

# BOB HAMPTON of PLACER

By **RANVALL PARRISH** AUTHOR OF  
"WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING" "MY LADY OF THE NORTH"  
"HISTORIC ILLINOIS, ETC."

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"I've quit, that's all, Bob. I just couldn't stand reform any longer, and so I've come back here to you."

The man drew a deep breath. "Didn't you like Mrs. Herndon?"

"Oh, she's all right enough, so far as that goes. 'T ain't that; only I just didn't like some things she said and did."

"Kid," and Hampton straightened up, his voice growing stern. "I've got to know the straight of this. You say you like Mrs. Herndon well enough, but not some other things. What were they?"

The girl hesitated, drawing back a little from him until the light from the saloon fell directly across her face. "Well," she declared, slowly, "you see it had to be either her or—or you, Bob, and I'd rather it would be you."

"You mean she said you would have to cut me out entirely if you stayed there with her?"

She nodded, her eyes filled with entreaty. "Yes, that was about it. I wasn't ever to have anything more to do with you, not even to speak to you if we met—and after you'd saved my life, too."

"Never mind about that little affair, Kid," and Hampton rested his hand gently on her shoulder. "That was all in the day's work, and hardly counts for much anyhow. Was that all she said?"

"She called you a low-down gambler, a gun-fighter, a—a miserable barroom thug, a—a murderer. She—she said that if I ever dared to speak to you again, Bob Hampton, that I could leave her house. I just couldn't stand for that, so I came away."

Hampton never stirred, his teeth set deep into his cigar, his hands clinched about the railing. "The fool!" he muttered half aloud, then caught his breath quickly. "Now see here, Kid," and he turned her about so that he might look down into her eyes. "I'm mighty glad you like me well enough to put up a kick, but if all this



"Kid, What Does This Mean and What Are You Doing Here Alone?"

Is true about me, why shouldn't she say it? Do you believe that sort of a fellow would prove a very good kind to look after a young lady?"

"I ain't a young lady!"

"No; well, you're going to be if I have my way, and I don't believe the sort of a gent described would be very apt to help you much in getting there."

"You ain't all that."

"Well, perhaps not. Like an amateur artist, madam may have laid the colors on a little thick. But I am no winged angel, Kid, not exactly a model for you to copy after. I reckon you better stick to the woman and cut me."

She didn't answer, yet he read an unchanced purpose in her eyes, and his own decision strengthened. Some instinct led him to do the right thing; he drew forth the locket from beneath the folds of her dress, holding it open to the light. He noticed now a name engraved on the gold case, and bent lower to decipher the delicate lettering.

"Was her name Naida?" he questioned, sharply. "It is an uncommon word."

"Yes."

Their eyes met, and those of both had perceptibly softened.

"Naida," his lips dwelt upon the peculiar name as though he loved the sound. "I want you to listen to me, child. I sincerely wish I might keep you here with me, but I can't. You are more to me than you dream, but it would not be right for me thus deliberately to sacrifice your whole future to my pleasure. I possess nothing to offer you,—no home, no friends, no reputation. Practically I am an outlaw, existing by my wits, disreputable in the eyes of those who are worthy to live in the world. She, who was your mother, would never wish you to remain with me. She would say I did right in giving you up into the care of a good woman. Naida, look on that face in the locket, your mother's face. It is sweet, pure, beautiful, the face of a good, true woman. Living or dead, it must be the prayer of those lips that you become a good woman also. She should lead you, not I, for I am unworthy. For her sake, and in her name, I ask you to go back to Mrs. Herndon."

He could perceive the gathering tears in her eyes, and his hand closed tightly about her own. It was not one soul alone that struggled.

"You will go?"

"O Bob, I wish you wasn't a gambler!"

A moment he remained silent. "But unfortunately I am," he admitted, soberly, "and it is best for you to go back. Won't you?"

Her gaze was fastened upon the open locket, the fair face pictured there smiling up at her as though in pleading also.

"You truly think she would wish it?"

"I know she would."

The girl gave utterance to a quick, startled breath, as if the vision frightened her. "Then I will go," she said, her voice a mere whisper. "I will go."

He led her down the steps, out into the jostling crowd below, as if she had been some fairy princess. Her locket hung dangling, and he slipped it back into its place and drew her slender form yet closer against his own, as they stepped forth into the black, deserted road. Half-way up the gloomy ravine they met a man and woman coming along the narrow path. Hampton drew her aside out of their way, then spoke coldly.

"Mrs. Herndon, were you seeking your lost charge? I have her here."

The two passing figures halted, peering through the darkness.

"I was not seeking her," she returned, icily. "I have no desire to cultivate the particular friends of Mr. Hampton."

"So I have understood, and consequently relinquish her and now all claims upon Miss Gillis. She has informed me of your flattering opinion regarding me, and I have indorsed it as being mainly true to life. Do I state this fairly, Naida?"

"I have come back," she faltered, fingering the chain at her throat. "I have come back."

"Without Bob Hampton?"

The girl glanced uneasily toward him, but he stood motionless in the gloom.

"Yes—I suppose I must."

Hampton rested his hand softly upon her shoulder, his fingers trembling, although he inwardly coldly deliberate.

"I trust this is entirely satisfactory, Mrs. Herndon," he said. "I can assure you I know absolutely nothing regarding her purpose of coming to me to-night. I realize quite clearly my own deficiencies, and pledge myself hereafter not to interfere with you in any way. You accept the trust, I believe?"

She gave utterance to a deep sigh of resignation. "It comes to me clearly as a Christian duty," she acknowledged, doubtfully, "and I suppose I must take up my cross; but—"

"But you have doubts," he interrupted. "Well, I have none, for I have greater faith in the girl, and—perhaps in God. Good-night, Naida."

He bowed above the hand the girl gave him in the darkness, and ever after she believed he bent lower, and pressed his lips upon it. The next moment the black night had closed him out, and she stood there, half frightened at she knew not what, on the threshold of her new life.

## CHAPTER IX. At the Occidental.

Hampton slowly picked his way back through the darkness down the silent road, his only guide those dim yellow lights flickering in the distance.

It was Saturday night, and the mingling town was already alive. The one long, irregular street was jammed with constantly moving figures, the numerous saloons ablaze, the pianos sounding noisily, the shuffling of feet in the crowded dance-halls incessant.

Riot reigned unchecked, while the quiet, sleepy town of the afternoon blossomed under the flickering lights into a saturnalia of unlicensed pleasure, wherein the wages of sin were death.

Hampton pushed his way through the noisy throng with eyes ever watchful for the faces. His every motion was that of a man who had fully decided upon his course. He swung up the broad wooden steps of the Occidental and entered the barroom, which was crowded by jostling figures, the ever-moving mass as yet good-natured, for the night was young. At the lower end of the long, sloping bar he stopped for a moment to nod to the fellow behind.

"Anything going on to-night worth while, Jim?" he questioned, quietly.

"Rather stiff game, they tell me, just started in the back room," was the genial reply. "Two eastern suckers, with Red Slavin sitting in."

The gambler passed on, pushing rather unceremoniously through the throng of perspiring humanity. The large front room upstairs was ablaze with lights, every game in full operation and surrounded by crowds of devotees. He walked directly toward the rear of the room. A thick, dingy red curtain hung there; he held back its heavy folds and stepped within the smaller apartment beyond.

Three men sat at the single table, cards in hand, and Hampton involuntarily whistled softly behind his teeth at the first glimpse of the money openly displayed before them. This was apparently not so bad for a starter, and his waning interest revived. A red-bearded giant, sitting so as to face the doorway, glanced up quickly at his entrance, his coarse mouth instantly taking on the semblance of a smile.

"Ah, Bob," he exclaimed, with an evident effort at cordiality; "been wondering if you wouldn't show up before the night was over. You're the very fellow to make this a four-handed affair, provided you carry sufficient stuff."

Hampton came easily forward into the full glow of the swinging oil lamp, his manner coolly deliberate, his face expressionless. "I feel no desire to intrude," he explained, quietly, watching the uplifted faces. "I believe I have never before met these gentlemen."

Slavin laughed, his great white fingers drumming the table.

"It is an acquaintance easily made," he said, "provided one can afford to trot in their class, for it is money that talks at this table to-night. Mr. Hampton, permit me to present Judge Hawes, of Denver, and Mr. Edgar Willis, president of the T. P. & R. I have no idea what they are doing in this hell-hole of a town, but they are dead-game sports, and I have been trying my best to amuse them while they're here."

Hampton bowed, instantly recognizing the names.

"Glad to assist," he murmured, sinking into a vacant chair. "What limit?"

"We have had no occasion to discuss that matter as yet," volunteered Hawes, sneeringly. "However, if you have scruples we might settle upon something within reason."

Hampton ran the undealt pack carelessly through his fingers, his lips smiling pleasantly. "Oh, never mind, if it chances to go above my pile I'll drop out. Meanwhile, I hardly believe there is any cause for you to be modest on my account."

The play opened quietly and with some restraint, the faces of the men remaining impassive, their watchful glances evidencing nothing either of success or failure. Hampton played with extreme caution for some time, his eyes studying keenly the others about the table, seeking some deeper understanding of the nature of his opponents, their strong and weak points, and whether or not there existed any prior arrangement between them. He was there for a purpose, a clearly defined purpose, and he felt no inclination to accept unnecessary chances with the fickle Goddess of Fortune. To one trained in the calm observation of small things, and long accustomed to weigh his adversaries with care, it was not extremely difficult to class the two strangers, and Hampton smiled softly on observing the size of the rolls rather ostentatiously exhibited by them. His satisfaction was in noways lessened by the sound of their voices, when incautiously raised in anger over some unfortunate play. He immediately recognized them as the identical individuals who had loudly and vainly protested over his occupancy of the best rooms at the hotel. He chuckled grimly.

But what bothered him particularly was Slavin. The cool, gray eyes, glancing with such apparent negligence across the cards in his hands, noted every slight movement of the red-bearded gambler, in expectation of detecting some sign of trickery, or some evidence that he had been selected by this precious trio for the purpose of easy plucking. Knavery was Slavin's style, but apparently he was now playing a straight game, no doubt realizing clearly behind his impassive mask of a face, the utter futility of seeking to outwit one of Hampton's inevitable reputation.

It was, unquestionably, a fairly fought four-handed battle, and at last, thoroughly convinced of this, Hampton settled quietly down, prepared to play out his game. The stakes grew steadily larger. Several times drinks were served, but Hampton contented himself with a gulp of water, always gripping an unlighted cigar between his teeth. He was playing now with apparent recklessness, never hesitating over a card, his eye as watchful as that of a hawk, his betting quick, confident, audacious. The contagion of his spirit seemed to affect the others, to force them into desperate wagers. The perspiration was beading Slavin's forehead, and now and then an oath burst unrestrained from his hairy lips. Hawes and Willis sat white-faced, bent forward anxiously over the table, their fingers shaking as they handled the fateful cards, but Hampton played without perceptible tremor, his utterances few and monosyllabic, his calm face betraying not the faintest emotion.

And he was steadily winning. Occasionally some other hand drew in the growing stock of gold and bank notes, but not often enough to offset those continued gains that began to heap up in such an alluring pile upon his portion of the table. The lookers-on who had come in began to observe this, and gathered more closely about his chair, fascinated by the luck with which the cards came floating into his hands, the cool judgment of his critical plays, the reckless abandon with which he forced success. Suddenly he forced the fight to a finish. The opportunity came in a jack-pot which Hawes had opened. The betting began with a cool thousand. Then Hampton's turn came. Without drawing his cards yet lying downward before him on the board, his calm features as immovable as the Sphinx, he quietly pushed his whole accumulated pile to the center, named the sum, and leaned back in his chair, his eyes cold, impassive. Hawes threw down his hand, wiping his streaming face with his handkerchief;

Willis counted his remaining roll, hesitated, looked again at the faces of his cards, flung aside two, drawing to fill, and called loudly for a show-down, his eyes protruding. Slavin, cursing fiercely under his red beard, having drawn one card, his perplexed face instantly brightening as he glanced at it, went back into his hip pocket for every cent he had, and added his profane demand for a chance at the money.

A fortune rested on the table, a fortune the ownership of which was to be decided in a single moment, and by the movement of a hand. Willis was gasping, his whole body quivering; Slavin was watching Hampton's hands as a cat does a mouse, his thick lips parted, his fingers twitching nervously. The latter smiled grimly, his motion deliberate, his eyes never wavering. Slowly, one by one, he turned up his cards, never even deigning to glance downward, his entire manner that of unstudied indifference. One—two—three. Willis uttered a snarl like a stricken wild beast, and sank back in his chair, his eyes closed, his cheeks ghastly. Four. Slavin brought down his great clenched fist with a crash on the table, a string of oaths bursting unrestrained from his lips. Five. Hampton, never stirring a muscle, sat there like a statue, watching. His right hand kept hidden beneath the table, with his left he quietly drew in the stack of bills and coin, pushing the stuff heedlessly into the side pocket of his coat, his gaze never once wandering from those stricken faces fronting him. Then he softly pushed back his chair and stood erect. Willis never moved, but Slavin rose unsteadily to his feet, gripping the table fiercely with both hands.

"Gentlemen," said Hampton, gravely, his clear voice sounding like the sudden peal of a bell, "I can only thank you for your courtesy in this matter and bid you all good-night. However, before I go it may be of some interest for me to say that I have played my last game."

Somebody laughed sarcastically, a harsh, hateful laugh. The speaker whirled, took one step forward; there was the flash of an extended arm, a dull crunch, and Red Slavin went crashing backward against the wall. As he gazed up, dazed and bewildered, from the floor, the lights glimmered along a blue-steel barrel.

"Not a move, you red brute," and Hampton smirked him contemptuously with his heel. "This is no variety show, and your laughter was in poor taste. However, if you feel particularly hilarious to-night I'll give you another chance. I said this was my last game; I'll repeat it—this was my last game! Now, damn you! if you feel like it, laugh!"

He swept the circle of excited faces, his eyes glowing like two diamonds, his thin lips compressed into a single straight line.

"Mr. Slavin appears to have lost his previous sense of humor," he remarked, calmly. "I will now make my statement for the third time—this was my last game. Perhaps some of you gentlemen also may discover this to be amusing."

The heavy, strained breathing of the motionless crowd was his only answer, and a half smile of bitter contempt curled Hampton's lips, as he swept over them a last defiant glance.

"Not quite so humorous as it seemed to be at first, I reckon," he commented, dryly. "Slavin," and he prodded the red giant once more with his foot. "I'm going out; if you make any attempt to leave this room within the next five minutes I'll kill you in your tracks, as I would a mad dog. You stacked cards twice to-night, but the last time I beat you fairly at your own game."

He held aside the heavy curtains with his left hand and backed slowly out facing them, the deadly revolver shining ominously in the other. Not a man moved Slavin glowered at him from the floor, an impotent curse upon his lips. Then the red drapery fell.

While the shadows of the long night still hung over the valley, Naida, tossing restlessly upon her strange bed within the humble yellow house at the fork of the trails, was aroused to wakefulness by the pounding of a horse's hoofs on the plank bridge spanning the creek. She drew aside the curtain and looked out, shading her eyes to see clearer through the poor glass. All she perceived was a somewhat deeper smudge when the rider swept rapidly past, horse and man a shapeless shadow. Three hours later she awoke again, this time to the full glare of day, and to the remembrance that she was now facing a new life. As she lay there thinking, her eyes troubled but fearless, far away on the sun-kissed uplands Hampton was spurring forward his horse, already beginning to exhibit signs of weariness.

## CHAPTER X. The Arrival of Miss Spencer.

Miss Phoebe Spencer, the pioneer school teacher of Glencald, came direct from the far east, her starting point some little junction place back in Vermont, although she proudly named Boston as her home, having once visited in that metropolis for three delicious weeks. She was of an ardent, impressionable nature. Her mind was nurtured upon eastern conceptions of our common country, her imagination aglow with weird tales of the frontier, and her bright eyes perceived the vivid coloring of romance in each prosaic object west of the tawny Missouri. All appeared so different from that established life to which she had grown accustomed,—the people, the country, the picturesque language,—while her brain so teemed with lurid pictures of border experiences and heroes as to reveal romantic possibilities everywhere. As her eager eyes traced the serrated

# The County Exchanges

Items of General Interest Selected from the Columns of Contemporaries

## Nehawka

(From the Register.)

Uncle George Hansen had a bad spell of heart trouble Tuesday evening, but is better now.

We are pleased to report Mrs. Wm. Tucker as improving, and gaining in strength every day.

Mrs. C. D. Kelter went to Lincoln last Friday to attend an installation and banquet of the Royal Neighbors. She reports a splendid time.

Joe Shrader's team indulged in a runaway Wednesday evening, leaving the buggy hung over a telephone pole near the livery barn. They went on home.

Herman Stoll sold wheat at the Nehawka Mill last Friday that tested 64 pounds. This is the best wheat that has been sold at this place; the highest test being 63 pounds heretofore.

Mr. and Mrs. V. P. Sheldon left for an extended trip through California and the Pacific Coast yesterday morning. They go first to Kansas City and remain there until Sunday. Their first stopping place will be Riverside, where they expect to arrive Tuesday.

Dr. and Mrs. Wilcox packed their household goods on Tuesday and Wednesday starting for their old-home in Oskaloosa. Dr. Wilcox came to this place a young man and an almost unknown quality, but he had been here only a short time until he had demonstrated his ability to make good.

Bryan Moore seems to be born to trouble as sparks are to fly upward. He has passed through several accidents, and for some time we thought he was immune, until one day last week his evil star must have been in the ascendancy, and he got in the way of a pick in the hands of his brother, with the result that he had a hole punched in his head that came near going through the skull.

## Chamberlain's Cough Remedy a Safe Remedy for Children.

In buying a cough remedy for children, never be afraid to buy Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. There is no danger from it and relief is sure to follow. It is intended especially for coughs, colds, croup and whooping cough, and there is no better medicine in the world for these diseases. It is not only a certain cure for croup, but, when given as soon as the croupy cough appears, will prevent the attack. Whooping cough is not dangerous when this remedy is given as directed. It contains no opium or other harmful drugs, and may be given as confidently to a baby as to an adult. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

## Elmwood

(From the Leader-Echo.)

Ed. Langhorst was laid up this week with la grippe.

Miss Daisy Langhorst is entertaining la grippe this week.

W. A. Clark was laid up the fore part of the week with la grippe.

T. H. Pollock, general manager and treasurer of the Plattsmouth Telephone Co., was a business visitor in Elmwood a few days last week. He was a pleasant caller at the Leader-Echo office Friday.

The Wabash correspondent of the Leader-Echo says: "The Leader-Echo last week made a grievous mistake in saying 'the hospital nurse has gone to Wabash to nurse a small pox patient.' The nurse came down to attend Mrs. I. M. Ward who is suffering from a complication of diseases, but no small pox."

Mrs. E. B. Lambert returned from Percival, Iowa, Saturday evening accompanied by Mr. Lambert's mother, who will make her home here. Mr. Lambert remained to settle up some business affairs, returning home Sunday.

Mr. F. Brookhart, of Boise City, Idaho, is visiting his old time neighbor and friend, I. H. Hollenbeck, whom he has not seen since twenty-five years ago last Thanksgiving. Mr. Brookhart was a residence of Cass County during the grasshopper times living on a farm near Weeping Water, which he sold to Mr. Hollenbeck. Mr. Brookhart left Cass County in 1882. The Leader-Echo received a pleasant call from both gentlemen yesterday.

## An Insidious Danger.

One of the worst features of kidney trouble is that it is an insidious disease and before the victim realizes his danger he may have a fatal malady. Take Foley's Kidney Cure at the first sign of troubles as it corrects irregularities and prevents Bright's disease and diabetes. Sold by F. G. Fricke & Co.

## 160 Acres No. 1 Land

in McPherson county, Nebraska, to trade for residence property in Plattsmouth. Call at Perkins house this week.

W. H. PORTER.

## Louisville

(From the Courier.)

W. F. Diers and wife left Wednesday morning for Gresham, Neb., where Mr. Diers will assist in invoicing.

If three feet of water in the Missouri river will safely float a steamboat, how long will it take Rockefeller to cut the price of coal oil to seven cents a gallon?

Henry Lautenschlager expected to start with his family for Oklahoma Tuesday, but owing to the illness of one of his children had to delay their departure for a few days.

Dr. M. U. Thomas, of Memphis, Neb., passed through town Tuesday on his way to Weeping Water to the bedside of his father, Dr. Thomas, who is said to be near death's door.

Rev. McClure, at one time pastor of the Free Methodist church at this place, but at present located on a claim near Bonsteel, S. D., paid his Louisville friends a visit last Saturday, remaining over Sunday.

H. E. Brown was here from Scottsbluffs, forepart of the week, disposing of his real estate, which we understood he exchanged for farm land near his home town. He was a guest of Dr. and Mrs. Worthman while in the city.

C. A. Richey went to Omaha Thursday attending a meeting of the stockholders of the Wilson Reinforced concrete company to locate their plant in Louisville.

Superintendent O'Brien, of the state fish hatcheries, was a Louisville visitor Thursday. Mr. O'Brien informs the Courier that his mother, who has been making her home with him for some time, is in very poor health, being a sufferer from la grippe. She is well along in years, but is one of her years. The Courier trusts that she may speedily recover.

## Special Announcement Regarding the National Pure Food and Drug Law.

We are pleased to announce that Foley's Honey and Tar for coughs, colds and lung troubles is not affected by the National Pure Food and Drug law as it contains no opiates or other harmful drugs, and we recommend it as a safe remedy for children and adults. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

## Union

(From the Leader.)

Mrs. C. L. Graves has been very ill and confined to her bed the past week, but there is now some improvement in her condition.

Russell Smith has been very sick the past week, the result of a stroke of paralysis last Friday, but latest report is that he is improving.

W. Banning went to Lincoln on the early train Wednesday morning to make sure of being there for the entire "doings" of the democratic dollar dinner.

Will Foster, a former resident of Nehawka and who has been in Montana the past several years, is visiting his Cass county friends, arriving last Saturday.

D. W. Foster, M. H. Shoeman and Judge Reuben Foster went to Lincoln on Tuesday with intentions of getting all the pleasure to be had at the dollar banquet of the democracy Wednesday night.

The Barnum home west of town has been a miniature hospital for a few weeks. Mrs. Eliza Barnum and Mrs. T. G. Barnum being patients, confined to beds most of the time, but both are reported to be getting along very nicely.

Mrs. R. L. Newell went to Omaha Monday morning where she has joined her husband in their new home. Dr. Newell now has dental office in the Brandies building in that city, and will announce dates for coming to Union occasionally.

James T. Reynolds is the gentleman who will do the assessing for Liberty precinct this year, having been appointed by County Assessor Soemichsen as one of his deputies. The selection is a good one, and it is a sure thing that the work will be given prompt and careful attention by our new democratic official who succeeds George N. LaRue.

## Bad Stomach Trouble Cured.

Having been sick for the past two years with a bad stomach stomach trouble, a friend gave me a dose of Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets. They did me so much good that I bought a bottle of them and have used twelve bottles in all. Today I am well of a bad stomach trouble.—Mrs. John Lowe, Cooper, Maine. These tablets are for sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

## For Sale or Rent.

Thirteen acres of land in section 12, near the city. Also a 7-room house in good location. I. M. LEYDA.