

The Home Reading Circle



JIMMY JOHN BOSS

By OWEN WISTER. AUTHOR OF 'RED MEN AND WHITE' (Copyright, 1897 by Owen Wister.)

SYNOPSIS.

Dean Drake is going to the cattle ranch at the Malheur agency, Oregon, as the superintendent. He is a remarkable boy, only 19 years old, yet Max Vogel, the great cattle owner, is placing him in a position that requires courage and firmness in controlling the unruly and often vicious cowboys. Vogel has come with Drake to the railroad junction where the latter is to take the Silver City stage. At the junction, the two find Bolles, a school teacher, who is going to his post at the agency. The train from Portland brings Uncle Pasco, a peddler, well known throughout the region. He sells cheap jewelry to the miners and cowboys, but makes a note of the fact when Vogel tells Drake that on no account must whiskey be allowed at the ranch. Drake, Bolles and Uncle Pasco leave on the Silver City stage.

PART II.

The stage had not trundled so far on its Silver City road but that a whistle from Nampa station reached its three occupants. This was the branch train, starting back to Boise with Max Vogel aboard, and the boy looked out at it with a sigh.

"Only five days of town," he murmured, "six months more wilderness, now."

"My life has been too much town," said the new schoolmaster, "I am looking forward to a little wilderness for a change."

"Change is what I don't get," sighed Dean Drake. In a few miles, however, they had come to the ferry over Snake river, the resort being-taking and his employer's kind, but dominating, recession lifted from the boy's spirit. His gray eye widened again, and he began to whistle light opera tunes, looking about him alertly, like the stowaway hawk that he was. "Ever see Jeanie Winston in Fair-nitz?" he inquired of Mr. Bolles.

The schoolmaster, with a thankful countenance, said that he had never. "Ought to," said Drake.

"That's what the girls in the harem sing in the second act, Golly whizz!" The boy glanced over the memory of that evening.

"You have a hard job before you," said the schoolmaster, changing the subject.

"Yep, hard." The wary Drake shook his head warningly at Mr. Bolles to keep off that subject, and he glanced in the direction of slumbering Uncle Pasco. Uncle Pasco was quite aware of all this. "I wouldn't take another lonesome job so soon," pursued Drake, "but I want the money. I'd been working eleven months along the Owyhee as a sort of junior boss, and I'd earned my vacation. Just got it started but in in Portland, when bill of Uncle Vogel telegraphs me. Well, I'll be saving instead of squandering. But it feels so good to squander!"

"I have never had anything to squander," said Bolles, rather sadly.

"You don't say? Well, old man, I hope you will. It gives a man a lot. He will never get out of spelling books. Are you cold? Here." And despite the schoolmaster's protest, Dean Drake tucked his buffalo coat round and over him. "Some day, when I'm old," he went on, "I mean to live respectable under my own cabin and



"THEY MEAN NEW BOSS, MISSER DLAKE. HE VELLY YOUNG BOSS."

vine. Wife and everything. But not, anyway, till I'm thirty-five."

He dropped into his opera tunes for a while; presently he exclaimed, "You shoot?"

Bolles hoped he was going to learn in this country, and exhibited a 22 Smith and Wesson revolver.

Drake grieved over it. "Wrap it up warm," said he. "I'll lend you a real one when we get to the Malheur agency. But you can eat, anyhow, Christmas being next week, you see, my programme is: shoot all a. m. and eat all p. m. I wish you could light on a notion what prizes to give my buccaroos?"

"Buccaroos?" said Bolles.

"Yep. Cow punchers. Vaqueros. Buccaroos in Oregon. Bastard Spanish word, you see, drifted up from Mexico. Vogel would not care to have me give 'em money as prizes." At this Uncle Pasco opened an eye.

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"How many buccaroos will there be?" Bolles inquired. At the Malheur agency? It's the headquarters of five of our ranches. There ought to be quite a crowd. A dozen, probably, at this time of year. Uncle Pasco opened his other eye. "Here, you!" he said, dragging at his box under the seat. "Pull it, can't you? There, just what you're after. There's your prize."

"Sommer give 'em nothing," said Dean Drake.



"GO, AND I'LL BE IN POSITION TO INFORM YOU."

"What's that? What's the matter with them?"

"Guess the boys have had all the brass rings and glass diamonds they want."

"That's all you know, then. I sold that box empty through the Palouse country last week, 'cept the bottom drawer, and an outfit on Micaham's hill took that. Shows all you know. I'm going clear through your country after the silver City. How many are what buccaroos want. How many are they up at your place, did you say?"

"I said about twelve. If you're coming our way, stop and eat with us."

"Maybe I will and maybe I won't," Uncle Pasco crossly shoved his box back.

"All right, Uncle. It's a free country," replied Drake.

Not much was said after this. Uncle Pasco unwrapped his concertina from the red handkerchief, and played merrily for his own benefit. At Silver City he disappeared, and finding he had stolen nothing from them, they did not regret him. Dean Drake had some affairs to see to here before starting for Harper's ranch, and it was pleasant to Bolles to find how Drake was esteemed through this country. The schoolmaster was to board at the Malheur agency, and had come this way round because the new superintendent must so travel. They were scarcely birds of a feather, Drake and Bolles; yet since one remote roof was to cover them, the indoor man was glad that his best had won so much good will from the high and low. That the shrewd old Vogel should trust so much in a nineteen-year-old was proof enough of his character; but when Brock, the foreman from Harper's, came for them at Silver City, Bolles witnessed the affection that the rougher man held for Drake. Brock shook the boy's hand with that curious quietness and absence of words which shows the western heart is speaking. After a look at Bolles and a silent bestowing of the baggage aboard the team, he cracked his long whip and the three rattled happily away through the dips of an open country, where clear streams ran blue beneath the winter air. They followed the Jordan (that Idaho Jordan) west toward Oregon and the Owyhee, Brock often turning in his driver's seat as to speak with Drake. Then, in the midst of his gossip, the thing he had wanted to say all along came out: "We're pleased about your promotion," said he and blushing, shook Drake's hand again.

Warmth kindled the boy's face, and next with a sudden severity, he said: "You're keeping back something."

The honest Brock looked blank, then labored in his memory:

"Has the sorrel girl in Harney married you yet?" said Drake. Brock slapped his leg, and the horses jumped at his mirth. He was mostly grave-mannered; but when his boy superintendent joked, he rejoiced with the same pride that he took in all of Drake's excellences.

"The boys in this country will back you up," said he next day; and Drake inquired what news from the Malheur agency."

"Since the new Chinaman has been cooking for the," said Brock, "they have been peaceful as a man could wish."

"They'll all approve of me, then," Drake answered. "I'm feeding 'em hysas Christmas muck-a-muck."

"And what may that be?" asked the schoolmaster.

"You no kumtux Chinook?" inquired Drake. "Travel with me and you'll learn all sorts of languages. It means just a big feed. All whiskey is barred," he added to Brock.

"It's the only way," said the foreman. "I've got those Pennsylvania men up there." Drake had not encountered these.

"The three brothers Drinker," said Brock. "Full. Half-past Full and Drunk are what they call them. Them's the names they've brought with them from Klamath and Rogue river. Suppose they kick about the whiskey rule?" he suggested to Drake.

"Can't help what they do. Oh, I'll give each boy his turn in Harney City when he gets anxious. It's the whole united lot I don't propose to have cut up on me."

"TO BE CONTINUED."

From Headquarters. Dodge—I attended a seance last night. The medium called up the spirit of Napoleon.

Legend—What message does he send? Dodge—He denies everything and demands an investigation.—Truth.

A look of concern for the boy came over the face of Foreman Brock. Several times again before their parting did he thus look at his favorite. They paused at Harper's for a day to attend to some matters, and when Drake was leaving the place one of the men said to him: "We'll stand by you." But from his blithe appearance and talk as the slim boy journeyed to the Malheur River and Head Quarter Ranch, nothing seemed to be on his mind. Oregon twinkled with sun and fine white snow. East Oregon, the Owyhee and the Malheur country, the willows by the streams, the open swales, the high woods, where once Buffalo Horn and Chief E-agante and O-lits, the Medicine man, prospered—through this domain of war and memories went Bolles the schoolmaster with Dean Drake and Brock. The third noon from Harper's they came leisurely down to the old Malheur agency, where once the hostile Indians had drawn pictures on the door, and where Castle Rock frowned down, unchanged.

"I wish I was going to stay here with you," said Brock to Drake. "By Indian Creek you can send word to me quicker than we've come."

"Way, you're an old bull!" said the boy to his foreman, and clapped him farewell on the shoulder.

The young superintendent set at once to ranch work this afternoon of Brock's leaving; and the buccaroos made his acquaintance one by one, and



stared at him. Villains did not sit outwardly upon their faces; they were not villains; but they stared at the boy sent to control them, and they spoke together, laughing. Drake took the head of the table at supper, with Bolles on his right. Down the table some silence, some staring, much laughing, went on; the rich, brute laugh of the belly untroubled by the brain. Sam, the Chinaman, rapid and noiseless, served the dishes.

"What is it?" said a buccaroo.

"Can't it be?" said another.

"If you guess what it is you can have it," said a third.

"It's meat," remarked Drake, helping himself. "And tougher than it looks." The brute laugh rose unitly, and fell into surprised silence. No rejoinder came, they ate their supper in puzzlement. The Chinaman's quick, soft eye glanced at Dean Drake when they laughed. He served his dinner solicitously. In his kitchen that evening he and Bolles unpacked the good things—the olives, the dried fruits; the cigars brought by the new superintendent for Christmas; and finding Bolles harmless, use his gentle Asiatic self. Sam looked cautiously about and spoke:

"You know not why they laugh," said he. "They not guess about my meat then. They mean new boss, Misser Drake. He velly young boss."

"I think," said Bolles, "Mr. Drake understood their meaning. Sam, I have noticed that at times he expresses himself peculiarly. I also think they understood his meaning."

The oriental pondered. "Me like Misser Drake," said he. And, drawing quite close, he observed: "They not mean velly much."

Next day and every day "Misser Drake" went gaily about his business, at his desk or on his horse, vigilant near and far, with no sign save a steeper keenness in his eye. He won the heart of Bolles by lending him a good horse; but the buccaroos, though they were bolterous over the coming Christmas joy, did not seem especially grateful. Drake, however, kept his worries to himself.

"This thing happens everywhere," he said one night in the office to Bolles, puffing a cigar. "I've seen a troop of cavalry demoralize itself by a sort of contagion from two or three men."

"I think it was wicked to send you here by yourself," blurted Bolles.

"Poppycock! It's the chance of my life, and I'll jam her through or bust."

"I think they have decided you are getting turkeys because you are afraid of them," said Bolles.

"Why, of course! The body is all they understand in man. They've never met kindness."

Dean Drake smoked for awhile; then a knock came at the door. Five buccaroos entered and stood close, as in the way of the guilty who feel uncertain.

"We were thinking as maybe you'd tell us go over to town," said Half-past-Full, the spokesman.

"What?"

"Oh, any day along this week."

"Can't spare you till after Christmas."

"Maybe you'd not object to one of us going?"

"You'll each have your turn after this week."

A slight pause followed. Then Half-past-Full said: "What would you do if I went anyway?"

"Can't imagine," Drake answered, easily. "Go, and I'll be in a position to detain you."

The buccaroo dropped his stolid bull eyes, but raised them again and grinned. "Well, I'm not particular about going, this week, boss. They stood a-impertin' in the hange-two way."

Drake winked over to Bolles. "That was a grace," said he. "They'll not go this time, Question is, will they go next?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

From Headquarters. Dodge—I attended a seance last night. The medium called up the spirit of Napoleon.

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AT THE THEATERS.

The re-appearance at the Academy of Music tomorrow night of that pretty one of the most interesting events in the current theatrical year, Miss Bancker has won her way to the hearts of theater-goers of this city and established herself firmly in their affections. Her visit tomorrow night is made doubly attractive by the announcement that she will be seen in her new play, the scintillant three-act comedy, "A Divorce Cure," which has been described as a continuity of bright dialogue and ingeniously conceived situations. In Miss Bancker's company this season, are a number of clever players well known in this city, among them are Raymond Capp, Henry Beresford, J. P. Cope, James A. Kiernan, Alfred Trahern, Miss Elizabeth Roselle, Miss Channez Olney and Miss Mary Basil Tracy.

"Sowing the Wind" will be presented at the Frothingham tomorrow evening by Charles Frohman's big New York company, which includes Thomas Whiffin and a number of the original cast. This remarkable drama came to its last season with an endorsement from the big play-going centers second to no other production of the generation. It has just finished a series of "runs," including 200 nights at Gotham's fashionable playhouse, the Empire, nine weeks in Chicago, fifty nights in Boston, four weeks in San Francisco, two weeks in Philadelphia and similar engagements in other cities; and during these runs the critics seemed to have exhausted language of superlatives in its praise. It was so enthusiastically heralded that our play-goers feared it might not come up to their expectations, and therefore the surprise was most agreeable when it seemed

to them as if half enough that was praiseworthy had not been said.

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The enthusiasm was contagious and the applause great, but at its conclusion, a gray-haired old soldier, who for half a century had served his country with fidelity and courage at home and abroad, slowly arose in his place, and spoke as follows: "It grieves me greatly, gentlemen, to hear my countrymen speak with so much levity upon what should be a serious subject, and set such narrow bounds to our country's domain. Let us remember unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Let us drink again to the United States—banded on the north by the Aurora Borealis, on the south by the Tropic of the Equinox, on the east by the Nebular Hypothesis, and on the west by the Day of Judgment."

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