

BURNING DAYLIGHT

By JACK LONDON

AUTHOR OF "THE CALL OF THE WILD," "WHITE FANG," "MARTIN EDEN," ETC.

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SYNOPSIS.

Elam Harnish, known all through Alaska as "Burning Daylight," celebrates his 40th birthday with a crowd of miners at the Circle City "Tivoli." The dance leads to heavy gambling, in which over \$50,000 is staked. Harnish loses his money and his mine but wins the mail contract. He starts on his mail trip with dogs and sledges, telling his friends that he will be in the big Yukon gold strike at the start. Burning Daylight makes a sensational rapid run across country with the mail, appears at the "Tivoli" and is now ready to join his friends in a dash to the new gold fields. Deciding that gold will be found in the interior district Harnish buys two tons of flour, which he declares will be worth its weight in gold, but when he arrives with his flour he finds the big flat desolate. A comrade discovers gold and Daylight reaps a rich harvest. He goes to Dawson, becomes the most prominent figure in the Klondike and defeats a combination of capitalists in a vast mining deal. He returns to civilization, and amid the bewildering complications of high finance, Daylight finds that he has been led to invest his eleven millions in a manipulated scheme. He goes to New York, and confronting his disloyal partners with a revolver, he threatens to kill them if his money is not returned. They are cowed, return their stealings and Harnish goes back to San Francisco where he meets his fate in Dede Mason, a pretty stenographer. He makes large investments and gets into the political ring. For a rest he goes to the country. Daylight gets deeper into high finance in San Francisco, but often the longing for the simple life nearly overcomes him. Dede Mason buys a horse and Daylight meets her in her saddle trips. One day he asks Dede to go with him on one more ride, his purpose being to ask her to marry him and they enter away, she trying to analyze her feelings. Dede tells Daylight that her happiness could not be with a money manipulator. Daylight undertakes to build up a great industrial community.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

She led the way through the door opening out of the hall to the right, and, once inside, he stood awkwardly rooted to the floor, gazing about him and at her and all the time trying not to gaze. In his perturbation he failed to hear and see her invitation to a seat.

"Won't you sit down?" she repeated.

"Look here," he said, in a voice that shook with passion, "there's one thing I won't do, and that's propose to you in the office. That's why I'm here. Dede Mason, I want you, I just want you."

So precipitate was he, that she had barely time to cry out her involuntary alarm and to step back, at the same time catching one of his hands as he attempted to gather her into his arms.

"Oh, I know I'm a sure enough fool," he said. "I guess I'll sit down. Don't be scared, Miss Mason. I'm not real dangerous."

"I'm not afraid," she answered, with a smile, slipping down herself into a chair.

"It's funny," Daylight sighed, almost with regret; "here I am, strong enough to bend you around and tie the knots in you. Here I am, used to having my will with man, beast or anything. And here I am sitting in this chair, as weak and helpless as a little lamb. You sure take the starch out of me."

"I—I wish you hadn't asked," she said softly.

"Mebbe it's best you should know a few things before you give me an answer," he went on, ignoring the fact that the answer had already been given. "I never went after a woman before in my life, all reports to the

He waited a moment for her to complete the sentence, failing which, he went on himself.

"I haven't an exaggerated opinion of myself, so I know I ain't bragging when I say I'll make a pretty good husband. You could follow your own sweet will, and nothing would be too good for you. I'd give you everything your heart desired."

"Except yourself," she interrupted suddenly, almost sharply. "Don't you see?" she hurried on. "I could have far easier married the Elam Harnish fresh from Klondike when I first laid eyes on him long ago, than marry you sitting before me now."

He shook his head slowly.

"That's one too many for me. The more you know and like a man the less you want to marry him. Familiarity breeds contempt—I guess that's what you mean."

"No, no," she cried, but before she could continue, a knock came on the door.

His eyes, quick with observation like an Indian's, darted about the room while she was out. The impression of warmth and comfort and beauty predominated, though he was unable to analyze it; while the simplicity delighted him—expensive simplicity, he decided, and most of it left over from the time her father went broke and died.

She re-entered the room, and as she crossed it to her chair, he admired the way she walked, while the bronze slippers were maddening.

"I'd like to ask you several questions," he began immediately. "Are you thinking of marrying somebody else?"

"There isn't anybody else. I don't know anybody I like well enough to marry. For that matter, I don't think I am a marrying woman. Office work seems to spoil me for that."

"It strikes me that you're the most marriest woman that ever made a man sit up and take notice. And now another question. You see, I've just got to locate the lay of the land. Is there anybody you like as much as you like me?"

But Dede had herself well in hand.

"That's unfair," she said. "And if you stop and consider, you will find that you are doing the very thing you disclaimed—namely, nagging. I refuse to answer any more of your questions. Let us talk about other things. How is Bob?"

Half an hour later, whirling along through the rain on Telegraph Avenue toward Oakland, Daylight smoked one of his brown-paper cigarettes and reviewed what had taken place. It was not at all bad, was his summing up, though there was much about it that was baffling. There was that liking him the more she knew him and at the same time wanting to marry him less. That was a puzzler.

Once again, on a rainy Sunday, weeks afterward, Daylight proposed to Dede. As on the first time, he restrained himself until his hunger for her overwhelmed him and swept him away in his red automobile to Berkeley. He left the machine several blocks away and proceeded to the house on foot. But Dede was out, the landlady's daughter told him, and added, on second thought, that she was walking in the hills. Furthermore, the young lady directed him where Dede's walk was most likely to extend. Daylight obeyed the girl's instructions, and soon the street he followed passed the last house and itself ceased where began the first steep slopes of the open hills. The air was damp with the on-coming of rain, for the storm had not yet burst, though the rising wind proclaimed its imminence. As far as he could see, there was no sign of Dede on the smooth, grassy hills. To the right, dipping down into a hollow and rising again, was a large, full-grown eucalyptus grove. Here all was noise and movement, the lofty, slender-trunked trees swaying back and forth in the wind and clashing their branches together. In the squalls, above all the minor noises of creaking and groaning, arose a deep thrumming note as of a mighty harp. Knowing Dede as he did, Daylight was confident that he would find her somewhere in this grove where the storm effects were so pronounced. And find her he did, across the hollow and on the exposed crest of the opposing slope where the gale smote its fiercest blows.

"It's the same old thing," he said. "I want you and I've come for you. You've just got to have me, Dede, for the more I think about it the more certain I am that you've got a sneaking liking for me that's something more than just ordinary liking. And you don't dast say that it isn't; now dast you?"

"Please, please," she begged. "We can never marry, so don't let us discuss it."

Daylight decided that action was more efficient than speech. So he stepped between her and the wind and drew her so that she stood close in the shelter of him. An unusually stiff squall blew about them and



"Dede Mason, I Want You, I Just Want You."

thrummed overhead in the treetops, and both paused to listen. A shower of flying leaves enveloped them, and hard on the heel of the wind came driving drops of rain. He looked down on her and on her hair, wind-blown about her face; and because of her closeness to him and of a fresher and more poignant realization of what she meant to him, he trembled so that she was aware of it in the hand that held hers. She suddenly leaned against him, bowing her head until it rested lightly upon his breast. And so they stood while another squall, with flying leaves and scattered drops of rain, rattled past. With equal suddenness she lifted her head and looked at him.

"Do you know," she said, "I prayed last night about you. I prayed that you would fail, that you would lose everything—everything."

Daylight stared his amazement at this cryptic utterance.

"That sure beats me. I always said I got out of my depth with women, and you've got me out of my depth now. Well, you've just got to explain, that's all."

His arms went around her and held her closely, and this time she did not resist. Her head was bowed, and he could not see her face, yet he had a premonition that she was crying. He had learned the virtue of silence, and he waited her will in the matter. Things had come to such a pass that she was bound to tell him something now. Of that he was confident.

"I would dearly like to marry you," she faltered, "but I am afraid. I am proud and humble at the same time that a man like you should care for me. But you have too much money. There's where my abominable common sense steps in. Even if we did marry, you could never be my man—my lover and my husband. You would be your money's man. I know I am a foolish woman, but I want my man for myself. And your money destroys you; it makes you less and less nice. I am not ashamed to say that I love you, because I shall never marry you. And I loved you much when I did not know you at all, when you first came down from Alaska and I first went into the office. You were my hero. You were the Burning Daylight of the gold-diggings, the daring traveler and miner. And you looked it. I don't see how any woman could have looked at you without loving you—then. But you don't look it now. You, a man of the open, have been cooping yourself up in the cities with all that that means. You are becoming something different, something not so healthy, not so clean, not so nice. Your money and your way of life are doing it. You know it. You haven't the same body now that you had then. You are putting on flesh, and it is not healthy flesh. You are kind and genial with me, I know, but you are not kind and genial to all the world as you were then. You have become harsh and cruel. I do love you, but I cannot marry you and destroy love. You are growing into a thing that I must in the end despise. You can't help it. More than you can possibly love me, do you love this

business game. This business—and it's all perfectly useless, so far as you are concerned—claims all of you. I sometimes think it would be easier to share you equitably with another woman than to share you with this business. I might have half of you, at any rate. But this business would claim, not half of you, but nine-tenths of you, or ninety-nine hundredths. You hold back nothing; you put all you've got into whatever you are doing—

"Limit is the sky," he grunted grim affirmation.

"But if you would only play the lover-husband that way. And now I won't say another word," she added. "I've delivered a whole sermon."

She rested now, frankly and fairly, in the shelter of his arms, and both were oblivious to the gale that rushed past them in quicker and stronger blasts. The big downpour of rain had not yet come, but the mist-like squalls were more frequent. Daylight was openly perplexed, and he was still perplexed when he began to speak.

"You've left me no argument. I know I'm not the same man that came from Alaska. I couldn't hit the trail with the dogs as I did in them days. I'm soft in my muscles, and my mind's gone hard. I used to respect men. I despise them now. You see, I spent all my life in the open, and I reckon I'm an open-air man. Why, I've got the prettiest little ranch you ever laid eyes on up in Glen Ellen. That's where I got stuck for the brick-yard. You recollect handling the correspondence. I only laid eyes on the ranch that one time, and I so fell in love with it that I bought it there and then. I just rode around the hills, and I was happy as a kid out of school. I'd be a better man living in the country. The city doesn't make me better. You're plumb right there. I know it. But suppose your prayer should be answered and I'd go clean broke and have to work for day's wages? Suppose I had nothing left but that little ranch, and was satisfied to grow a few chickens and scratch a living somehow—would you marry me then, Dede?"

"Why, we'd be together all the time!" she cried.

Then was the moment, among the trees, ere they began the descent of the hill, that Daylight might have drawn her closely to him and kissed her once. But he was too perplexed with the new thoughts she had put into his head to take advantage of the situation. He merely caught her by the arm and helped her over the rougher footing. At the edge of the grove he suggested that it might be better for them to part there, but she insisted that he accompany her as far as the house.

"Do you know," he said, "taking it by and large, it's the happiest day of my life. Dede, Dede, we've just got to get married. It's the only way, and trust to luck for it's coming out all right."

But the tears were threatening to rise in her eyes again, as she shook her head and turned and went up the steps.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



His Arms Went About Her and Held Her Closely.

contrary notwithstanding. The stuff you read about me in the papers and books, about me being a lady-killer, is all wrong. There's not an iota of truth in it. I guess I've done more than my share of card-playing and whisky-drinking, but women I've let alone. There was a woman that killed herself, but I didn't know she wanted me that bad or else I'd have married her—not for love, but to keep her from killing herself. She was the best of the holding, but I never gave her any encouragement. I'm telling you all this because you've read about it, and I want you to get it straight from me."

"I can't marry you," she said. "I like you a great deal, but—"

BETTER THAN MANY FROWNS

Right Kind of Smile Stands Always for the Best Things There Are in This Life.

At the door of a hospital is the sign: "If you can't smile, don't go in." There are smiles and smiles, but of course this means the smile which stands for the best things in life, not the kind that irritates, but the kind which cheers and inspires and stimulates and nourishes. Whoever conceived of that sign was not far from being a good physician, though he may have been serving as janitor. Better than medicine is the smile of friendship to those who are set apart by their infirmities. And the smile of cheer and hopefulness is not only the passport to the hospital, but to all the world, if we but knew it. Some one remarks: "Who is beyond the ministry of a kindly smile? It is a tonic to the discouraged. It helps the little child for whom the world holds so much that makes afraid, and it cheers the aged who find life unappealingly lonely. As King Arthur's court was built by music, so the happier life we all hunger for here upon earth is built in large part by the cheerful faces we see, as we bear the load appointed for us."—Universalist Leader.

Saving a Desperate Man.
"Why did you get engaged to Harry? You swore that you would never, never, have anything to do with such a man."
"Yes, dear, I know I did. But—well, I wouldn't have accepted him if he hadn't made such a perfectly dreadful threat."
"Oh! That old stall about rushing out and committing suicide?"
"No, worse than that."
"But any of those threats are bluffs. I suppose he said he'd kill the next man who called on you, eh?"
"No, no! I've heard that before. Dearly, he threatened that if I did not accept him he'd go and propose to you. And I believe he would have done it, too—he was perfectly desperate!"

Truth Alone Not Sufficient.
Just consider for a moment how ridiculous it would be for a lawyer to attempt to win a case on his client's bare assertion as to the facts. The facts as stated, might be true, but truth alone is not sufficient either in law or in advertising—there must be proof positive or at least evidence (reasons) sufficiently good to convince the jury or the judge that the assertions made are probably true.—John E. Kennedy in Printers' Ink.

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