

Desert Dust

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "How Are You Feeling?" etc.

The sun was more vexatious, being an hour lower, when we bravely entered Benton's boiling main street. We made brief halt for the finishing up of business; and cleaving a lane through the pedestrians and vehicles and animals there congregated, the challenges of the street gamblers having assailed us in vain, we proceeded—our Mormons gazing straight ahead, scornful of the devil's enticements, our few Gentiles responding in kind to the quips and waves and salutations.

Thus we eventually left Benton; in about an hour's march or some three miles out we formed corral for camp on the farther side of the road from the railroad tracks which we had been skirting.

Travel, except upon the tracks (for they were rarely vacant) ceased at sundown; and we, all, having eaten our suppers, were sitting by our fires, smoking and talking, with the sky crimson in the west and the desert getting mysterious with purple shadows, when as another construction train of box cars and platform cars clanked by I chanced to note a figure spring out asprawl, alight with a whistle of sand, and staggering up hasty for us.

First it accosted the hulk Daniel, who was temporarily out on herd, keeping the animals from the tracks. I saw him lean from his saddle; then he rode spurring in, bawling like a calf:

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

Save for his excited stuttering silence reigned, a minute. Then in a storm of rude raillery—"That's a hoos 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, his whiskered mouth so agape that he almost dropped his pipe. And we all peered, with the women of the caravan smitten mute but intensely curious, while the solitary figure, braving our stares, came on to the fires.

"Gawd almighty!" Mr. Jenks delivered.

Likewise straightening I mentally repeated the ejaculation, for now I knew her as well as he. Yes, by the muttered babble others in our party knew her. 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 it if I ain't," he mumbled. He glowered at me. "Yes, ma'am, right hyar. You want to speak with me?"

"By gosh, it's Montoyo's woman, ain't it?" were the comments.

"I do, sir."

"You can come on closer then, ma'am," he growled. "There ain't no secrets between us."

Came on she did, with only an instant's hesitation and a little compression of the lips. She swept our group fearlessly—her gaze crossed mine, but she betrayed no sign.

"I wish to engage passage to Salt Lake."

"With this hyar train?" gasped Jenks.

"Yes. You are bound for Salt Lake, aren't you?"

"For your health, ma'am?" he stammered.

She faintly smiled, but her eyes were steady and wide.

"For my health. I'd like to throw in with your outfit. I will cook, keep camp, and pay you well besides."

"We haven't no place for a woman, ma'am. You'd best take the stage."

"No. There'll be no stage out till morning. I want to make arrangements at once—with you. There are other women in this train." She flashed a glance around. "And I can take care of myself."

"If you aim to go to Salt Lake your main halt is Benton and the stage. The stage makes through in four days and we'll use thir-

ty," somebody counseled.

"An' this bull train ain't no place for yore kind, anyhow," grumbled another. "We've quit roarin'—we've cut loose from that hell-hole yonder."

"So have I." But she did not turn on him. "I'm never going back. I—I can't, now; not even for the stage. Will you permit me to travel with you, sir?"

"No, ma'am, I won't," rasped Mr. Jenks. "I can't do it. It's not in my line, ma'am."

"I'll be no trouble. You have only Mr. Beeson. I don't ask to ride. I'll walk. I merely ask protection."

"So do we," somebody sniggered; and I hated him, for I saw her sway upon her feet as if the words had been a blow.

"No, ma'am, I'm full up. I wouldn't take on even a yaller dog, specially a she one." Jenks announced. "What your game is now I can't tell, and I don't propose to be eddicated to it. But you can't travel along with me, and that's straight talk. If you can put anything over on these other fellers, try your luck."

"Oh!" she cried, wincing. Her hands clenched nervously, a red spot dyed either cheek as she appealed to us all. "Gentlemen! Won't one of you help me? What are you afraid of? I can pay my way—I ask no favors—I swear to you that I'll give no trouble. I only wish protection across."

"Where's Pedro? Where's Montoyo?"

She turned quickly, facing the jeer; her two eyes blazed, the red spots deepened angrily.

"He? That snake? I shot him."

"What! You? Killed him?" Exclamations broke from all quarters.

She stamped her foot. "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. Her lip curled.

"You needn't fear. I'll meet him, myself."

"By gosh, I don't mix up in no quarrel 'twixt a man and his woman." And—"Tain't our affair. When he comes he'll come a-poppin'." Such were the hasty comments. I felt a peculiar heat, a revulsion of shame and indignation, which made the present seem much more important than the past. And there was the recollection of her, crying, and still the accents of her last appeals in the early morning.

"I thought that I might find men among you," she disdainfully said—a break in her voice.

"So I came. But you're afraid of him—of that breed, that vest-pocket killer. And you're afraid of me, a woman whose cards are all on the table. There isn't a one of you—even you, Mr. Beeson, sir, whom I tried to be-friend although you may not know it."

And she turned upon me. "You have not a word to say. I am never going back, I tell you all. You won't take me, any of you? Very well." She smiled wanly.

"I drift along, gentlemen. I'll play the lone hand. Montoyo shall never seize me. I'd rather trust to the wolves and the Indians. There'll be another wagon train."

"I am only an employee madam," I faltered. "If I had an outfit of my own I certainly would help you."

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

"Here's the wagon boss," Jenks grunted, and spat. "Mebbe you can throw in with him. When it comes to supers that's his say so."

"I've all I can tend to, myself, and I don't look for trouble. I've got no love for Montoyo neither," he added. "Darned if I ain't glad you gave him a dose."

Murmurs of approval echoed him as if the tide were turning a little. All this time—not long, however—Daniel had been sitting his mule transfixed and gaping, his odd wry eyes upon her. Now the large form of Captain Adams came striding in contentions, through the gathering dust.

"What's this?" he demanded harshly. "An ungodly woman? I'll have no rafficking in my

train. Get you gone, Delilah. Would you pursue us even here?"

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

"Them's the two she's after, paw. Jenks and that greenie," Daniel bawled. "They know her. She's follered 'em. She aims to travel with 'em. Oh, gosh! She's shot her man in Benton. Gosh!" His voice trailed off. "Ain't she purty, though! She's dressed in britches."

"Get you gone," Captain Adams thundered. "And these your paramours with you. For thus saith the Lord: There shall be no lusting of adultery among his chosen. And thus say I that no brazen hussy in men's garments shall travel with this train to Zion—no, not a mile of the way."

Jenks stiffened, bristling.

"Mind your words, Adams. I'm under no Mormon thumb, and I'll thank you not to connect me and this lady in any such fashion. As for your brat on horse-back, he'd better hold his yawp. She came of her own hook, and damned if I ain't beginnin' to think—"

I sprang forward. Defend her I must. She should not stand there, slight, lovely, brave but drooping, aflame with the helplessness of a woman alone and insulted.

"Wait!" I implored. "Give her a chance. You haven't heard her story. All she wants is protection on the road. Yes, I know her, and I know the cur she's gettin' away from. I saw him strike her; so did Mr. Jenks. What were you intending to do? Turn her out into the night? Shame on you, sir. She says she can't go back to Benton, and if you'll be humane enough to understand why, you'll at least let her stay in your camp till morning. You've got women there who'll care for her, I hope."

I felt her instant look. She spoke palpitant.

"You have one man among you all. But I am going. Good-night, gentlemen."

"No! Wait!" I begged. "You shall not go by yourself. I'll see you into safety."

Daniel cackled.

"Haw haw! What'd I tell you, paw! Hear him?"

"By gum, the boy's right," Jenks declared. "Will you go back to Benton if we take you?" he queried of her. "Are you 'fraid of Montoyo? Can he shoot still, or is he laid out?"

"I'll not go back to Benton, and I'm not afraid of that bully," said she. "Yes, he can shoot, still; but next time I should kill him. I hope never to see him again, or Benton either."

The men murmured.

"You've got spunk, anyhow," said they. And by further impulse: "Let her stay the night, Cap'n. It'll be plumb dark soon. She won't harm ye. Some o' the woman folks can take care of her."

Captain Adams had been frowning sternly, his heavy face unsoftened.

"Who are you, woman?"

"I am the wife of a gambler named Montoyo."

"Why come you here, then?"

"He has been abusing me and I shot him."

"There is blood on your hands? Are you a murderess as well as a harlot?"

"Shame!" cried voices, mine among them. "That's tall language."

Strangely and yet not strangely, sentiment had veered. We were Americans—and had we been English that would have made no difference. It was the Anglo-Saxon which gave utterance.

She crimsoned, defiant; laughed scornfully.

"You would not dare bait a man that way, sir. Blood on my hands? Not blood; oh, no! He couldn't pan out blood."

"You killed him, woman?"

"Not yet. He's likely fleeing the public in the Big Tent at this very moment."

"And what did you expect here, in my train?"

"A little manhood and a little chivalry, sir. I am going to Salt Lake and I knew of no safer way."

"She jumped off a railway train, paw," bawled Daniel. "I seen her. An' she axed for Mister Jenks, fust thing."

"I'll give you something to stop that yawp. Come morrin', we'll settle, young feller," my friend Jenks growled.

"I did," she admitted. "I have seen Mr. Jenks; I have also seen Mr. Beeson; I have seen others of you in Benton. I was glad to know of somebody here. I rode on the construction train be-

cause it was the quickest and easiest way."

"And those garments!" Captain Adams accused. "You wish to show your shape, woman, to tempt men's eyes with the flesh?"

She smiled.

"Would you have me jump from a train in skirts, sir? Or travel far afoot in crinoline? Put to soothe your mind I will say that I wore these clothes under my proper attire and cloak until the last moment. And if you turn me away I shall cut my hair and continue as a boy."

"If you are for Salt Lake—where we are of the Lord's choosing and wish none of you—there is the stage," he prompted shrewdly. "Go to the stage. You cannot make this wagon train your instrument."

"The stage?" She slowly shook her head. "Why, I am too well known, sir, take that as you will. And the stage does not leave until morning. Much might happen between now and morning. I have nobody in Benton that I can depend upon—nobody that I dare depend upon. And by railway, for the East? No. That is too open a trail. I am running free of Benton and Pedro Montoyo, and stage and train won't do he trick. I've thought that out."

She tossed back her head, deliberately turned. "Good-night, ladies and gentlemen."

Involuntarily I started forward to intercept. The notion of her heading into the vastness and the gloom was appalling; the merriness of that increasing group, formed now of both men and women collected from all the camp maddened. So I would have besought her, pleaded with her, faced Montoyo for her—but a new voice mediated.

"She shall stay, Hyrum! For the night, at least! I will look after her."

The Captain's younger wife, Rachael, had stepped to him; laid one hand upon his arm—her smooth hair touched ashine by the firelight as she gazed up into his face. Pending reply I hastened directly to My Lady herself and detained her by her jacket sleeve.

"Wait," I bade.

Whereupon we both turned. Side by side we fronted the group as if we might have been partners—which, in a measure, we were, but not wholly according to the lout Daniel's cackle and the suddenly interrogating countenances here and there.

(To Be Continued.)

Then the Fun Started From the Kansas City Star.

Mrs. Gushierly: "May I sit beside you, Mr. Bashfulboy? I just offered to sit beside that wretched Mr. Nettleton and he said he was particular about the company he kept."

Mr. Bashfulboy: "Did he really? He has! Yes, certainly sit right here, I'm not a bit particular."

THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND THE VALLEY ROAD

Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus—II Tim. 2:3. Remember that in this world every mountain top of privilege is girdled by the values of lowly duty.

Remember that the transfiguration of the soul is but the preparation and encouragement for the sacrifice of the life.

Remember that we are not to tarry in the transitory radiance of Mount Hermon, but to press on to the enduring glory of Mount Zion, and that we can only arrive at the final and blessed resting place by the way of Mount Calvary.

Remember Peter's words in the full experience of the School of Christ.

For the spirit of Jesus was in him, and taught him what to say, when he wrote at the close of his life:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The Touch Test. From the Boston Transcript.

"Johnny, your face needs washing. Did you look at it in the glass this morning?"

"No mother, but it seemed all right when I felt it."

Open sugar bowls are prohibited in public eating places in Akron, Ohio, on the ground that they are unsanitary and a menace to health.

The Salutation of the Dawn From The Independent.

Listen to the Exhortation of the Dawn! Look to this Day, for it is Life. The very Life of Life. In its brief course lie all the

Verities And Realities of your Existence: The Bliss of Growth. The Glory of Action. The Splendor of Beauty: For Yesterday is but a Dream, And Tomorrow is only a Vision; But Today well lived Makes every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness

And every Tomorrow a Vision of Hope. Look well, therefore, to this Day! Such is the Salutation of the Dawn.



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Owners of Coffee Rooms

Thrown Into the Sea

Coffee came first out of Arabia and Abyssinia, according to the best information available. The first reference to it in literature was made by Avicenna, a Mohammedan physician, who died in 1037. "It fortifies the members," he wrote; "it cleanses the skin and dries up the humilities that are under it and gives an excellent smell to all the body."

The "kaveh kanes" of Mecca were the first coffee houses. Kair Bey, the governor, discovered that those who met in the coffee houses discussed politics and religion, sometimes critically. So he ordered the kaveh kanes closed. The sultan at Cairo disapproved of the governor's indiscreet zeal and had him executed.

But in Constantinople, where plots against the oppressive government were hatched over the coffee, the public houses were closed and reopening meant that the proprietor was sewed in a sack and thrown into the Bosphorus.—Detroit News.

Oversight

Brown was making a business trip on a branch railroad and was not due at his destination until shortly before midnight.

Accordingly, he settled back in his seat and attempted to sleep. It was quite a struggle for a while, and he had just dozed off comfortably when he was awakened by some one taking hold of his arm and shaking him.

Brown looked up to see the conductor standing over him.

"What's the idea?" he demanded.

"Ticket," demanded the conductor.

"Why, I gave you my ticket a long time ago, just after we left the junction," Brown explained.

"Well," replied the conductor, "if you had told me that I wouldn't have bothered you."

Scarce Variety

"Are you fond of entertaining callers?" "Yes, but, dear me! so few of them are."

A Standard for 90 Years. As a laxative and blood purifier there is nothing better than Brandreth Pills. In use throughout the world.—Adv.

Russian Chemist Makes

Strong Wire From Salt

A wonderful discovery has been made by a Russian scientist, who claims to have found a method of making wire stronger than steel out of common rock salt. His discovery is the result of a series of extraordinary experiments in the mutability of metals by structural chemistry.

The scientist found that by submitting the rock salt to high heat pressure before the elementary crystals began to decay he arrested the decay by changing the structural arrangement of the atoms and molecules, and this change increased the durability and ductility of the substance 300 times, says London Tit-Bits. He is continuing his experiments with other metal substances.

If this discovery can be applied to metals it will revolutionize the world. It will mean, amongst other things, trains capable of running 200 miles an hour and turbine steamers that could reach Australia in ten days.

Where Is Cave of Nativity?

It is a winding cave in Bethlehem, beneath the Church of the Nativity, built over it by the Empress Helena, and the Emperor Constantine. This cave is the supposed birthplace of Christ. The supposed position of the manger and the precise spot where Christ was born are marked. The grotto is beautiful with marbles and candles are constantly kept burning.

"They Can't Put You in Jail for That!"

"Can't, eh?" said the man, "Well, I'm here!"

After your sleepless night from coffee drinking and your friends say it's all imagination, remember the sleepless night.

Also remember that Postum, the pure cereal beverage, contains nothing that can interfere with sleep. It has every desirable quality of a mealtime drink—cheering warmth, delightful flavor and wholesomeness that makes for health.

Postum for Health

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Your grocer sells Postum in two forms: Instant Postum (in tin) prepared instantly in the cup by the addition of boiling water. Postum Cereal (in packages) for those who prefer the flavor brought out by boiling fully 20 minutes. The cost of either form is about one-half cent a cup.

