sleeping child on one of the seats. He did this so gently that the lady's careworn face suddenly relaxed in a faint smile.

"This is better than the trucks," he murmured to himself.

He turned to the lady. She was trying to lay the babe on a pillowed seat, but the little one fretted and wailed.

"She isn't very well," said the lady.

"Let me take her, ma'am," and the boy put out his hands. "I'm used to handling lambs." And he smiled as he said it, and the lady smiled, too, and placed the child in the outstretched arms. The babe looked up wonderingly and the boy smiled down at her.

"You certainly have a mesmeric influence," said the lady softly, and she sighed a sigh of relief. "I haven't had her out of my arms for hours," she said as she took the seat opposite the boy.

"You looked tired, ma'am," said the boy. "Wouldn't you like to lie down? I'll sit across there by Eddie."

"No," said the lady, "I am resting very nicely. I said I would tell you later why I asked this favor from you."

"Favor, ma'am?"

"Yes, I have been visiting my sister in San Francisco and I telegraphed my husband that I would come home—our home is in Chicago—on this train. Just as I was stepping on the car my maid was taken ill—too ill to start on the long journey—and I left her in the care of my sister and started with the two children. I have never traveled alone, and I am not very strong, and the children have been rather hard to manage. And so when I saw you, when I saw how Eddie clung to you, the idea entered my head that you might be willing to help me with the children—and let me pay you for your kindness and your trouble."

The boy shook his head.

"I'm getting more pay than I'm worth," he said as he looked around. "I only hope I can give satisfaction. It is a long way to Chicago, and I wasn't particularly delighted with the idea of riding on the trucks."

The lady turned suddenly.

"The trucks!" she gasped.

"Yes, ma'am, and they say it isn't so very dreadful if you don't mind the dust, and the train hands don't catch you, and your grip is strong, and the train stays on the track."

"The trucks!" repeated the lady. "Why that's dreadful!"

"I've never wanted to steal anything before," laughed the boy. "But I certainly meant to steal a ride—and I hoped the railroad wouldn't find it out."

The lady drew a deep breath.

"And why did you feel obliged to take this dreadful risk?"

And then he told her about the ranchman, and his life among the sheep and the cattle, and the rough riding and the meager fare. He told it well and the lady listened with much interest.

"And what is your name?" she asked.

"Joe—Joseph Rogers. The boys called me Chicago Joe."

"And you were a sheep herder?"

"I've herded sheep, ma'am," he said, "but I'd rather be called a cowboy."

The lady laughed.

"I prefer to call you Joe," she said.

"All right," said the boy, "that's what Eddie calls me. You'll let me take care of him, won't you?"

"Why, yes," said the mother; "that will relieve me of a lively responsibility. Eddie is a very active child."

"That's the only kind I like," said the boy. "Hush-h! the baby is asleep."

"Put her down here," said the mother as she arranged the pillows, and the boy with infinite care laid the child on the seat. "She has been quite fretful," said the mother. "I'm afraid the milk I got in the dining car doesn't agree with her. She is accustomed to the very freshest we can buy."

"Is that the can?" said the boy as he pointed to the floor.

"Yes."

There was a grinding noise from the wheels and the long train slowed down. They had reached another water station, but this one had more evidences of civilization about it. Two or three farmhouses were near the station, and the prairie was being transformed.

As the train stopped, the boy snatched up the milk can.

"Look out for Eddie, please," he said and was gone.

There was more hammering on the wheels and this time the wait lasted fifteen minutes. The lady was growing a little anxious when just as the train began to gather headway she saw the boy dash across the station platform with the milk can in his hands. Behind him came an irate-looking man, just a little too late to catch the fleeing lad. The irate man paused and shook a red fist menacingly.

A moment later the boy put the can on the window shelf beside the lady.

"There's the freshest milk you can get in this section," he said with a quick smile.

"Oh, thank you," cried the lady. "But what was the matter with that cross-looking man?"

The boy smiled again.

"Why, he's the man I got the milk from. He wouldn't give me any when I asked him for it and so I milked a cow. He caught me at it and chased me clear to the train."

And he suddenly laughed at the thought.

"But why didn't you buy it from him?"

The boy looked at her quizzically. His face was a little flushed.

"I guess you never heard why the boy didn't eat his supper," he said.

"Do you mean," said the lady, "that you didn't pay him because you had no money?"

"That's it," said the boy. "You see, people with money don't ride on trucks."

The lady found her bag and quickly drew from it several bank bills.

"Take these," she hastily said. He drew back.

"No, no," he said. "I don't need any money now."

"Take the bills," she commanded. "Just as a sort of steward?" queried the boy.

"Yes, yes."

"I'll keep an account," he said, "and pay you back what's left over." Then he suddenly laughed. "I guess I'm pretty cheeky, ain't I?"

"Why?"

"Taking so many liberties. Here I am, only a nurse boy, and you're treating me like a friend."

"You're the best kind of a friend," said the lady, "the friend in need."

"But my clothes?" persisted the boy. "They don't match with a Pullman."

The lady laughed.

"You're clothes are all right," she said. "They don't worry me in the least. In fact I'm not worrying at all." She drew a telegraph blank from her bag and rapidly scribbled a message. "There," she said, "I want you to send that telegram from the next telegraph office. It tells my husband that we are well and safe and happy. I don't think I could have said all that this morning."

The boy nodded.

"Well, I guess I'm a good deal happier than I would have been on that truck," he said. "Hark! There's Eddie."

He had the boy up in a moment and took him and washed his face and smoothed down his curls, and brought him back rosy and dimpling.

And while the boy held him up and made funny faces at him and drove him into a gale of laughter, the Pullman conductor came down the aisle. He raised his hat to the lady and stared at the boy.

"He is with me," said the lady.

The conductor pleasantly nodded and passed along.

And then the baby awoke and was fed with the consecrated milk, and seemed highly pleased with it, and pretty soon it was time for dinner.

The boy hung back.

"Bring Eddie, please, Joe," said the lady.

So they went forward into the dining car, and found a table together and the lady ordered dinner, and it was a very good dinner for a hungry boy—quite the best dinner Joe had ever eaten. And he looked at Eddie as well as himself, and enjoyed it all amazingly.

"Just a week ago to-night," he told the lady, "I sat by a camp fire out in the prairie and ate my supper with two Siwash Indians and a French Canuck. I don't know what we ate—I didn't much care to know. Then he laughingly added, "This is different."

"I am glad you like this," said the lady, "although we can't offer you as much variety in dining companions."

Joe laughed at the contrast.

"Do you know," he said, "that if traveling was all like this I think I'd like to travel forever."

They were two happy days for Joe that followed his first encounter with the lady and her children.

She was a real lady, Joe told himself, and it was a delight and an education to listen to her talk. And Joe learned many things from her—being quick at observation and clever at imitation.

As for the lady, she liked this clear-eyed, willing boy, who strove so hard to please her. And because her children liked him, the little Elsie being almost as fond of him as Eddie, she liked him all the better.

"And what are you going to do when we get to Chicago?" she asked him.

"I'll find something to do," he confidently replied. "I may have to knock around for a while, but I don't intend to starve."

"What would you like to do?"

"I think," replied Joe, "that I'd like to be a railroader."

The lady laughed merrily.

"And ride on car trucks?" she asked.

"Not as long as there are nurse-maids' places to fill," Joe quickly answered.

And the lady laughed and said that was very good, and Eddie patted his hands—dimly understanding that applause was due—and even Baby Elsie looked up and cooed.

"You have your friends well trained," laughed the lady, and Joe thought this was very good, too.

They were booming through Iowa that evening when the train came to a sudden stop. It was a jarring, grinding stop, and almost instantly shots were heard ahead.

"Train robbers!" some one shrieked, and the passengers were in instant confusion.

Joe snatched his big hat and put it on.

"Don't be scared, ma'am," he said. "Hide your money quick!"

He stepped into the aisle just as the door at the opposite side of the car was thrown open and one of the robbers appeared.

"Hands up, everybody!" he roared. Then he saw Joe. The boy's hat was pulled low and something gleamed in his hand.

"Next car," he hoarsely shouted at the bandit. "Git! I'm workin' this lot."

No doubt the bandit was excited and nervous. He was deceived by the confident tone, the cowboy garb, the big hat, and the shining thing in the boy's hand—and there were a half dozen men in the gang and it was not easy to recognize faces the length of the car.

The ruffian muttered something and backed out.

"Scream!" commanded Joe as he walked up the aisle.

Some of the frightened passengers understood him and set up a wild outcry.

The shots outside continued and then came the long shrill note of a distant locomotive whistle. Another train was approaching.

The shooting ceased.

Joe listened a moment, then went back to his seat. He was laughing. And the lady, although quite pale, laughed too.

"That was fine," she said.

The passengers were coming forward and patting Joe on the back and praising him.

"And what was the shining thing you had in your hand?" inquired a gray-haired man. "I'm quite sure it wasn't a pistol."

Joe was still laughing.

"Something right in my line," he said. He held it up.

It was the baby's silver rattle.

The next morning as the train slowed down in the Chicago station a big, fine-looking man of forty appeared in the doorway.

He started down the aisle and then hurried forward and tenderly embraced the lady and kissed the children and stared hard at Joe, who was carrying Master Eddie.

"How very well you are looking, dear," he cried to the lady. "I was afraid the trip would be too much for you. I just received a telegram from Anna, and Marie is much better. And what's all this I hear about a train robbery and only one car escaping the looters? Did they frighten you very much?"

"No, Robert," said the lady a little tremulously. "It was our car that escaped and all the credit is due to Joe here."

The big man grasped Joe's hand.

"Good for you, son," the big man cried. "And now who is Joe?"

"You were just wondering, dear," said the lady, "how I stood the journey so well. It is all because of Joe's helpfulness. I don't think even Marie could have done more."

"Good for you, son," cried the big man again.

"And, Robert, he wants to be a railroad man."

"He shall be," cried the big man. "He looks like the right stuff—and his recommendations couldn't be better. You will come into my office tomorrow, son. What's your name?"

"Joe Rogers," replied the lady, "nursemaid and cowboy."

And the big man laughed loud and long.

SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL.

Meteors prove that the air is still dense enough to make those little bodies incandescent through friction at a height of 100 miles; but up to the present man has succeeded in exploring the atmosphere to a height of only sixteen miles.

Every metal is believed by Gruttin, a German chemist, to have its peculiar odor, which he regards as a gaseous transformation product. He has made some of the odors perceptible for a few moments at intervals by heating the metals to 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

Armored concrete continues to enlarge the field of its application. The experimental concrete telegraph poles erected by one of the great railroads running between Chicago and the eastern coast have proved so successful that the company has decided to extend their use gradually over its western lines.

Prince Henry, brother of the German Emperor, is the inventor of an automatic window washer. Lest it be supposed that the device is a household improvement, let it be stated that it is intended for the purpose of wiping off moisture from the glass wind-break of an automobile, so that the rider's vision may be clear at all times.

Spain has reduced the cost of telegrams to America fifty per cent.

CHILDREN'S DEPART



"AS GOOD AS GOLD."

The day that I was five years old I thought I'd be as good as gold. I promised mother, as I stood there, All dressed up, on a parlor chair, That I would do my very best To act as well as I was dressed.

She told me when my party came To think of others in the game, To let my visitors go first, To take the smallest piece and worst, And see that others had enough, And not be greedy, cross, or rough.

But I forgot it once or twice, And then my manners were not nice, So when they'd gone she shook her head; "As good as silver," mother said. "But when I grow to six years old, I know I'll be as 'good as gold.'" —Annie Willis McCullough, in St. Nicholas.

THE TARDY ASTER.

Little Bessie Berry was almost always late for school. She was almost always late for everything.

It wasn't because she had to run errands, or mind the baby, but because she was an "In-a-minute" and a "Pretty-soon" and an "After-a-while" little girl, who liked to dilly-dally better than anything else in the world.

There were some other children in Bessie's room who were often tardy, too, so the teacher began to wonder what she could do. And soon she thought of something. She went to the seedsman and bought some seeds. They were aster seeds, in paper packets.

"Listen, children!" said the teacher. "How many of you ever had a flower garden?"

Bessie had; most of the children in Bessie's class had.

Then the teacher said a nice thing. "These seeds are for you—one little packet for each one in this room."

Here Bessie raised her hand. "Please, may I pass them?"

But the teacher shook her head. "One for each in the room," she went on, "who isn't tardy a single time this month."

That wasn't all. They would plant the seeds and after a while have flowers. And then the seedsman would give a prize to the boy or the girl who had the finest flowers. It was really two prizes.

So the children looked at the seeds longingly and promised that they wouldn't be tardy one single time. And some weren't. But Bessie was—four times!

The next month was April, and the tardy ones tried again. Bessie was tardy twice. They were to try once more in May.

"Try, try, again," said Bessie's papa. So she tried again. And mamma helped. Every morning and afternoon she said "Seeds!" when she kissed her little girl good-bye. Bessie said "Seeds" over and over, all the way to school, and didn't dilly-dally once.

And on the last day of May she took a packet of seeds home. Bessie and her mother planted them right off. They didn't dilly-dally about it at all. Bessie hoped she might win the seedsman's prize.

But it was late and dry, and the seeds didn't come up very quickly. Only one seedling grew. Papa called it a dilly-dally flower. It just would not catch up with Clara Bell's across the street. But Clara Bell had won her seeds in March.

When the day for the flower show was nearly come, some of Bessie's friends had big blue and white asters in their gardens, and Bessie had one fine aster plant, with hard green knots at the top.

Every morning she counted the days that were left, until at last a bit of white showed in one of the knots. But then there was only one day left.

So everybody, even Bessie, knew that it would be a tardy aster, just as Bessie had been a tardy little girl.

When at last the day for awarding the prize came, it was a very, very sad Bessie Berry who stood in the back garden looking down at the tardy aster, while all of her little friends, with hands full of punctual asters, went to the flower show.

Wasn't it too bad? But it must have been a good lesson for Bessie, for she doesn't dilly-dally any more. —Lulu G. Parker, in Little Folks.

THE ANIMAL SCHOOL.

Did you ever hear of the animal school? Then I will tell you about it.

Miss Willow was the teacher, and the reason she was chosen was—why do you suppose? Because she had so many switches about. If any one didn't behave, she would reach out one of her long arms and get a switch and then—um-m-m-M-M!

The scholars were: the donkey with his long ears, the owl, always half asleep, and the stamping horse; the woolly sheep, the billy-goat, the black cat, and the curly dog; the goose, long of neck, the turkey gobbler, the duck, and the little red hen. Then there was a row of birds on the top rail of a fence. And—oh, yes—there was the frog. I almost forgot the frog. He sat in a puddle.

When it was time to begin, Miss Willow snapped all her switches. It was quiet in an instant. "Now, said she, 'who is absent?'"

The owl crooed, whoo-oo, whoo-oo.

Miss Willow then asked, "Was that horse?" she asked.