

"ACES and EIGHTS"

And Since August 2 1876, That Has Been the "Dead Man's Hand"

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

ACES and eights! Or, to be more specific, the aces and eights of spades and clubs, the black aces and eights—how many a later player holding that sinister combination, in some lighted, cheerful room, must have felt a pricking of his scalp as if an icy breeze fanned his hands, or some dark, cold presence, suddenly in the room, stood mocking at his shoulder.

For more than half a century that sinister combination has been known as the "Dead Man's Hand." It was the hand of cards which the famous Wild Bill Hickok was holding when he was assassinated in Deadwood, S. D., on August 2, 1876, and that event is a landmark in the history of the American frontier.

"His death marked not only the loss of a brave and gentle man, but also the passing of a great epic," writes a recent biographer of this celebrated frontiersman. "Wild Bill, the greatest scout of the Plains, the cool and fearless marshal of border 'bad towns,' the marvelous marksman, the terror of desperadoes and 'bad men' was gone. And with him was gone the most vital need for a man of his type. The days of wild, free frontier life were numbered. Already courts and schools and libraries and factories were so near by that one more eager forward move would put them and the rich life they brought into the place of saloon and gambling-hall and dance-resort. Wild Bill, and the period in which he lived, both had played their part."

The man who wrote those words was the late William Eisey Connelley, secretary of the Kansas State Historical society. When he died in 1930 he left behind him the manuscript of an unpublished biography of Hickok, based upon 42 years of research. During that time he had an unusual opportunity to obtain, evaluate and interpret authentic material relating to the life and character of Hickok. Associated with him in his work was his daughter, Mrs. Edith Connelley Cliff, and upon his death it fell to her lot to edit her father's manuscript and round out the story which he was writing. The result was the book "Wild Bill and His Era—The Life and Adventures of James Butler Hickok," (issued last year by the Press of the Pioneers, a New York publishing firm, directed by Rufus Rockwell Wilson, which is doing an invaluable work in preserving a variety of pioneer historical records) and in the opinion of those best able to judge the result, this latest biography is "a sane, convincing portrait of Wild Bill as he was."

Like many another Wild West hero, Wild Bill Hickok has been the central figure in many a tall tale which was either entirely fictitious in the first place or had only a slight basis of fact but which, by constant repetition, has come to be regarded as fact. Therefore, one of the values of Connelley's book is that it dispels many of these legends and myths which have clustered around the name of Wild Bill and substitutes for them statements which can be accepted with the confidence that they represent the truth about him as nearly as it is possible to learn the truth about a man who had such a colorful and varied career as Hickok had.

Among these legends is the story of how James Butler Hickok came to be known as "Wild Bill" and there have been many variations on this theme as there have been on most of the other events in his life. According to Connelley, the true story is this: In 1861 Hickok, already widely noted as a skillful government scout and guide, was placed in charge of a wagon train which, escorted by 12 guards, was transporting army supplies from Fort Leavenworth to Sedalia, Mo. En route a party of 50 guerrillas attacked the train not far from Independence, Mo., and the guards, outnumbered four to one, made no attempt to defend the train, but retreated at once.

Hickok, as master of the train, was riding on horseback ahead of it. When the guerrillas called upon him to surrender, he replied: "Come and take me!" and spurred his horse toward Independence. In the running fight which followed he killed several of his pursuers but escaped without a scratch. Reporting the loss of the train to the Union troops there, he was told that they could not help him, but that he would have to go on to Kansas City and report the loss to the commander at that place.

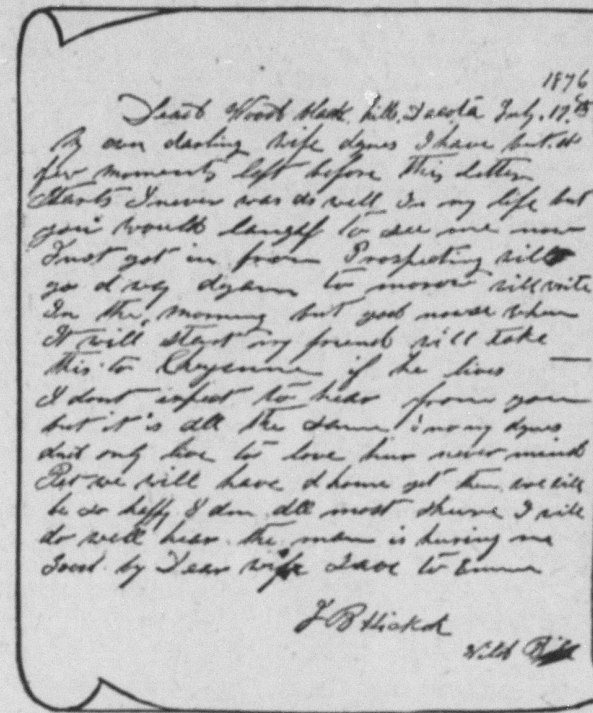
While in Independence he went into a saloon owned by a friend of his and learned that the bartender was besieged in a rear-by house by a mob of teamsters and other roddies because he had wounded one of their number during a fight. Hickok immediately drew two pistols and offered to fight the entire party but his challenge was not taken up. Then he ordered the crowd to disperse, saying: "If you do not, there will be more dead men around here than the town can bury," whereupon the ruffians departed hastily.

The citizens of the town gathered in the town square after they had left to express their appreciation to the man who had delivered them from their brief reign of terror and during the meeting a woman cried out: "Good for you, Wild Bill!" Who she was and why she called him "Wild Bill" instead of "Wild Jim," Hickok never knew. He went on to Kansas City, secured the aid of a detachment of soldiers and, returning to the scene of the attack on the wagon train, recaptured the uninjured wagons and some of the mules. When he arrived at Sedalia he found that the story of his encounter in Independence had preceded him and everywhere he was hailed as "Wild Bill," a name which stuck to him to the day of his death.

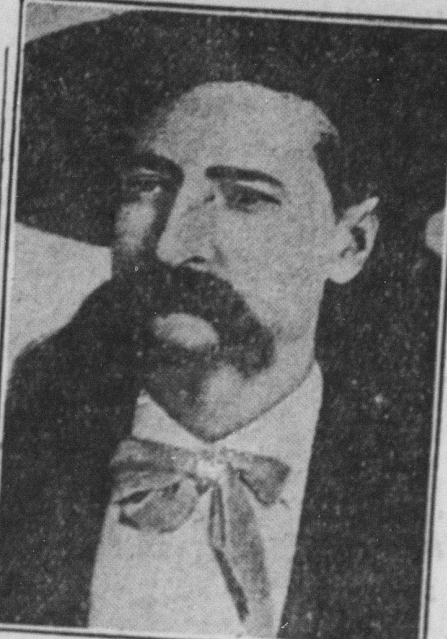
A great many of the legends that have grown up around the name of Wild Bill have had to do with his almost uncanny skill with the six-shooter, but Connelley's patient research has resulted in the confirmation of most of these stories, even those which seem nearly unbelievable, rather than in dispelling the legend.

Like so many other stories about Wild Bill,

Dead Wood black hills, Dakota July 17, 1876
 My own darling wife Agnes I have but a few moments left before this letter starts I know how well in my life but don't get in from prospecting with me I will stay my friends till I take this to Cheyenne if he lives I don't expect to hear from you but it is all the same I may die but only live to love her never mind but we will have a home get her to be as happy as I can die with her I will do well here the women is having one Good by Dear wife Love to Emma
 J. B. Hickok 2/24/76



The Murder of "Wild Bill" (From an Old Wood Cut)



Hickok's Last Letter to His Wife

"Wild Bill" Hickok

the story of his death has been told many times with a wide variety of conflicting detail. Because of its historical importance, in the light of the quotation from Connelley's book at the beginning of this article, it seems worth while, as the anniversary of that event approaches, to give the version of it which has resulted from the Kansas historian's research.

There was a curious irony of fate in the manner of Wild Bill's dying which makes it more than another illustration of the age-old saying that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword, with the substitution of the word "six-shooter" for the word "sword." Woven into the red fabric of the narrative of Wild Bill's last days is a white thread which seems strangely out of place in the chronicle of the violent end of a life of violence. It introduces into the story of this cold-eyed killer of the plains the unusual and unexpected role of a tender and devoted husband, even though the element of romantic love may be lacking.

In 1876 Hickok was living in Cheyenne, Wyo., listening to the siren call of gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota. But before he could answer that call he learned that Mrs. Agnes Thatcher Lake, the widow of a famous circus performer and herself one of a long line of show people, was visiting a relative in Cheyenne. He had first met her while he was marshal of Abilene, Kan., in 1871, and, in 1874, during his brief career as an actor with "Buffalo Bill" Cody in Ned Buntline's "Scouts of the Plains," he had met her again in Rochester, N. Y.

The result of their meeting in Cheyenne was their marriage on March 5. Says Connelley: "There is no doubt that the two, venturesome and full of courage and life, appealed to each other. But the question of love is a very dubious one. The marriage was the practical, sensible combining of forces of two people who knew that they could be of mutual help." After the marriage they went first to St. Louis, then to Cincinnati. Two weeks there found Hickok restless and eager to get back to the West and go to the Black Hills.

Accordingly he returned to St. Louis and set about organizing a company of adventurers whom he was to lead into the gold country. This he did, going by way of Cheyenne where his old friend, "Colorado Charley" Utter, joined him. They arrived in Deadwood early in May. Connected with that arrival is one of the elements of the irony-of-fate motif in the story of Wild Bill's death—his premonition that he was going to his death in Deadwood Gulch.

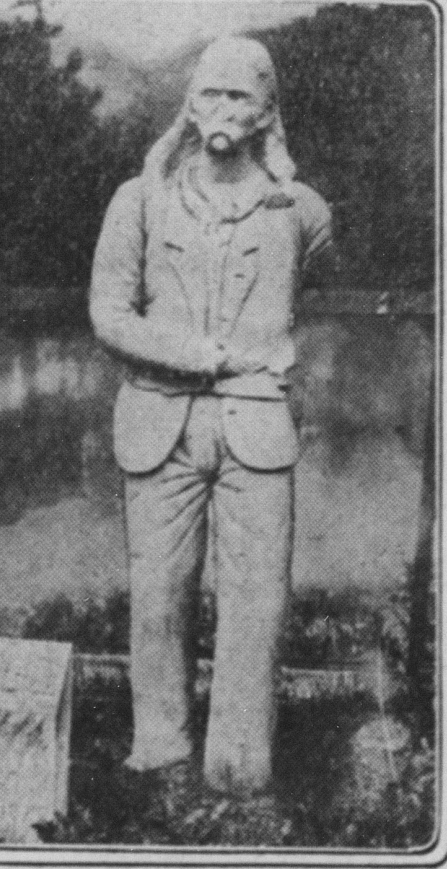
According to a well-authenticated story, as he and Utter came to the top of Break Neck Hill and looked down into the gulch, Wild Bill said to his companions: "Boys, I have a hunch that I am in my last camp and will never leave this gulch alive." Some time later, in fact the very evening before his death, he was leaning against the side of the open door of the "66" saloon when a friend noticed his downcast appearance and asked him why he was "looking so dumpy." Hickok replied: "Tom, I have a presentiment that my time is up and that I am going to be killed."

After arriving in the Hills, Hickok took up several claims and began developing them. How successful he was is unknown. There is extant (in the museum of the United States Playing Card company at Cincinnati) his last letter to his wife, written on July 17, which does not indicate any considerable success as a gold hunter. His letter read:

Dead Wood black hills, Dakota July 17th. 1876.
 My own darling wife Agnes I have but a few moments left before this letter starts I never was as well in my life but you would laugh to see me now Just got in from prospecting will go away again to morrow but god nowise when it will start my friend will take this to Cheyenne if he lives I don't expect to hear from you but it is all the same I no my Agnes and only live to love her never mind Pet we will have a home yet then we will be so happy I am almost shure I will do well the man is huring me Good by Dear wife Love to Emma
 J. B. Hickok
 "Wild Bill"

When Hickok arrived in Deadwood, that camp was in the grip of the most lawless element. Although he was there only as a peaceful prospector, his reputation as a marshal in Kansas, at Hays and Abilene, was well known. Soon the law-abiding element in Deadwood began talking of making him marshal of that town and having him "clean up the camp." Hickok neither encouraged nor discouraged such talk but went quietly about his work.

But such talk was disconcerting to the card-sharps, the thieves and the killers who had



Monument at "Wild Bill's" Grave

flocked to Deadwood. They knew that their activities were doomed if he became marshal. Not brave enough to forestall that possibility by "shooting it out" with him themselves, two of the leaders of the lawless element, Tim Brady and Johnny Varnes, resorted to assassination.

"Broken Nose Jack" McCall, a former buffalo hunter in Kansas who had degenerated into a drunken hanger-on around the saloons and dance-halls of Deadwood, was hired to do the job. They gave him \$25 in gold dust and promised him \$175 more, filled him up with the brand of "chain lightning" whiskey which flowed freely in the camp and set him to his task.

On the afternoon of August 2 Hickok was engaged in a friendly game of poker in the "66" saloon with Charley Rich, Carl Mann (one of the owners of the place) and Captain Massey, a Missouri river pilot. Although the others laughed and joked as they played, Hickok seemed uneasy and worried. He was sitting with his back to the door, "a position so absolutely contrary to the caution that governed his alert and watchful habit that all his time-trained instincts were in violent rebellion." Several times he asked to change places with the others, but they refused and teased him about his nervousness.

None of the four paid any attention as McCall came lounging through the door and moved noiselessly up behind Hickok. Suddenly Jerking out his .45 caliber six-shooter, McCall shoved the gun within a yard of the back of Wild Bill's head and, exclaiming: "D—n you! Take that!" fired a single shot. As Hickok slumped forward on the table, the assassin threatened Harry Young, the bartender, with his gun and, keeping the other men in the room covered with it, backed from the room. Running to his pony, he threw himself into the saddle. But the cinch was loose and the saddle turned, throwing him to the ground. Then he picked himself up and ran into a butcher shop nearby to hide. There he was found by the famous "Calamity Jane" Burke, whose quick temper flamed into a furious rage when she heard the news of the murder of her friend, Wild Bill. Unmindful of the fact that McCall was still armed, she entered the butcher shop, seized a cleaver from a rack and, threatening him with it, forced him to surrender.

Back in the "66" saloon, Hickok's friends hastily summoned Ellis A. ("Doc") Pierce. But McCall's one shot had been instantaneously fatal. Beside Wild Bill on the floor lay the four cards which he had drawn—the two black aces and the two black eights. Who first called that combination the "Dead Man's Hand" is unknown. But it is certain that that characterization of it throughout the West dates from that day.

One other item in the irony-of-fate motif deserves mention. After McCall's capture they examined his revolver and discovered that every chamber in it was loaded. But none of the other five cartridges in it could be exploded! As "Doc" Pierce once said: "What would have been McCall's chances if he had snapped one of the other cartridges when he sneaked up and held his gun to Bill's head? He would now be known as No. 37 on the file list of Mr. Hickok."

Dark Sheer Prints for Midseason

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WITH the waning of the good old summertime when the clothes you have on hand begin to take on that sort of a "has-been" look which happens in even the best of regulated wardrobes and when it is too early to don new autumn regalia, what then? Every woman who aspires to an up-to-the-moment appearance knows the baffled feeling which comes when this nagging, disturbing-of-the-peace question comes up.

But why worry, for here's encouraging news in regard to this very problem. Briefly told, it's the good looking jacket suits of dark triple sheer print which are now showing in leading style shops and departments wherever one may turn. You can rest assured that an ensemble such as any one of the stunning models here pictured, will pilot you victoriously through that dreaded stretch of time which spans from the burning, scorching days of summer to weather bearing cool breezes which hint that autumn is on its way hitherward.

The beauty of these triple sheer costumes which are now playing so conspicuous a role on fashion's stage is that they are being given a styling so absolutely up to the instant in chic, the moment you don one you are apt to experience thrills as exultant as a mannikin at a style show as she pronounces back and forth before the eager and admiring eyes of her audience. Then, too, these sheers are cool when you want them to be and with their jackets they provide just the degree of comfort and protection necessary for the erratic changes of a fickle thermometer. By the way had you noticed that scarcely a one-piece dress is to be seen this season, be it

day or night, without a matching or related jacket? Everything with a jacket, is the new slogan and just because the idea is so thoroughly practical the vogue is moving on of its own momentum.

Turning to our illustration we know that you will agree that the jacket dress on the standing figure is of unerring style appeal. It is fashioned of triple sheer of bemberg in the new Vlonnet bowknot print. The crisp organdie jabot is worked in the two colors of the print. The slim little jacket with its voluminous and graceful cape sleeves conveys a message of high-style distinction.

Cool and comfortable for the young girl is the little jacket-frock to the left. The bright monotone print in triple sheer of bemberg employed for this winsome outfit carries an animated patterning of wee gay monotone posies—a perfect complement to youth. The link-button fastening at the waistline accents the modish slimmness of this young modern. The pleated frill which collars the jacket also bespeaks a youthful note.

The insistent call of the mode for white accents on dark prints is answered in the swagger jacketed dress to the right. This model is a bit more grown-up than the one just described which should make it of special interest to the matron. As a matter of fact it is a type which tines to most any age from teens on. This distinguished ensemble like its companion models in the picture is also made of bemberg triple sheer. It again reminds that the polka dot vogue is still going strong. The huge wide collar and flaring cuffs are of white taffeta.

© by Western Newspaper Union.

USE SAILOR COLLAR NOW EVEN ON SHOES

And now they're wearing sailor collars on shoes. Already they've put sailor collars on everything from bathing suits to nightgowns. So now you may literally be nautical from head to foot.

Your gob hat and your middy shirt-waist dress will find their reflection on the toe of your novel sports sandal, which may combine red patent leather and white linen, and unaccountably will sport a little sailor collar design on the toe.

Shoes must match your costume nowadays not only in fabric and color, but in atmosphere. The dress trimmed with rows of stitching demands a stitched pump to set it off. The suit with pearl buttons has its matching pump, with a button instead of a buckle.

New Fabrics and Colors Shown in Summer Gloves

Chanut has used both new fabrics and colors to make some of the smartest of summer gloves. Most of them are designed to match a jabot or cravat such as the old-time dandies used to wear, intended to be worn with the same frock. Necktie silk—navy dotted with white and brown splashed with green—fashions jaunty gauntlet gloves worn with ascot cravats. Black and white and red and white checked taffeta gloves have matching scarfs finished with a great bow worn on one side of the throat.

Cellophane Embroidery
 Black cellophane embroidery is a favorite trim for white organdie dresses of romantic design.

Huge Red Dots
 Red pistoles of enormous size, printed on white chiffon, are replacing dot designs in importance.

IT'S ORGANDIE



According to the latest dictates of fashion sheer prints are smartest when they have dark backgrounds. Here is one of the prettiest organdie frocks brought out this season. It is black and white, which gives it a Paris look, for smart-dressed French women continue steadfast in their favor for black-and-white. Flame red shoulder flowers supply the dash of color which glorifies the whole scheme of things.