

WOMEN SPHINXES

By J. D. Gillilan

"For the love of God, sir, do not refuse me! I am here among strangers, and have met with many misfortunes in this country. If you do not take me, I shall lose my last chance of returning to my friends and relatives."

Such was the touching and successful appeal made to A. J. Simmons at old Fort Benton in 1866 when he and a company of nine others were embarking down the Mississippi for the "states." It was a young man of about twenty, and a stranger to every one of the party, but his pleasant, honest face disarmed all suspicion as to his character, and after a few hasty words of consultation with his companions it was agreed that he should accompany them. In those days men were taken for their present worth and exhibition of ability, and little was asked our lad about himself. They called him "Johnny" and his skill with a pistol as exhibited almost every day when antelope or deer were needed won for him the admiration of the entire party. The rougher life of the members of the party seemed to have no charm for him, and he indulged in none of the coarse jokes that went round; nor did he use profanity.

"When the camping time came he was asked to share our bed and blankets with us for he brought none with him. Thus he ate and slept with us to the end of the long trip."

It was an exciting journey; they fought Indians, killed grizzlies and Johnny, the errand boy, was worth far more the price of his passage would have amounted to had he paid full fare.

Continuing the narrative, Mr. Simmons said: "As we were finishing our anything but tedious trip, one day Johnny asked me if I were going to get off at Sioux City; receiving an affirmative reply, and upon my urging him to accompany me to Chicago, he broke into tears and said: 'Come with me on the deck, I have something to tell which will greatly surprise you.'" He then proceeded to thank me for the kindness I had shown him, and now that we had to part he wanted to reveal something which not to have done he felt would be next to criminal. "The disguise is no longer necessary for my protection. I am a woman." Of course I was surprised, but he (she) went on to tell me the story of her life and why she had assumed male attire.

At the age of 19 contrary to the wishes of her parents she had married a Union soldier in Tennessee. Reverses and persecutions followed and they went to California. Failing in mining enterprises he became discouraged and took to gambling. Then he drank till reduced morally and physically. In a game of faro a fight occurred and he killed his opponent. Now an outlaw he fled wounded to the forest where secreting himself he lay till he could send word to his wife. She put on men's clothing and they fled anywhere, everywhere, always with the feeling of the hunted till crossing Oregon and Idaho he died in Montana

in midwinter and with the assistance of a passing miner the body was buried. Then it was she went to Fort Benton for the trip as above related.—(Retold from "Vigilante Days and Ways" a new book with much local Idaho color.)

For years there was a stage driver on the line between Salt Lake and Virginia City named Charley Parker. He roughed it with all the toughs and hardships of those stormy days when the "man on foot" was in the most dangerous position, yet stayed "by the stuff" until he died. The autopsy revealed him a woman. "Her story" did you say? It died with her. A woman is the only one who can keep a secret.

The tale of Joe Monahan of Owyhee county is too new to be retold here. Recently on the Jordan valley stage the writer had as companion a man who had ridden the range with Joe, had been in his cabin, knew him "like a book" but never suspected that a person who could ride and rope and endure as could Joe Monahan was a woman. Kindly mannered, attentive to her own affairs, fond of isolation, she was a sphinx that knew how to hold her tongue and did so. Only two or three people in the country knew her awful secret and these were women.

George Ingman, well known to the stage-riding public until his recent death, was once "held up" in Colorado. Two men attended to him and the treasure-box and one stood a little way off holding their horses. Years afterward when he was driving between Boise and Huntington, he told me, he picked up a woman once well known in the under-world of this region, who rode with him on the "outside." In the course of their conversation she asked him if he was not held up once in a certain spot in Colorado. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, she said, "Yes, I was there, too."

That sphinx told a part of her story, but not all.

If all women should tell all they know, society would not last a single day.

Politics and Politicians.

Progressives of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and the Dakotas are to join in a conference in St. Paul this month.

Seven newspaper publishers will be included in the membership of the United States senate after March 4 next.

William Flinn is arranging for a state convention of Pennsylvania Progressives to be held in Harrisburg some time this month.

Governor Herbert S. Hadley of Missouri is expected to become a candidate for United States senator next year, to succeed William J. Stone.

Vice President-elect Thomas R. Marshall will cease to be governor of Indiana on Jan. 13, on which date he will be succeeded by Samuel H. Ralston.