

BOB HAMPTON of PLACER

By RANDALL PARRISH AUTHOR OF
"WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING" "MY LADY OF THE NORTH"
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SYNOPSIS.

A detachment of the Eighteenth infantry from Fort Bethune trapped by Indians in a narrow gorge. A mong them is a stranger who introduces himself by the name of Hampton, also Gillis the post trader, and his daughter, Gillis and a majority of the soldiers are killed during a three days' siege. Hampton and the girl only escape from the Indians. They fall exhausted on the plains. A company of the Seventh cavalry, Lieut. Brent in command, find them. Hampton and the girl stop at the Miners' Home in Glendale, Mrs. Duffy, proprietress.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

There was no response, but the speaker moistened his lips and proceeded firmly. "It was that of a professional gambler, utterly devoid of mercy toward his victims; a reckless fighter, who shot to kill upon the least provocation; a man without moral character, and from whom any good action was impossible. That was what was said about you. Is the tale true?" Hampton laughed unpleasantly, his eyes grown hard and ugly.

"I presume it must be," he admitted, with a quick side glance toward the closed door, "for the girl out yonder thought about the same. A most excellent reputation to establish with only ten years of strict attendance to business."

Wynkoop's grave face expressed his disapproval.

"Well, in my present judgment that report was not altogether true," he went on clearly and with greater confidence. "I did suppose you exactly that sort of a man when I first came into this room. I have not believed so, however, for a single moment since. Nevertheless, the naked truth is certainly bad enough, without any necessity for our resorting to romance. You may deceive others by an assumption of recklessness, but I feel convinced your true nature is not evil. It has been warped through some cause which is none of my business. Let us deal alone with facts. You are a gambler, a professional gambler, with all that that implies; your life is of necessity, passed among the most vicious and degrading elements of mining camps, and you do not hesitate even to take human life when in your judgment it seems necessary to preserve your own. Under this veneer of lawlessness you may, indeed, possess a warm heart, Mr. Hampton; you may be a good fellow, but you are certainly not a model character, even according to the liberal code of the border."

"Extremely kind of you to enter my rooms uninvited, and furnish me with this list of moral deficiencies," acknowledged the other with affected carelessness. "But thus far you have failed to tell me anything strikingly new. Am I to understand you have some particular object in this exchange of amenities?"

"Most assuredly. It is to ask if such a person as you practically confess yourself to be—homeless, associating only with the most despicable and vicious characters, and leading so uncertain and disreputable a life—can be fit to assume charge of a girl, almost a woman, and mould her future?"

For a long, breathless moment Hampton stared incredulously at his questioner, crushing his cigar between his teeth. Twice he started to speak, but literally choked back the bitter words burning his lips, while an uncontrollable admiration for the other's boldness began to overcome his first fierce anger.

"By God!" he exclaimed at last, rising to his feet and pointing toward the door. "I have shot men for less. Go, before I forget your cloth. You little impudent fool! See here—I saved that girl from death, or worse; I plucked her from the very mouth of hell; I like her; she's got sand; so far as I know there is not a single soul for her to turn to for help in all this wide world. And you, you miserable, snivelling hypocrite, you little creeping Presbyterian parson, you want me to shake her! What sort of a wild beast do you suppose I am?"

Wynkoop had taken one hasty step backward, impelled to it by the fierce anger blazing from those stern, gray eyes. But now he paused, and, for the only time on record, discovered the conventional language of polite society inadequate to express his needs.

"I think," he said, scarcely realizing his own words, "you are a damned fool."

Into Hampton's eyes there leaped a light upon which other men had looked before they died—the strange mad gleam one sometimes sees in fighting animals, or amid the fierce charges of war. His hand swept instinctively backward, closing upon the butt of a revolver beneath his coat, and for one second he who had dared such utterance looked on death. Then the hard lines about the man's mouth softened, the fingers clutching the weapon relaxed, and Hampton laid one opened hand upon the minister's shrinking shoulder.

"Sit down," he said, his voice unsteady from so sudden a reaction. "Perhaps—perhaps I don't exactly understand."

For a full minute they sat thus look-

ing at each other through the fast dimming light, like two prize-fighters meeting for the first time within the ring; and taking mental stock before beginning their physical argument. Hampton, with a touch of his old audacity of manner, was first to break the silence.

"So you think I am a damned fool. Well, we are in pretty fair accord as to that fact, although no one before has ever ventured to state it quite so clearly in my presence. Perhaps you will kindly explain?"

The preacher wet his dry lips with his tongue, forgetting himself when his thoughts began to crystallize into expression.

"I regret having spoken as I did," he began. "Such language is not my custom. I was irritated because of your haste in rejecting my advances before hearing the proposition I came to submit. I certainly respect your evident desire to be of assistance to this young woman, nor have I the slightest intention of interfering between you. Your act in preserving her life was truly a noble one, and your loyalty to her interests since is worthy of all Christian praise. But I believe I have a right to ask, what do you intend for the future? Keep her with you? Drag her about from camp to camp? Educate her among the contaminating poison of gambling holes and dance-halls? Is her home hereafter to be the saloon and the rough frontier hotel? Her ideal of manhood the quarrelsome gambler, and of womanhood a painted harlot? Mr. Hampton, you are evidently a man of education, of early refinement; you have known better things; and I have come to you seeking merely to aid you in deciding this helpless young woman's destiny. I thought, I prayed, you would be at once interested in that



"I Have Shot Men for Less. Go, Before I Forget Your Cloth."

purpose, and would comprehend the reasonableness of my position."

Hampton sat silent, gazing out of the window, his eyes apparently on the lights now becoming dimly visible in the saloon opposite. For a considerable time he made no move, and the other straightened back in his chair watching him.

"Well!" he ventured at last, "what is your proposition?" The question was quietly asked, but a slight tremor in the low voice told of repressed feeling.

"That, for the present at least, you confide this girl into the care of some worthy woman."

"Have you any such in mind?"

"I have already discussed the matter briefly with Mrs. Herndon, wife of the superintendent of the Golden Rule mines. She is a refined Christian lady, beyond doubt the most proper person to assume such a charge in this camp."

Hampton flung his sudden cigar butt out of the window. "I'll talk it over to-morrow with—Miss Gillis," he said, somewhat gruffly. "It may be this means a good deal more to me than you suppose, parson, but I'm bound to acknowledge there is considerable hard sense in what you have just said, and I'll talk it over with the girl."

Wynkoop held out his hand cordially and the firm grasp of the other closed over his fingers.

"I don't exactly know why I didn't kick you downstairs," the latter commented, as though still in wonder at himself. "Never remember being quite

so considerate before, but I reckon you must have come at me in about the right way."

If Wynkoop answered, his words were indistinguishable, but Hampton remained standing in the open door watching the missionary go down the narrow stairs.

"Nervy little devil," he acknowledged slowly to himself. "And maybe, after all, that would be the best thing for the kid."

CHAPTER VI.

"To Be or Not to Be."

They were seated rather close together upon the steep hillside, gazing silently down upon squalid Glendale. At such considerable distance all the dull shabbiness of the mining town had disappeared, and it seemed almost ideal, viewed against the natural background of brown rocks and green trees. Everywhere was loneliness, no sound telling of the labor of man reached them, and the few scattered buildings far below resembling mere doll-houses.

They had conversed only upon the constantly changing beauty of the scene, or of incidents connected with their upward climb, while moving slowly along the trail through the fresh morning sunshine. Now they sat in silence, the young girl, with cheeks flushed and dreamy eyes aglow, gazed far off along the valley, the man watching her curiously, and wondering how best to approach his task.

Observing her now, sitting thus in total unconsciousness of his scrutiny, Hampton made no attempt to analyze the depth of his interest for this waif who had come drifting into his life.

Even to his somewhat prejudiced eyes she was not an attractive creature, for she possessed no clear conception of how to render apparent those few feminine charms she possessed. Negligence and total unconsciousness of self, coupled with lack of womanly companionship and guidance, had left her altogether in the rough. He marked now the coarse ragged shoes, the cheap patched skirt, the tousled auburn hair, the sunburnt cheeks with a suggestion of freckles plainly visible beneath the eyes, and some of the fastidiousness of early days caused him to shrug his shoulders. Yet underneath the tan there was the glow of perfect young health; the eyes were frank, brave, unflinching; while the rounded chin held a world of character in its firm contour. Somehow the sight of this brought back to him that abiding faith in her "dead gameness" which had first awakened his admiration.

"Kid," he ventured at last, "you were talking while we came up the

us can't be bosses in the same ranch."

She looked at him contemptuously, swinging her body farther around on the rock, and sitting stiffly, the color on her cheeks deepening through the sunburn. "Now see here, Mister Bob Hampton, you're a fraud, and you know it! Didn't I understand exactly who you was, and what was your business? Didn't I know you was a gambler, and a 'bad man'? Didn't I tell you plain enough out yonder—and her voice faltered slightly—"just what I thought about you? Good Lord! I haven't been begging to stick with you, have I? I just didn't know which way to turn to, after dad was killed, and you sorter hung on to me, and I let it go the way I supposed you wanted it. But I'm not particularly stuck on your style, let me tell you, and I reckon there's plenty of ways for me to get along. Only first, I propose to understand what your little game is. You don't throw down your hand like that without some reason."

Hampton sat up, spurred into instant admiration by such independence of spirit. "You grow rather good-looking, Kid, when you get hot, but you go at things half-cocked, and you've got to get over it. That's the whole trouble—you've never been trained, and I wouldn't make much of a trainer for a high-strung filly like you. Ever remember your mother?"

"Mighty little," reckon she must have died when I was about five years old. That's her picture."

Hampton took in his hand the old-fashioned locket she held out toward him, the long chain still clasped about her throat, and pried open the stiff catch with his knife blade. She bent down to fasten her loosened shoe, and when her eyes were uplifted his gaze was riveted upon the face in the picture.

"Mighty pretty, wasn't she?" she asked, with a sudden girlish interest, bending forward to look, regardless of his strained attitude. "And she was prettier than that, even, the way I remember her best, with her hair all hanging down, coming to tuck me into bed at night. Someway that's how I always seem to see her."

The man drew a deep breath, and snapped shut the locket, yet still retained it in his hand. "Is—is she dead?" he questioned, and his voice trembled in spite of his steel nerves.

"Yes, in St. Louis; dad took me there with him two years ago, and I saw her grave."

"Dad? Do you mean old Gillis?" She nodded, beginning dimly to wonder why he should speak so fiercely and stare at her in that odd way. He seemed to choke twice before he could ask the next question.

"Did he—old Gillis, I mean—claim to be your father, or her husband?"

"No, I don't reckon he ever did, but he gave me that picture, and told me she was my mother. I always lived with him, and called him dad. I reckon he liked it, and he was mighty good to me. We were at Randolph a long time, and since then he's been post-trader at Bethune. That's all I know about it, for dad never talked very much, and he used to get mad when I asked him questions."

Hampton dropped the locket from his grasp and arose to his feet. For several minutes he stood with his back toward her, apparently gazing down the valley, his jaw set, his dimmed eyes seeing nothing. Slowly the color came creeping into his face, and his hands unclutched. Then he wheeled about, and looked down upon her, completely restored to his old nature.

"Then it seems that it is just you and I, Kid, who have got to settle this little affair," he announced, firmly. "I'll have my say about it, and then you can uncork your feelings. I rather imagine I haven't very much legal right in the premises, but I've got a sort of moral grip on you by reason of having pulled you out alive from that canyon yonder, and I propose to play this game to the limit. You say your mother is dead, and the man who raised you is dead, and so far as either of us know, there isn't a soul anywhere on earth who possesses any claim over you, or any desire to have. Then, naturally, the whole jack-pot is up to me, provided I've got the cards. Now, Kid, waving your prejudice aside, I ain't just exactly the best man in this world to bring up a girl like you and make a lady out of her. I thought yesterday that maybe we might manage to hitch along together for awhile, but I've got a different think coming to-day. There's no use disfiguring the truth. I'm a gambler, something of a fighter on the side, and folks don't say anything too pleasing about my peaceful disposition around these settlements; I haven't any home, and mighty few friends, and the few I have, got are nothing to boast about. I reckon there's a cause for it all. So, considering everything, I'm about the poorest proposition ever was heard of to start a young ladies' seminary. The Lord knows, old Gillis was bad enough, but I'm a damned sight worse. Now, some woman has got to take you in hand, and I reckon I've found the right one."

"Goin' to get married, Bob?"

"Not this year; it's hardly become so serious as that; but I'm going to find you a good home here, and I'm going to put up plenty of stuff, so that they'll take care of you all right and proper."

The dark eyes never wavered as they looked steadily into the gray ones, but the chin quivered slightly. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Need Awakening. Though men are accused of not knowing their weakness, yet perhaps a few know their own strength. It is in men as in soldiers, where sometimes there is a vein of gold, which the owner knows not of.—Swift.

At the National Capital

Gossip of People and Events
Gathered in Washington

STRICT RULES FOR VISITS IN WASHINGTON SOCIETY



WASHINGTON.—Just at present matters are dull socially, but there is an air of expectancy and enough people are in the city and more are returning every day to keep up the interest.

Houses and visiting lists are being overhauled, as visiting is the joy as well as the bete noir of the Washington woman and has to be attacked scientifically as well as diplomatically to accomplish all that is required by an exacting public.

There is a regular etiquette in regard to visits, and woe betide the unlucky stranger who unconsciously sins against the cast iron rules laid down in this supposedly most democratic of cities.

The judges of the supreme court must be called on by the cabinet, senators and representatives first. Then the members of the cabinet call on one another and on the senators and house members. The senators make their supreme court and cabinet visits and finally reach one another. But a senator's wife whose husband has been in office six years cannot demean herself by calling first on the wife of

one who has only served his country three years.

The senatorial and congressional records are called in requisition and lists made out and the length of time men have held office noted. The house members are not as exacting and a little more license is permitted them, but still an immense amount of form is necessary to steer clear of the breakers of social political life.

Diplomats are exempt to a certain extent, as after presenting their credentials to the president they quietly await the onslaught of visitors. It requires a discriminating foreigner or one who has employed a secretary from the very innermost fold of the fashionable set to tell whom to receive and whom not and to sift the shower of cards that descend upon him, especially if he belongs to the diplomatic corps.

Washington is an especially easy city for outsiders, as they have the right of way and must call first on all those who hold an official position. These visits are returned and thus the thin edge of the wedge is inserted that leads to social distinction.



ROOT-GRANT WEDDING TO BE MOST SIMPLE AFFAIR

It probably will be a relief to the great masses of the people to know finally and positively that Miss Edith Root, daughter of the secretary of state, and Ulysses S. Grant III. are to have an extremely simple and quiet wedding at the home of the bride's parents on Rhode Island avenue. The children of the big ones, especially in Washington, ordinarily have enough spent on the gewgaws of their weddings to keep them in household supplies for 10 years. The only social affairs in Washington more costly than funerals are the weddings.

The daughter of the secretary of state is to marry the grandson of a president and the greatest soldier of his time, and few people are to be gathered together to witness the ceremony. It is a fine and an appealing arrangement. There probably will be a lot of presents. Neither the bride nor the groom, it is supposed, can prevent the flood of gifts which the prominence of their families will start.

Young Grant is a quiet, unassuming studious fellow, with a bent of mind for mathematics, for he graduated into the army's engineering corps. The bride is a girl of domestic tastes. She has been comparatively little known in the swirling circle of Washington society. It is said that she has good sound sense, and her dis-

inclination to go the rounds seems to prove the point.

It is understood that young Grant has no money beyond his pay. He is a first lieutenant of engineers and his wage is about \$125 a month. He gets an allowance for quarters, however, provided he is on detached duty where there are no army quarters. The government will give him and his wife three rooms to live in, or if he is away from an army post it will give him the equivalent of the rent of three rooms. It is said that Edith Root, although the daughter of a rich man, is perfectly capable of keeping house in three rooms, and keeping house there contentedly.

Lieut. Grant has an enormously wealthy aunt, who lives part of the time in Chicago, but he has no expectations from her, and he is too much of a Grant to take anything if it were offered. Elihu Root's father was a college professor, who was earning about \$1,500 a year, perhaps less, when Elihu was a boy.

It isn't at all probable that he will contribute largely to the household funds of his future son-in-law. He doubtless would prefer to let the young couple go it alone for some time to come. This wedding promises to be entirely satisfactory from every intrinsically valuable American viewpoint.

ROOSEVELT CELEBRATES FORTY-NINTH BIRTHDAY

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT celebrated his forty-ninth birthday a few Sundays ago. He spent the day, as is his custom, attending church in the morning, and spending the afternoon in the open air.

In the afternoon he received a committee of ten representing the Hungarian Republican club of New York, of which the president is an honorary member. The custom of the club of extending its congratulations to Mr. Roosevelt on his birthday began when he was governor of New York. He became a member on his return from Cuba in 1898, and during his first campaign for governor of the state of New York the club took an active part in New York city. The committee extended congratulations on the president's successful hunting trip and heard a partial description of it.



THE voyage of the battleship fleet to the Pacific will be veiled in impenetrable secrecy.

No news regarding the maneuvers to be conducted on the trip around South America will be allowed to filter through to the American taxpayer. Newspaper correspondents will be rigidly excluded from the war vessels.

The journey of Rear Admiral Evans' large squadron will be virtually on a war footing, for the only information that will be allowed to reach the people who are paying out millions to keep the navy up to the highest state of fighting efficiency will be in the



Aside from this visit the day was marked by no special observance. There were family congratulations and presents, and the president attended Grace Dutch Reformed church as is his custom. Returning from church, he spent an hour in the White House office, and in the afternoon took a long walk into the suburbs of Washington, on which he was accompanied by Secretary Root.

Although 49 years old, President Roosevelt, after six years as the head of the nation, is only two years older than President Grant when he took the oath; a year older than President Cleveland and the same age as President Pierce. He is still a much younger man than were his predecessors when they assumed office—McKinley at 54, Lincoln at 52, Tyler and Arthur at 51 and Polk and Garfield at 50.

SHROUD OF MYSTERY FOR TRIP OF PACIFIC FLEET

form of meager reports furnished by naval officers specially appointed for that purpose and who will carefully avoid references to those things in which the public is interested.

These decisions were arrived at by President Roosevelt after a consultation with Secretary Metcalf, Rear Admiral Evans and Rear Admiral Brownson, chief of the bureau of navigation of the navy department.

After a conference, Secretary Metcalf announced that the fleet would set sail from Hampton roads on December 16. The president has been informed on all important items in the itinerary.