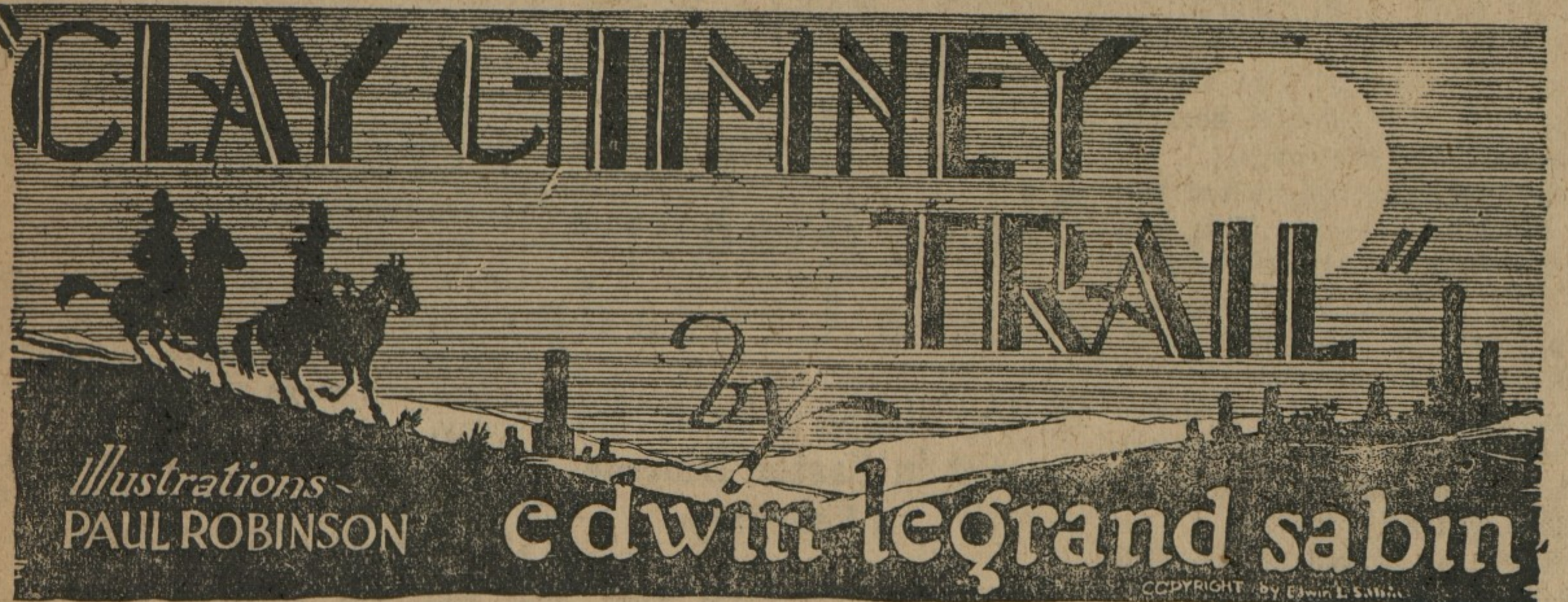


ALONG ABOUT THIS TIME OF YEAR

By A. B. CHAPIN



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 in 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 day's steady travel, engrossed 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 aplenty 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 this 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.

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

we were there from the fust, when it started in as the railroad terminal. My sakes, but them were times! Gambin', shootin', drinkin', and high-cockalorums night and day! 'Twas 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 rail-rodners, 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 ob-

stinate 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—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."

"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 fringing it. 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?"

She snorted. "In among them Mormons? My Gawd, young man. Where they live in conubinage—several women to one man, like a buffler herd or other beasts of the field? Denver—well, Denver mightn't be bad, but ain't on 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 remarkable 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 gulluses and stretching out; the women by losing 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."

Ordered this 29th day of November, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty six, by the Circuit Court for Kent County, in Equity, and by the authority of said Court, that the creditors of Ruben F. Cole and Nannie F. Cole, his wife, IN THE MATTER OF THE TRUST ESTATE OF RUBEN F. COLE AND NANNIE F. COLE, HIS WIFE.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR KENT COUNTY, IN EQUITY NO. 2443.

Noted this 29th day of November, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty six, by the Circuit Court for Kent County, in Equity, and by the authority of said Court, that the creditors of Ruben F. Cole and Nannie F. Cole, his wife, and all others claiming any interest in the estate and property, or the proceeds of the sale thereof, granted and assigned by the Deed of Trust of the said Ruben F. Cole and Nannie F. Cole, his wife, to William Frazier Russell, Jr., Trustee, for the purposes in said Deed stated and declared, be, and they are hereby directed and required to file their said claims, with the proper vouchers attached thereto, with the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Kent County, Maryland, on or before the 3rd day of February in the year 1927, provided a copy of this order be published in Kent County, Maryland, once in each of four successive weeks before the 3rd day of January in the year nineteen hundred and twenty seven.

LEWIN W. WICKES, True copy, Test: ROBERT R. AYRES, Clerk.

INSURANCE ALL CLASSES OF INSURANCE WRITTEN AT THE LOWEST CURRENT RATES RELIABLE COMPANIES INSURE FROM ONE DAY TO FIVE YEARS—Special Attention Given to Insurance on Grain in Both Barn and Shock.

Prompt and Careful Attention given All Business. Write or Call on JAMES G. BECK, Agent CHESTERTOWN, MD. Office in Eastern Shore Inn 1st Floor

THE TOLCHESTER COMPANY TOLCHESTER BALTIMORE FERRY TWO HOURS FROM THE EASTERN SHORE TO PIER 16 LIGHT STREET, BALTIMORE STEAMER ANNAPOLIS RUNNING WINTER SCHEDULE

Weather Permitting Effective January 13th, 1927 Leaves Baltimore week days at 8:00 a. m. and 3:00 p. m. Leaves Baltimore Sundays at 8:30 a. m. and 3:00 p. m. Leaves Tolchester week days at 10:15 a. m. and 5:15 p. m. Leaves Tolchester Sundays at 10:45 a. m. and 5:15 p. m. Adults tickets one way 60 cents; Round trip, good 1 day \$1.00; Round trip good 30 days \$1.10; Children half fare.

THE TOLCHESTER COMPANY Pier 16 Light St., Baltimore.

"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 stilly 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 Copyright by Edwin L. Sabin

While charity begins at home, it shouldn't be afraid to go out and see a little of the world occasionally.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS Wm. Frazier Russell, Jr., Attorney

IN THE MATTER OF THE TRUST ESTATE OF RUBEN F. COLE AND NANNIE F. COLE, HIS WIFE.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR KENT COUNTY, IN EQUITY NO. 2443.

Ordered this 29th day of November, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty six, by the Circuit Court for Kent County, in Equity, and by the authority of said Court, that the creditors of Ruben F. Cole and Nannie F. Cole, his wife, and all others claiming any interest in the estate and property, or the proceeds of the sale thereof, granted and assigned by the Deed of Trust of the said Ruben F. Cole and Nannie F. Cole, his wife, to William Frazier Russell, Jr., Trustee, for the purposes in said Deed stated and declared, be, and they are hereby directed and required to file their said claims, with the proper vouchers attached thereto, with the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Kent County, Maryland, on or before the 3rd day of February in the year 1927, provided a copy of this order be published in Kent County, Maryland, once in each of four successive weeks before the 3rd day of January in the year nineteen hundred and twenty seven.

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Arlington L. Sparks Chestertown MD

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