

# MADGE

A Story of the  
Former West

By JAMES G. FRIEBERG

What a change a generation has made in what was once "the west!" When "wild west" shows first appeared they represented what was really going on between the Missouri river and the Pacific ocean, or, rather, what was then dying out. Now the western half of the continent is dotted with cities containing mercantile establishments, manufactories and dwellings with every convenience, including luxuries. The western settler has given place to the ranchman, the prospector to the capitalist, the gambler to the teacher and the Indian to the all.

These people of former times constitute a unique society. They were good and bad mingled, the good constantly striving to throw off the bad, though the line was not sharply drawn between them.

The women, though disproportionately small in numbers, partook of the same general characteristics as the men. There was a type of western woman, personated on the mimic stage in eastern cities during the latter part of the nineteenth century, who was very popular—a diamond in the rough, independent, free hearted, free handed and supposed to be fairly moral. She could ride, shoot or throw a lariat tackle a grizzly or bring down an antelope at long range. Some had fought Indians, and all were fearless.

When a very young man, desiring to see people of whom I had heard so much, I went to spend a season among them. The Union Pacific railroad was being built, and I traveled on a train to the foot of the Rocky mountains. Then I went on by stagecoach till I reached a region in which gold had recently been discovered, and I put up for a while at the boarding house of a woman named Hayward. Madge was her first name, and she was seldom called by any other. Those who addressed her by the last name usually prefixed a Mrs., but whether she was married, single or divorced I didn't know. No one there cared.

There was that freedom about her and her house of which I had read. Certainly nothing was conventional. And yet there was a line drawn beyond which no one ever passed. I saw one man attempt to pass it, and I saw Madge put him out of her house with a revolver.

I was not over nineteen years old at the time and looked even younger. Madge took me under her protection. The first man who appeared to guy me for a tenderfoot got a dressing down from her that shut him up instantly, and from that time, being considered by the frequenters of the house as her pet, I was let alone.

Every one in the community gambled, and Madge was no exception to the rule. Every evening after she had washed and put away the supper dishes she would sit down with whoever was ready to play the national game of poker, and more or less money would change hands. But at 11 o'clock, no matter who had won or lost, she would take the cards from the table and put them away. She said she didn't propose that the house should get the reputation of being a gambling den. On one occasion a man who had lost a good deal of money protested at the game being summarily closed, whereupon Madge informed him that he would not be permitted to play there again. Had she been a man there would doubtless have been a fracas, but Madge had the support of every man in the party, though it is questionable if she needed it. I think she could have taken care of herself had the necessity arisen.

I wished to take a hand at some of these poker parties, but Madge would not consent to my doing so. One evening I begged so hard that she consented. When I left the table I had lost \$60. Madge handed me the money, which I refused to accept from her, whereupon she forced it upon me. It is needless to say that this was the last time I played the game to her house.

Of course those who came and went to and from Madge Hayward's were a floating throng. Now and then some one who played poker there would drop out, and I suspected that he had been cleaned out, though nothing was said about it, and it was generally understood that any application for a small loan would be honored by the mistress of the house. Madge was considered an excellent poker player, but I never understood that she was much ahead in the long run. She was so liberal that sometimes it looked as if she must be

Nevertheless occasionally I saw her win large pots. One evening I was looking over a game at which she was playing with some miners who had come in during the day loaded with dust. The miners were anxious for high stakes, and Madge was continually trying to keep the limit down. Presently a jack pot began to grow upon the table. A number of hands were dealt, but nobody got the requisite cards to open the pot, and at every new deal the pot was sweetened.

A man by the name of Plunket was dealer when some one got a hand that warranted his opening the betting. Every one at the table was "in," and everybody "saw" the bets that were made till all were satisfied. Then it was proposed, since there was a good deal of money already on the table, that after the draw the best hand should take it in. Madge was the last person to call for a card. Throwing her hand on the table face up, she displayed three aces, a knave and a deuce. She hesitated some time as to which of the two lower cards to discard and finally threw out the knave. Plunket dealt her a card in its place. It was another deuce, which gave her an ace full. It was a winner.

Madge scraped the money off the table, and soon after that a Connecticut clock on the mantel wheezed out the hour of 11, and the game came to an end through limitation.

The next day I left Madge Hayward's boarding house to pursue my travels and soon afterward returned to the east. I did not go back to the west for a matter of twenty years. During the interval the region where Madge Hayward had lived had been comprised within the limits of a newly admitted state. I found all much changed. I visited the capital, and a friend took me to call upon the governor. The latter was a man about fifty-five years of age and, though he dressed in the professional black, bore marks of having belonged to the early times. There was something about him that seemed familiar to me, and I fancied I might have met him during my western tour years ago. But I couldn't place him, nor could he remember having seen me before. He invited me to dinner at his home, and I accepted.

The moment I laid eyes on his wife I noticed in her, too, something familiar. If I had met her during my previous visit to the region I now held her twenty years older than she was then. The moment she looked at me I saw by the expression on her face that there was something about me that was not strange to her, but as she received me as a stranger I did not claim a previous acquaintance.

The dinner passed off pleasantly, the governor leaving his wife to do most of the entertaining. They both evidently had been denizens of the country in its primitive days, but women take to new conditions easier than men, and the wife would have passed for a lady anywhere. Indeed, she had spent some time with her husband in Washington while he had represented his state in congress. I heard afterward that she had been quite prominent socially at the capital.

Suddenly a look, a motion, a gesture—I can't tell which—told me that she was Madge Hayward. I was convinced that she had recognized me from the first, and if she had wished to be known as her former self she would have greeted me as her former boarder. But since she had not thus made herself known I did not feel warranted in claiming a former acquaintance. Therefore when I took leave of my hosts I did not mention the matter of bygone days. But the lady gave me a pressure of the hand that assured me I was not only remembered by her, but remembered favorably. I fancied, however, that gratitude was mingled with other sentiments. I not having given away her previous condition to her husband.

But in the latter supposition I was mistaken. While smoking in the hotel at which I was stopping a man stepped up to me who recognized in the man of thirty-nine the youth of nineteen. He proved to be one of the poker party convened at Madge Hayward's the evening before my departure. I told him that I had dined with the governor and his wife, had recognized the wife as Madge and the governor seemed familiar to me. I also asked him if he remembered how Madge had drawn the deuce that had filled her hand and won a large pot. He said he did and straightway let me into a secret.

"What I am going to tell you," he said, "is confidential. I am the only man now about here who was here then. The record of the governor and his wife is not known, and I wouldn't make it known to any one here. Madge ostensibly kept a boarding house, but it was really a gambling house. She had a husband, and the two worked the scheme together. Do you remember a man called Plunket, who dealt her that deuce? Well, he was her husband and is now the governor. He was very clever as a dealer and had fixed her hand for her before filling it with the deuce. I didn't know this at the time. I inferred it afterward when I learned the rest of the secret. Plunket

was not his real name. The pair made no end of money through their scheme, and afterward the husband became prominent in politics. Having invested the money made as a card sharper in mines, he became very rich, was elected to congress and is now, as you know, governor."

"I am sorry," I said to my informant, "to hear this. I always liked Madge, and I know that she liked me. I wish you had not told me."

"You should remember that this couple were then a part of their surroundings. Would you expect to find flowers in a donkey pasture or thistles in a conservatory?"

"But the dishonesty of it all!" I exclaimed.

"Where was the dishonesty? It was the common custom of those days for those playing cards to beat one another if they could. Did Madge take your money that way? No. She would not allow you to play. I do not doubt that she and her husband, having arisen from that lowly condition which then prevailed, now look back upon it with horror."

I was not convinced, but I called on my old friend Madge and claimed an acquaintance. Her eyes filled with tears as I did so, and she and the governor kept me their guest as long as I could be induced to remain with them.

## Knights of Old.

The knights of the days of chivalry were so well protected by their armor that they were practically invincible to all ordinary weapons. Even when dismounted they could not be injured save by the misericorde, a thin dagger, which penetrated the chains of the armors. In more than one battle knights fallen from their horses could not be killed until their armor had been broken up with axes and hammers.

## The Traitors' Gate.

One of the most famous entrances in the world is doubtless the ancient Traitors' Gate, in the Tower of London. It was through this portal for several centuries that traitors were conducted from the shores of the river Thames into the tower. To Canadians probably the most familiar of these unfortunates was Sir Walter Raleigh.

## Feminine Finesse.

Duffer—My wife got a fiver out of me to-day with one happy remark.

Puffer—Let's have it.

Duffer—She told our boy Willie that she was his nearest relative, but that I was his closest.

## Kind of Him.

"George, I'm very much worried. The landlord says he is going to raise the rent."

"Is he? Then why do you want me to worry trying to do it?"

## Some British Glad Raiment.

The new mantle and cloak which the king has commanded for the knights of the Grand Cross of the Victorian Order will be very handsome indeed, of dark blue satin, with a border two inches deep of red, a cordon of blue and gold and white silk lining. The collar to be worn on "collar days" is beautiful indeed—all blue enamel and gold roses, with carbuncle centres and white enamel inscriptions. In the centre of all Queen Victoria's medallion is shown in gold. —London Gentlewoman.

## Whole Hog or None.

"Whole hog or none" refers to the alleged custom of Mohammed to allow his followers to eat all except one portion of a pig, which portion, however, was not specified. The result, therefore, was that if a Mohammedan did not wholly avoid the use of pork he might as well run the risk of consuming the whole hog as to eat any portion thereof.

## The Otter's Wanderlust.

Of all the beasts in the world, the otter, that fierce outlaw, is the greatest wanderer. It is as if he were afflicted with a curse that forbids him to be still, that forces him ever to push on—on—on! Rest as rest he knows not. Three days will see the end of his longest inaction, and the amount of miles he covers in a fortnight would amaze some folk.

## A Poetical Feat.

"That writer is a paradoxical poet." "In what way?" "I called to see him one day and found that his idyl moments were keeping him busy."

## Portraits.

"I don't think your portrait is much like the original, old man." "Only once have I painted a portrait that was really like my sitter, and she sued me for libel afterward."

## Fairy Stories.

Mr. Bacon—When a woman tells a fairy story she always begins like this, "Once upon a time." Mrs. Bacon—Yes, and when a man tells a fairy story he always begins like this: "There, now, dear, don't be angry with me. You see, it was like this."—Yonkers Statesman.

## Didn't Have to Make Her.

"Well, I saw my wife off for the West Indies this morning." "Jamaica?" "No; she went of her own accord."—Princeton Tiger.

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