Stories of Adventures In Love

One---Or How Many?

By Will Seaton



Phillips and "Freck" McGee wasn't a bananaza. claim worth work- nuther. ing when the mob that had stampeded Camp Creek drifted away after few delirious

weeks of almost fruitless labor, leaving "the two-man outfit" monarchs of all they surveyed in the solemn solitudes of the Camp Creep country.

Freck held that working the claim was more restful than "fighting bumpers an' brakemen," while Sandy found the vocation more lucrative than peddling "A Million Methods of Making Money" to the credulous but unsepculative rustic. Each day the two partners laboriously wrested a varying any furder'n Camp Creek. We're long modicum of golden grains from the determined clutch of mother earth; each evening they sought recreation through the medium of a disabled deck of grimy cards.

Inasmuch, however, as one clause of the unwritten contract of partnership stipulated that the joint accumulation should remain undivided until the exhaustion of the claim, and as the pebbles of Camp Creep which served as "chips" possessed but a flat value not recognized by the world of finance, the fascination of draw-poker grad-ually waned, and the monotony of Barmecidal jack-pots eventually pailed the senses of the two-man outfit.

Then it was that Freek and Saudy. with a view to future predatory campaigns among the fledging gamblers of other camps, collaborated in perfecting every shifty trick picked up from their respective and adventurous itineraries, and then it was that Freck-Freck of the variegated complexion and obtrusive ears-discovered Mr. Isaac Buffer, of Stevens' Cor-

ners. Missouri. The glory might have been Sandy's had it not been Freck's turn to make the usual 20-mile trip to Spitler's Station in quest of necessary supplies. Moreover, Freck seemed preferred by Providence as its instrument, for that very morning he had confidently prophested that an era of prosperity was about to dawn upon the two-man

declared, as he dug his boot-heels into the flanks of the reluctant mule

showerin' down crackly stars an' gold man outfit rose correspondingly. tens an' twenties till me an' you an' th' mule had to duck out fer shelter. Mind what I say, Sandy-we're goin' but it was the only to strike it rich, an' it won't be long.

Into Sandy's puzzled conjectures, ever, there crept no connection between the prediction and the arrival. that evening, of Mr. Isaac Buffer, mounted on the mule, until the footsore Freck seized the first opportunity for enlightenement.

"That there's th' angel of my dream, Sandy." Freck jubilantly announced, when the new acquisition to the social circle of Camp Creek had wandered out of ear-shot to stare through his bir green goggles at the working paraphernalia of the two-man outfit. in from Missoury, huntin' fer health an' diversion. I 'lowed he needn't go health, an' as fer amusement-Freck closed one eye, and with a long and mottled finger tapped the disabled deck of cards.

Sandy licked his lips and scrutinized the distant guest with cold and calculating eyes.

"Has he got th' price of th' amusehe asked dubiously. "Do I look like a man who'd toll a 40-bacon?" retorted Freck. "He jest heired \$20,000 Sandy! We're to make it right with Spitler fer puttin' us

"Looks to me like a backwoods "Haste makes waste, San school teacher," observed the doubting served the cautious Freek.

"He was. Studyin' now to be a preacher. When he got his stuff he laid off fer a vacation. Spitler ust to know his folks out in Missoury. He's up in book learnin' all right, but, Sandy, when it comes to real wisdom that feller don't know a jack-rose from a jack-rabit.

Freck's angel was pained extremely. hat evening, upon learning most casually that the usual crepuscular amusement was being foregone out of deference to his presence, and he begged with apologetic insistence that he be not permitted to interfere with the which he retired, to be lulled to alumber by the weird music of untamed vocalists of gorge and gulch and the and yanked its head toward Spitler's, ome of the two-man outfit. On the 'Na'ral as life, it was Sandy. Shiny- third evening Mr. Buffer sat up and eyed angel fied over Camp Creek, took notice, and the spirits of the two-

occasioning too great a draft upon the patience of his host be would not be averse to acquiring a smattering knowledge of their novel and innocent game. Being interrogated respecting his aptness, Mr. Buffer, with becoming modesty, revealed the flattering fact that he and Squire Dobbs had once tied for the checker championship of Stevens' Corners, and on crossexamination finally confessed with evident reluctance that in the halcyon of reckless and unrestrained youth he had been accounted pretty fair at euchre. Whereupon Mr. Buffer was equipped with his proportion of pebbles and allowed to "set in." Before retiring that night Mr. Buffer had away under the genial glow of a unidemonstrated his aptness by winning all the "chips," as well as the effusive plaudits of his genial instructors.

"We'll bait th' trap a leetle toutght. Sandy, an' see if he sniffs," Freck suggested, next morning, as the two departed to their daily toil, followed by their guest, who halted at intervals inhale the mountain air, so healing to impaired lungs.

"Better throw it wide open," urged the impatient Sandy. "There's no pauper out here to gorge hisself on tellin' how soon he'll take a notion to move on, an' it's mighty rackin' to th' nerves to dig all day for a pinch of dust with \$20,000 grinnin' at you all

'Haste makes waste,' Sandy," obopen th' trap gradual, givin' Ikey his own time to crawl in, he'll leave Camp Creek with nothin' on his person but

them goggles. secutive collection of pebbles, dropped finger flip. It's a wonder Goggles a scornful imputation upon his part-didn't notice it. A feller can't tell ner's pokeresque prowess, whereupon the offended Sandy hotly offered, hid by that fool grin an them derued provided Mr. Buffer would kindly stay out, to abrogate the restricting clause of the contract, and to back his judgshort season of swift and laconic re- dust. Goggles might kick on our valhabits of his hospitable hosts; ofter partee was closed by the transfer of a moderate quantity of "real stuff" to Freck's side of the table, to the manifest and wide-mouthed delight of the soft clinking of Cam. Creep pebbles observant Mr. Buffer. The trap being "When a man has a dream like that, on the deal table. Next evening his thus baited, the unwary victim not it means somethin," he had solumly conduct was equally reprehensible, only sniffed, but insisted that it be and a feeling of indignant disappoint- opened, notwithstanding the friendly ment began to stir in the manly bos- admonitions of the two-man outfit. In the amusement from being crepuseu- sufficiently thank Mr. -ah-Spitter, patronizingly upon the beaming Enf- gented accordingly

lar became nocturnal, and when the A few weeks more of this free, invig- fer On the fourth evening Mr. Buffer unlucky Freck was finally seized with orating life will send me back to my shyly intimated that if it were not for a severe attack of cold feet the green arduous studies a new-man. Glorigoggles of the triumphant Buffer were ous country! Delightful climate! Magglowing with elation in the light of nificent mornings!"

the flickering lamp. It may be here noted, as a barometrical indication of the constantly ris- direction. ing spirits of the two-man outfit, that on the first two evenings, of Mr. Buffer's sojourn he was respectfully addressed as "Mr. Buffer," on the third evening as "Isaac," on the fourth as 'Ikey.' and on the fifth as "Goggles." To the stranger, one of the most stirking idiosyncrasics of the free and unfettered west is its delightful disregard of conventionalities. In the sunny clime of the cactus and coyote the cold barriers of social formalities melt versal camaraderie.

When Mr. Buffer had departed next morning to perform his ablutions in the pearby stream, Sandy looked up from over the pan of sputtering bacon on the box stove in the little shack tertwined his soft, white fingers. and smiled cheerfully.

"Freck," he said, "he's coming fast, Maybe we can turn th' trick tonight. Freck paused in his occupation of amiable Freck. pointing a blunted-pick and cocked his

frowsy head judicially. last night. Strikes me it would be safer to reel in about half what he got, an' then give him more. With proper play we'd orter land his entire roll about We'nsd'y night. Howsom-

ever, if he should plungsshould plunge we couldn't get sure action with them sticky cards.

"We couldn't, an' that's a fact." It was yet early in the evening when Freek assented gravely. "Twice last shall be most happy to pay for a nice Freck, as he swept up his fourth con- night I fell down on that middle- new deck. nothin' from his face when it's plumb

"One of us better trot over to Spiller's an' get a new deck," Sandy sugment with a little "real stuff." This gested, as he lifted the pan from the Sandy. "You're th' guest of this out-challenge being promptly accepted, a stove. "An' we ought to cash in our fit. Don't insult us by offerin' to pay

"Sh-sh-sh!" hissed Freek softly, Mr. Buffer stepped through the door-

less entrance and sniffed energetically as the mingled colors of bacon and coffee floated to his nostrils.

"Delicious!" he wheezed. gentlemen. I am indeed fortunate in

"An' profitable evenings," added Sandy with a bantering grin in Freck's Mr. Buffer, essaving a jovial laugh,

was seized by a prolonged period of coughing that racked his scrawny frame from top to toe.

"Mere chance," he finally wheezed. Mere chance, Mr. McGee. And it occurs to me that the overwelming predominance of the element of chance must explain the pecular fascination of the sport. No skill being required. the mercat novice may safely compete with the most experienced. I should like to suggest, however, were I certain of giving no offense-

Mr. Buffer hesitated, brought the green goggles to bear first on Sandy and then on Freck, and nervously in

"Certainly," murmured Sandy. offense-none whatever. "Spit it out, Goggles," insisted the

"I should like to suggest, then, ' renumed Mr. Buffer, softly, "that your "We give him most too much line cards are decidedly-well, you'll admit,, my friends, that they are no, exactly clean.

"They sure ain't." Freck assented with quick eagerness. Mr. Buffer bowed gratefully

'And if either of you gentlemen "Freck" interrupted Sandy, "if he should have occasion in the near future to journ by to-ah-"Spitlers," prompted the alert Freck.

"Thank you; yes, to Spitler's -I "Sandy's goin' this mornin'." Freek announced. "We're most out of to-

Mr. Buffer hastily produced a chining coin, but Freek waved a voluminous hand imperiously.

'Put it away, Goggles." commanded for anything."
"But, Mr. Phillips, it's a small item.

Mr. Buffer protested; "a small item to one who has plenty. However, out of deference to the noble principle-

"That's it!" Freck interjected. "I ain't th' price; it's th' principle! Shut That evening, while Sandy in water." wrapper from the new deck, Freck infact. Mr. Buffer, in his enthusiasm, stumbling upon such novel and Los- dustriously polished the table with a became almost offensively aggressive, pitable environments. I can never sleeve of his flannel shirt and smiled "Here's where I git even," he and he did. fougly the modest stakes disithin the avaricious sweep ly but copiously, and the seemed to lose their en, synchronous with the Sandy's boot upon Frick's de of fortune changed, stently Bufferward, and

ame a moment when Mr. about to "plunge." The scrutinized the five d intently, and the soft tantalizingly caressed oll of bills. The seven led surreptitiously from geinforce the three al-Freck's long fingers. aglyes." Sandy urged b you call or raise?"

a pretty fair hand erent pug. loomed like a

ghed, hesitated, and

eights and a deuce upand his fifth card flut-I. face down, upon the pointed in the direction of without the entrance to Smilingly Freck displayed vens and reached for the apex of the rise the first Mr. Buffer gently stayed

eights. Mr. McGee," he re-"That's the fourth on the faintly, "do you mean hear two-man outfit his been de "Four eights, Mr. McGee," he repeated. ground.

"Beggin your pardon," said Sandy, "that's a trey. I saw it plain "That's what." Freck Growled, bel-

ligerently; "it's th' trey of clubs, I seen it, too. No funny bizness goes here, Goggles. Mr. Buffer leaned back and regard-

ed the two-man outfit with expression an' of indignant surprise. "Gentlemen," he wheezed exciton;

"as an invalid I can resent your insulting imputations in but one way." He arose, placed one foot upon the disputed card, and tossed the plethoric roll to the center of the table.

There's two thousand dollars that say it's the eight. I allow no man to question my veracity with impunity," he said with calm dignity. Mr. Buffer had "plunged-plunged"

up against a dead sure cinch! You're fifty too strong for us." Freck ejaculated, as he hastily counted down the entire capital of the two- puttin us on." man outfit. "Take fifty back. This

"There's the mule," Mr. Buffer sug-

Mr. Buffer stooped. Steadily and fullen card with his sol for just a fraction of reckled hand, while Sandy turned it up. It was he spades! Sandy was the first is breath. With a howl let

himself upon the spot vi-fer had been. When his a portion of Mr. Buffer var that portion awang to the dy's chin with a cataput left but one-half of the fit to continue the argume

When Sandy emerged trance and raised himself posture, his dazed eye as the other half of the best the shack. In the shire light Freek's raw fact up merged into one vast and bed and his aggravated nose, remarked. "Four athwart the golden men

As Sandy grouned From him, then silently raise a rise, topped by the may wound to Spitler's States on a mule was disappea from view.

one scrawny, sore-eyel or skeletton?"

Freck struggled to an inter ed wrathfully. "One! Sandy Phillips to dozen of 'em goin' rousi w on a buz-saw! An even had as many arms as a Re an' a dynamite sky-mos One! Huh!

"Couldn't you land to he Freck?" "Couldn't I step on that or sprinkle salt on th' talk jack rabbit? Tried it see

Sandy slowly arose, kind ly at a pair of discarded per

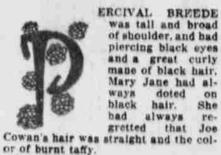
and shook an impressive the other half of the twom

"You freckled idiot, his you have a nightmare will it. forget it-forget its much do you reclou sal "You other idjut!"

with a last scowl at th equestrian, "hw much @) Spitler gits fer puttis him

A Small Steel Trap

By Elsie Endicott



was tall and broad of shoulder, and had piercing black eyes and a great curly mane of black hair. Mary Jane had aldoted black hair. always regretted that Joe

full of the death-throes of the Assyrians. It gave Mary Jane some delightful creeps. So much interest did she take in the recital that Joe Cowan had to ask her three times if she liked the new necktie he was wearing.

Joe was Mary's flance. She unwillingly and unwittingly compared him with Percival. She wished he was more like Percival. Joe was short and stout and wore glasses, big round glasses that made him look like a fish at times. Mary Jane and Joe had been "going

together" since they were school cht:dren. She had accepted him rather in the course of events, and principally because he was so set on having her do so, and she hated to give him pain. But Romance! Romance had never been considered.

The next day was Tuesday. After Mary Jane had got the family ironing off her hands, she remembered that she had Miss Sophia Breede's copy of "East Lynne." She took the book home. Incidentally she was introduced to Percival. He told her that "rusticating" a few weeks with his aunt, the Miss Breede in

She told him how she had enjoyed his rendering of the woes of Sennacherib the previous night, upon which he volunteered to read some of Miss Heman's poems to her. He was studying and with a stub of a pencil composed for the bar. Mary Jane had no doubt his voice and commanding presence would carry him far in that profes- read in the magazines.

How different he was, in his attitude toward life, from Joe. Joe's father owned a meat market, and Joe was quite content to plod along in the paternal footsteps. No ambition whatever for higher things.

Mary Jane listened to Percival's bar-ambitions and to his renderings of Miss Hemans until late in the afternoon, so late that Miss Breede insisted on serving tea, and after tea Percival

The Miss Breede residence was on First street and the Jenkins domicile on Second a rear line-fence dividing

the distance, and were an hour in making the trip.

Percival showed keen penetration of Mary Jane's character. She felt it incumbent to tell him, at parting, that she felt he understood her better than some who had known her for years." She invited him to call soon. Percival called the next afternoon. He brought her a box of candy. Heev often had Joe ever brought her boxes of candy Percival's deep voice filled the church Mary Jane shared the Jenkins front-

porch hammock with her visitor. Joe was out soliciting meat orders, and waved cheerily as he drove by. Mary Jane waved back a trifle constrained-

"Friend of yours?" Percipal asked nonchalantly.

"Yes," she answered, and changed the subject.

The afternoon passed very pleasantand quickly. She accepted Mr. Breede's invitation to go horsebackriding the next day. How often had Joe ever taken her horseback-riding? Joe called that evening after sup-The conversation dragged along wearily until nine, when he went home. He usually stayed until ten.

The next day's ride was a success Percival-how easy it was to think him as Percival-wore puttees. There was only one other man in Cedarville who made a practice of wearing puttees, and he was a retired colge professor of English antecedents. Mary Jane rode very happily by the putteed Percival. How leoning he looked when he held his hat in one hand and brushed back his hair from his temples with the other. Mary Jane contrived the ride so that neither in

going nor coming should they pass the Cowap meat market. Percival recited on the homeward way. He even paused for five minutes, an ode which Mary Jane was certain was much better than some she had

she also showed further insight as a character reader. He told her that she underestimated herself. How much better he understood her than

Joe ever had! Sunday afternoon Joe called. came in the open buggy in which he solicited meat orders. He took it as a matter of course that Mary Jane would enjoy riding with him. She had often gone with delight, but Low she viewed the prospect with distaste.

How common the rig looked! It had no lettering on it, but its but it yel-low wheels and unspeakably It is run-

went quite around the town to cover cival taking a lady riding in such a vehicle! Joe was surprised when she nega-

tived his proposition. She professed a headache. "Probably too much horseback-riding yesterday." Joe said, and the battle

was on.

"How dare you?" Mary Jane replied. in true melodramatic style. Joe replied that the whole town was

talking abut her carryings-on, and he was tired of it, and she could choose between the two, and a lot of things were said in a very short time that neither meant, and in less than a half-hour after his arrival Joe was driving blindly away, with a certain diamond ring in his pocket walch Mary Jane had been wearing for him for goodness knows how many mouths. Mary Jane cried for a few minutes.

Then she bethought herself of the win-

"I'll show him," she said to herself. She trailed one end of an apron out of the window, and then bathed her al Breede Gatepost." This post had eyes and checks to remove the redness. been turned by lathe and hand during The signal brought instant results. a slack winter, by Old man Breede, Mary Jane had scarcely completed her was as full of flutings and chisclings freshening operations when she heard and curves as a wooden post could be heels click merrily down the gravel out to a depth of four inches into a

The days that followed were full ones for the lovers. Every day there were long rides or long walks to be taken. Every day there were joems to be read and momentous questions discussed, such as. "Is a man or a woman capable of the more sincere affection?

At times Percival's devotion seemed to cloy, from very aweetness, but only for an instant; his romanticism would break out in a new place and sweep Mary Jane merrily along with him.

He invented a code in which such sentiments as "Whose Little Sweetheart Are You?" and its answering token of "Your Little Sweetheart. could be wigwagged with a handkerchief from an upper window of the Jenkins homestead to the Breede cottage and vice versa. He contrived to shoot an arrow through her open window with a sweet-messaged pote

wrapped round the feathered end. And then he discovered the possibilities of the locally famous "Ornamentgate slam and Percival's and the top of it had been hollowed

It stood at the Whittaker street end of the Breed:-Jenkins line-fence. By standing on tipioe, one of the beight of Mary Jane or Percival could touch the bottom of the urn's inside with the tips of one's fingers.

"What an elegant way to send messages." Percival said, one afternoon when the lovers were hanging over the line-fence exchanging confidences. Messages!" Mary Jan'e's eyes li: up with expectancy.

"Yes. I could write you things, and post them in the urn. Then you could get them and post replies in the same

It would be just like a book, or a play. Some things always were so much sweeter when they were on paper! Mary Jane agreed ecstatically. After that Percival left a note in the urn for Mary Jane every noon. He would stroll out leisurely at bedtime

and get a reply to dream over. Alas that all Earth's children cannot be equally happy! If Mary Jane and Percival were living in a seventh heaven of delight. Joe Cowan was living very much below that level. Mary Jane's defection changed his whole disposition. Formerly cheerful, he now moped the hours away miserably. He spoke to his meat customers in monosyllables. Once a model of careful-

ness, his pathway now was one strewn with mistakes. He insulted a Jewish customer by leaving her salt pork. He estranged the stanch Catholic clan of O'Brien with a Friday delivery of roast beef. Nor did his cares end with the setting of the sun. At night he sought his fevered couch and wooed rest in vain.

He tried to soften Mary Jane's adamantine heart, but vainly. He wrote her warm letters full of reproaches and pleadings. They were ignored. He called her up on the telephone. At the first words from his lips, bang! went the receiver. He intercepted her on the street; she stared haughtily above

Unable to move the woman, he vainly cudgeled his brain to devise a way of ridding himself of his rival. cannot nowadays truss up an enemy and take him away to a cave or a dungeon, as they did in days of yore. One cannot shoot a man on the streets

merely for stealing his sweetheart. He added a special fillip to his misery by driving madly past the Jenkins home many times daily. At night, when wooling exhaustion by taking walks over the town, his feet seldom failed to take him around the square in which the disdainful maid lived.



er and fairly flew over to the phone. self to sleep.

Surely this was a call from Jack, for hadn't he told her he would undoubtedly be home Thurs-All excited, she took down the receiver and in her sweetest tones said.

The message was short, but oh. nice. The voice on the other end of the wire said. "Is this you, dear? Just Lot a minute to call you; will be over tonight at eight and will tell you all. By the way, I have got something pretty nice here for you.

Alice could not work any more, so she quickly put her things away and tripped merily homewhard, humming to herself, wondering what Jack had for her. The town clock struck eight, but no

Jack had yet arrived. Alice paced up

GAIN the telephone the walk. Alice knew now that Jack and Alice was not coming; it was the first time quickly jumped up that he had failed to keep his word. from the typewrit- She ascended the stairs in tears, locked herself in her room and sobbed her-

> In the morning she awoke with a terrible headache; she had no desire for any breakfast, but went to work feeling very blue. What a change from the night before, when she tripped gayly along. Now every step seemed like a thorn thrust into her

the bills were added incorrectly, the typewriter was writing over and there was trouble everywhere. At 11 o'clock "Hello, aweetheart, I suppose you-

the telephone rang and Alice slowly took down the receiver and coldly said. "Quite enough: I am finished with you," uttered Alice sternly and hung

up the receiver. If Jack Gould though

he could disappoint Alice Blake and

spoil her evening he had a great deal

Everything went wrong at work;

had intended to come home the day Alice's birthday, he stopped over in New York to purchase a diamond ring. He could not imagine what had happened to cause Alice to act in the manner she did.

At noon Alice went out to dinner, and while walking along met her friend, Grace Horne. Grace's face was all aglow, and as she held up her left hand there Alice saw on her finger a magnificent diamond. Grace was all excited and told Alice that Paul had been away for a tew days and she did not expect him back until Sunday, but as yesterday was her birthday he came home early. The funniest part of it was he called her up in the afternoon and thought he had her on the line, but central gave him the wrong number and he never realized it until he came over at night, and when she was so surprised to see him he could not understand it, for he told her he had phoned her an said that he was coming over in the evening with something "continued in the continued in e evening with some-

to ponder over what she had done. before, but knowing that today was She knew very well that she was the party Paul had on the line, and that poor Jack did not arrive home until this morning, and then to think of the cold and angry manner in which she responded to his call. What would

he think of her? She sat down and hastily wrote these few lines: "Come over tonight. Big misunderstanding to clear up-Alice. After placing a special delivery stamp on the envelope, she despatched the office boy with the letter

to the postoffice. As the town clock pealed forth the hour of eight on that evening Jack's footsteps could be plainly heard com-ing up the walk. Alice came out to meet him, and after receiving him cordially brought him around to the gar-They wandered down through the orchard until they came to the old tustic seat under the apple tree, and was very much amused at the little new. Joe led there Alice related her story, which episode, and when all was told he shortly drew forth from his pocket a brillianis pearance.

figure making his way in night. Later investigates the note that worthy halfs Jane. The next day at came to Joe. He made the local hardware such That night the tripped gayly along the

led to the Breede Orne The moon was at its could have counted the with which his pajames at a distance of twenty He reached his soal. right hand over the s provised mail-box, and with surprise and fris had snapped on his hard in a grip of steel. He stood on tiptos

lease himself. In the hole some miscresul small steel trap. Tat bring enough pressure lease the spring "How do you do M was his rival's voice.

He turned, but what turning wrought. He shipped to one side. In the

it seemed that his askew, but it was only refulgent mane was and as Joe looked spell-best to the ground. Joe had wondered wat with his rival after his Now with a flash of his knew. He picked up the ground, knotted it and a ground, knotted it and a ground.

pebble in a handkert Back in a minute. taker street. There was a swiable clutter which attested in vised missie had popen window of Man There was an instant

her room, showing that ed her attention. Back to the post to cur!" Breede hissed broken. He dared not face

his awful secret disco not face her to especially delivery of his rares her window. edge to her how his ticism. There re avenue of escape It is easy to