



A Pair of Blue Eyes

In the estimate of the affable brakeman we were making a fair average of twenty miles an hour across the greatest country on earth.

It was a flat country of far horizons, and for vast stretches peopled mainly, as one might judge from the car windows, by antelope and prairie dogs.

Yet despite the novelty of such a ride behold me, surfeited with already five days' steady travel, engaged chiefly in observing a clear, dainty profile and waiting for the glimpses, time to time, of a pair of exquisite blue eyes.

Merely to indulge myself in feminine beauty, however, I need not have undertaken the expense and fatigue of journeying from Albany on the Hudson out to Omaha on the plains side of the Missouri River; thence by the Union Pacific Railroad of the new transcontinental line into the Indian country.

There were handsome women a plenty in the East; and of access, also, to a youth of family and parts! But here I was, advised by the physicians to "go West," meaning by this not simply the one-time West of Ohio, or Illinois, or even Iowa, but the remote and genuine West lying beyond the Missouri.

The Union Pacific announcements acclaimed that the summer of 1868 the rails should cross the Black Hills Mountains of Wyoming to another range of the Rocky Mountains in Utah; and that by the end of the year one might ride comfortably clear to Salt Lake City! And somewhere in the expanse of brand new Western country, the plains and mountains, I would find at least the breath of life.

When I arrived in Omaha the ticket agent was enabled to sell me transportation away to the present western terminus, Benton, Wyoming Territory itself, six hundred and ninety miles west of the Missouri!

Of Benton I had never heard. But in round figures, seven hundred miles! Practically the distance from Albany to Cincinnati, and itself distant from Albany over two thousand miles! All by rail.

The lady of the blue eyes was bound for the same point. Ye Gods, but she was a little beauty; a perfect blonde, of the petite and fully formed type, with regular features inclined to the clean-cut Grecian, a piquant mouth deliciously bowed, two eyes of the deepest blue veiled by long lashes, and a mass of glistening golden hair upon which perched a ravishing little bonnet.

The natural ensemble was enhanced by her costume, all of black, from the closely fitting bodice to the rustling crinoline beneath which there peeped out tiny shoes. I had opportunity also to note the jet pendant in the shelly ear toward me, and the flashing rings upon the fingers of her hands.

Could she by any chance live in Benton—a woman dressed as she was, as much a la mode as if she walked Broadway in New York? Omaha itself had astonished me with the display upon its streets; and now if Benton, far out in the wilderness, should prove another surprise—!

Indeed the Western world was not so raw, after all.

Half of my seat at the start had been effectually filled by a large, stout, red-faced woman who formed the base of a pyramid of boxes and parcels.

She was going to North Platte, three hundred miles westward. I told her I was going to Benton.

She stared, round-eyed. "I reckon you're a gambler!" she accused.

"I am seeking health in the West," I said, "where the climate is high and dry."

"My Gawd!" she blurted, "High and dry! You're goin' to the right place. For all I hear tell, Benton is high enough and dry enough. But laws sakes, you don't need to go that far. You can as well stop off at North Platte, or Sidney or Cheyenne. They'll sculp you sure at Benton—unless you watch out mighty sharp."

"How so, my I ask?"

"You're certinly green," she apprised. "Benton's roarin'—and I know what that means. Didn't North Platte rear? I seen it at its 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! Gamblin', shootin', drinkin' and high-cockalorum 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 rest of the crowd moved, too. You stop off at North Platte, Nebraska. It's healthy and it's moral."

But since I had crossed the Missouri something had entered into my blood which rendered me obstinate against such allurements. For her North Platte, "strictly moral," I had no ardent feeling. I was set upon Benton.

And in after days—soon to arrive—I bitterly regretted that I had not yielded to her counsel.

Nevertheless this was true, at present:

"But I have already purchased my ticket to Benton." I objected. "If I don't like it I can move elsewhere. Possibly to Salt Lake City, or Denver."

She snorted.

"In among them Mormons? My Gawd, young man! Where they live in konkbinage—several women to one man, like a buffer herd or other beasts of the field? Denver—well, Denver mightn't be bad, but ain't no railroad, either. If you want health, and to grow up with a strictly moral community, you throw in with North Platte."

"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 you may see me in North Platte after all."

She grunted.

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

In remarkably short order she was asleep.

The brakeman came in later, 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 gaiters 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 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."

Fortune had favored me—across the aisle from my new seat only a couple of seats beyond, I glimpsed the top of a golden head, securely low and barricaded in by luggage.

I slept until midnight.

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.

Now it stirred and erected a little. I felt the unseemliness of sitting and waiting for her to make her toilet, so I hastily staggered to achieve my own by aid of the water tank, tin basin, roller towel and small looking glass at the rear.

The coach was the last in the train. I stepped out upon the back platform, for fresh air.

A bevy of antelope flashed white tails at us as they scudded away. Two motionless figures, horseback, whom I took to be wild Indians, surveyed us from a distant sandhill.

Across the river there appeared a fungus of low buildings, almost indistinguishable, with a glimmer of canvas-topped wagons fringed fit. That was the old emigrant road.

While I was thus orienting myself the car door opened and closed. I turned my head. The lady of the Blue Eyes had joined me. As fresh as the morning she was!

"Oh! You? I beg your pardon, sir," I felt her diffidence was more polite than sincere.

"You are heartily welcome," I assured. "There is air enough for us both."

We tore by another freight waiting upon a siding located amidst a wide debris of tin cans and barren spots, resembling the ruins from fire and quake.

"There is Juleburg."

"A town?" I gasped.

"The end!" She smiled. "The only inhabitants now are in the station-house and the graveyard."

"And the others? Where are they?"

"Farther west. Many of them in Benton."

"Indeed? Or in North Platte?" I bantered.

"North Platte!" She laughed merrily. "Dear me, don't mention North Platte—not in the same breath with Benton, or even Cheyenne. A town of hayseeds and dollar-a-day clerks whose height of sport is to go fishing in the Platte! A young man like you would die of ennui in North Platte."

Her free speech accorded ill with what I had been accustomed to in womankind; and yet became her sparkling eyes and general dash.

"Will you," she asked, "join me in a little appetizer? You will find it a superior cognac—and we breakfast shortly, at Sidney."

From the pocket of her skirt she had extracted a small silver flask, stopped with a tiny screw cap.

Her face swam before me, in my astonishment.

"I rarely drink liquor, madam," I stammered.

"Nor I. But when traveling—you know. And in high and dry Benton, liquor is quite a necessity! You will not decline to taste with a lady? Let us drink to better acquaintance, in Benton!"

"With all my heart, madam," I blurted.

We consummated our pledges just in time. The brakeman issued, bringing discord into my heaven of blue and gold and comfortable warmth.

With a darting glance at him and a parting smile for me she passed inside. The brakeman lingered.

"Friend of yours, is she?"

"I met her at Omaha, is all," I stiffly informed. "You are acquainted with the lady, yourself?"

"Her? Sure. I know about everybody along the line between Platte and Cheyenne."

"She lives in Benton, though, I understand," I proffered.

"Yep. Followed her man. A heap of people moved from Cheyenne to Benton, by way of Laramie."

"She is married, then?"

"Far as I know. Anyway, she's not single, by a long shot." And he laughed.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)
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OREGON'S MOTHERS AND BABIES DISCUSSED

(By State Board of Health) Intelligent care of the mother-to-be is a means of safeguarding the lives of both mothers and babies in Oregon. There is an increasing consciousness in all civilized countries of the importance of decreasing the heavy loss to the community due to the high death rate among mothers at child birth and among infants during the first year of life. Saving the lives of mothers and babies is largely a matter of giving the mother and child a square deal. One of the greatest problems today is maternity and child hygiene. Each year in the counties of Oregon there are about 800 deaths among children under a year old or approximately one out of every twenty born alive.

A better understanding on the part of mothers of baby hygiene, baby care, and baby feeding, has cut down the death rate among older babies. Many little lives can be saved when the mothers are properly advised and cared for before the babies are born.

Some interesting figures have recently been published that are of interest to every mother in Oregon. A survey made in 25 cities showed that 8 per cent had received proper instruction before their babies were born. Among these mothers there were no deaths. Among the other four thousand women who did not have such advice one woman in every 96 lost her life at the birth of her baby, and in this last group there were six times as many baby deaths as in the number born to mothers who had prenatal care. These figures are just as true in Oregon. Thousands of mothers in this state have received and are receiving advice and instruction through the Bureau of Nursing and Child Hygiene of the State Board of Health.

Oregon boasts of the lowest infant mortality in the United States. Many, many lives can be saved by providing an adequate service for the instruction and care of mothers and children. The Federal Government will cooperate in this work on a 50-50 basis. Every state in the United States with several exceptions has some form of organized service for the conservation of the lives of mothers and children.

When a state goes to improve its apple crop it usually begins in one or several localities, does the best it can in these places and keeps other apple growers in the state informed about the progress made. Such undertakings are called demonstrations, because they show how the thing is done. That is exactly the way Oregon has gone about improving the crop of babies. At present there are five counties in this state that are providing an adequate and efficient health service to every community within their boundaries.

Of course there must be funds to carry on and extend this work. The funds for this work are supplied entirely through matching federal funds.

Here From Medford—Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Mead of Medford are visiting for a few days with Rev. and Mrs. C. H. Blom.

METHUSELAH NEVER TRIED THESE TIPS

Dodging old age is so easy that none need worry about beauty doctors or miraculous fountains of youth, according to Sam Bones, 82, retired Southern Pacific conductor who offers the following rules for those who do not want to grow old.

Never slow up at grade crossings. Step on the gas! You may merely lose an arm or a leg the first time; but persevere and you will dodge old age, if not the train.

Whenever possible try to board moving trains. Freight trains are unusually effective. Heaven, and possibly the other place, is literally populated with persons who avoided old age in this way.

Always take short-cuts where it says "No Trespassing." This is a sure winner, especially if the sign hangs over railroad tracks.

Never miss a chance to stick your head out of a car window. You may damage a bit of concrete at a tunnel entrance; but the railroad can sue your estate for any damage to company property.

"If these rules fail to work," Bones said, "there are others discovered by me during my 46 years of railroadng which I shall be pleased to supply upon request."

Kester at Chicago
Dr. Eugene Kester left Sturday for Chicago, where he will spend two weeks studying chest and stomach diseases at a Chicago hospital. He will return in the Middle of February. Mrs. Kester left on the same day for San Francisco, where she will visit until Dr. Kester returns.

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CIVIC CLUB NAMES YEAR'S COMMITTEES

The Ladies Civic club at this week's meeting named committees for the coming year to serve under the newly installed officers. The committee-women follow:

Social—Mrs. W. J. Scott, Mrs. Riley Snodgrass, Mrs. Carl Olson, Mrs. John Parker.

Membership—Mrs. Nina McPherson, Mrs. C. E. Wheaton, Mrs. William Donaldson, Mrs. Ora Read Hemmenway.

Visiting—Mrs. C. E. Wheaton, Mrs. Maude Bryan, Mrs. Mead Catching, Mrs. Ora Hemmenway.

Trustees—Mrs. William Donaldson, Mrs. Wheaton and Mrs. Scott.

Lumberman is Injured
A painful injury to one of his heels was sustained by A. H. Baxter, high climber for the Fisher Lumber company of Marcola, in an accident while working Monday. Baxter slipped and a spur he was wearing was thrust deeply into his heel. He was brought to Springfield for treatment.

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NOTICE OF FINAL HEARING
NOTICE is hereby given that S. Mogensen, the administrator of the estate of Mrs. B. McCorkindale, deceased, has filed his final account as such administrator, and that Saturday, the 5th day of February, 1927, at the hour of 10 o'clock in the forenoon of said day, and the County Court room in the Court House at Eugene, Lane County, Oregon, has been fixed as the time and place for hearing and settling said final account. All persons having objections to said final account are hereby notified to file said objections in writing with the clerk of said court on or before said date.

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