

BOB HAMPTON of PLACER

By RANDALL PARRISH AUTHOR OF "WHEN WILDERNESS WHISPERS" "IN LADY OF THE HEATH" "HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS ETC."



"Yes, little girl, I know," and the man stroked her hair tenderly, his own voice faltering. "It's all hard; I learned that sad lesson long ago, but I've tried to make it a little bit easier for you since we first came together. Still, I don't see how I can possibly help this. I've been hunting after that fellow a long while now, a matter of 15 years over a mighty dim trail, and it would be a mortal sin to permit him to get away scot-free. Besides, if this affair only manages to turn out right, I can promise to make you the happiest girl in America. But, Naida, dear, don't cling to me so; it is not at all like you to break down in this fashion," and he gently unclasped her hands, holding her away from him while he continued to gaze hungrily into her troubled face.

"Sometimes I feel just like a coward, Bob. It's the woman of it; yet truly I wish to do whatever you believe to be best. But, Bob, I need you so much, and you will come back, won't you? I shall be so lonely here, for you are truly all I have in the world."

With one quick, impulsive motion he pressed her to him, passionately kissing the tears from her lowered lashes, unable longer to conceal the tremor that shook his own voice. "Never, never doubt it, lassie. It will not take me long, and if I live I come straight back."

He watched her slender, white-robed figure as it passed slowly down the deserted street. Once only she paused and waved back to him and he returned instant response, although scarcely realizing the act.

"Poor little lonely girl! Perhaps I ought to have told her the whole infernal story, but I simply haven't got the nerve, the way it reads now. If I can only get it straightened out, it'll be different."

Mechanically he thrust an unlighted cigar between his teeth and descended the steps, to all outward appearance the same reckless, audacious Hampton as of old.

The military telegraph occupied one-half of the small tent next the Miners' Retreat, and the youthful operator instantly recognized his debonair visitor.

"Well, Billy," was Hampton's friendly greeting, "are they keeping you fairly busy with wars and rumors of wars these days?"

"Nathin' doin' just now," was the cheerful reply. "Everything goin' ter Cheyenne. The injuns are gettin' themselves bottled up in the Big Horn country."

"Oh, that's it! Then maybe you might manage to rush a message through for me to Fort A. Lincoln without discommoding Uncle Sam?" and Hampton placed a coin upon the rough table.

"Sure, write it out."

"Here it is; now get it off early, my lad, and bring the answer to me over at the hotel. There'll be another yellow boy waiting when you come."

The reply arrived some two hours later.

Fort A. Lincoln, June 17, 1875.
Hampton, Glencid.

Seventh gone west; probably Yellowstone. Brant with them. Murphy, government scout, at Cheyenne waiting orders.
BITTON, Commanding.

He crushed the paper in his hand, thinking—thinking of the past, the present, the future. He had borne much in these last years, much misrepresentation, much loneliness of soul. To run this Murphy to cover remained his final hope for retrieving those dead, dark years. Ay, and there was Naida! Her future, scarcely less than his own, hung trembling in the balance. The sudden flashing of that name into his brain was like an electric shock. He cursed his inactivity, Great God! had he become a child again, to tremble before imagined evil, a mere hobgoblin of the mind? He had already wasted time enough; now he must wring from the lips of that misshapen savage the last vestige of his secret.

"Where is Custer?"

"Don't know exactly. Supposed to be with Terry and Gibbons, somewhere near the mouth of the Powder, although he may have left there by this time, moving down the Yellowstone. Murphy's orders were to intercept his column somewhere between the Rosebud and the Big Horn. No other scout along this border would take such a detail. But that old devil of a Murphy just enjoys such a trip. He started off as happy as ever I see him."

"How far will he have to ride?"

"Oh, 'bout 300 miles as the crow flies, a little west of north, and the better part of the distance, they tell me, it's almighty rough country for night work. But then Murphy, he knows the way all right. Sorry you didn't come along a little earlier," he said, genially. "Do you know Murphy?"

"I'm not quite certain. Did you happen to notice a peculiar black scar on the back of his right hand?"

"Sure; looks like the half of a pear. He said it was powder under the skin."

A new look of reviving determination swept into Hampton's gloomy eyes—beyond doubt, this must be his man.

"How many horses did he have?"

"Two."

"Did you overhear him say anything definite about his plans for the trip?"

"What, him? He never talks, that fellow. He can't do nothing but sputter if he tries. But I wrote out his orders, and they give him to the 25th to make the Big Horn. You wasn't planning to strike out after him, was you?"

"I might risk it if I only thought I could overtake him within two days; my business is of some importance."

"Well, stranger, I should reckon you might do that with a dog-gone good outfit. Murphy's sure to take things pretty easy today, and he's almost certain to follow the old mining trail as far as the ford over the Belle Fourche, and that's plain enough to travel. Beyond that point the devil only knows where he will go, for then is when his hard ridin' begins."

The moment the operator mentioned that odd scar on Murphy's hand, every vestige of hesitation vanished. Beyond any possibility of doubt he was on the right steed this time. Murphy was riding north upon a mission as desperate as ever man was called upon to perform. The chance of his coming forth alive from that Indian-haunted land was, as the operator truthfully said, barely one out of a hundred. To the end, to the death if need were, he would follow!

The memory of his old plain craft would not permit any neglect of the few necessities for the trip. He bought without haggling over prices, but insisted on the best. So it was four in the afternoon when he finally struck into the trail leading northward. He rode a mettlesome, half-broken bronco, a wicked-eyed brute, which required to be conquered twice within the first hour of travel; a second and more quiet animal trailed behind at the end of a lariat, bearing the necessary equipment.

He had, by persistent questioning, acquired considerable information, during that busy hour spent in Cheyenne, regarding the untracked regions lying before him, as well as the character and disposition of the man he pursued. Both by instinct and training he was able to comprehend those brief hints that must prove of vast benefit in the pathless wilderness.

The night was already dark, but stars were gleaming brilliantly overhead, and the trail remained easily traceable. It became terribly lonely on that wilderness stretching away for unknown leagues in every direction, yet Hampton scarcely noted this, so watchful was he lest he miss the trail. To his judgment, Murphy would not be likely to ride during the night until after he had crossed the Fourche. There was no reason to suspect that there were any hostile Indians south of that stream, and probably therefore the old scout would endeavor to conserve his own strength and that of his horses, for the more perilous travel beyond.

About midnight, the trail becoming obscure, the rider made camp, confident he must have already gained heavily on the man he pursued. He lariat his horses and flung himself down on some soft turf, almost immediately dropped asleep. He was up again before daylight, and after a hasty meal, pressed on. The nature of the country had changed considerably, becoming more broken, the view circumscribed by towering cliffs and deep ravines.

Late in the afternoon he reined up his horse and gazed forward into a broad valley, bounded with precipitous bluffs. The trail led directly down toward where a considerable stream of water shone silvery in the sun, half concealed behind a fringe of willows. And yonder, close in against those distant willows, some black dots were moving. Hampton glued his anxious eyes to the glass. The leveled tubes clearly revealed a man on horseback, leading another horse. The animals were walking. There could be little doubt that this was Silent Murphy.

half an hour the patient watcher scanned the surface of the stream beyond, but there was no sign of attempted passage. The sun sank lower and finally disappeared behind those desolate ridges to the westward. Hampton's knowledge of plainscraft rendered Murphy's actions sufficiently clear. This was the Fourche; beyond those waters lay the terrible peril of Indian riders. Further advance must be made by swift, secret night riding, and never-ceasing vigilance. This was what Murphy had been saving himself and his horses for. Beyond conjecture, he was resting now within the shadows of those willows, studying the opposite shore and making ready for the dash northward. Hampton believed he would linger thus for some time after dark, to see if Indian fires would afford any guidance. Confident of this, he passed back to his horses, rubbed them down with grass, and then ate his lonely supper, not venturing to light a fire, certain that Murphy's eyes were scanning every inch of skyline.

Darkness came rapidly, while Hampton sat planning again the details of his night's work. Then, with the two animals trailing cautiously behind, he felt his slow way on foot down the steep bluff, into the denser blackness of the valley.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Haunting of a Crime.

Murphy rested on his back in the midst of a thicket of willows, wide awake, yet not quite ready to ford the Fourche and plunge into the dense shadows shrouding the northern shore. Crouched behind a log, he had so far yielded unto temptation as to light his pipe.

Murphy had been amid just such unpleasant environments many times before, and the experience had grown somewhat prosaic. Even Indian-scouting degenerates into a commonplace at last. So Murphy puffed contentedly at his old pipe.

But suddenly there was the faint crackle of a branch to his left, and one hand instantly closed over his pipe bowl, the other grasping the heavy revolver at his hip. There came a plain, undisguised rustling in the grass—some prowling coyote, probably; then his tense muscles immediately relaxed, and he cursed himself for being so startled, yet he continued to grasp the "45" in his right hand, his eyes alert.

"Murphy!"

That single word, hurled thus unex-



"Hampton Glued His Anxious Eyes to the Glass."

pectedly out of the black night, startled him more than would a volley of rifles. He sprang half erect, then as swiftly crouched behind a willow, utterly unable to articulate. For the instant his very blood ran cold; he appeared to shrivel up.

"Oh, come, Murphy; speak up, man; I know you're in here."

That terror of the unknown instantly vanished. This was the familiar language of the world, and, however the fellow came to be there, it was assuredly a man who spoke.

"Who—the hell—are ye?" he blurted out.

The visitor laughed, the bushes rustling as he pushed toward the sound of the voice. "It's all right, old boy. Gave ye quite a scare, I reckon."

Murphy could now dimly perceive the other advancing through the intervening willows, and his Colt shot up to the level. "Stop!—ye take another step an' I'll—let drive. Ye tell me—first—who ye be."

The invader paused, but he realized the nervous finger pressing the trigger and made haste to answer. "It's all right, I tell ye. I'm one o' Terry's scouts."

"Ye are! Jist the same—I've heard—yer voice—afore."

"Likely nough. I saw service in the Seventh."

Murphy was still a trifle suspicious. "How'd ye git yere? How'd ye come ter know—whar I was?"

The man laughed again. "Sort' hurts yer professional feelings, don't it, old feller, to be dropped in on in an unceremonious way? But it was easy, old man. Ye see I hap' thro' Cheyenne only a couple o' behind ye, with a bunch o' pay the Yellowstone. The trail' enough out this far, and I lo' at a pretty fair hickory, so I' up on the bluff yonder, and into camp yere just afore we was a-keepin' yer eyes sk' the Fourche, and natural'ly spect no callers from t' hind. The rest was nut' am. It's a darn sight hev company travelin' Now kin I cum on?"

Murphy reluctantly every movement he "I reckon. But I rather risk it—alr"

The stranger c' further hesitat' too dark to r' Murphy's str' corner appear build, and of "Whar'd—" "Mouth together—" "Ye kin ain't a l'—a'—gait"

Ag rest

MIXED BABIES

A HOST OF LITTLE FELLOWS BORN IN THE WINTER QUARTERS OF THE BIG CIRCUSES FROM STRANGE GROUPE OF PLAY-MATES IN THE MENAGERIE.

Perhaps one of the most enjoyable features of the big zoological annex with the John Robinson Big Circus billed to appear here for two performances on the 27th of August is the opportunity afforded to witness at play the young of many of the strange animals in its long list, for the winter has been prolific in that respect, and spring finds the big menagerie the scene of much festivity on the part of the youngsters. A tiny black baby of the rare Ando Antelope is quite chummy with the frolicsome Bebu Calf and a half dozen club lions at play never fall to draw their share of attention while the baby monkey nestling close to its mother's breast, for all the world like its little human brother makes one wonder if Darwin were not more than half right and then there is some half dozen Shetland pony colts, and the baby Emu and baby Kangaroo, until it looks as if the Stork at the big winter quarters of the show had been kept pretty busy. At any rate they form no small part of the attraction for old and young alike, and it must keep the Robinsons pretty busy finding homes for all their additions when they arrive.

THE INJURIOUS HABIT OF CROSSING YOUR LEGS

The constant indulgence in this comfortable position produces many ills.

A most injurious habit, common alike to men and women, is that of sitting with one leg swung over the knee of the other. Headaches, cold feet, varicose veins, ulcers and many other discomforts attendant on an imperfect circulation of the blood are directly traceable to this habit, says the September Delineator.

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY

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Marconi—the wireless wizard—did not stumble accidentally upon the principles of his marvelous invention. It was only by deep and prolonged study of the cause of certain known phenomena in nature that he was able to produce the startling effect.

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AN OLD ROAD.

From the New York Times.

Reason for Selling Out.

Judge Ben Lindsey, of Colorado, says that a woman's vote can be bought for \$15. That gives you a clue of what...

MUCH IN LITTLE.

India annually produces a rice crop of greater value than the American cotton crop.

Northern Florida and Northern Georgia can boast of some of the largest tobacco plantations in the world.

The average size of Australian sheep runs is 25,000 acres, while sheep runs in South Africa average only 5,500 acres.

Vladivostok imported last year from Australia and the Argentine Republic more than 12,000,000 pounds of meat.

It is said that one-eighth of the revenues of the United States is derived from the tobacco industry in one form or another.

The advantage of artificial shade in the growing of tobacco and other crops consists of the conserving of the moisture in the soil.

In the South Atlantic division the proportion of bachelors is 27.1 of all the men; but the proportion of unmarried women is only 22.3.

The Italian State Railway has bought 200,000 tons of American coal, to be delivered at Genoa, at \$5.64 a ton. The Welsh coal-owners, it is said, asked \$6.12.

In Germany sound-proof building blocks are made of a mixture of gypsum with sawdust, coke, dust of ashes. Some chemical skill is required to make the mixture.

San Marino is the smallest republic in the world. It has but 22 square miles, but has a population of 8,500. Its annual revenues are \$15,000. Its army has 900 soldiers and 150 officers.

An interesting relic of Napoleon Bonaparte has been placed in the Nottingham Castle Museum. It consists of a lock of hair of the Emperor which was cut off about an hour after his death.

It is suggested in London that all children be made to have their names and addresses written in the inside of their hats, so that they can be cared for by the police if they stray away from home.

The baby Prince of Spain's name has been entered upon the roll of a regiment and he wears the number of it, in gold, pinned on his bib. A bed in the barracks is reserved for him as the latest recruit.

The latest secret fraternity movement began at the Ohio State University, where students recently organized a Delta Theta Sigma society to stand "strictly for advancement in agriculture and extend its development."

Vice Consul J. K. Foster writes from Newcastle that experiments made in Queensland with the leaves of the pineapple plant have shown that there is a fiber in them which may be used in the production of a useful kind of silky cloth.

Vice Consul W. J. Sullis, writing from Liverpool, says that since the great development of the cycle and motor industry the demand for rubber has enormously increased throughout the world, and there is no indication that the limit of requirement has been nearly reached.

In Springfield, Mass., is a private art collection which is the largest and most varied owned by any one person in the country. It is the property of G. W. V. Smith, who has spent over 50 years getting it together, and it is ranked with the New York Metropolitan Museum and the Wallace Museum of London.

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THE STAGE

Louis Mann's tour in "The White Hen" will begin in Chicago September 1st.

Dora Davidson is to play the part of Silas Hopper in "The Earl of Pavlucket" in London.

Florence Roberts is to create the leading role in "The Struggle Everlasting," which is to be produced first in Providence in October. Her leading man will be Arthur Byron.

Tyrone Power, Henrietta Crossman's leading man the coming season in "The Christian Pilgrim," has been spending the summer in the Canadian woods with his wife, Edith Crane.

Mrs. Fiske's play, "A Light from St. Agnes," is to be given in Italy, and it is also to be turned into an opera there, with Puccini, the composer of "Madama Butterfly," as the composer.

Amelia Bingham has engaged for her company in "The Modern Lady Godiva" W. L. Abingdon. Others well known in her company are John E. Kellard and Beth Franklin.

Liebler & Co. deny the published report that they are to manage Miss Viola Allen's next tour. They say they have not approached the actress with an offer, nor has she approached them.

Katherine Mulkins, who originated the role of Pert in "Checkers," has been engaged by Henry B. Harris for the leading female role in "Classmates," in which Robert Edeson is to star.

"Brown of Harvard," the play by Mrs. Rida Johnson Young, in which Harry Woodruff has been so successfully starring will go into San Francisco and coast towns, then New Orleans and Southern towns. Winnipeg, St. Paul and Minneapolis will mark the northern boundary of the tour.

One of the most interesting hits of years, furnishing a study from quaint to weird, was "The Road to Yesterday," which has had a solid year in New York. It will this season make a tour of the principal cities, including Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Brooklyn, Newark, Toronto, Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Milwaukee. This is the play which was originally produced in this city by Miss Percy Haswell without a title, a prize being offered for the most appropriate name, which prize was gained by the suggestion of "A Midsummer Night." The title was later changed to its present one.

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