



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

It is 1868 and the Pacific Railroad has reached its newest "farthest west"—Benton, Wyoming, a town described as "roaring," as each new terminus, temporarily was.

Frank Beeson, a young man from Albany, New York, comes because he is in search of health and Benton is considered "high and dry."

Edna Montoyo, a fellow passenger on the train from Omaha, impresses Beeson with the beauty of her blue eyes and the style of her apparel. Equally she astonished him by taking a "smile" of brandy before breakfast. A brakeman tells Beeson she has "followed her man" to Benton.

Jim, a typical western ruffian whom she knows apparently well insults her and is floored by Frank whose prowess impresses the passengers.

Col Lunderson and "Bill" Brady volunteer to entertain young Beeson.

ROBBED

A crowd had gathered before a youth in galluses, soiled shirt and belled pantaloons, who standing on a box, was exhorting at the top of his lungs.

"Whoop! This way, this way! Rondo coolo-oh! Here's your easy money Down with your soap! Let her roll! Rondo coolo-oh!"

"It's a great game, suh" the Colonel said. We pushed forward, to the front. The center of the crowd was a table across one end of which there were several holes. Into these balls, ten or a dozen, resembling miniature billiard balls, might roll.

The balls had been banked at the opposite end; and just as we arrived the were propelled all forward, scattering, by a short cue rapidly swept across their base.

"Rondo coolo, suh," the Colonel explained, "as you see, is an improvement on the old rondo, for red-blooded people. Shall we take a turn for luck?"

The crowd was eyeing the gyrating balls expectantly. A part of the balls entered the pockets; the remainder came to rest.

"Rondo," announced the man with the short cue and deftly distributed checks and coins.

"She rolls again. Make your bets, ladies and jents," and he reassembled the balls.

"I prefer not to play, sir," I responded to the Colonel. "I am new here and I cannot afford to lose until I am better established."

"Never yet seen a man who couldn't afford to win, though," he growled. But come on then."

So we left the crowd—containing indeed women as well as men—to their insensate fervor over a childish game under the stimulation of the raucous, sweating harker.

Of gambling devices, in the open of the street, there was no end. My conductors finally stopped at the simplest apparatus of all.

The spiel game for me, gentlemen," said the Colonel. "Here it is. Yes, suh, there's nothing like monte, where any man is privileged to match his eyes against fingers. Nobody but a blind man can lose at monte, by George!"

"And this spieler's on the level," Bill pronounced, sotto voice. "I vote we hook him for a gudeon, and get the price of a meal. Our friend will join us in the turn. He can see for himself that he can't lose. He's got sharp eyes."

The by-standers here were stationed before a man sitting at a low tripod table; and all that he had was the small table—a plain cheap table with folding legs—and three playing cards. Business was a trifle slack.

"Two jacks, and the ace, gentlemen. There they are. I have faced them up. Now I gather them slowly—you can't miss them. Observe closely. The jack on top, between thumb and forefinger. The ace next—ace in the middle. The other jack bottom-most."

He turned his hand, with the three cards in a tier, so that all might see. "The ace is the winning card. You are to locate the ace. Observe closely again. It's my hand against your eyes. I am going to throw. Who will spot the ace? Watch, everybody. Ready! Go!"

The backs of the cards were up. With a swift movement he released the three, spreading them in a neat row, face down, upon the table. "Twenty dollars against your twenty that you can't pick out the ace, first

try! I'll let the cards lie. If you've watched the ace fall, you win!"

"Just do that trick again, will you for the benefit of my friend here?" bade the Colonel.

The "spieler"—a thin-lipped, cadaverous individual—smiled.

"Hello, sir. I'm agreeable. Yes, sir. But as they lie, will you make a guess? No? Or you, sir?" and he addressed Bill. "No? Then you, sir?"

He appealed to me. "No? But I'm a mind-reader. I can tell by your eyes. They're upon the right-end card. Aha! Correct!" He had turned up the card and shown the ace. "You should have bet. You would have beaten me, sir. Watch the ace. I pick up the cards. Ace first—blessed ace; and the jacks. Watch close. There you are." He briefly exposed the faces of the cards. Keep your eyes upon the ace. Ready—go!"

He spread the cards. As he had released he had tilted them slightly, and I clearly saw the ace land. The cards fell in the same order as arranged. To that I would have sworn.

"Five dollars now that any one card is not the ace," he challenged. "I shall not touch them."

"I'll go halvers with you, Colonel," Bill proposed.

"I'm on," agreed the Colonel. "There's the soap. And for the honor of the grand old Empire State we will let our friend pick the ace for us."

I turned up the right-end card. "By the Eternal, he's done it! He has an eye like an eagle's," praised the dealer, with evident chagrin. "I lose. Once again now. Everybody in this time." He gathered the cards.

"I'll play against you all, this gentleman included. I'm afraid he's smarter than me, but I'm game."

He was too insistent. Somehow, I did not like him, anyway, and I was beginning to be suspicious of my company.

"You'll have to excuse me, gentlemen," I pleaded. "Another time, but not now. I wish to eat and to bathe and I have an engagement following."

"We can't talk this over while we're dry," the Colonel objected, as we moved off. "Let us libate suhs."

We were verging upon argument, much to my distaste, when of a sudden who should come tripping along but My Lady of the Blue Eyes—yes, the very flesh and action of her, her face shielded from the dust by a little sunshade.

She recognized me in startled fashion, and with a swift glance at my two companions bowed and was gone.

"Gad, suh! You know the lady?" the Colonel ejaculated.

"A casual acquaintance," I answered. "We were merely travelers a

by the same route at the same time. And now if you will recommend a good eating place, and be my guests at supper, after that, as I have said, I must be excused. By the way, while I think of it," I carelessly added, "can you direct me how to get to the Big Tent?"

The Colonel swelled; his fishy eyes hardened upon me as with righteous indignation.

"Suh you are too innocent! I believe, by gad, suh, that you are a capper for some infernal skinning game, or that you are a professional. Suh, I call your hand!"

I was about to retort hotly, when Mr. Brady, who likewise had been glaring at me, growled morosely.

"She's waitin' for you. You can square with us later."

The black-clad figure had lingered beyond, ostensibly gazing into a window. Without saying another word to my ruffled body-guards I approached her.

"Madam," I uttered foolishly, "good-evening."

"You have left your friends?" "Very willingly."

"And I have rescued you?" She smiled again. "Believe me, sir, you would be better off alone. I know the gentlemen. The Colonel is a notorious capper and steerer, and Brady is no better."

"Strange to say, they have just accused me of being a capper," I answered.

Her face brightened. "They were disappointed in finding out no gudgeon to be hooked by such raw methods. Promise me that you will take up with no more strangers! Meanwhile, let me advise you. 'Outfit' while you wait, and become of the country! You look too much the pilgrim—there is Eastern dust showing through our Benton, dust, and that spells of other 'dust' in your pockets. Get another hat, a flannel shirt, some coarser trousers, a pair of boots, don a gun and a swagger, say little, make few impromptu friends, win and lose with out a smile or frown, if you play (but upon playing I will advise you later) I shall hope to see you tonight. So adios, sir, and remember."

With no mention of the Big Tent she flashed a smile at me and mingled with the other pedestrians crossing the street on diagonal course.

When I turned for a final word with my two guides, they had vanished.

The counsel to don a garb smacking less of the recent East struck me as sound and at "Levi's Mammoth Emporium: Liquors, Groceries and General Merchandise" I procured a hat, a flannel shirt, a servicable ready-

made suit, boots and a revolver.

With my bulky parcel I sought a cafe, ate supper and hastened to the hotel for bath and change of costume.

I had yet time to array myself, as an experiment and a lark; and that I did, hurriedly tossing my old garments upon the bed and floor, in order to invest with the new.

The third bed was occupied by a plump, round-faced, dust-clad man, with piggy features accentuated by his small bloodshot eyes; dressed in Eastern mode.

"Hell of a country, ain't it!" he observed. "You a stranger, too? What's your line?"

"Well, you don't have to tell em," he granted. "Thought you was a salesman. I'm from Saint Louis, myself. Sell groceries, an' pasteboards on the side. Cards are the stuff. I got the best line of sure thing stock—strippers, humps, rounds, squares, briefs and marked backs—"

He did not finish. An uproar sounded above the other street clamor: a pistol shot, an' another—a chorus of

hoarse shouts and shrill frightened cries, the scurrying rush of feet, all in the street; and in the hall of the hotel, and the lobby below, the rush of still more feet, booted, and the din of excited voices.

"A fight, a fight! Shootin' scrape!" In a flash my companion was pelting down the hall.

Overcome by the zest of the moment I pelted after, and with several others plunged, as madly upon the porch.

A baying mob trampled through the street, with jangle "Hang him! Hang him! String him up!"

I saw first a figure bloody-chested and inert flat in the dust, with stooping figures trying to raise him; then, beyond, a man white as death, hustled to and fro from clutching hands and suddenly forced in firm grips up the street, while the mob trailed after, whooping, cursing, shrieking, flourishing guns and knives and ropes. There were women as well as men in it!

All this turned me sick. From the

outskirts of the throng I tramped back to my room and the bath. The hotel was quiet as if emptied; my room was vacant—And more than vacant, for of my clothing not a vestige remained! My bag also was gone.

Worse yet, prompted by an inner voice that stabbed me like an icicle I was awakened to the knowledge that every cent I had possessed was in those garments.

The Pilgrim gets some action in the next installment—Don't miss it. (TO BE CONTINUED)

Two Fight, Pay Fines W. J. Scott and Ralph Sweeney were hauled before City Recorder Peterson Saturday, charged with fighting on a vacant lot behind a local hotel. Scott paid a \$10 fine but Sweeney chose to work out his assessment. He was put to work on the addition to the fire hall.

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