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Foe or Friend?

Friend It Was to Be

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Bad luck had followed Joe Pebble for three years—in fact, ever since he had tired of the monotony of supporting his wife and her father on his wages as a cattle herder and had suddenly deserted them to follow the call of his old free life.

He had simply disappeared to let them think what they would of him. He had left all the money that he possessed except a single silver dollar, and he had used his own horse to ride away from them.

Bad luck had followed him in his roving. He had been unhappy in his freedom. His heart ached for the sweet companionship of Gertrude, his wife, and for the placid philosophy of the good natured old man, her father.

Today he was riding down a ravine among the Tepee hills. Once more he was free. He had discharged himself from a ranch on the western side of the watershed and was riding forth on one of those strange, restless quests for new scenes which had become a habit with him since he had deserted his wife. Happiness he never expected to regain.

He drew rein there and looked through an opening down upon a pleasant alluvial plain dotted with cattle. A low adobe ranch house was there, surrounded by barns and a corral. Smoke wreathed up from a chimney. It looked very peaceful and pleasant—the sort of home he and Gertrude had



planned before. A lump came into his throat, and he brushed his brown hand across his wet eyes. Then his young face sank into those stern, brooding lines that had replaced the old careless expression.

Joe Tribble, as he called himself, rode on. A few yards farther on his horse stumbled and fell so suddenly that Joe was pitched over his head, to fall in a crushed heap among some rocks. He lay very still, while the horse scrambled to his feet, sniffed at his master's unconscious form and then limped away for assistance, whinnying pitifully.

Joe opened his eyes upon darkness. There was a bandage over his eyes, and he could see nothing, but he knew that he rested upon a soft bed. A large cool hand touched his wrist, and a finger pressed upon his pulse.

"Doctor," Joe huskily whispered. "Aha!" said a mellow voice. "Coming around, are you? Feel pretty well banded to pieces?"

"Pretty sore," admitted Joe. "What's the matter with my eyes?"

"You fell on a lot of broken rocks and got some splinters in your eyes. You can't come into the light until they're healed up a bit. Nothing to worry about; mere scratches. You have got a broken ankle, though."

"Where am I?" was Joe's next question.

"At a ranch close by the spot where your horse threw you. Pretty intelligent beast, that horse! Came limping down here to the ranch and almost told Mr. Smith what had happened. You can bet he's well taken care of too!"

"Poor old Starbrow!" murmured Joe. Then, turning to the doctor, he asked

in a low voice, "Where can I stay here?"

"Oh, yes! You can't be moved until your ankle is better," said the doctor decisively.

The doctor left the room, and Joe heard him talking to some one in another room. There were other voices that seemed to vibrate strangely on his hearing. What memories of the past they revived! Whose voices did they resemble?

He tormented himself with these questions until he fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. He was awakened after a refreshing sleep by the sound of a pump handle creaking outside. Shortly afterward a heavy, deliberate footfall entered his room, and he was conscious that some one was bending over him.

"Well, stranger," said a deep, resonant voice, "I reckon you're awake now?"

"Who are you?" was Joe's hurried question.

There was a little pause before the answer came. "My name's Smith. Why?"

"Nothing, only I thought it sounded like—somebody I used to know," murmured Joe, sinking back upon his pillow.

"I wonder if you wouldn't like me to help you out those clothes you got on and get you into bed in a decent way?" went on the voice, and when Joe gratefully assented the owner of the voice helped him with a woman's tenderness to undress and clothed him in clean underwear and a clean coarse night-shirt.

"I'm mighty obliged to you, stranger," murmured Joe drowsily as he sank on his pillow after swallowing a cup of hot broth.

"You're welcome," said the other solemnly, and, tiptoeing out, he closed the door.

Joe did not awake again until the next morning. He knew that the windows were wide open, for he breathed the fresh, sweet air, and he could hear the song of birds. His eyelids felt very stiff and sore, and he was grateful for the bandage that covered them.

Mr. Smith came in presently and, after a pleasant greeting to the injured man, bathed his face and hands and brought some breakfast to him.

Joe bit into a hot corn muffin, and his hand fell upon the counterpane. He turned his blindfolded eyes toward the stranger.

"Who made these muffins?" he asked in a choking voice.

There was a hesitating silence before Mr. Smith replied. Then, "My daughter made them," he replied.

"Your daughter! Why—who—excuse me?" stammered Joe. "But they are like those my wife makes, and I never tasted any others like 'em!" He hastily resumed his breakfast, and the portion of his face below the bandage glowed redly.

Mr. Smith said nothing.

When the doctor appeared he declared that Joe had a little fever, and he changed his medicine. Once more Joe heard three voices in consultation in the next room. He could now recognize Smith's voice and that of the doctor, but the third one was that of a woman, pitched low and soft, and eluded his searching mind.

"Where have I heard that voice before?" he asked himself again; and again as the days passed by, but the answer did not come—then.

During those long days and nights of pain and helplessness Joe Pebble had leisure to think over what he had done, and he resolved that when he recovered that he would go north again and endeavor to become reconciled to his wife and her father.

The thought of this coming journey did much to hasten his recovery.

On the evening of this particular day—a Sunday—it was—he lay there alone in the room. Presently Smith came in and talked to him. They talked on various matters, and finally Joe told him about his former life in Wyoming and ended by confiding his sin to the old man. He told it all—of his wild longing for freedom, how he had fought it for days before making up his mind to leave his wife and how, after the irrevocable step had been taken, of the remorse he had suffered.

"I think of them two helpless ones day and night," he groaned. "What has become of them? A coyote wouldn't have acted meaner'n I did. Don't God ever give folks a chance to make good when they've sinned?"

The elder man did not answer for a long time. Then he arose and bent over the bed for a brief instant. "I believe he does, son; I believe he will," he said solemnly, and Joe heard him pass from the room and close the door.

From the room overhead he heard the murmur of voices long into the night. They were talking when he fell asleep, and once he started wide awake because he thought he heard a woman's sob. "Don't cry, Gertrude; everything is all right," he murmured drowsily and went to sleep again.

The next day the doctor came and removed the bandage.

After the doctor had gone Joe waited impatiently for Mr. Smith to come

in. He was eager to see the face of the man who had been so kind to him.

All at once a bulky form filed the doorway, and Mr. Smith's slow, deliberate step approached the bed. In the dim light Joe's eager eyes did not at first recognize him; then he sat bolt upright in bed and stared with whitening face into the kind, forgiving eyes of—his father-in-law.

"Father!" he murmured brokenly and hid his face in his hands.

"Son!" said the older man solemnly, and he laid his hand upon Joe's dark hair in the old familiar caress, for the two had been very fond of each other.

"It has been you all along?" asked Joe after a while.

"Yes," said the other. And in a few words he told the repentant man that after his desertion Gertrude and he had left Wyoming and come down into Texas to start anew. The old man had a little money, with which he bought the ranch. They had never expected to see Joe again. When they recognized him in the injured stranger whom Starbrow had led them to they had hastily assumed the name of Smith for the time being.

"And Gertrude?" asked Joe brokenly.

"Can she remember me and believe me to become what she's worthy of?"

"I'm here, Joe!" came Gertrude's voice in answer.

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Quaint Signposts.
In the neighborhood of Warmbrunn, in the Silesian Mountains, there are to be found some very curious signposts. One seen by a writer in The Wide World represents a farm laborer sharpening his scythe, on which is inscribed in the old Silesian dialect, "To Giers village, one hour." The signpost is well carved and painted in natural colors, so that it appears very lifelike. Another signpost in the same district represents a schoolboy carrying a slate bearing the name of the nearest village, toward which the boy is pointing.

Cows Tried For Murder.
Old documents of the middle ages tell us of numerous cases where animals were put on trial for serious offences charged against them. For example, in 1370 three cows were tried for having killed a boy. The whole herd were arrested as accomplices. All were discharged but the guilty three, these being condemned to be executed. The sentence was pronounced by the Duke of Burgundy.—Our Dumb Animals.

Good Luck For Turtles at Least.
The Chinese have a peculiar custom with regard to turtles, which they consider as very good luck. Almost any day one can see these creatures, some of them of huge size, being carried on board the river steamers, not to be taken to Canton for culinary purposes, and restored to liberty and freedom. Good luck is thought to follow.

"MAN IS FILLED WITH MISERY."—This is not true of all men. The well, sound of lung, clear of eye, alert and buoyant with health are not miserable whatever may be their social condition. To be well is to be happy, and we can all be well by getting and keeping our bodies in a healthy condition. Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil will help all to do this.

A Leamington man who attempted to grow onions on Point Pelee had to give up the job on account of not being able to procure help. He plowed up the patch and set out tobacco plants. These the cut worms attacked in force, and he now thinks he will be in luck if the mosquitoes do not drive him off the Point altogether.

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