

Desert Dust

By Edwin L. Sabin

Author of "How Are You Feeling?" etc.

"Daniel and I appear to be at butts, sir," I said. "Why, I do not know, except that he seems to have had a dislike for me from the first day. If he'll let me alone I'll let him alone. I'm not one to look for trouble."

His heavy face, with those thick pursed lips and small china blue eyes, changed not a jot.

"Daniel will take care of himself."

"That is his privilege," I answered. "I am not here to question his rights, Captain, as long as he keeps within them; but I don't require of him to take care of me also. If he'll hold to his own trail I'll hold to mine, and I assure you there'll be no trouble."

"Daniel will take care of himself, I say," he reiterated. "Yes, and look after all that belongs to him, stranger. There's no use threatening Daniel. What he does he does as servant of the Lord and he fears naught."

"Neither do I, sir," I retorted hotly. "One may wish to avoid trouble and still not fear it. I have not come to you with complaint. I merely wish to explain. You are captain of the train and responsible for its conduct. I give you notice that I shall defend myself against insult and annoyance."

I turned on my heel—sensed poised forms and inquiring faces; and his booming voice stayed me.

"A moment, stranger. Your talk is big. What have you to do with this woman Edna?"

"With Mrs. Montoyo? What I please, if it pleases her, sir. If she claims your protection, very good. Should she claim mine, she'll have it." And there, confound it, I had spoken. "But with this, Daniel has nothing to do. I believe that the lady you mention is simply your present guest and my former acquaintance."

"You err," he thundered, darkening. "You cannot be expected to see the light. But I say to you, keep away, keep away. I will have no gallivanting, no cozening and smiling and prating and distracting. She must be nothing to you. Never can be, never shall be. Her way is appointed, the instrument chosen, and as a sister in Zion she shall know you not. Now get you gone—" a favorite expression of his. "Get you gone, meddle not hereabouts, and I'll see to it that you are spared from harm."

Surprising myself, and perhaps him, I gazed full at him and laughed without reserve or irritation.

"Thank you, Captain," I heard myself saying. "I am perfectly capable of self-protection. And I expect to remain a friend of Mrs. Montoyo as long as she permits me. For your bluster and Daniel's I care not a sou. In fact, I consider you a pair of damned body-snatchers. Good-evening."

Then out I stormed, boiling within, reckless of opposition—even courting it; but met none, Daniel least of all (for he was elsewhere), until as I passed on along the lined-up wagons I heard my name uttered breathlessly.

"Mr. Beeson."

It was not My-Lady; her I had not glimpsed. The gentle English girl Rachael had intercepted me. She stood between two wagons, whither she had hastened.

"You will be careful?"

"How far, madam?"

"Of yourself, and for her. Oh, be careful. You can gain nothing."

Her face and tone entreated me. She was much in earnest, the roses of her round cheeks paled, her hands clasped.

"I shall only look out for myself," said I. "That seems necessary."

"You should keep away from our camp, and from Daniel. There is nothing you can do. You—if you could only understand—Her hands tightened upon each other. "Won't you be careful? More careful? For I know. You cannot interfere; there is no way. You but run great risk. Sister Edna will be happy."

"Did she send you, madam?" I asked.

"N-no; yes. Yes, she wishes it. Her place has been found. The Lord so wills. We all are happy in Zion, under the Lord. Surely you would not try to interfere, sir!"

"I have no desire to interfere with the future happiness of Mrs. Montoyo," I stiffly answered. "She is not the root of the business between Daniel and me, although he would have it appear so. And you yourself, a woman, are satisfied to have her forced into 'Mormonism'?"

"She has been living in sin, sir. The truth is appointed only among the Latter Day Saints. We have the book and the word—the Gentile priests are not ordained of the Lord for laying on of hands. In Zion Edna shall be purged and set free; there she shall be brought to salvation. Our bishops, perhaps Brigham Young himself, will show her the way. But no woman in Zion is married without consent. The Lord directs through our prophets. Oh, sir, if you could only see!"

An angel could not have pleaded more sweetly. To have argued with her would have been sacrilege, for I verily believed that she was pure of heart.

"There is nothing for me to say, madam," I responded. "As far as I can do so with self-respect I will avoid Daniel. I certainly shall not intrude upon your party, or bother Mrs. Montoyo; but if Daniel brings trouble to me I will hand it back to him. That's flat. He shall not flout me out of face. It rests with him whether we travel on peacefully or not. And I thank you for your interest."

"I will pray for you," she said simply. "Good-bye, sir."

She withdrew, hastening again, sleek haired, round figured, modest in her shabby gown. I proceeded to the outfit with a new sense of ease. If she—if Mrs. Montoyo really had yielded, if she were out of the game—but she never had been in it; not to me. And still I coned the matter over and over, vainly convincing myself that the situation had cleared. Notwithstanding all my effort, I somehow felt that an incentive had vanished, leaving a gap. The affair now had simmered down to plain temper and tit for tat. I championed nothing, except myself.

Why, with her submissive, in a fracas I might be working hurt to her, beyond the harm to him. But she be hanged, as to that phase of it. I had been led on so far that there was no solution save as Daniel turned aside. Heaven knows that the matter would have been sordid enough had it focused upon a gambler's wife; and here it looked only prosaic. Thus viewing it I fought an odd disappointment in myself, coupled with a keener disappointment in her.

"You talked to Hyrum, I see," Jenks commented.

"I did."

"'Bout Dan'l, mebbe?"

"I wanted to make plain that the business is none of my seeking. Hyrum is wagon master."

"Didn't get any satisfaction, I'll bet."

"No. On the contrary."

"I could have told you you'd be wastin' powder."

"At any rate," I informed, "Mrs. Montoyo is entirely out of the matter. She never was in it except as she was entitled to protection, but now she requires no further notice."

"How so?"

"That is her wish. She sent me word by Rachael."

"She did? Wall!" He eyed me.

"You swaller that?"

"Willingly." And I swallowed my bitterness also.

"Means to marry him, does she?"

"Rachael did not say as to that. Rather, she gave me to understand that a way would be found to release Mrs. Montoyo from Benton connections, but that no woman in Utah is obliged to marry. Is that true?"

"Um-m." Jenks rubbed his beard. "Wall, they do say Brigham Young is ag'in promise-yus swappin', and things got to be done straight, 'cordin' to the faith. But an unjined female in the church is a powerful lonely critter. Sticks out like a sore thumb. They read the Bible at her plenty. Um-m," mused he.

"I don't put much stock in that yarn you bring me. There's a nigger in the wood-pile, but he ain't black. What you goin' to do about it?"

"Nothing. It's not my concern. Now if Daniel will mind his affairs I'll continue to mind mine."

"Wall, Zion's a long way off yet," quoth friend Jenks. "I don't lok to see you or she get there—nor Dan'l either."

He being stubborn, I let him have the last word; did not seek to develop his views. But his contentious harping shadowed like an omen.

CHAPTER XVI

I Do The Deed

We had camped well beyond a last bunch of the red-shirted graders, so that the thread of a trail wended before, lonely, sand-obscured, leading apparently nowhere, through this desert devoid of human life. Line stakes of the surveyors denoted the grade; but the surveyors' work was done, here. Rush orders from headquarters had sent them all westward still, to set their final stakes across other deserts and across the mountains, clear to Ogden at the north end of the Salt Lake itself.

Seemingly we had cut loose and were more than ever a world to ourselves. The country had grown sterile beneath ordinary, if possible; and our thoughts and talk would have been sterile also were it not for that one recurrent topic which kept them quick. In these journeyings men seize upon little things and magnify them; discuss and rediscuss a phase until launched maybe as an empty joke it returns freighted with tragedy.

However, now that once My Lady had eliminated herself from my field I did not see but that Daniel and I might taper off into at least an armed neutrality. If he continued to nag me, it would be wholly of his own free will. He had no grievance.

Then in case that I did kill him—if kill him I must, and that eventuality hung over me like the sword of Damocles) I should be not ashamed to tell even my mother. In this I took what small comfort I might.

I had not spoken at length with Mrs. Montoyo for several days. We had exchanged merely civil greetings. To-day I did not see her during the march; did not attempt to see her—did not so much as curiously glance her way, being content to let well enough alone, although aware that my care might be misinterpreted as a token of fear. But as to proving the case against me, Daniel was at liberty to experiment with the status in quo.

Toward evening we climbed a second wide, flat divide. We were leaving the Red Basin, they said, and about to cross into the Bitter Creek Plains, which, according to the talk, were "a damned sight wuss!" Somewhere in the Bitter Creek Plains our course met the course of the Overland Stage road, trending up from the south for the passage of the Green River at the farther edge of the Plains.

I had only faint hope that Mrs. Montoyo would be delivered over to the stage there. It scarcely would be her wish. We were destined to travel on to Salt Lake City together—she, Daniel and I.

If the Red Basin had been bad and if the Bitter Creek Plains were to be worse, assuredly this plateau was limbo—a gray, bleak, wind-swept elevation fairly level and extending, in elevation perceptible mainly by the vista, as far as eye might see, northward and southward, separating basin from basin—one Hell, as Jenks declared, from the other.

Nevertheless there was a wild grandeur in the site, flooded all with crimson as the sun sank in the clear western sky beyond the Plains themselves, so that our plateau was still bathed in ruddy color when the Red Basin upon the one hand had deepened to purple and the white blotches of soda and alkali down in the Plains upon the other hand gleamed evilly in a tenuous gloaming.

We had corralled adjacent to another tainted pond, of which the animals refused to drink but which furnished a little rank forage for them and an oasis for a half dozen ducks. A pretty picture these made, too, as they lightly sat the open water, burnished to brass by the sunset so that the surface shimmered iridescent, its ripples from the floating bodies flowing molten in all directions.

After supper I took the notion to go over there, in the twilight, on idle exploration. Water of any kind had an appeal; a solitary pond always has; the ducks brought thoughts of home. Many a teal and widgeon and canvas-back had fallen to my double-barreled Manton, back on the Atlantic coast—very long ago, before I had got entangled in this confounded web of misad-

venture and homicidal tendencies.

To the pond I went, mood subdued. It set slightly in a cup; and when I had emerged from a little swale or depression that I had followed, attracted by the laughter of children playing at the marge, whom should I see, approaching on the diagonal, but Mrs. Montoyo—her very hair and form—coming in like-wise, perhaps with errand similar to mine: simple inclination.

And that (again perhaps) was a mutual surprise, indeed awkward to me, for we both were in plain sight from the camp. Certainly I could not turn off, nor turn back. Not now. It was make or break. Hesitate I did, with involuntary action of muscles; I thought that she momentarily hesitated; then I drove on, defiant, and so did she. The fates were resolved that there should be no dilly-dallying by the principals chosen for this drama that they had staged.

Our obstinate paths met at the base of a small point white with alkali, running shortly into the sedges. Had we timed by agreement beforehand we could not have acted with more precision. So here we halted, in narrow quarters, either willing but unable to yield to the other.

She smiled. I thought that she looked thinner.

"An unexpected pleasure, Mr. Beeson. At least, for me. It has been some days."

"I believe it has," I granted.

"Shall I pass on?"

"You might have turned aside."

"And so," I reminded, "might you."

"But I didn't care to."

"Neither did I, madam. The pond is free to all."

I was conscious that a hush seemed to have gripped the whole camp, so that even the animals had ceased bawling. The children near us stared, eyes and mouths open.

"You have kept away from me purposely?" she asked. "I do not blame your discretion."

"I am not courting trouble. And as long as you are contented yonder—"

"I contented?" She drew up, paling. "Why do you say that, when you must know." She laughed weakly. "I am still for the Lion's den."

"You have become more reconciled—I've been requested not to interfere."

"You? Without doubt. By Daniel, by Captain Adams, likely by others. More than requested, I fancy. And you do perfectly right to avoid trouble if possible. In fact, you can leave me now and continue your walk, sir, with no reproaches. Believe me, I shall not drag you farther into my affairs."

(To be Continued.)

Pile-Drivers.

Victor Murdock.

Not one man in a million the world over understands the device of short selling. The reason is that most men do not speculate. Little groups of men in all countries do speculate and they do understand short selling. An occasion offers these men pound the daylights out of farmers, railroads, industries, and during the last two weeks they have been putting the fixings to one of the great nations of the earth—France. Short selling is accomplished by contracting to sell something you haven't got. It looks innocent enough, but when the shortsellers mass their efforts, the effect on the price of a thing is that of a pile-driver. About two weeks ago, the shortsellers went after the franc. The franc was in a weak position and the shortsellers drove it down until it was worth only 342 cents. It is 193 cents at par. France is fighting for its life against this onslaught. It has borrowed fifty million dollars of American bankers and British bankers to enter the market to keep the franc from dropping into the depths. It is paying six per cent for this money. The taxpayer will pay this in the end. He always does pay in the end for the frolics and upkeep of the gamblers.

The Call.

I never hear the March winds blow in their sweeping, blustering way. But they stir in my heart a wild desire To bundle up and away.

Away where the blue sea stretches wide. Where the gray gulls scream and dip As they circle over the flapping sails Of a stout and sturdy ship.

For I was a sailor lad so bold In the years that are long since past. And I've viewed the seven seas that are From the top of a swaying mast.

I have felt the thrill of battling waves With staunch and loyal mates. I have sailed to magic ports afar Where romance lives and waits. But now I must sit and rest and doze— Old age brings ill and fears— Or, so they say—so a younger man Has filled my place for years.

But whenever I hear the March winds blow, 'Tis a call from the sea it seems. And it fires my heart with the old desires— Even old men have their dreams. Katherine Edelman in the Kansas City Star.

Modern Methods.

From the Waukegan Sun. Inhaling deeply in the early morning is practiced by the modern girl, also; but she does it through a cigarette.

Wall HARMONIES

The Cross and Circle is printed in Red on every genuine package



HAVE your interior walls tinted the exact color. Exercise your own good taste in just the color tones to bring out the best features of every room. There is only one sure way.

Alabastine

Instead of Kalsomine or Wall Paper

Wouldn't Ride Free

President James Buchanan insisted on paying his fare at all times when he traveled, never receiving a pass, even though he was out of office. He would have been horrified at the idea of traveling free when he was president. Friends often heard him say: "I will pay my way while I can afford it. When I cannot afford to pay, I will stay at home."—From Inklings.

New Auto Signal

A new rear signal for automobiles displays the word "slow" in green light when either the clutch or brake pedal or brake is operated and "stop" in red when both are used.

The man who achieves self-mastery has accomplished much.

Tree to Decorate

With proper attention and care, trees of small size will thrive in small patches of soil where larger trees, with their spreading root systems, might languish, says the American Tree Association of Washington, D. C. The effect of these formally pruned trees is dignified and decorative, and gives a fine touch of green to a street lined with high-class shops or handsome houses in solid rows.

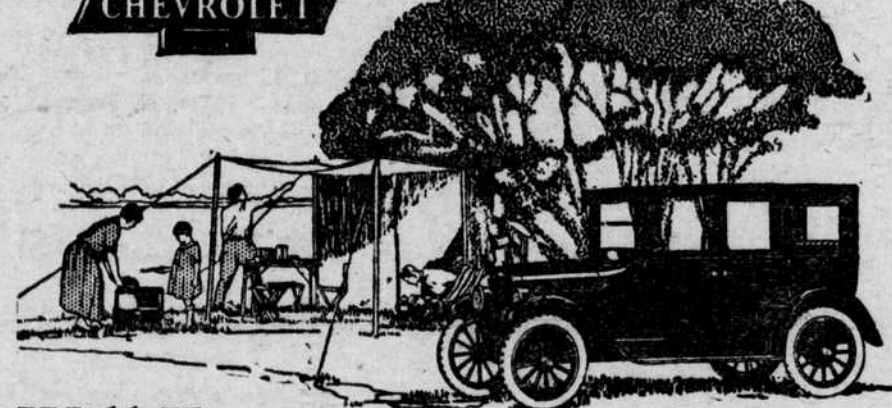
Here's Real Drug Store

One drug store in New York has never carried anything but drugs, yet has remained in the same location for more than fifty years.

There is no place like the home of a young man's best girl.

For Economical Transportation

CHEVROLET



Will Your Family Be Happy This Spring?

Suppose you have definitely decided to buy a Chevrolet this Spring.

That does not necessarily mean that you are going to get it.

Anyone posted on conditions in the automobile business will tell you that thousands of families are going to be unable to get cars this Spring. That has been true almost every Spring for years, but the shortage in April, May and June, this year, is going to be more serious than ever before.

The only way to be sure

of a Chevrolet this Spring is to order it NOW.

If you do not want to pay for it in full at this time, any Chevrolet dealer will arrange terms to suit your convenience, so you can pay as you ride.

You will be surprised to learn how easy it is to pay for a Chevrolet.

Will Chevrolet Advance Prices?

Ten makes of automobiles have already advanced in price. In spite of increased costs of materials, the Chevrolet price is still the same. How long—we cannot guarantee. To make sure of your Chevrolet at present low prices

BUY NOW!

Chevrolet Motor Company, Detroit, Mich.

Division of General Motors Corporation

Prices f. o. b. Flint, Michigan			
Superior Roadster	645	Superior Sedan	875
Superior Touring	695	Superior Commercial Chassis	395
Superior Utility Coupe	640	Superior Light Delivery	495
Superior 4-Passenger Coupe	725	Utility Express Truck Chassis	550

Fisher Bodies on Closed Models

Cotton From Austria

It has been predicted that within a few years Australia will send a million bales of cotton each year to be used in the Lancashire cotton mills.

There are no fools so troublesome as those who have some wit.

Principles of Justice

The fundamental principles of justice are, first, that no injury be done to anyone, and, secondly, that it be subservient to the public good.

Our idea of a plucky man is one who refuses to be plucked.

Just for Curiosity

If you are curious about the results of using Calumet—bake a cake and use some other baking powder, then use the same recipe and employ CALUMET



Compare the texture of the two cakes—the way they look—the way they taste. The difference will make you join the millions who use Calumet daily.

Sales 2 1/2 times as much as that of any other brand

THE WORLD'S GREATEST BAKING POWDER