Continued from Page Four

pocket for more cartridges. "Maybe them boys will be a bit more keerful if they once onderstand they're up agin the real thing. Well, perhaps I better skin down, fer I reckon it's liable ter be rifles next."

It was rifles next, and the "winging" of Big Jim, however it may have inspired caution, also developed fresh animosity in the hearts of his followers, and brought forth evidences of discipline in their approach. Peering across the sheltering dump pile, the besieged were able to perceive the dark figures cautiously advancing through the protecting brush; they sped out widely until their two flanks were close in against the wall of rock, and then the deadly rifles began to spit spitefully, the balls casting up the soft dirt in clouds or flattening against the stones. The two mencrouched lower, hugging their pile of siag, unable to perceive even a stray assailant within range of their ready

"This whole blame country is full of discharged sojers," he growled, "an' they know their bis all right. I reckon them fellers is pretty sure to git one of us yit; anyhow, they've got us cooped. Say, Bob, thet lad crawling yonder ought to be in reach, an' it's our bounden duty not to let the boys git too gay."

Hampton tried the shot suggested. elevating considerable to overcome distance. There was a yell and a swift skurrying backward which caused Mason to laugh, although neither knew whether this result arose from fright

'Bliged ter teach 'em manners onct in awhile, or they'll imbibe a fool notion they kin come right 'long up yere without no invite. "Taint fer long, no-Hampton turned his head and looked soberly into the freckled face, im-

pressed by the speaker's grave tone." "Fire, my boy, fire. The wind's dead right for it; thet brush will burn time and space. As my thought was like so much tinder, an' with this big | with you I may be altogether to blame wall o' rock back of us, it will be hell for thus arousing your own. From here, all right. Some of 'em are the expression of your face, I sup bound to think of it pretty blame soon, posed you dreaming." an' then, Bob, I reckon you an' I will her' to take to the open on the jump."

how he desired to live just then, to dream, and there are few things in uncover that fleeing Murphy and life more sweet. I know not whether wring from him the whole truth which it is the common gift of all minds, but had been cluding him all these years! my day-dreams are almost more to

Miss Spencer so promptly at the ho-person, Miss Naida." tel door, but rather a desire to escape ized his advantageous position, as well first conception. In that sense as his remarkable powers of pleasing, choose to be a dreamer." tified in endeavoring to win Naida Gil- mind?" He for himself? That the girl would and continued happiness with such a for I had not even supposed it conman as Hampton he did not for a mo- cerned me." ment believe possible; that she had been deliberately deceived regarding ferent view from the one given us an his true character he felt no doubt. That the girl was morally so, far was then conveyed to both our minds above him as to make his very touch | that you were greatly distressed rea profanation, and at the unbidden thought of it, the soldier vowed to oppose such an unholy consummation. Nor did be, even then, utterly despair of winning, for he recalled afresh the intimacy of their few past meetings,



his face brightened in memory of this

Tententment is

Better than Riches."

But man is so constituted has still tifled as you," she acknowledged. so much of the animal in him—that frankly, "for it has certainly never been a habit with me to betray the confidence of my friends, and I learn-his fied. To make a man thoroughly of long since not to confide secrets to districtioned with his life and lot, give Miss Spencer." him bread made from moldy or ill prepared flour. Write "contentment" aftent considering those questions which might decide his fate. Up flour-always pure and clean and "You speak of your confidence in both," he said, slowly. "To me

and that brief word or shy glance. All the world loves a lover, and all the fairles guide him. As the offcer's eyes glanced up from the dusty road, he perceived just ahead the same steep bank down which he ha plunged in his effort at capturing his fleeing tormentor. With the sight there came upon him the desire to lot ter again in the little glen where they had first met, and dream once more of her who had given to the shaded nook both life and beauty. He swung himself from the saddle, tied a loose rein to a scrub oak, and clambered un the bank

man he pushed in through the labyrinths of bush, only to halt petrified upon the very edge of that inner bar rier. No figment of imagination, but the glowing reality of flesh and blood awaited him. She had neither see nor heard his approach, and he stop ped in perplexity. He had framed a dozen speeches for her ears, yet now he could do no more than stand and gase, his heart in his eyes. And it was a vision to enchain, to hold line speechless. She was seated with unstudied grace on the edge of the bank, her hands clasped about one knee, her sweet face sobered by thought, her eyes downcast, the long lashes plainly outlined against the clear cheeks To draw back unobserved was impossible, even had he possessed strength of will sufficient to make the attempt nor would words of easy greeting come to his relief. He could merely worship silently as before a sacred shrine. It was thus she glanced up and saw him with startled eyes, her hands unclasping, her cheeks rose-

"Lieut. Brant, you here?" she or claimed, speaking as if his presence med unreal. "What strange mir-

acles an idle thought can work!" "Thoughts, I have heard," he plied, coming toward her with head uncovered, "will sometimes away answers through vast distances of

She smiled, her eyes uplifted single instant to his own. "It was Hampton's eyes hardened. God, rather thought just merging into me than my realities."

"First is was moods and now "She Loves Me; She Loves Me Not." dreams." He seated himself comfort It was no claim of military duty ably at her feet. "You would cause which compelled Brant to relinquish | me to believe you a most impractical

"If that were only true, I am gure her coassless chatter and gain retire. I should be most happy, for it has ment where he could reflect in quiet | been my fortune so far to conjure un over the revelations of Hampton. In only pleasure through day-dreaming this quest he rode slowly up the val- -the things I like and long for beley of the Bear Water, through the come my very own then. But if you bright sunshine, the rare beauty of mean, as I suspect, that I do not enthe scene scarcely leaving the slight- joy the dirt and drudgery of life, then est impress on his mind, so busy was my plea will have to be guilty. Back it, and so preoccupied. He no longer of what you term practical some one had any doubt that Hampton had util- has said there is always a dream. a

to ensuare the susceptible heart of "And not so unwise a choice, i this young, confiding girl. While the your dreams only tend toward re man had advanced no direct claim, he sults." He sat looking into her anihad said enough to make perfectly mated face, deeply puzzled by both clear the close intimacy of their re- words and actions. "I cannot help lation and the existence of a definite noticing that you avoid all reference understanding between them. With to my meeting with Mr. Hampton. Is this recognized as a fact, was he just this another sign of your impractical

"I should say rather the opposite,

"Indeed! That presents a vastly difhour since. The distinct impression garding the matter. Is it possible you can have been acting again?" "I? Certainly not!" and she made

no attempt to hide her indignation. "What do you mean?"

He besitated an instant in hie reply, feeling that possibly he was treading upon thin ice. But her eyes nmanded a direct answer, and he vielded to them.

"We were informed that you experienced great anxiety for fear we might quarrel—so great, indeed, that you had confided your troubles to an-

"To whom?"

"Miss Spencer. She came to us o tensibly in your name, and as a peacemaker." For a moment she sat gazing direct

ly at him, then she laughed softly. "Why, how supremely ridiculous; can hardly believe it true, only your face tells me you certainly are not in play. Lieut. Brant, I have never even dreamed of such a thing. You had informed me that your mission his word not to permit any quarrel. I had the utmost confidence in you both."

our meeting?"

"I am entirely in the dark, as mys-

the complete trust yes repose in Mr. inactive is accretify disprehensible.

To you truly believe in his reform?"

"Cortainly, Den't you?"



Thursday, September 19th.

depended upon, your happiness to a mit—I am inclined to like you." very large extent does."

can safely repose confidence in whatever he may have told you regarding

"You indorse, then, the claims he

"You are very insistent; yet know of no good reason why I should not answer. Without at all knowing the nature of those claims to which you refer, I have no hesitancy in say ing that I possess such complete conadence in Bob Hampton as to reply unreservedly yes. But really, Lieut, Brant, I should prefer talking upon some other topic. It is evident that you two gentlemen are not friendly. yet there is no reason why any misunderstanding between you should interfere with our friendship, is there? She asked this question with such perfect innocence that Brant believed

she failed to comprehend Hampton's "I have been informed that it must he explained. "I have been told that I was no longer to force my attentions

upon Miss Gillis." "By Bob Hampton?" "Yes. Those were, I believe, his ex act words. Can you wonder that I

hardly know how I stand in your "I do not at all understand," she faltered. "Truly, Lieut. Brant, I do

not. I feel that Mr. Hampton would not say that without a good and sufficient reason. He is not a man to be swayed by prejudice; yet, whatever the reason may be, I know nothing about it."

"But you do not answer my last query."

"Perhaps I did not hear it." "It was: How do I stand in you sight? That is of far more importance to me now than any unauthorized command from Mr. Hampton." She glanced up into his serious face laughter. "Indeed; but perhaps he might not care to have me say. However, as I once informed you that you were very far from being my ideal, possibly it may be my duty to qualify that harsh statement somewhat."

"By confessing that I am your "Oh, indeed, no! We never realise our ideals, you know, or else they would entirely cease to be ideals. My confession is limited to a mere admission that I now consider you a very pleasant young gentleman."

"You offer me a stone when I cry unto your for bread," he exclaimed "The world is filled with pleasant young men. They are a drug on the



" Have Been Told That I Was No Longer to Force My Attentions Upen Mies Gillis."

market. I beg some special distinc-tion, some different classification in "You are becoming quite hard to please," her face turned partially away, her look modificative, "and— and dictatorial; but I will try. You

to nettle and confuse him. "It is, fairly good looking, rather bright at perhaps, not my place to say, as my times, and, no doubt, would prove future happiness does not directly de. venturesome if not held strictly to pend on the permanence of his your proper place. Take it all in all. reformation. But if his word can be | you are even interesting, and—I ad-

hand resting invitingly on the grass. and held it firmly within his own. once before. I must have the whole

time would be sheerest mockery, and I would never dare to be so free. Why, remember we are scarcely more than strangers. How rude you are! only our third time of meeting, and you will not release my hand." "Not unless I must Naida," and the

sure to regret such hasty words." hand which she scarcely endeavored to release, bending forward hoping to

lips guarded. "Am I, then, not old enough to know my own mind?" "Yes-yes; I hope so, yes; but it is not for me: it can never be for me-I am no more than a child, a homeless waif, a nobody. You forget that I do

I ought rightfully to bear. I will not have it so." "Naida, sweetheart!" and he burst impetuously through all bonds of restraint, her flushed cheeks the inspiration of his daring. "I will speak, for I care nothing for all this. It is

love you!" shyly, with a little dimple of returning she awoke as if from a dream, his

> will not be false to myself. You have no right; I gave you no right."

He permitted her to draw away and they stood facing each other, he eager, mystified, thrilling with passion almost beyond mastery, she trembling and unstrung, her cheeks crimson, her eyes filled with mute an-

"It told of love." "Then my face must have lied." she answered, her soft voice tremu-

wrongly. It is from my lips you must take the answer." "And they kissed me." "If so, I knew it not. It was hy no volition of mine. Lieut. Brant, I

have trusted you so completely: that was not right" "My heart exonerates me."

"I cannot accept that guidance." "Then you do not love me?" She paused, afraid of the impulse that swept her on. "Perhaps," the love you too well." "You mean there is something-

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The direct return question served are intelligent, a splendid dancer.

The tantalizing tone and manner "You only make sport as you did

"Oh, no: to make sport at such a

deep ringing soberness of his voice startled the girl into suddenly uplifting her eyes to his face. What she read there instantly changed her mood from playfulness to earnest gravity. "Oh, please do not-do not say what

you are tempted to." her voice almost pleading. "I cannot listen: truly I cannot: I-must not. It would make us both very unhappy, and you would be "Regret!" and he yet clung to the

Phoebe? They are fighting at the Shasta dump, you say? Lieut. Brant, read in her hilden eyes the secret her you must act-you must act now, for She sprang toward the horse, nerved by Brant's apparent slowness to respond, and loosened the rein from the scrub oak. "Then I will go to him,

even if they kill me also, the not even know who I am, or the name cowards!" But Brant had got his head now. Grasping her arm and the rein of the

plunging horse, "You will go home," he commanded, with the tone of military authority. "Go home with Miss Spencer. All that can possibly be done to aid Hampton I shall do-will you I love-love forever. Do you unyou go?" derstand me, darling? I love you! I You-you don't like him," she faltered: "I know you don't. But-but you

For an instant-one glad, weak, helpless, forgetful instant-she did not see him, did not even know herself; the very world was lost. Then strong arms clasped about her, his lips upon hers.

"You must not," she sobbed. tell you no! I will not consent; I

With the magical pressure of her lips upon his, he swung into the saddle and spurred down the road. It was a principle of his military training never to temporize with a mobhe would strike hard, but he must have sufficient force behind him. He reined up before the seemingly deserted camp, his horse flung back upon its "I read it in your face," he insisted. haunches, white foam facking its

"Sergeant!" The sharp snap of his voice brought that officer forward on lous, "or else you read the message the run. "Where are the men?" "Playin' ball, most of 'em, str, just beyond the ridge."

"Are the horses out in the herd?" "Yes, sir." "Sound the recall; arm and mount every man; bring them into Glencald on the gallop. Do you know the old

quivering flanks.

you go?"

Shasta mine?" "No. str." "Half-way up the hill back of the hotel. You'll find me somewhere in

death, so jump lively now.!"

them. These were minors mostly, eager to have a hand in the man hunt. and joined in the chase. Just beyond the hotel, half-way up the hill, rifes straight toward them. The eroud black and covered with wood asker, scattered alightly at his approach, but promptly closed in again as he draw up his horse with test rate. He looked down into spugh, hearded from passage where the secretly of unfor-

hoursely, his gun poleed as if

and I sincerely wish we had never

spoke bravely. "Nor can I ex-

this I know, there is a barrier between

us insurmountable; not even the pow-

her sober earnestness, or the depth

of her feelings; the full truth in her

words was pictured upon her face, and in the pathetic appeal of her eye.

"You will forgive me? Truly, this

barrier has not been raised by me."

He bowed low, until his lips pressed

the white fingers, but before he could

naster himself to utter a word in re-

ply, a distant voice called his name.

"That cry came from the valley,"

he said. "I left my horse tied there.

I will go and learn what it means."

through the labyrinth of underbrush.

hardly knowing why she did so. He

stood alone upon the summit of the

high bluff whence he could look

across the stream. Miss Spencer stood

below waving her parasol frantically,

and even as he gazed at her, his ears

caught the sound of heavy firing down

CHAPTER XXIL

Plucked from the Burning

tated was evident at a glance, while

the nervous manner in which she

glanced in the direction of those dis-

tant gunshots, led Brant to jump to

the conclusion that they were in some

way connected with her appearance.

excitedly, "they are going to kill him

down there, and he never did it at all.

I know he didn't, and so does Mr.

Wynkoop. Oh, please hurry! No-

body knew where you were, until I

saw your horse tied here, and Mr.

Wynkoop has been hunting for you ev-

erywhere. He is nearly frantic, poor

man, and I cannot learn where either

Mr. Moffat or Mr. McNell is, and I

will kill him before we can get help."

just know those dreadful creatures

"Kill whom?" burst in Brant, spring-

ing down the bank fully awakened to

the realization of some unknown

emergency. "My dear Miss Spencer.

tell me your story quickly if you wish

The girl burst into tears, but strug-

"It's those awful men, the roughs

gled bravely through with her mes-

and rowdles down in Glencaid. They

say he murdered Red Slavin, that big

gambler who spoke to me this morn-

ing, but he didn't for I saw the man

who did, and so did Mr. Wynkoop. He

umped out of the saloon window, his

hand all bloody, and ran away. But

they've got him and the town marshal

up behind the Shasta dump, and swear

they're going to hang him if they can

only take him alive. Oh, just hear

"Bob Hampton, and and he neve

Before Brant could either move or

speak, Naida swept past him, down

the steep bank, and her voice rang

out clear, insistent. "Bob Hampton

attacked by a mob? Is that true,

She looked helplessly into his face.

will help him, won't you, for my

He crushed back an oath. "Like

him or not like him, I will save him if

be in the power of man. Now will

"Yes." she answered, and suddenly

extended her arms. "Kiss me first."

those awful guns!"

"Yes, but who is it?"

"Oh, Lieutenant Brant," she cried,

That Miss Spencer was deeply agi

the valley.

She followed him part of the way

and both glanced hastily around.

She extended both hands.

er of love can overcome it; and

appeal to you to ask me no more." It was impossible for him to doubt

met; but this must be the end."

us down like that? Do you own this mean business. You see this uniform? Strike that, my man, and you strike

the United States. Who is leading "I don't know as it's your affair," the man returned, sullenly. "We ain't takin' no army orders at present, mis-tra. - V.o're free-born American citi-

n' an' ye better let us alone." "That is not what I ask: I you," and Brant squared his shoulders, his hands clinched. "My question was, Who is at the head of this outfit? and I want an answer."

The spokesman looked around upon the others near him with a grin of derision. "Oh, ye do, hey? Well, I reckon we are, if you must know. Since Big Jim Larson got it in the shoulder this outfit right yere hes bin doin' most of the brain work. So if ye've got anythin' ter say, mister officer man, I reckon ye better spit it out yere ter me, an' sorter relieve yer

The fellow expectorated vigorous into the leaves under foot, and drawing one hairy hand across his lips, fushed angrily to the unexpected in-

"Oh, tell him. Ben. What's the blame odds? He can't do ye no hurt." The man's look became dogged. "I'm Ben Colton, if it'll do ye any good

"I thought I had seen you somewhere before," said Brant, contemptuously, and then swept his glance about the circle. "A nice leader of vigilantes you are, a fine representative of law and order, a lovely specimen of the free-born American citizen! Men, do you happen to know what sort of a cur you are following in this affair?"

"Oh, Ben's all right." "What ye got against him, yo

"Just this." and Brant squarely fronted the man, his voice ringing like and I've dealt with them. I'm not afraid of you or your whole outfit, and I've got fighting men to back me up. I never yet saw any mob which wasn't led and incited by some cowardly, revengeful rascal. Honest men get mixed up in such affairs, but they are invariably inflamed by some lowdown sneak with an ax to grind. I Colton, but I know enough to say he is an army deserter, a liar, a divekeeper, a gambler, and, to my certain knowledge, the direct cause of the death of three men, one a soldier of my troop. Now isn't he a sweet specimen to lead in the avenging of a sup-

posed crime?" Whatever else Colton might have failed in, he was a man of action. Like a fash his gun flew to the level, but was instantly knocked aside by the grissled old miner standing next him. "None o' that Ben." he growled, warningly. "I don't never pay to shoot holes in Uncle Sam."

Brant smiled. He was not there just then to fight, but to secure delay until his own men could arrive, and to turn aside the flerce mob spirit if

such a result was found possible. "I really would enjoy accommodate ing you, Colton," he said, coolly, feeling much more at ease, "but I never fight personal battles with such fellows as you. And now, you other men, it is about time you woke up to the facts of this matter. A couple of hundred of you chasing after two men, one an officer of the law doing his sworn duty, and the other innocent of any crime. I should imagine you would feel proud of your job."

"Innocent? Hell!" "That is what I said. You fellows have gone off half-cocked-a mob generally does. Both Miss Spencer and Mr. Wyakoop state positively that they saw the real murderer of Red Slavin, and it was not Bob Hampton." The men were impressed by his evident carnestness, his unquestioned

courage. Several voices spoke almost "Is that right?" "Oh, say, I saw the fellow with h

hand on the knife." "After we git the chap, we'll give them people a chance to tell what

Brant's keenly attentive ears heard the far-off chug of numerous horses

"I rather think you will," he said, confidently, his voice ringing out with redden authority. He stepped back, lifted a silver whistle to his lips, and sounded one

sharp, clear note. There was a growing thunder of boofs, a quick, manly cheer, a crashing through the underbrush, and a squad of eager troopers, half-dressed but with faces glowing in anticipation of trouble, came galloping up the slope, swinging out into line as they advanced, their carbines gleaming in the sunlight. It was prettily, sharply performed, and their

Scer's face brightened. "Very nicely done, Watson," he said to the expectant sergeant. "Deploy your men to left and right, and clear out those shooters. Make a good job of it, but no firing unless you have to."

The troopers went at it as if they

enjoyed the task, forcing their restive horses through the thickets, and roughly handling more than one who ventured to question their authority. He drove in his spurs, and was of than it takes to tell, the discomfited like the wind. A number of men were regulators driven pell-mell down the in the street, all hurrying forward in | hill and back into the town, the eager the same direction, but he dashed past envalrymen halting only at the commend of the bugie. Brant, confident of his first sergeant in such emerg Here and there a rider skurried along | cy, merely passed long enough to watch the men deploy, and then preseed straight up the hill, alone and on were speaking irregularly, the white puffs of smoke blown quickly away by the stiff breeze. Near the center of this line of skirmishers a denser cloud come an enveloping cloud, spreading was beginning to rise in spirals. rapidly in both directions from its Brant, perceiving the largest group of original starting-point. He arrived men gathered just before him, rode | facily where the ground was charred

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brush rendered the zone of fire less impassable. He could see scarcely three yards in advance, but to the rear the narrow lane of retreat remained open. Standing there, as though in the mouth of a furuace, the red flames scorching his face, Brant hollowed his hands for a call.

"Hampton!" The word rang out over the infernal crackling and roaring like the note of a trumpet. "Ay! What is it?" The returning voice was plainly not Hampton's yet it came from directly in front, and

not far away. "Who are you? Is that you, Mar-"Thet's the ticket," answered the

voice, gruffly, "an' just as full o' fight Brant lifted his jacket to protect his face from the scorehing heat.

There was certainly no time to lose in any exchange of compliments. "I'm Brant, lieutenant Seventh cavalry," he cried, choking with the thickeaing smoke. "My troop has scattered those fellows who were hunting you. I'll protect you and your prison er, but you'll have to get out of there at once. Can you locate me and make a dash for it? Wrap your coats around your heads, and leave your guns be

An instant he waited for the answer, fairly writhing in the intense ton's been shot, and I'm winged a lit-

tie: I can't carry him." Brant ripped off his jacket, wrapped it about his face, jammed a handkerchief into his mouth and with a prayer in his heart, leaped forward into the seemingly narrow fringe of fire in his front. Head down, he ran blindly, stumbling forward as he struck the ore-dump, and beating out with his hands the sparks that scorched his clothing. The smoke appeared to roll higher from the ground here, and the coughing soldier crept up beneath it, breathing the hot air, and feeling as though his entire body were afire. Mason, his countenance black and unrecognizable, his shirt soaked with

blood, peered into his face. "Hell, ain't it!" he sputtered, "but you're a dandy, all right."

"Is Hampton dead?" "I reckon not. Got hit bad, though." Brant cast one glance into the white, unconscious face of his rival, and acted with the promptness of mil-

itary training. "Whip off your shirt, Mason, and tie it around your face," he commanded.

"Lively now!" He bound his silk neckerchief across Hampton's mouth, and lifted the itmp form partially from the ground. "Help me to get him up. There, that will do. Now keep as close as you can so as to steady him if I trip. Straight ahead-run for it!" They sprang directly into the lurid fames, bending low, Brant's hands grasping the inert form lying across his shoulder. They dashed stumbling through the black, smouldering lane beyond. Halfway down this, the ground yet hot beneath their feet, the vapor stifling, but with clearer breaths of air blowing in their faces Brant tripped and fell. Mason beat out the smouldering sparks in his clothing, and assisted him to stagger to his feet once more. Then together they bore him slowly down below the first fire-line.

To be Continued.

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