

THE BOSS OF THE YELLOW DOG.

A WESTERN STORY, BY THE AUTHOR OF "CHARLIE RANSOM."

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PART II.

Away on the Western slope of the great Rocky Mountains, in the wildest and, apparently, most unapproachable part of the State of Nevada, is a deep gorge or canyon. It is only a couple of hundred yards wide, and in the spring-time half of that narrow width is occupied by a rushing torrent, formed by the melting snow as it pours from the giant hills. The sides of the canyon rise perpendicularly to a height of nearly fifteen hundred feet; while abrupt bends to the north and south, a thousand yards apart, help to give the gorge the appearance of a mammoth grave. Standing by the little stream, across which one can easily step in summer-time, nothing can be seen but the solid walls of rock on all sides and the deep-blue sky above. Even from the highest elevation of these mountain precipices the eye rests upon nothing but tier beyond tier of rugged hills, topped in the distance by lofty snow-clad peaks full a hundred miles away.

It is difficult to grasp the enormous extent of the territory occupied by the Rocky Mountain ranges—those great sierras which stretch the entire length of America, and spread across it, east and west, more than a thousand miles.

Mountains ten hundred miles to the south; mountains ten thousand miles to the north; mountains to the east, and mountains to the west, hem in the little canyon, and ten years ago scarce a white man knew of its existence. At the present time it is linked to civilisation by a line of Concord coaches, which make weekly trips to the Central Pacific Railway, a hundred and fifty miles away. For to-day rich capitalists, busy stockholders, and rough miners are interested in the secluded canyon. Out of that rocky gorge many tons of rich silver ore have been taken; and on "Change at San Francisco the Yellow Dog Silver Mine is now a name familiar as "Erie Railway" or "Panama Canal."

In 1835 the "Yellow Dog boom" was at fever heat. Every available foot of space in the canyon—Gulch, as the miners call it—was occupied by tents, shanties, huts, and all other conceivable forms of dwelling-places, which could possibly be erected in from ten minutes to ten hours. Men of all nationalities arrived on foot and on horseback, as well as by every coach, armed with picks, shovels, hammers, drills, buckets, &c., not to mention the orthodox bowie-knife and pocket gun, which articles are considered as essential to a man's outfit as wearing-apparel in the Far West.

Of course, the Yellow Dog—the origin of which unpoetic and truly American name is lost in oblivion—was discovered and worked for some years in a desultory manner by a few hardy pioneer adventurers. Then a strong syndicate of rich mining men was formed in San Francisco, and the Yellow Dog was mined on scientific and business principles. But its assured success brought many more adventurers, eager to explore the adjacent territory. A few were successful to a greater or lesser degree; more failed, but all helped, with the employees of the Yellow Dog Mining Company, to swell the heterogeneous population of Blue Rocket Gulch, until, in the year above mentioned (1835), the rock-girt gorge contained more than a thousand men and—three women.

A thousand men! Frankos, Canadians and—Saxons and Colts; Africans and—Gentiles—and only—

of the miners in the Gulch, and even Seph rarely got a thought to herself, past, present, or future. She was Seph: she was part and parcel of the Yellow Dog Mine. So far as Seph and the miners were concerned, these two undeniable facts were as satisfactory as a coat-of-arms and three pages in Burke's *Peerage* might be to some scion of an old British family.

For the benefit of such as never enjoyed the privilege of crushing quartz in the Blue Rocket Canyon, we may add that Seph, then a little girl seven or eight years old, came to the Gulch with her father, who was one of the first pioneers in search of silver. In the early history of the mine he was killed by a premature explosion of blasting-powder, leaving his little girl in that strange out-of-the-world corner to the tender mercies of his rough comrades. Seph's father left no word as to who he was or whence he came, and the child was quite ignorant of both home and mother. So "the camp" adopted Seph. And if it was a rough, wild, uncultured crowd—a crowd that included men who had been gamblers, cat-throats, and highway robbers—Seph was well cared for. The boys built a little cabin for her sole use; they furnished her with clothing and girlish trinkets—bought at unheard-of prices in Frisco—and waited on her every need. Refined society of her own sex Seph never missed, simply because she had never known it. Perhaps she instinctively appreciated her own peculiar position, which gave her an almost autocratic sway over so many men; for all those rough fellows admired Seph, and rude and uncouth as they were, never an insult by word or deed had been offered the girl in all the eight years in which she had resided in Blue Rocket Gulch.

Seph was now sixteen years old, and a most beautiful girl—a magnificent specimen of a Western maiden. She was bright as she was handsome, and, though a stranger to all that goes to make up an "accomplishment" young lady of the present day, she was no dunce. She could read and write, she was witty and keenly sensitive; in short she was "smart." Only at sixteen, it would have puzzled any one to decide whether Seph was more woman or child.

In the autumn of 1835 news reached the Gulch, by way of a letter from San Francisco to the manager of the mine, that the Yellow Dog Mining Company had sold out its entire interests to one man, who would immediately take possession.

A solitary horseman and wending his way along the narrow mountain track which did duty for a coach-road between Blue Rocket Gulch and the railway. It was about two hours after noon on a late summer day, and the sun was beating its merciless rays upon the traveller's head and shoulders. So scorching was the heat that his broad-brimmed straw hat formed little or no protection, while the rocky wall to the left of the horseman only served to intensify the scorching rays. He was a man of powerful physique, with a handsome face and pleasant eyes, the latter betraying just a tinge of sadness. Judged by his hair, which was iron gray, he might have been taken for a man fifty years old at least, though a closer inspection would have led one to the conclusion that the white hairs were premature. As a matter of fact, the traveller lacked two years of forty.

Strong and vigorous as he naturally was, the man was tired, for this was his second day of the saddle, and the temperature was growing up in the nineties when he reached a niche in the rocky mountain wall, where he had noticed some morning such a shady spot about six feet yet in dismount and, after hobbling

cause, he was sitting long shadows of its great—upon our traveller with chain—The first—no more—

of the—

of the—

of the—

which, he thought he could detect a merry twinkle in her dark eyes.

"Yes," he said, "you caught me napping, —What next?"

"Hand over! You may take down one hand at a time to clean out your pockets."

A gold watch, a tolerable sum of money, some letters and papers, soon lay in a pile between the man and his fair captor. These the girl gathered in her lap, and then proceeded to remove the cartridges from the revolver with which she had covered the traveller while he delivered up his effects. "There," she said, as she tossed the now harmless weapon to the man, "I guess, considering that this is my first attempt of the kind, that I've done the trick in good shape. Let me see: six twenties, three tens, and three fifties—three hundred dollars, and a gold tucker. I'm no alouch if I do wear petticoats! Guess you won't go to sleep again on the coach-road, and that within three miles of the Yaller Dorg, in a hurry, Mr. Greenhorn!"

But while the young lady was counting her ill-gotten wealth, the stranger had reloaded the revolver and quickly reversed the order of things. "Throw up your hands, Miss Smarey! It's my turn now."

Up went the girl's hands, while a queer look of chagrin overspread her pretty features. "Ah," she said in tones of genuine disappointment. "Of course I was only fooling; but I wanted to play a good joke and do it up brown. Now the joke's on me! I'll take back everything I said about you being a tender 'oot, though"—and here she showed her woman's nature in qualifying an apology—"I still think you were very foolish to fall asleep near the road."

"Yes; I know it was unwise, though I had no idea that I was so close to the camp. Well, you just bring back my belongings and place them in the pockets from which I took them, and we will put the pistol away and be good friends."

With her own hands she replaced the various articles. In such close proximity the man was enabled to look well into the open countenance of the girl, the result being that he was more favourably impressed than ever. On her part, the girl, to use an expression of her own, was "dead-mashed" on the stranger with his handsome sunburnt face, his broad shoulders, and erect carriage.

"But I know who you are!" merrily cried the girl, recovering from her temporary depression of spirits caused by the failure of her joke.

"Well?" queried the man rather, amused and glad enough to fall in with so novel and pleasant a companion.

"You're the new boss of the Yaller Dorg; and I'm Seph!"

It was a queer introduction in more ways than one. He remembered that, although she could read and write to some extent, Seph was an utter stranger to Lindley Murray or any other exponent of "orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody." The ungrammatical yet quaint lingo of the miners was the only spoken language known to Seph, and she was an adept in the use of Western slang.

Long years afterwards, when she was well versed in the three Rs as well as many other accomplishments, Seph invariably spoke of the "Yaller Dorg," from strong force of habit.

"Oh, that's it, is it? I'm the boss of the Yaller Dorg! And, pray, why do you think so?"

"Cause down to Reddy Gallagher's (Reddy runs the post-office, and I tend it for him sometimes when he is busy on his claim) I saw a letter yesterday for Frank Sanborn, Esquire; Yellow Dog Mine, Blue Rocket Gulch, Nevada. Reddy told me that was for the new boss, and I've just seen some letters of yours with the same name."

"Very well. I'll confess to being Frank Sanborn. So you are Seph. That's a new name to me, though I don't half dislike it or its owner. Still, Seph is very short, and I am rather eager for explanatory information. Suppose, Miss Seph, that I get my horse? We can then walk towards the camp and talk as we go."

So Frank Sanborn mounted his horse, as Seph utterly refused to do so, and with the girl tripping at his side, pursued his journey. He plied the maiden with a number of questions, which elicited more or less direct replies.

No; she could not explain the origin of her odd name, except that Reddy Gallagher, the postmaster had suggested it might be an abbreviation of Josephine. She could not tell just how old she was, though she guessed about sixteen. No, she did not hanker after women and girls; she was contented enough with the boys. Yes; she liked all the boys first-rate, they all liked her. Did not know what a sweetheart was; but if it was like a "best fellow," she must

admit that she liked "Frisco Johnny" somewhat better than the rest; at least, she thought she did, and she was quite sure Johnny was a little bit "gone" on herself. Well, Johnny "just was" a nice fellow—almost too good for the rough mine-work—and only a boy of tw'nty.

So she chatted away; and when, in less than an hour, Frank Sanborn and his pretty companion entered the camp, this man, who had travelled heart-whole the world over, who had known fair women of four continents with unconcern, now found himself, for the first time in his life, interested in feminine beauty in the person of a little Western wail.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE COUNTRY RAILROAD STATION.

BY KATE THORN.

If there is anything specially planned, and specially calculated to try a man's faith in the eternal wisdom and fitness of all things, it is having to wait for a train at a country railroad station.

The train that he is going to take is generally behind time. And he is in a hurry. All people who are going on trains are in a hurry.

The station is always located in the hottest and most uninviting place in that part of the country. Sand is all around it. Shade trees are unknown. Grass, which is one of the most democratic species of all vegetation, fights shy of it.

The station itself is an anomaly in the way of architecture. The man who planned the first railroad station ever built in the country town has reason to congratulate himself on having struck something new under the sun. And it was so near perfect that no succeeding architect has ever felt himself able to improve upon it.

And there it stands to-day, hundreds of it, all over our land, as a perpetual monument to the genius of that first builder.

No blinds, no shades; the seats yolk-wadged, the water supply a pump before the door, the ornaments on the walls framed advertisements of steamship lines, and "Fitzleton's Great Soap Discovery," and the flies are there in full force to cheer the hearts of the weary waiter, and make him feel that though the world may frown on him in other places, here he is welcome!

The ticket-office is generally closed, which proves that the official in charge is a wise man. He knows better than to wear out his precious life dancing before that window, looking for travelers who never come to buy tickets.

He takes his rest on the shady side of the house, on a settee, with a cigar and a novel to help him take it easy. He is a philosopher, and indeed he needs to be, since no other man could survive a month of life at a country railroad station.

He has his little diversions, no doubt. When the Sunday-school picnic starts out, and when the circus comes to the next town, and when some farmer's cow is run over and killed, and the people round about drop in to talk it over, and speculate on whether or not the owner of the animal is likely to get damages.

But the man who is waiting for the train has none of these little interests to cheer him. When he has read the advertisements on the walls, and looked up and down the track, and peered at his glowering image in the cracked looking-glass, and looked twenty times at his watch, and the same number of times at the time-table, he is ready to give his kingdom for the sound of a locomotive whistle.

An old woman who comes in with her bundles, and the young woman who comes with her crying baby, are welcome as the flowers in spring. He never before realized how entertaining a crying baby might be under some circumstances. Something to look at—something to listen to.

He studies the old woman's bonnet, and he counts the buttons on the baby's cloak, and he wonders what is in the bag bundle, and what is in the little box, and then he looks at his watch again, and compares it with the clock, and finds that the clock has been stopped an hour, at the least calculation.

By and by the ticket seller comes leisurely in and opens his little window. Oh, what an encouraging sound it is! sweeter than music to the ears of the weary waiter. He rushes up and gets his ticket. Then he sits down and reads it all over. He never dreamed that a railroad ticket could be such interesting reading. He has never before looked upon that sort of literature as worthy of notice. Well, circumstances alter cases, and you do not know what you might be driven to consider as entertainment until you have waited for a train at some country railroad station.

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