

Buckskin Mose

602. BUCKSKIN MOSE; or, Life From the Lakes to the Pacific, as Ranger, Gold-Digger, Indian Scout, and Guide. Written by Himself. Edited by C. G. Rosenberg, Plates. 285 pp., 12mo, cloth. New York, 1873.

Original Edition. Cowan p. 28: "BuckskinMose, whose real name is unknown, was one of the singular characters that belong to the past. He reached California in 1857 (1856) and seems to have spent much of the time at Honey Lake and Susanville, in Lassen County."

The narrative is an extremely interesting one, and reveals the author as a member of Captain Grimms' Overland party of 1855, and later, Captain of the Buckskin Rangers of California. He gives a detailed account of the Grimms Emigration Company, which numbered 75 men and 375 horses, and of the adventurous journey across the plains from St. Jo to California. After a year and a half at the diggings, he joined the Rangers, and from then until 1869--with which year the narrative concludes--he followed the career of an Indian fighter, campaigning against the Pah-Utes, Modocs, Bannocks, Cheyenne, Apache and other tribes, chasing the savages up and down the coast, into the deserts, and whenever possible, clear off the face of the earth. Only twice was he derelict to his chosen profession, and on these occasions his book in no wise suffers, for his defections yield some thrilling chapters detailing experiences in the Fraser River Rush and at the Idaho Gold Mines. [Above - "Grimms" should be "Crimms."]

49 Until we arrived at Ash Hollow, on the south side of the North Platte, nothing of any moment occurred. Here as we were camping, a magnificent and noted bay horse, called Captain Fisher, took fright and started off at a furious pace with a number of the stock. In fact, it was a regular stampede, and one of the most exciting sights I had ever seen. However, I had no more than the first moment to enjoy it in. Action was a necessity, and my old circus-training stood me in good stead, to be of some service. I darted after the bay with a speed that nearly equalled his own. How long this would have held out, it is, of course, impossible for me to say. Something, however, caused Captain Fisher to swerve across my my line of pursuit. Leaping, rather than running after him, I succeeded in grasping him by the rope attached to the hackamoor or halter. His terrified speed was so great that I was thrown upon the ground and dragged by him for a considerable distance. But for my long experience as a boy on the sawdust of the arena, it would have been absolutely useless for me to have attempted regaining my feet. How I escaped serious bodily injury from the remainder of the stampeded horses, I never knew. Escape I however did, as

50 well as again recover a standing or rather a running position. The rest of the business was now comparatively easy--indeed, a mere matter of time. Clinging to the rope, I compelled him to slacken his pace, until, at last, I succeeded in grasping the affrighted animal by the mane and vaulting upon his back. There, I was the master, and he was not long in finding it out.

It was about three miles from our halting-place when I succeeded in turning him. The remainder of the stampeded horses followed us. Thoroughly cowed by his past fright, and the certainty that he had to do as I chose, we arrived at the camp.

All my mates ~~crowded~~ crowded round me with congratulations, and Captain Crim shook me by the hand as I leapt from the back of the other Captain with a warmth that was at the least as effective as it was affecting. It was the second time he had honored me. The first occasion was when I had entered upon my service with him in St. Joseph. Nor did his second grip mean nothing. It established me, with him, from that hour, as a prime favorite.

In the vicinity of Chimney Rock, we encountered an apparently agreeable party of some half-dozen travelers, who applied for permission to travel with our train. Captain Crim complied with their request, extending to them the camp privileges on condition of their complying with its necessary restrictions. Our new friends seemed not only grateful for his hospitable kindness, but too eager to display their gratitude.

They continued with us some two days, without exciting any suspicion.

51 During the second night after their admission to the camp, it happened to be my watch, and while on my rounds, I seemed to notice a movement in some of the animals which indicated that all was not perfectly as it should be. They did not seem as quiet as usual.

Bending closer to the earth and gazing along it, with my eyes covered by my hand from the glare of the camp-fires, I saw some description of animal, which I at once supposed was a coyote or Prairie-wolf. As yet, such an animal was unknown to me. To make assurance doubly sure, I raised my rifle to my shoulder, and in another instant should have blazed away at it, when it suddenly straightened itself up, yelling out frantically:

"For God's sake, don't shoot!"

"Come in, then," was my answer.

As the fellow gradually sneaked nearer to me, it seemed that I recognized him. And, very certainly, when he was within the light of the camp-fires, I did so. It was one of the party of agreeable gentlemen whom our captain had hospitably permitted to travel with us. The scoundrel had been tampering with the fastenings of our horses, preparatory to stealing them.

Never shall I forget Captain Crim's look of unutterable horror at the fellow, when I woke him up in his tent, with my prisoner. The indignation which he had exhibited on poor Dave Horner's third detection in whiskey-stealing, was nothing to it.

"A darned horse-thief! Who'd ever have thought it!"

"I assure you, Captain--"

"Hold your tongue, you infernal rascal, or, by Heaven! I'll make short work of you and your companions."

"Let me explain, my dear sir!" he whined.

"Have them all turned out, Mose!" thundered Crim.

52 "They are lucky to have me to deal with them. Any one else would have hanged the whole lot."

By this time, the whole camp was alive, more especially our forty-eight hour acquaintances. These disowned the culprit, as a stranger who had but recently joined them. Their defence, was, however, too thin; and as the ominous murmur arose around them that--

"Lynching would be the shortest and best settlement of the matter"--

It was concluded by them, it would be wisest to obey. This, the more especially, as I had collected some dozen of my immediate friends, who stood ominously close to me, with rifles in hand, and six-shooters very palpably visible.

In another ten minutes, they had all left the camp.

When we arrived at Fort Laramie, Crim reported this gang of marauding horse-thieves to the officer in command of that post. Several days on our route beyond the fort, we were overtaken by the Pony Express, and learned that this very band had been captured in its immediate vicinity. Military justice is very prompt. It may make an occasional mistake, although not often. They had all been hung.