

## YUMAESQUE

By CON P. CRONIN

Years ago I knew Yuma personally, knew every man and every woman and almost every child, that walked the streets. Now things have changed. I am a stranger amid the scenes of my youth. I am unknown excepting to a very few of the oldest old timers.

Many changes have occurred. New buildings have taken the places of the old adobes. The streets are nicely paved. The Mesa is all built up. It has a metropolitan air. But the old familiar faces are missed. The soul of the old town seems to have changed.

At eight-thirty in the evening I take my place in one of the soft easy chairs, in the window of the hotel on Main street. I think, "I will sit here and some one whom I know will pass." It is very quiet and I cannot but contrast with the same time of day, the same hour, during the gay nineties. Nine o'clock comes and with it comes a quietness and a peaceful calm, and in a reverie I live again through the summer evenings in the gay nineties. I picture the gulley that was Main street before Mike Nugent filled in the ruts and hollows with blue dirt from the Hill.

There were no clubs, no social organizations where men met and fraternized in the early nineties. The saloon was the only man's club—and there he congregated. Big man and little man, merchant prince and pauper, professional man, miner, cowboy and day-laborer, all congregated at some time or other in the man's social club, the saloon. Most everybody drank, some more, some less. Some gambled. Many played solo and panguingui. All is changed.

It is now almost half past nine o'clock and the streets are deserted. Everyone is at home.

I start up; I must have been partly asleep, as I imagined myself back in "Cap" Meeden's, playing sluf with Harry Carpenter, Mr. Ewing and Martin Pool, and a Mex-

ican boy came in with an oil can partly filled with dry manure and *bubach*, crying, "Fuma, cinco centavas!" Yuma, in the gay nineties, bought and sold smoke. The mosquitoes were very bad in those days. Like incense bearers, the boys swung their cans for a few moments, drove off the little pests, collected either a nickel or a dime and moved off to the next place.

I arouse myself, but again memory peoples the streets.

I sit on a truck near the old depot hotel and with several cronies, listen to Jesse Grant relate his experience in London when he dined with the Queen. Jesse was but a boy when he accompanied his father, who had just finished his term as president of the United States, on the memorable trip around the world. At Winsor he was advised that he would "dine with the *Family*." "No, he would not dine with the Family. He would dine with the Queen (Victoria), or he would dine at the American Club in London." Diplomats, ambassadors, statesmen, implored, beseeched, pointing out to the youthful American what an honor it was to dine with the Royal Family. Young Mr. Grant had made up his mind. He would dine with his father and mother and the Queen or he would dine at the American Club in London. English diplomacy yielded to American firmness and Jesse dined with the Queen; international complications were avoided. I believe Mr. Grant still lives. I know that all of the other members of the party have passed on.

Coming down the street, staggering slightly, comes a heavy lumbering man, with heavy lowering brows. I remember, although it is so many years,—that is Sam Temple, the villain of the story "Ramona." He told me once that Alessandro was a worthless, no account Injun and not at all the kind of an angel that Helen Hunt Jackson painted him. He just *had* to kill him! Sam Temple has also crossed the divide. Dreams and reveries!

And who is that solemn, quiet, dignified man with the drooping mustaches? That is Wyatt Earp, on his way

to open up his game at Jack Dunne's. How he was vilified and maligned in those days! But he lived to see his name and reputation vindicated. He also has joined the long list of the departed.

Stephen W. Dorsey—"Star Route" Dorsey—was a familiar character in those days. From his room with Harry Carpenter, to Bill Meeden's saloon was his route. Grey, pointed beard and chin resting on his breast, he was always scheming, for millions.

Many celebrities lived, sojourned and visited in Yuma in the old days. Jim Fair used to come here annually for the good the climate did for his asthma. Carrie Nation paid us a visit for half a day once, and I remember, read me a lecture on the evils of smoking cigarettes. Jim Jeffries, Champion of the World! He was world famous, in all his glory as champion when he visited me. We went on a hunting and fishing trip down to the Gulf. His huge form towered above all admirers as he wended his way from one saloon to another. He still lives and enjoys life. I attended the last Tunney-Dempsey fight with him. He likes Yuma. It all seems like yesterday. But it is today, and the old figures of my memory have departed to the land of shades.

We had good times in the gay nineties. We thought nothing of driving and riding thirty-odd miles to Fortuna to attend a dance, dance all night and drive or ride back the next morning. Some of us drove, while many of the young folks, both boys and girls, rode in the saddle.

And those dances given on the Hill! How we looked forward to those occasions. The dance floor was built right over the Colorado river, the prison band rendered the most romantic music, and we danced many times until day-break. The parents of many of the youth of Yuma today, first met and loved, and plighted their troth at the parties given on Prison Hill. Dreams and reveries!

We gave a circus once, the young men of the town. We were mostly members of the newly organized lodge of Elks, and conceived the idea of an amateur circus. It

was a wonderful success. Harry Clark was the bearded lady. Mulford Winsor and myself did several stunts—teamed up. One of them was a shooting stunt. Everyone pitched in to make it a success. We had the most sedate and solemn members in the most ridiculous positions. John Gandolfo sold balloons and C. D. Baker sold peanuts!

Buffalo Bill came to town and we entertained him.

It was a year or two after the Spanish-American War, and "The Bill Show" featured the Battle of San Juan Hill, with a score or more of actual members of the Rough Riders. Bill was an Elk. It was a very hot Sunday in May. I remember part of the committee on refreshments consisted of "Doc" Robinson, Dick Renick, Frank Lee and Lew Alexander. The committee prepared a wonderful repast for Bill, Annie Oakley, Johnnie Somebody and the distinguished members of the "Bill Show." There were sandwiches of all kinds, and a wonderful assortment of ice cold beer, ice cold beer, ice cold beer and more ice cold beer. There was ice cold beer in barrels, and ice cold beer in tubs and barrels. It was a very hot day. The reception committee, consisting of the more distinguished members of the lodge, waited on Bill and Annie Oakley to escort them in style befitting the repast. But in the meantime, some unofficial committee had secured the presence of the Rough Rider contingent and the cowboys of the show. Imagine the onslaught on that ice cold beer! Imagine the devastation wrought by that score of Rough Riders, aided and abetted by a dozen cow waddies! Sandwiches and beer disappeared like sin before the wrath of justice, and when Bill and Annie and the select of the invited arrived, an emergency committee was drafted to bring relief from the premises of Honest John Shanssey, located just below.

The first house on the Mesa,—aside from the one at the Orange Ranch,—was the Blaisdell house. I built right across the street—the second house on the Mesa, where the city is now situate. The old timers will remember.

## YUMAESQUE

But, how many of the old timers realize the wonders of that site!

One evening as the shadows lengthened, I sat with my wife on the back steps of our new home. It suddenly occurred to my mind that I was envisaging a panorama unique in all the world. From my back door step I see, in one stupendous sweep of country, two nations, two states, two territories, and five counties.

It is nearly eleven o'clock! I stretch, reach for my cane and walk out doors. There is not a soul in sight. A solemn stillness reigns.