

# JUST A DESERT EPISODE

By GLEN D. HURST

THE setting for the last chapter in the life of Old Man Murphy was the heart of the Nevada desert; the time—the exhilarating but turbulent spring season of the year 1900.

The old man stood in the door of his cabin on the side of a rugged desert range, and in troubled spirit he gazed at a group of strangers moving about in apparent excitement on the light-colored porphyry foothills that lay between him and the gray, parched flat in the deceptive distance. It was only at long intervals during more than a generation since the old man had lived alone in that cabin that any one had disturbed his solitude, and this sudden invasion he resented. He had prospected and mined in a desultory way for so many years unmolesied that he felt a sort of proprietorship in the surrounding country.

The time was when he welcomed his fellows to the desert domain, but it was now long past. When he located the "Atlantic Cable" and "Nova Scotia" silver lode claims he felt that his long search for riches had been successful. Under the stimulus of visions of wealth his mind's eye saw swarms of treasure seekers burrowing in the hills about him and his own claims yielding bonanza. Then it was, he invited the whole world to share his discovery and good fortune. However, the small silver ledge attracted little attention and the district was deserted except for Murphy, who worked his own vein and never guessed the real secret of the hills over which he prowled.

The years went by and Old Man Murphy, growing more grizzled and bent, became morose and cared less and less for the society of his kind. As a young man he had left friends and family behind and joined the fortune hunters in the far-off western desert. Then he had every hope of returning soon with wealth abundant. His failure galled his pride. The years of brooding alone created a strange antagonism toward contact with his fellows.

Old Man Murphy watched in silence the activity on the hills below till he saw one of the strangers coming up the trail toward him. That was too much. He turned into the cabin with muttered imprecations on the intruders.

The stranger had come with friendly intention. He told a story of a great find, one that would have thrilled the old man had he heard it twenty years before. A shallow trench across the peak of one of the yellow hills had opened a vein of picture rock, literally sparkling with crystals of gold. Murphy merely glanced at the glittering sample of ore offered in proof and turned away, grumbling about the invasion of his district. The next day he packed his scraggy cayuses with provisions and disappeared in the direction of Excelsior range where he could be alone for a while.

Worn out with tramping about the mountains Old Man Murphy returned in a few weeks to his cabin on the "Atlantic Cable." During his absence a wonderful change had come over the district. All around him for miles prospectors were locating every foot of ground. Near the site of the original gold discovery a town to shelter thousands was building. The explosion of giant-powder charges blasting the rock in a hundred shafts and tunnels kept up a continual roar. Miners dodged about in the smoke and dust, showing each other specimens of gold-besprinkled quartz. From his eminence Murphy could count half a hundred automobiles, loaded with passengers, speeding in clouds of dust and sand along the three new trails through the sage-brush, all converging in the new camp.

The old man contemplated the change with heavy heart. His solitude was a thing of the past. A trespasser he was powerless to stop was upon him.

A monument of rough stones newly placed on his claims caught his eye. He strode over to it and read the location notice in anger. With a vicious kick he tumbled the pile and tore the notice to shreds. Returning to his cabin, he loaded both barrels of his shotgun and took a position commanding a view of the razed monument and the two trespassing prospectors, who were working in a newly started tunnel, unmindful of the old man's presence.

"You fellows git off my claim. Don't ye know I've had this ground for thirty years. Git—if ye know what's good for ye," he shouted hoarsely, much excited. The prospectors left their work to face the big gun leveled at them. They protested, argued and threatened, but Murphy's manner was menacing and his fingers twitched nervously on the trigger. They were compelled to retreat.

The prospectors made several efforts to get possession of the claim and replace their monuments, always to be met by the big shotgun and the old man behind it, who kept on constant guard duty.

When provisions ran low, rather than lend encouragement to the bountifully stocked stores of the new camp, Murphy made a night drive to an isolated trading post some twenty miles away.

Late one afternoon Murphy sat with the gun across his knees guarding his claim. Away in the distance along the route of one of the new trails there appeared a gang of workmen. His attention was attracted by the line of telegraph poles they were erecting. That evening he sat long in the darkness musing intently, and the next morning he put away the gun, fastened his cabin door, and skirting the camp was soon tramping at his best pace through the sand toward the line of poles. He spent the day trailing along with the construction gang.

A new Murphy came back to the cabin that evening. The prospectors had taken advantage of his absence to replace the monument he had destroyed.

"Let 'em have it. Let 'em have it," he mused when he saw what had been done. He scrawled a few lines to the "boys," telling them they would be bothered no more and to go on with their work, and placed the note where they would easily find it.

As regularly and persistently as he had stayed on guard duty during the preceding days, Murphy now followed along with the line builders, watching every movement of the construction work. He stepped off the distance between the poles, observed the number set each day, and in the twilight, in his cabin, he figured the number of days till camp would be reached. Each evening he checked off the day's progress, chuckling happily to himself if the work had gone better than usual or feeling depressed if some accident had been the cause of delay.

The last strand of wire was strung. The click of the sounder as the key closed told the initiated that all was finished. The operator was taking his place at the table when Old Man Murphy pushed through the crowd that filled the new office and leaning over the operator uttered an appeal that was backed by the longing of his whole soul.

"Boy, let me send the first one?" "The operator stared at the flushed face incredulously, then into the deep-set, now brilliant, appealing eyes. Scarcely knowing why, he answered the old man by stepping back. Murphy flung himself into the operator's seat and placed his fingers on the transmission key. The dispatch to be sent first lay open before him. It read:

Crosscut on Balloon hill claim opened up four feet of high-grade assaying into the thousands. Withdraw offer for sale.

With hesitation and an uncertain "send" the old man commenced:

It was not the message before him. The operator looked worried. He advanced one hand toward the instrument to stop the old man, then as the message became coherent he listened intently. The receiving operator at the other end of the wire was puzzled to get this message:

"—will prove an additional link between the nations whose friendship is founded upon their common interest and reciprocal esteem."

Now the old man's fingers were tingling with the electric impulse of the instrument; as if by magic the old touch came back. He began the transmission of the copy before him. It went over the wire with the speed and precision of an expert. He labored under an inward excitement a mystery to the onlookers. With a steady hand he sent dispatch after dispatch until the accumulated pile was exhausted. With the last click he opened the key and turned to the crowd, triumph and satisfaction in every feature of the rugged, time-worn face.

"Boys," he said, "this is a great day—a great day for the desert—an' fer me. How I hated to see you fellers come—but I didn't know yer was goin to bring this—I didn't know it. I've been holdin' down a claim in this district for near thirty years, boys—I'm kind o' shriveled up body an' soul, bein' here so much alone an' I wanted to be alone till the end," then he addressed the operator.

"Ye thought somethin' was wrong when I sent out that first message, didn't ye? This desert has laid between me an' that message for forty years. It's a long time, boys, since I was counted one of the best operators in the country. That was in the late eighties. I was so good at operatin' that when the first cable was laid I was put in th' service. That was a great day, too, fer me, an' I relayed that message from Queen Victoria to the President. It was the first one across. A few years afterward I got th' gold fever an' I've been on the desert ever since, but I never forgot that message, and I just had to send it out first to get my bearin's. An' to think this thing has followed me and found me in the desert after all these years."

The excitement that sustained the old man was passing.

"But now I'm glad ye come. I'm satisfied, boys—I'm satisfied. The eyes dulled, the lips twitched in an effort to speak, and the head dropped. Old Man Murphy was seized with a paralysis—a paralysis of death.

**Sleep Machine Invented**  
An inventor at Macclesfield, England, has perfected a machine that, he thinks, will cure insomnia. The machine is placed alongside of the bed and emits light rays of twelve different colors, flashing at prearranged periods. The effect of this combination of colors and periodicity is intended to be soothing and to induce sleep. The color flashes at such regular intervals have a peculiar effect upon the retina, it is said. The inventor maintains he has cured several stubborn cases of sleeplessness in ten to fifteen minutes.

# ROAD BUILDING

## BETTER HIGHWAYS AID TO BUSINESS

The business value of getting people into their stores is appreciated by all merchants. That is the purpose for which they advertise. Once a prospective customer is inside a store there is opportunity for a sale. A merchant may have a good line of merchandise, his prices may be reasonable, and his display may be attractive; but the people must be provided with a good road to his store or they will not come there. The residents of a city will not make the fullest use of their streets if they are muddy or dusty, and the merchants will not enjoy the trade they should have if their prospective customers cannot find good roads to their stores.

Any street in any community can be made attractive by the simple expedient of paving it properly, and it is to the advantage of every taxpayer to help highway officials or the town council put through improved highway and street improvement programs. People who own business or residence property are learning every day that civic improvements that call for the proper paving of streets are the best kind of investments—investments that pay sure dividends.

The well-paved street is worth money to every merchant on it, as well as being highly convenient for shoppers. A well-paved business street will impel customers to the door, with consequent increase in business as the opportunity is offered customers to make their purchases without the inconvenience of muddy, dirty, dusty pavements.

Clean, pleasant, healthful surroundings are most desirable in any residence district. This condition is provided in a well-paved street, besides making it safer for children as well as for the motorist. Property values go up where a well-paved street replaces a rutted, impassable thoroughfare. Cities are judged very largely by the attractiveness of their streets. Strangers looking about for locations are quick to judge the business and social standards of the community by its thoroughfares, particularly the residence streets. Visitors in a well-paved city will instantly sense the progressive spirit of the place, they will long remember the orderly influence of business and residence sections, and they will carry the story of its clean, charming streets back to their homes.

Public improvements of any kind cost less in the long run where they are made as nearly permanent as possible. The first cost of permanent paving is no more than inefficient types, and their maintenance is either minimized, or entirely eliminated. Consequently the type that pays dividends to any community is the permanent, durable, sanitary, fire-safe type.

Other advantages of paved streets are found in fire and health protection. Good paving on streets and alleys is one of the prime essentials to fire protection. Fire hazard is greatly reduced if even, clean, skid-proof thoroughfares are in every section of the town so that any point can be reached quickly and easily by the fire department. Health is a by-product of cleanliness. Health officers insist that sanitation as reflected in the conditions of the streets and alleys has a direct bearing upon the general health of the city's inhabitants. Hence, a street that is well paved will be easily cleaned, and will be free from ruts and holes that breed filth.

## Roadway Will Run to Old French Fort Toulouse

Plans are under way for the building of a highway to the old French Fort Toulouse, which was an Indian town nearly 400 years ago.

Fort Toulouse is in Elmore county, near Montgomery, Ala., a short distance from one of the principal highways leading into the city, and it is the intention of historical experts to make this point available to tourists. The plan was launched by Peter A. Brannon, curator of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. It was only recently that a marker was placed at old Pole Cat Springs, 30 miles from Montgomery, where Lafayette spent the night on his way to Montgomery.

Fort Toulouse is rich in history. A granite shaft has been placed there to commemorate the old French outpost of 1714, which is a miniature replica of the shaft erected to General Montgomery on the plains of Abraham, at Quebec. The old French cemetery is at Fort Toulouse, and here some of Jackson's men were buried, the place becoming known as Fort Jackson. The treaty of 1814 by which the Indians ceded all their lands south of Fort Jackson to the United States was signed there.

## New Jersey Roads

With the completion of its construction program for this year, the New Jersey state highway commission will have added 100 miles of improved roads to the state's system. The board has now under contract 66 miles to be paved this summer and awards of work to be made shortly will increase this total to 100.

New Jersey now has 840 miles of state highway routes and 494 of these miles have been completed with a hard-surfaced pavement.

# FARM STOCK

## FORAGE CROPS ARE SWINE NECESSITY

Experience has shown that forage crops are necessary for growing pigs economically. So states William C. Skelley, assistant animal husbandman at the New Jersey State College of Agriculture, who continues:

"Pasturing on green forage saves a great amount of feed, allows plenty of fresh air, gives the animal exercise and helps to keep the quarters sanitary."

"Where it thrives alfalfa makes one of the best permanent pastures for swine, as it can be pastured from early spring to late summer and is high in protein and mineral matter. Since heavy pasturage is injurious to the crop it is well to restrict the number of pigs, allowing the plant to grow and be good for two or three cuttings of hay."

"Red clover also makes an excellent forage. Pigs should not be turned on it until it has reached a good growth, as too early pasturing is likely to kill it out. It can be pastured until it becomes woody in the summer, when it contains too much fiber to be taken care of by the pig's digestive tract."

"Sweet clover is another leguminous forage which should be pastured rather closely, as this encourages new growth and hinders woodiness."

"Rape is unsurpassed as an annual forage crop for swine. It is palatable, succulent and high in protein and ash. As it may be sown both early and late in the season, forage may be provided at any time in the summer. Pigs should not be turned on it until it is about ten inches high. If rape is not pastured too closely growth will continue until fall."

"Field peas, sown either alone or with oats or rape, is a very satisfactory summer forage crop, as it is a legume and compares with alfalfa and clover in its protein content."

"Rye furnishes a supply of green, succulent feed material in the late fall and early spring and is therefore of great benefit to the breeding herd—especially the brood sow nursing fall and spring litters."

"A number of other forage crops, such as soy beans, bluegrass and even some weeds are relished by swine. The point for the grower to keep in mind is that every bit of green material consumed by the pig means a saving of some grain in growing that pig for market."

## Alfalfa Versus Clover for Pasture for Swine

Alfalfa excelled red clover as a pasture for hogs in recent comparisons made at the Indiana station. Alfalfa proved capable of carrying more hogs per acre than clover and produced slightly larger gain with less corn than was required on clover pasture. The showing of clover pasture, however, was very satisfactory. The two pastures carried 18 to 20 spring pigs to the acre when the pigs were full fed and about seven pigs when limited grain feeding was practiced.

In one test pigs were fed a limited ration of two pounds of grain daily for each 100 pounds live weight. Part of the pigs grazed alfalfa and part clover pasture. Gains made by the two lots were practically identical, but the pigs on alfalfa required only 243 pounds of corn per 100 pounds of gain, compared to 255 pounds for the pigs on clover pasture.

In a comparison of pigs which were full-fed corn and tankage on the two pastures the pigs on alfalfa outgained those on clover by a slight margin and required five pounds less corn, and four and one-half pounds less tankage than the pigs which ran on clover pasture.

## Exercise for Stallions

Stallions should have a liberal amount of exercise during the breeding season, especially during the last half. They should have the equivalent of eight or ten miles a day on the road. This exercise should be given early in the morning. Nothing will pay better in the management of a public-service stallion than this kind of exercise.

## Live Stock Notes

Use pure-bred sires for more and better meat, milk, wool and eggs.

Corn and cob meal is not considered a good horse feed. Horses will do better on a mixture of corn and bran.

Nature's tonics for young pigs are exercise, sunshine, plenty of green, succulent feed, plenty of good water, and clean surroundings.

Cull all undeveloped pullets and old hens from the flock.

Early hatched pullets will molt early in the fall and be ready for laying next winter at a season when egg production is low and prices high.

It has been shown that young chicks are most susceptible to infestation of roundworms until about 12 weeks of age. With severe infestation death may occur in two weeks. In mild infestations chicks live, but growth is slower and resistance to disease less.

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### Peculiar Division.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings may be perfected definition as well as praise. For example, there is the case of the teacher who, at the close of the reading lesson, was questioning her class on the subject matter thereof. "What is an oyster?" she asked. "Please, miss," replied the bright boy of the class, "it's half a fish and half a nut."

### Menhaden Fish Defended.

Menhaden fish, the oil from which has many commercial uses, is also an excellent food fish though as yet unpopular because of its great number of bones. Food experts, however, are overcoming this by grinding the fish, bones and all, so as to make a fish meal or powder, in which form it can be converted into cakes and eaten easily.

### Tree Hides Weapons.

A revolver and a steel trap were found inside a tree when it was cut down near Norborne, Md., recently. The weapons evidently had been placed at the base of the tree years ago and it grew around them.

### Plant Stimulation.

Nitrate of soda is good for plants and flowers if used in moderation. It increases the vegetable growth, stimulating the foliage rather than the flowers. Too much will prove injurious.

### Nature's Peculiarities.

Many a man thinks admirably well who has a poor utterance, while others have a charming manner of speech but their thoughts are trifling.

### Tribute to Faith.

Faith is the great elevator of character, and has a wonderful influence on the ideals. It lifts us to the heights and gives us glimpses of the promised land. It is the "light of truth and wisdom."—Orison Swett Marden.

### Rats with Rabbits.

Rats, both brown and gray, have been found living with rabbits in their holes by a rat catcher in Lincolnshire, England.

### Facial Surgery Old.

Facial surgery, including the remodeling of injured noses, ears and lips, was known in Italy as long ago as 1546.

### "The Shallows Murmur."

The smaller the caliber of mind, the greater the bore of a perpetually open mouth.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

### Excellent Advice.

Speak little and well, if you wish to be considered as possessing merit.—From the French.

### She Knew!

Woman (at Willesden)—No matter how you listen in our flat you cannot hear what the people say in the next flat. I know.—Tit-Bits.

### Rather Exclusive.

Wisdom will not die with the people, and it is evident that it objects to living with lots of 'em.—Atlanta Constitution.

Indian women climb the highest hill-top at night to wait for the dead.

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