

Desert Dust

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "How Are You Feeling?" etc.

"You're certainly green," she apprised. "Benton's roar-in—and I know what that means. Didn't North Platte roar? I seen it at the beginnin's. My old man and me, we were there from the rust, when it started in as the railroad terminal. My sakes, but them were times! What with the gamblin' and the shootin' and the drinkin' and the high-alkalums night and day, 'twasn't no place for innocence. Easy come, easy go, that was the word. I don't say but what times were good, though. My old man contracted government freight, and I run an eatin' house for the railroaders, so we made money. Then when the railroad moved terminus, the wust of the crowd moved, too, and us others who stayed turned North Platte into a strictly moral town. But land sakes! North Platte in its roarin' days wasn't no place for a young man like you. Neither was Julesburg, or Sidney, or Cheyenne, when they was terminuses. And I hear tell Benton is wuss'n all rolled into one. Young man, now listen: You stop off at North Platte, Nebraska. It's healthy and it's moral, and it's goin' to make Omaha look like a shipplaster. I'll watch after you. Maybe I can get you a job in my man's store. You've jined some church, I reckon? Now if you're a Baptist—?"

But since I had crossed the Missouri something had entered into my blood which rendered me obstinate to such allotments. For her North Platte, "strictly moral," and the guardianship of her broad motherly wing I had no ardent feeling. I was set upon Benton; foolishly, fatuously set. And in after days—soon to arrive—I bitterly regretted that I had not yielded to her wholesome, honest counsel.

Nevertheless this was true, at present:

"But I have already purchased my ticket to Benton," I objected. "I understand that I shall find the proper climate there, and suitable accommodations. And if I don't like it I can move elsewhere. Possibly to Salt Lake City, or Denver."

She snorted.

"In among them Mormans? My Gawd, young man! Where they live in conkbinage—several women to one man, like a buffer herd or other beasts of the field? I guess your mother never heard you talk like that. Denver—well, Denver mightn't be bad, though I do hear tell that folks nigh starve to death there, and with the Injuns and the snow. Denver ain't on no railroad, either. If you want health, and to grow up with a strictly moral community, you throw in with North Platte of Nebraska, the great and growing of the Plains. I reckon you've heard of North Platte, even where you come from. You take my word for it, and exchange your ticket."

It struck me here that the good woman might not be unbiased in her fondness for North Platte. To extol the present and future of these Western towns seemed a fixed habit. During my brief stay in Omaha—yes, on the way across Illinois and Iowa from Chicago, I had encountered this peculiar trait. Iowa was rife with aspiring if embryonic metropolises. Now in Nebraska Columbus was destined to be the new national capital and the center of population for the United States; Fremont was lauded as one of the greatest railroad junctions of the world; and North Platte, three hundred miles out into the plains, was proclaimed as the rival of Omaha, and "strictly moral."

"I thank you," I replied. "But since I've started for Benton I think I'll go on. And if I don't like it or it doesn't agree with me you may see me in North Platte after all."

She granted.

"You can find me at the Bon Ton restaurant. If you get in broke, I'll take care of you."

With that she settled herself comfortably. In remarkably short order she was asleep and snoring.

CHAPTER II

TO BETTER ACQUAINTANCE

The train had started amidst clangor of bell and the snouts of good-bye and good-luck from

the station platform. We had rolled out through train yards occupied to the fullest by car shops, round house, piled-up freight depot, stacks of ties and iron, and tracks covered with freight cars loaded high to rails, ties, bailed hay, all manner and means of supplies designed, I imagined, for the building operations far in the West.

Soon we left this busy Train Town behind and were entering the open country. The landscape was pleasing, but the real sights probably lay ahead; so I turned from my window to examine my traveling quarters.

The coach—a new one, built in the company's shops and decidedly upon a par with the very best coaches of the Eastern roads—was jammed; every seat taken. I did not see My Lady of the Blue Eyes, nor her equal, but almost the whole gamut of society was represented: Farmers, merchants, a few soldiers, plainmen in boots and flannel shirt-sleeves and long hair and large hats, with revolvers hanging from the racks above them or from the seat ends; one or two white-faced gentry in broadcloth and patent leather shoes—who I fancied might be gamblers such as now and then plied their trade along the Hudson River boats; two Indians in blankets; Eastern tourists, akin to myself; women and children of country type; and so forth. What chiefly caught my eye were the carbines racked against the ends of the coach, for protection in case of Indians or highwaymen, no doubt. I observed bottles being passed from hand to hand, and tilted en route. The amount and frequency of the whiskey for consumption in this country were astonishing.

My friend snored peacefully. Near noon we halted for dinner at the town of Fremont, some fifty miles out. She awakened at the general stir, and when I squeezed by her she immediately fished for a packet of lunch. We had thirty minutes at Fremont—ample time in which to discuss a very excellent meal of antelope steaks, prairie fowl, fried potatoes and hot biscuits. There was promise of buffalo meat farther on, possibly at the next meal station, Grand Island.

The time was sufficient, also, to give me another glimpse of My Lady of the Blue Eyes, who appeared to have been awarded the place of honor between the conductor and brakeman at table. She bestowed upon me a subtle glance of recognition—with a smile and a slight bow in one; but I failed to find her on the station platform after the meal. That I should obtain other opportunities I did not doubt. Benton was yet thirty hours' travel.

All that afternoon we rocked along up the Platte Valley, with the Platte River—a broad but shallow stream—constantly upon our left. My seat companion evidently had exhausted her repertoire, for she slumbered at ease, gradually sinking into a shapeless mass, her flowered bonnet askew. Several other passengers also were sleeping, due, in part, to the whiskey bottles. The car was thinning out. I noted, and I might bid in advance for the chance of obtaining a new location in a certain car ahead.

The scenery through the car window had merged into a monotony accentuated by great spaces. As far as Fremont the country along the railroad had been well settled with farms and unfenced cultivated fields. Now we had issued into the untrammelled prairies, here and there humanized by an isolated shack or a lonely traveler by horse or wagon, but in the main a vast sun-baked dead sea of gentle, silent undulations extending, brownish, clear to the horizons. The only refreshing sights were the Platte River, flowing blue and yellow among sand-bars and islands, and the side streams 'at we passed. Close at hand the principal tokens of life were the little flag stations, and the tremendous freight trains sidetracked to give us the right of way. The widely separated hamlets where we impatiently stopped were the oases of the desert.

In the sunset we halted at the

supper station, named Grand Island, my seat neighbor finished her lunch box, and I returned well fortified by another excellent meal at the not exorbitant price, one dollar and a quarter. There had been buffalo meat—a poor apology, to my notion, for good beef. Antelope steak, on the contrary, was of far finer flavor than the best mutton.

At Grand Island a number of wretched native Indians drew my attention, for the time being, from quest of My Lady of the Blue Eyes. However, she was still escorted by the conductor, who in his brass buttons and officious air began to irritate me. Such a persistent squire of dames rather overstepped the duties of his position. Confound the fellow! He surely would come to the end of his run and his rope before he went much farther.

"Now, young man, if you get set of your foolishness and decide to try North Platte instead of some fly-by-night town on west," my seat companion addressed, "you jest follow me when I leave. We get to North Platte before plumb dark, and you hang onto my skirts right up town, till I land you in a good place. For if you don't, you're liable to be skinned alive."

"If I decide upon North Platte I certainly will take advantage of your kindness," I evaded. Forsooth, she had a mind to kidnap me!

"Now you're talkin' sensible," she approved. "My sakes alive! Benton!" And she sniffed. "Why in Benton they'll snatch you bald-headed fore you've been there an hour."

She composed herself for another nap.

"If that pesky brakeman don't remember to wake me, you give me a poke with your elbow. I wouldn't be carried beyond North Platte for love or money."

She gurgled, she snored. The sunset was fading from pink to gold—a god likely somebody's hair; and from gold to lemon which tinted all the prairie and made it beautiful. Pursuing the sunset we steadily rumbled westward through the immensity of unbroken space.

The brakeman came in, lighting the coal-oil lamps. Outside, the twilight had deepened into dusk. Numerous passengers were making ready for bed; the men by removing their boots and shoes and coats and galluses and stretching out; the women by loosening their stays, with significant clicks and sighs, and laying their heads upon adjacent shoulders or drooping against seat ends. Babies cried, and were hushed. Final night-caps were taken, from the prevalent bottles.

The brakeman, returning, paused and inquired right and left on his way through. He leaned to me.

"You for North Platte?"

"No, sir. Benton, Wyoming Territory."

"Then you'd better move up to the car ahead. This car stops at North Platte."

"What time do we reach North Platte?"

"Two-thirty in the morning. If you don't want to be waked up, you'd better change now. You'll find a seat."

At that I gladly followed him out. He indicated a half-empty seat.

"This gentleman gets off a bit farther on; then you'll have the seat to yourself."

The arrangement was satisfactory, albeit the "gentleman" with whom I shared appeared, to nose and eyes, rather well soured, as they say; but fortune had favored me—across the aisle, only a couple of seats beyond, I glimpsed the top of a golden head, securely low and barricaded in by luggage.

Without regrets I abandoned my former seat-mate to her disappointment when she waked at North Platte. This car was the place for me, set apart by the salient presence of one person among all the others. That, however, is apt to be differentiated city from city, and even land from land.

Eventually I, also, slept—at first by fits and starts concomitant with railway travel by night, then more soundly when the "gentleman," my comrade in adventure, had been hauled out and deposited elsewhere. I was fully awakened only at daylight.

The train was rumbling as before. The lamps had been extinguished—the coach atmosphere was heavy with oil smell and the exhalations of human beings in all stages of deshabille. But the golden head was there,

about as when last sighted.

(Continued next week.)

BY ARTHUR BRISBANE
M. S. Hershey, dedicating \$60,000,000, his entire fortune, to protect and educate the children of others, reminds you that the candy business is now the first or second industry of the United States, greater than steel, wheat, corn or anything else except, perhaps automobiles.

Mr. Hershey establishes his great industry and his magnificent philanthropy at the spot where he was born, poor, on a farm.

Contrast this action of Mr. Hershey, giving his \$60,000,000 that poor children may have a chance, with an individual who died the other day, leaving \$1,000 to his wife and \$35,000 to be invested in prayers for his poor miserable soul. In these two men you see all the difference between selfish barbarism and enlightened civilization.

Mr. Zangwill telling Americans that their "pep" is lost motion, that they are unglorified, unjust, lack shame, etc. will be useful to the wise and annoying only to the foolish.

It doesn't matter what Mr. Zangwill is—is they; any truth in what he says?

If a humble mouse crawled from a sewer, looked at you with long, quivering nose, and said, "you are a shameless creature and don't know anything; you should not try to kill that mouse."

You should ask yourself, "is there truth in what the mouse says? If so, how can I correct my fault?"

The bad features of Mr. Zangwill's talk is the harm it may do to his correctionists, among those already prejudiced. It cannot hurt him, for he will soon be back, safe in England, where they will approve quite generally his views on America.

But his inaccurate belittling of the Ku Klux Klan may cause trouble to "better Jews" of the Zangwill. And his ridiculing of Christian Science does not come with good grace from one belonging to a race that has so long complained, and justly, of religious prejudice.

However, at his worst, Mr. Zangwill is to be thanked. The United States and its people have a thousand defects, many that Mr. Zangwill could not see or understand. To make us think about them is to render a service.

What does the imagination of man amount to? Not much, outside of the little circle in which he agitates himself like a squirrel in the whirling wheel.

What does it mean to the human mind that our sun is a million times as big as the earth, and that there exist suns a million times as big as our sun? It means nothing. We can't even imagine the size of our own tiny earth.

Or what does it mean to us when a professor, lecturing on the construction of the atom, tells us that a speck of dust floating in a sun-beam weighs 1,000,000,000 times as much as an atom of hydrogen? It means nothing.

We live suspended between infinite brightness and inconceivable littleness, understanding neither. It's a wonder we worry so little.

The old fashioned mind says, "beware of new fangled ideas."

Twenty-five years ago that mind, in medicine and other lines, said "beware of new ideas."

Dr. Charles H. Mayo, whose word commands respect everywhere, says "the last 23 years have taught us more about preventing disease than all the preceding centuries."

The best French fliers agree that the speed of flying machines "will never exceed about 312 miles an hour." Higher than that they say is impossible.

It interests us to know that some disease now worrying us most are found in fossilized bones of animals that vanished from the earth long before any men were here.

Man will conquer all diseases eventually, as he has conquered all animals. All he needs is time, and luckily science proves that we have many millions of years ahead of us.

When the locomotive was young, as the flying machine now is, "accidentists" said it might be possible for a railroad train to maintain a speed as high as 20 miles an hour, but it would be difficult, and that great speed would kill the passengers if it were kept up too long.

Flying machines will go about as fast as men cars to have them go—about 1,000 miles an hour, the apparent speed of the sun around the earth, will probably be the average for long distance trips before the end of this century.

Three hours to cross the ocean, three hours to come back, air boats leaving every hour on the wheel, will be a sign read by your grandchildren.

A KING'S GIFT.
Sir John Fraser.

At least one Sunday a year I like to spend among the romantic surroundings of Hampton court, built by the great Cardinal Wolsey, but taken from him by Henry VIII. I have often wondered why this dignified palace is not used as a background by some enterprising "movie" producer.

It is a delight to saunter through the banquet hall and the audience chamber and the king's bedroom and the queen's antechamber and look at the paintings by Peter Lely and Godfrey Kneller of the ladies who were court favorites in roystering days of the restoration after Charles II came back to the throne.

I generally go down to Hampton court to visit a dear old lady, for though the palace belongs to the king, he makes no use of it except that he gives suites of apartments to the not very well-to-do widows of men who have served the state in some distinguished capacity. Can you imagine a more charming gift than a suite of apartments in a place like Hampton court with its peace and unrivaled old world gardens.

The Canadian department of mines has just received a block of silver ore weighing two tons from the Kelly mines in northern Ontario. It will be preserved as an exhibit.

Mrs. Nancy Brown, living near Knoxville, Tenn., has not been an extensive traveler during her 21 years of life. Though her home is within four miles of a railroad she has never seen nor ridden on a railroad train.

Aunt Jemima Rag Dolls

Get this jolly family for your children

Aunt Jemima; Uncle Mose, Wade and Diana—four of the jolliest rag dolls you've ever seen; all in bright colors ready to cut and stuff. Also a sample package of Aunt Jemima Prepared Buckwheat Flour, a sample package of the famous Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour and a recipe folder telling how to use it in making fine waffles, muffins and special pancake treats. Send coupon and 30c in stamps or coin—today.

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Enclosed find 30c. Please send dolls, samples, etc.

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Among English miners there was formerly a curious belief that, when having a bath, they must not wash the back, as water weakens that part of the body.

High Cost of Living.

Wife—Oh, Richard, baby swallowed a quarter today.
Hub—Can't you give him a less expensive diet?—Boston Evening Transcript.

DEMAND "BAYER" ASPIRIN

Aspirin Marked With "Bayer Cross" Has Been Proved Safe by Millions.

Warning! Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer Aspirin proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for 23 years. Say "Bayer" when you buy Aspirin. Imitations may prove dangerous.—Adv.

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Dye or Tint Any Worn, Shabby Garment or Drapery.

Diamond Dyes

Each 15-cent package of "Diamond Dyes" contains directions so simple that any woman can dye or tint any old, worn, faded thing new, even if she has never dyed before. Choose any color at drug store.—Advertisement.

What makes the "good old days" seem good? Isn't it the memory of the friends of your youth?

It sometimes seems as if a man with a good disposition likes to be imposed on.

Did you ever hear of a girl marrying the kind of a man that the fortune teller said she would?

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Notwithstanding our recent big reduction in prices the quality and equipment of our cars have been steadily increased, until today Chevrolet stands beyond comparison as the best dollar value of any car sold at any price and the most economical car to maintain.

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