

Montana Comes Again

A RAPID-FIRE ROMANCE BY EVAN EVANS.

SYNOPSIS: Mateo Rubio, the subtle Mexican Robin Hood, and Rosita, the girl who has been kidnapped by the Montana Kid, are the stars of this story. The Montana Kid, who is the leader of a band of outlaws, has stolen Mateo from the church in Durango by the government. The Kid had the United States because Mateo schemes put him outside the law. But the real reason he is now at Mateo's side is in Durango to Rosita. An arrow is a flower in the black of her hair.

CHAPTER 11 AT THE INN

Beyond a certain point of time, no one knew the past of Santos. There was a horrible rumor to the effect that not time, but torment, had worked the evil pattern in the face of Miguel Santos. It was even said, though this was a thing that no one really believed, that he had lost his leg in escaping from the Valley of the Dead.

But men did not escape from the Valley of the Dead. It was against chance and against thought that anything human could escape from that well-guarded pit of destruction far in the south, where men and women were made into animals and sold for labor on the tobacco plantations.

Women lived there for two years or three. A strong man had been known to endure for as much as seven or eight years. But that was the limit.

Yet if Miguel Santos had not escaped from the Valley of the Dead, then surely he had been through some frightful experience early in his life. He might be fifty now. But twenty years ago, when he first appeared in Durango, he had appeared almost exactly as old as he was now.

He had enough money to open the inn; he had enough money to persuade a pretty girl to marry him. Rosita was born, and her mother died shortly after because, it was said, she could not endure the ugly torment which was printed forever in the face of Miguel.

On this night, when he heard the song which ended with the name of Rosita, Miguel Santos instantly left the rear gaming-room and hurried forward, walking with a certain swing which kept the wooden leg in effective motion for long striding.

Moving with a peculiar hitch and away, he could get about almost as well as a normal man of his years. When he came into the front room he had a mere glimpse of Rosita disappearing through the front door.

"The little bird heard some one whistle," said a tall young caballero at one of the tables. Then he laughed, his breath knocking a ragged hole in the smoky air.

Miguel Santos went straight on and through the door into the street. There he saw the mare, the girl, the inn. The rider had dismounted. A dim hint of light sparkled over the little silver spangles of his outfit; the same light gleamed on the red satin of the mare's flank.

The eyes of Miguel was far sharper than a hawk's when he looked into certain matters. Now he was able to see the wide shoulders, the lofty carriage, the faintly gleaming smile of the man. And he felt the stranger's importance as though the voice of a crier had struck suddenly upon his ear.

"Will you smoke?" the girl was saying. "Who would light a match in a dark street?" answered the stranger. Something in the words, something in the voice, clung to the memory of Miguel. He came closer.

"Do you know this man?" he asked of Rosita. "Somewhere I have known him," said the girl.

Miguel Santos came so close that he could smell the reek of the sweating horse.

"Who are you?" he asked. THEY went into the little patio of the inn. On one side of the court was the barn and stables to accommodate the horses and mules of travelers. The larger wing was the hotel-saloon.

They crossed the inclosure with nothing but starlight to show the way so Rosita took the hand of Montana and led him. In that manner he was able to pass a broken-down cart, a pile of nameless junk, the curbstones and wooden top of a well.

Anything might happen here. Out of the dark litter men might start; starlight would hardly show the knives with which all Mexicans know how to work. Once he snatched his hand from the soft fingers of the girl when something moved on the ground.

It was only a grunting pig that got out of the way with a voice half

deep and half whining. And the girl laughed while Montana slipped back inside his clothes the gun he had drawn.

He left his mare at the foot of an open stairs that angled up the wall. Sally rubbed her muzzle against his shoulder. He could see the dim glass of her eyes. She blew out a long breath on him, and stamped, as though to make clear that she did not wish to be left alone in this strange place. But the girl was already a few steps up the stairs, and Montana followed.

At the top landing she pushed open a door. He followed her right into thick darkness. He could hear her breathing, close to him. If this were a trap, the shutting of the door would wall him away forever from the world that had known him. He looked back for an instant into his past and saw the faces of men, savage or laughing, and the broad, comfortable facade of the Lavery home, and Ruth Lavery last of all. But even out of the darkness of this moment he had no regret.

Then a match was scratched. The blue spurt of the flame showed him only the face and the slender hands of the girl, at first. They were the hands of an aristocrat; the touch of them had been so soft that it was plain she had worked most of her life with her smile and her eyes, rather than with her fingers.

The flame burned yellow. He saw a room with two windows, lace curtains across them tied back with yellow ribbons. There was an old four-poster bed. The floor sagged a good bit under the century-old weight of it. A little porcelain stove glittered yellow and white in a corner.

THE girl was lifting the chimney of a lamp on the table. The flame ran across the wick. A white spot of light sprang out on the ceiling, as she pressed the chimney down. The whole room was warmly involved in radiance that let him see all of the girl for the first time.

She was blowing out the match, knocking a thin shower of sparks off the charred wood with her breath. Her eyes were down; she was being looked at.

Well, she was worth seeing. She had no place in a room like this. She looked no more at home, here, than a great opera singer doing a one-night stand in the sticks.

"Sit down, señor," said the girl. "My father will come at once. There—you hear him on the stairs?"

Montana heard the bump and pause of sound as the wooden leg labored up the way. The girl put her head to one side and sighed. She seemed to be pitying the effort of her father, and yet she kept smiling, as though she had learned one lesson so thoroughly that she would never be able to forget it.

"Rosita, you're a dancer, eh?" said he. "Who has told you that?" she asked him.

"Just because there's a song about you. That old song, Rosita." "Song?" she echoed, tilting her head.

He sang to her his second song. Although he suppressed the strength of his voice, the resonance vibrated intimately through the room. The meaning of the words ran somewhat like this:

"You have seen the stream leap, And the trout spring in the current, And the water-couzel wing through the spray. But I have seen Rosita dancing, Dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing."

"You have seen the wind blow out of heaven And the leaves whirling round in the wind-pool, But you have never laughed with joy, Seeing Rosita, Rosita dancing, Dancing, dancing, dancing, dancing."

As the first words came from his lips, she began to sway her head a little with the rhythm of the music until the lights quivered along her throat and the rose in her hair nodded a trifle as though in agreement.

The grating knob of the door, as it turned, ended the song and the slight flexion of her accompaniment. Miguel Santos came into the room. He was dressed in white cotton trousers and a clean white apron, but nothing could make him look the part of a bartender.

Inside the door he paused for a moment and stared at the stranger. Lines not only seamed the face of Miguel, but also cross-checked it. The closer Montana looked at him the older he seemed.

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Tomorrow, Montana confesses his purpose to Santos.

LEGION STRESSES MEMBERSHIP GAIN DURING FEBRUARY

February is membership month in the American Legion and Commander I. E. Foy urges all delinquent members to get their dues in. Membership in the post is nearing the 100 mark. Those who do not pay this month will not receive the state and national publications and congress in session now, we are sure no one will want to lose the best veteran papers in the country which give so complete a story on the happenings at the nation's capital. Our membership committee has been working but we have to increase the membership of our post. It is not only the privilege of an ex-service man to belong to the Legion, it is his duty. Let's get busy and back Commander Foy up with a paid up membership by March 1. We don't know whether we'll get our adjusted compensation this year or not, but one thing we do know, and that is if the ex-service don't get into one organization like ours and work together all the time they'll find themselves up the creek without a paddle. Edw. L. Bostright, department vice commander and membership chairman, has prepared an interesting analysis of Oregon's population, showing the census figures on county population and the number of ex-service men in the county. The

percentage of veterans to population should be a guide to the percentage of Legionnaires which should be enrolled in this county. Study these figures and help your commander build up his membership. Jackson county, with a population of 32,918 has 1,271 veterans within its boundaries.

I say: "Hats off to the past, and coats off to the future. You want the bonus. Our comrades need it. We can use it. Our national commander is fighting for it. We have got to pitch in and dig—dig up old and new memberships because that is how we will win. In fact it is the only way."

Next meeting of Medford post will be Monday evening at the Medford Armory and Commander Foy is asking every member to bring in a member's dues. At 6:30 p. m. the post and auxiliary members will hold a covered dish supper.

Oregon Weather
Cloudy and foggy tonight and Thursday, moderate temperature, moderate easterly wind off the coast. When it comes to radios, remember "Fruitt's can do it." Phone 22.

DAM FISH LADDER PLANS OPPOSED

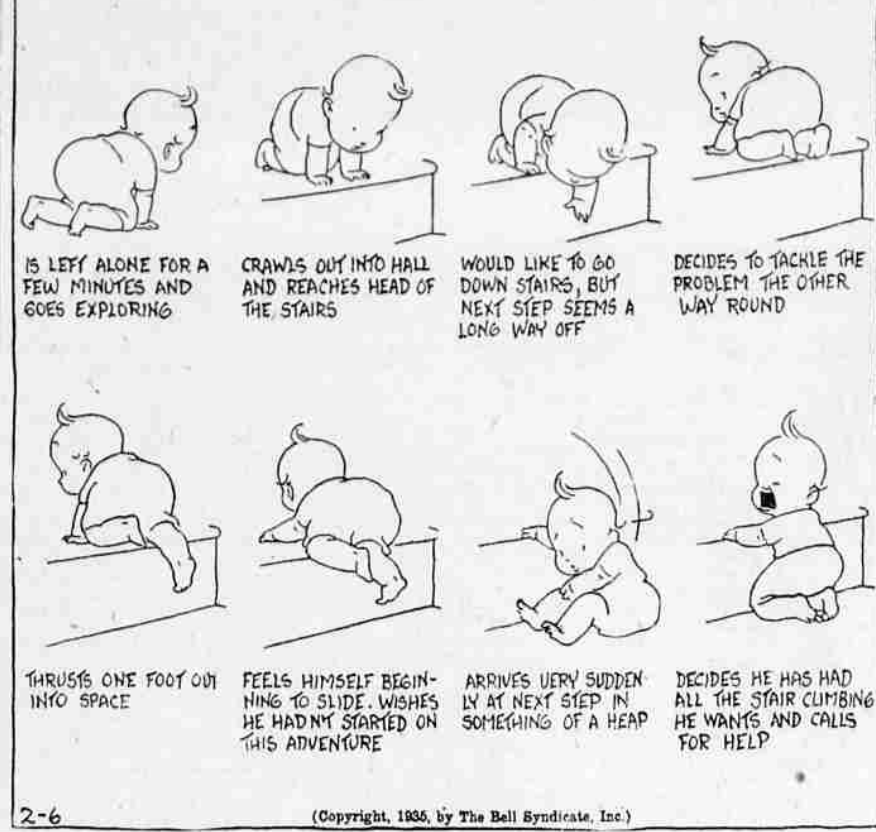
PORTLAND, Feb. 6.—(AP)—The decision of the U. S. army board of engineers to recommend appropriation of \$3,600,000 for installation at Bonneville dam of four fish ladders each 30 feet wide, three fingered passes and two double sets of fish locks, is not satisfactory to the fish and game commission of Oregon and Washington.

On behalf of the two commissions, John C. Veatch has asked Senator McNary to impress the war department with the fact that the decision of the army engineers is inadequate and contrary to the recommendations of the fishery departments concerned, and does not provide fishway facilities specified by all fishery departments.

The fishery departments estimate the cost of what they consider adequate equipment, at \$4,600,000.

STAIR CLIMBER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



15 LEFT ALONE FOR A FEW MINUTES AND GOES EXPLORING

CRAWLS OUT INTO HALL AND REACHES HEAD OF THE STAIRS

WOULD LIKE TO GO DOWN STAIRS, BUT NEXT STEP SEEMS A LONG WAY OFF

DECIDES TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM THE OTHER WAY ROUND

THRUSTS ONE FOOT OUT INTO SPACE

FEELS HIMSELF BEGINNING TO SLIDE. WISHES HE HADN'T STARTED ON THIS ADVENTURE

ARRIVES VERY SUDDENLY AT NEXT STEP IN SOMETHING OF A HEAP

DECIDES HE HAS HAD ALL THE STAIR CLIMBING HE WANTS AND CALLS FOR HELP

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S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Raymore Protests!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Mr. Chirp's Dismay



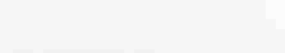
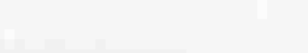
BEN FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN GETTING SOME ORDER ABOARD THE BOAT!



THE NEBBIS—Mind Your Own Business



BRINGING UP FATHER



BACK FENCE GOSSIP BARES TROUBLES OF CONSTANCE BENNETT

HOLLYWOOD, Calif., Feb. 6.—(AP)—The movie colony was chortling over a piece of literal "back fence" gossip today. The topic was the back fence of the palatial new estate Constance Bennett is building in Holmby Hills. It seems that no sooner had the fence been built than Roy W. Clark, a contractor, tore it down and proceeded to dump a lot of nasty old debris all over the nice, clean land where Constance is building, according to the actress' complaint to city officials. Clark is constructing a noise on property adjoining that of Miss Bennett.

UNITED VERDE COPPER CONTROL PURCHASED

NEW YORK, Feb. 6.—(AP)—Dow Jones & Co. said today the Phelps Dodge Corp. has acquired a large block of shares of United Verde Copper Co. It was understood the new agency said that the holding are nearly large enough to involve control. United Verde's production capacity is said to be 68,000 short tons of copper a year.