



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, N. Y., comes here because he is in search of health and Benton is considered "high and dry."

Edna Montoya, 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.

Desert Dust
What shall I say of a young man like myself, fresh from the green east of New York and the Hudson river, landed expectant as just aroused from a dream of rare beauty, at this Benton City, Wyoming Territory? The dust, as fine as powder and as white, but shot through with the crimson of sunset, hung like a fog, amidst which swelled a deafening clamor from figures rushing hither and thither about the platform like half-world shades. Two score hands grabbed at my valise and shoved me and dragged me.

"The Desert Hotel. Best in the west! This way, sir!"
"Buffalo Hump Corral! Free drinks at the Buffalo Hump!"

A deep voice boomed, stunning me. "The Queen, the Queen! Bath for every room. Individual towels. The Queen, the Queen, she's clean, she's clean!"

The promise of "individual towels" won me over.

We left the station platform and went plowing up a street over shoe-tops with the palpable dust. The noises as from a great city swelled strident. But although pedestrians streamed to and fro, the men in motley of complexions and costumes, the women, some of them fashionably dressed, with skirts eddying furiously; and wagons rolled, horses cantered, and from right and left merchants and hawksters seemed to be calling their wares, of the city itself, I could see only the veriest husk.

The majority of the buildings were mere canvas—faced up for a few feet perhaps, sheet iron or flimsy boards; interspersed there were a few wooden structures, rough and unpainted.

I was ushered into a widely-open tent-building whose canvas sign depending above a narrow veranda declared: "The Queen Hotel. Beds \$3. Meals \$1 each."

Now as whitely powdered as any of the natives I stumbled across a single large room bordered at one side by a bar and a number of small tables (all well patronized), and was brought up at the counter under the alert eyes of a clerk, coatless, silk-shirted, diamond-scarfed, pomaded and slick-haired, waiting with register turned and pen extended.

"Quite right, sir," the clerk assented. "So there is. A bath for every room and the best bath in town. Entirely private; fresh towel supplied. Only one dollar and four bits. That with lodging makes four dollars and a half. If you please, sir."

A bitter wave of homesickness welled into my throat as, conscious of the enveloping dust, the utter shams, the alien unsympathetic onlookers, through by own fault, I peeled a greenback from the folded packet in the sense of having been "done" and my purse and handed it over. Rather foolishly I intended that this display of funds should rebuke this finicky clerk; but he accepted without comment and sought for the change from the twenty.

"And how is old New York, suh?" A hearty, florid, heavy-faced man, with singularly protruding fishy eyes and a tobacco stained yellowish goatee underneath a loosely drooping lower lip, had stepped forward, his pudgy hand hospitably outstretched to me; a man in wide-brimmed dusty black hat, frayed and dusty but, in spots, shiny, black broadcloth frock coat, spattered down the lapels, exceedingly soiled collar and shirt front and greasy flowing tie, and trousers tucked into cowhide boots.

I grasped the hand wonderingly. It enclosed mine with a soft pulpy squeeze; and lingered.

"As usual, when I last saw it, sir," I responded. "But I am from Albany."

"Of course. Albany, the capital, a city to be proud of suh. I welcome you suh, to our west, as a fellow citizen."

"You are from Albany?" I exclaimed.

"Bohn and raised right near there; been there many a time. Yes, suh, from the grand old Empire State, like yourself suh, and without apologies. Whenever I meet with a New York State man I cotton to him."

"Have I your name, sir?" I inquired. "You know of my family, perhaps."

"Colonel Jacob B. Sunderson, suh, at your service. Your family name is familiar to me, suh. I hark back to it and to the grand old state with pleasurah. Doubtless I have seen you befoh, suh. Doubtless in the city—at Johnny Chamberlain's? Yes?" His fishy eyes beamed upon me, and his breath smelled strongly of liquor. "Or the Astor? I shall remember. Meanwhile, suh, permit me to do the honors. First, will you have a drink? This way, suh. I am partial to a brand particularly to be recommended for clearing this damnable dust from one's throat."

"Thank you, sir, but I prefer to tidy my person, first," I suggested.

"Number six for the gentleman," announced the clerk, returning to me my change from the bill. I stuffed it into my pocket—the Colonel's singular eyes followed it with uncomfortable interest. The runner picked up my bag, but was interrupted by my new friend.

"The privileges of showing the gentleman to his quarters shall be mine."

"All right, Colonel," the clerk carelessly consented. "Number Six."

"And my bath?" I pursued.

"You will be notified, sir. There are only five ahead of you, and one gentleman now in. Your turn will come in about two hours."

In No. 6 there were three double beds; one well rumbled as is just vacated; on (the middle) tenanted by a frowny-headed, whiskered man asleep in shirt-sleeves and revolver and boots; the third, at the other end, recently made up by having its blanket covering hastily thrown against a distinctly dirty pillow.

"Your bed yonduh, suh, I reckon," prompted the Colonel (whose accents did not smack of New York at all.)

I gazed about, sickened.

"There are no private rooms?" I asked.

"You are perfectly private right here, suh," assured the Colonel. "You may strip to the hide or you may sleep with your boots on, and no questions asked. Gentry speaking gentlemen prefer to retain a layer of artificial covering—but you ain't troubled much with the bugs, are you, Bill?"

He leveled this query at the frowny, whiskered man, who had awakened.



"I wish a room and bath, I said, as I signed."

"Bath is occupied. Show the gentleman to Number Six, Shorty."

"Your runner distinctly said, 'A bath for every room.'"

Bystanders laughed—nudged one another.

"I'm too alkali'd, I reckon," Bill responded. "Varmints will leave me any time when there's fresh bait handy. That's why I like to double up."

The Colonel turned to me: "Shake hands with my friend, Bill Brady." The frowny man extended his hand. "Proud to make yore acquaintance sir!"

"The bath room? Where it is, gentleman?" I inquired.

"If you will step outside the door, suh, you can hear the splashing down the hall. It is the custom, however, foh gentlemen at tub to keep the bath room door closed, in case the ladies promenaded. I judge, with five ahead of you and one in, the clerk was mighty near right when he said about two hours. That allows twenty minutes to each gentleman, which is the limit."

"What is your line of business," Bill invited.

"I am out here for my health, at present," said I. "I have been advised by my physician to seek a place in the far west that is high and dry, Benton—" I laughed miserably, "is certainly. And high, judging by the rates."

"Healthily dry, suh, in the matter of water," the Colonel approved. "We are not cursed by the humidity of New York state, grand old state that she is. Foh those who require water, there is the Platt only three miles distant. Nearer proximity of water we consider a detriment to the robustness of a community."

I made a meager toilet.

"Now I am at your service during a short period, gentlemen," I announced. "Later I have an engagement, and I shall ask to be excused."

"A little liquid refreshment is in order fust, I reckon," gooth the Colonel. "And after that—you have sporting blood, suh? You will desire to take a turn or two foh the honor of the Empire state?"

"If you are referring to card gambling, sir," I answered, "you have chosen a poor companion. But I do not intend to be a spoil sport, and I shall be glad to have you show me whatever you think worth while in the city, so far as I have the leisure."

"That's it, that's it, suh!" the Colonel appeared delighted. "Let us libate to the gods of chance, gentlemen; and then take a stroll."

After a round of drinks—I took lemonade—we issued into the street.

Surely such a hotch-potch never before populated an American town: Men flannel shirted, high booted, bearded, with formidable revolvers, balanced, not infrequently, by sheathed butcher knives—men whom I took to be teamsters, miners, railroad graders and the like.

Of the women I saw several in amazing costumes of tightly fitting black-like ballet girls, low necked, short skirted, around the smooth waists snake-skin belts supporting handsome little pistols and dainty poignards. Contrasted, there were women in gowns and bonnets that would do them credit anywhere in New York, and some, of course more commonly attired in calico and gingham as proper to the humbler station of laundresses, cooks, and so forth.

"How are you on the goose, sir?" Bill demanded of me.

"The goose?" I uttered.

"Yes, Keno."

"I am a stranger to the goose," said I.

He grunted.

"It gives a quick turn for a small stake. So do the three-card and rondo."

Of passageway there was not much choice between the middle of the street and the borders.

Seemed to me as we weaved along through the groups of idlers and among busily stepping people that every other shop was a saloon with door widely open and bar and gambling tables well attended.

My guides nodded right and left with "Hello, Frank!" "How are you Dan." "Evening Charley," and so on.

Occasionally the Colonel swept off his hat, with elaborate deference, to a woman, but I looked in vain for My Lady of the Blue Eyes. I did not see her—nor did I see her peer, despite the fact that now and then I observed a face and figure of apparent attractiveness.

Does our hero find the Lady of the Blue Eyes? Don't miss next week's installment.

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NEW TRIER STUDENT WINS ESSAY CONTEST

E. Seymour Burge Writes Successfully on Chicago Sewage Problem; Others

E. Seymour Burge has won first prize in the annual Otto R. Barnett prize essay contest at New Trier high school. Burge's essay bears the title, "The Problem of Chicago's Sewage Disposal."

Florence Burnham won second place with "Immigration Since the World War," and third place was won by an essay on this subject, "The Other Side of the Immigration Question" by Ruth Hinchliff.

All these essays were exceptionally good, it was stated, and as a result the judges' decision was not unanimous upon the eight essays submitted. The resident of Evanston, and alumnus of judges were C. Lisle Smith, lawyer, New Trier; Mr. Metz, banker, and resident of Elgin; and Mrs. Winthrop Girling of Glen-coe.

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T. H. Kilgore, 329 McDaniels Ave., Highland Park, Ill.	26.61
E. N. Thyborn, 709 S. St. Johns ave., Highland Park, Ill.	31.50
Mrs. Beardsly, 650 Chicago Ave., Highland Park, Ill.	24.80
Norenberg & Co., Glenview Ave., Highland Park, Ill.	24.80
George Nelson, 307 Vine Ave., Highland Park, Ill.	12.65
Damen's Hand Laundry, Highland Park, Ill.	23.25
Virgil Smith, Lake Forest, Ill.	25.25
Earl Fisher, 115 High St., Highwood, Ill.	72.77
Laurence Gloden, Hazel Ave., Deerfield, Ill.	7.50
Peter Andrette, Prairie Ave., Highwood, Ill.	15.63
George Conwa, 27 S. Well St., Chicago, Ill.	16.20
Mrs. B. Kirby, 616 Homewood Rd., Highland Park, Ill.	26.61

The above listed accounts are guaranteed by the owners to be CORRECT AND UNDISPUTED and will be advertised for sale until sold. All bids for the purchase of the above accounts will be received at the office of the undersigned. Anyone desiring to purchase the above accounts will be furnished the names of owners on request.

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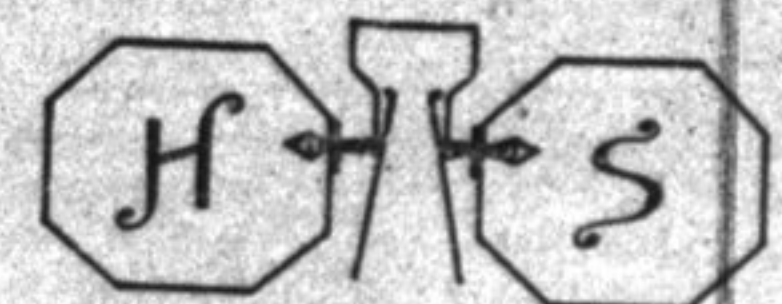
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