

**JOE MONIGAN: A
TALE OF THE
EARLY WEST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649618484

Joe Monigan: A Tale of the Early West by F. A. Phelps

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BY
F. A. PHELPS

PRICE \$1.25

PUBLISHED BY
THE AMERICAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
LOCK BOX 121 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

[copy 1907]
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PREFACE

The unexplored "West" has become a thing of the past, and with it have gone the sturdy, adventurous characters it builded. We shall not see them again. The peculiarities of their character, and the wild romance and freedom of their lives, is more strange and fascinating than fiction; and the tameness of modern "civilization" can never reproduce either the one or the other. They sleep under the shadow of the mountains they loved, and we enjoy the fruits of their labor. Here and there at the foot of some majestic mountain is an old, deserted cabin, or dugout, time-worn and weather-beaten, which speaks a language more eloquent than words. These, with some broken tunnels, grass grown "tailings" and old prospect holes are all that remain of the past. The hands which fashioned them, wrestled with the trackless wilderness, and made Mother Earth give up her treasure, have long since been gathered into her bosom, and it is the desire of one who beheld their waning glory, and caught something of the inspiration, beauty and romance of their lives, that they may not be forgotten. We owe them much, and can well bring a loving tribute to their memory.

Joe Monigan lived, and the body of this story is fact. A newsboy in New York, a pioneer to California, and back to the Rocky Mountains. The name is not fictitious, but the one the living char-

acter bore. The real Joe never revealed his life's secret. It attracted widespread comment when it became known. Around this fascinating personage the author has woven the web of romance, giving a character and setting to suit his purpose. The pen pictures of nature are not overdrawn but fall as far short of the real as the human must of the divine.

AUTHOR.

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JOE MONIGAN

CHAPTER I

THE CALL

Joe had heard it in the soft breeze that floated in on balmy wings from the ocean. It had whispered to him in the joyous song of a bird that had found its way on dewy pinions from distant woodland. The green grass, and the leafy trees, though limited to the parks and lawns of a great city, seemed to speak to him in a tongue familiar and beloved, but half forgotten; like some sweet dream that remains in the sub-consciousness but which one endeavors in vain to recall. There seemed to be a struggle of soul to shake off the "sleepy drench" of some "forgetful lake" which "benumbed" it still, and to lift its heavy eyelids and behold a rare country, vibrant with sweet music and glorious in beauty, as yet but dimly seen, but whose shadowy outline ever floated before his enchanted vision.

A voice, many toned and tuned to strike every chord of his being into melodious harmony, called to him from a dim and undiscovered country, and beautiful, though shadowy, hands beckoned him to come, till his spirit plumed itself with wings which put the eagle's to shame, and beat the unde-

finned yet galling bars of its narrow prison in a vain effort to escape.

At times the note of a song, the plaint of a minor chord, a word, a sunbeam falling across his path, and ever an inner voice, which struggled to find expression, would suddenly thrill his being and flood his soul with a depth of feeling which swayed him as a tempest tosses the branches of a tree on some bare cliff, and he knew not why. A great and tender longing for something, he knew not what, filled his breast. The incense of the moist earth after a shower and the rainbow colors of the big drops reflected in the sun, as they hung on grass, and herb, and tree, sent the blood coursing warmly through his veins, and kindled a light in his blue eyes sweet to behold.

That night as he lay in his box of shavings looking up at the stars with his beautiful, soul-bright eyes, more deeply, darkly blue than the midnight sky above him, aglow with a fire which transfigured his whole face, the spell was on him, and a voice came out of the darkness which caused him to thrill with emotion, and his heart to beat high in his bosom. He forgot the narrow, littered alley, his only bedchamber. He no longer saw the huge buildings which towered like grim prison walls about him, so many and yet not room for one little, motherless waif within their spacious apartments. He forgot even his little, tired body and aching limbs, which all day long had trudged up and down the hard pavements battling to stem the countercurrents and never ceasing streams of ebbing and flowing humanity, for the most part hard-faced, or preoccupied, seeking a pittance to buy his daily bread.