

The Klondyke Gold Mystery.

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Dark Stranger," "Charlie Allendale's
Double," Etc.

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CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)
"Did you leave the others there?"
"Yes; an' lemme tell ye, it'll take four to manage that woman. I couldn't stay in the same camp and set up quarters by a big black stump half a mile away from her."

"Curse such luck! I wish the men had stayed."
"Why? Who are you afraid of?"
"I don't know who he is, only he calls himself the Old Man of the Mountains."

"Where is he?"
"In her tent."
"Where did he come from?"
"Looks as if he had slid down the peak of some iceberg. Go and take a squint at him."

Cummins, though a coward when there was a woman in the case, had little fears of men. Creeping stealthily up to the tent he peeped in and beheld the "Old Man of the Mountains," seated on a camp stool before the fair Laura, his rifle between his knees, while she was telling him her story.

"Umph! It's old St. Nick or an escaped Seikirk. Looks as if he be bristled with weapons, and I don't doubt but he can use 'em. The boss is right, for a glimpse of that face and the arsenal he carries is enough to give a polar bear the ager."

Notwithstanding the unprepossessing appearance of the man from the mountains, he pressed his ear close to the tent to listen to the conversation between the two.

"Why did you come to Alaska, my poor child?"
"I came to find the man I love, my Paul, who was lost."

Laura told the old man her story and at the conclusion said:

"He tells me Paul is dead. I do not believe him. He has deceived me on more than one occasion, and he will do so again if it serves his purpose. My heart tells me Paul lives."

"My child, that silent monitor is never wrong. Your Paul lives. He is not far away, but he, you and I are in great peril. We must act with caution and secrecy or we will all be dead before morning. These men are desperate criminals. Will you trust me?"
"Yes, with my life!"

"Pretend as if you had heard nothing, but be ready to act as I direct."
"Do you know where Paul is?"
"Yes, but he is under a strong guard. Is there no one with the train you can trust? No Indian or Eskimo?"

"I do not understand them nor they me; but I have my trusty servant, Ben Holton."

"Where is he?"
"He was sent to-day to see if the pass could be opened."

"The pass has not been closed," said the hermit. "My dear daughter, sending him off was only an excuse to get your friends out of the way; but all is well. Heaven is on your side and directed me here."

"Humph! We'll see about that," growled Cummins, rising from his knees. "They kin put their trust in what they like, but it the boss will let me have my way, I'll put mine in about ten inches of cold steel!"

He hurried to Lackland, who was sitting on a sled, his face expressing the deepest anxiety. In a few words as possible he narrated the interview between the mysterious old man and Laura. Lackland made several efforts to speak before he finally succeeded, then, in a voice strangely unnatural, he said:

"It has come at last! I hoped I would be spared bloodshed, but there is no help for it. Since it must come, let it come. We will do our worst. If the old man and Paul Miller are in our way, let them die!"

"Well, there will be little time to act."
"I know it."

Lackland, who still shrank from the thought of committing murder himself, began to plan to have his myrmidons do all the work, and agreed very readily to have reinforcements.

"I think it would be well for you to start back and get two of the men," he said. "Can't you do it in a few hours?"

"Yes; on snowshoes I can make it by to-morrow noon. Let us leave the valley and start down the trail."

They had to cross the river to reach the trail, but by this time the Yukon was frozen over, so they crossed on the ice.

They had scarce got over when they saw three forms coming along the trail.

"There they are now," said Lackland.

The three forms could be seen coming hurriedly up the path and, when they drew nearer, the form of the old man could be seen coming along behind.

"Holton, come here!" said Lackland. As the old man advanced toward him, the Indians were ordered across the river on the ice.

"What d'ye want, Mr. Lackland?"

"Your mistress sent for you to go back and meet Miss Willis."

"Me go back!" gasped old Ben. "This do seem monstrous queer. Why, I'm about pestered out. I don't believe I kin go a mile furder."

"It's not over a mile."

"We'll try 't stand it."

Lackland took the arm of the tired, faithful old fellow and led him as rap-

idly as he could travel until the cavern was reached.

"Is that the place, Cummins?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Come in here—in this cavern!"
"What for?"

"Shut your infernal mouth and come on; you talk too much!"

"I won't go!" he cried, for his suspicions began to be aroused, and he made an effort to pull away.

The faithful old man seemed to realize that in some way this attack had reference to his mistress, and he fought with the desperation of a madman; but he was choked into insensibility, and Lackland said:

"Take him up! Drag him in there, and tie him hard and fast!"

Cummins obeyed instructions, and a few moments later emerged from the cave, saying:

"Well, boss, that's done."

"Yes, but there is not a second to lose, for the old man at the camp will not be dealt with so easily. You must get two or three of the others, if they have not gone, and bring them here at once. Don't waste a moment, for everything depends on getting reinforcements before daylight."

The nights in Alaska were long at this season, and it was possible for reinforcements to arrive before dawn.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Groan in the Dark.

When Paul Miller leaped from his pallet and rushed from the door of the hut, he was as insane as any inmate of a madhouse.

"Oh, stop! stop!" shrieked Kate Willis. "Where are you goin'—where are you goin'?"

"Laura! Laura!" he shouted.

"Laura! Oh, my goodness sakes alive, does he know her?" cried Miss Willis, clapping her hands as a new and wonderful thought burst on her mind. "It can't be—it must be—he is the girl's lover! He must be her Paul!"

She shouted to some of the Indian porters left to look after the camp:

"Stop him!"

The Indians were soon on him, had him tied with moosekin thongs and carried him back to the shanty, where he was lain on the bed. Kate followed them, sobbing frantically and groaning:

"He's dead! They've killed him and I'm to blame for it. Oh, what a fool I've played all the way through!"

He breathed and, placing her head over the little oil stove and prepared some nourishment, poud up his head, which was slightly bruised, and soon had his eyes open. No sooner was he rational enough to recall what had happened than he began to sob.

"Don't take on so!" the kind-hearted woman said. "I tell ye, ye couldn't have got a mile away from here! Ye would have died, and ye must know it!"

"But Laura, my darling, in the power of that man!"
"Say, let's you and I understand each other, an' then there won't be any danger of making mistakes. Are you Paul Miller, who's been dead so long?"

"I am Paul Miller and they may have reported me dead."

"From Fresno, California?"

"Yes, from Fresno, California."

"Have you a sweetheart called Laura Koan?"

"Yes—yes! It was she you told me had gone on—and I will—"

"Now, look here! I am your friend. I am the best friend you and Laura ever had aside from yourselves. If ye'll just listen 't me, we'll outwit the whole caboodle an' show 'em what's what yit."

Kate told him he must pretend to be a great deal worse than he really was, and she would report that she believed he was going to die. He at once fell in with the plan, with the assurance that as soon as he was strong enough he was to start secretly for the camp where, Laura was waiting for her companion to join them.

Meanwhile there was a change in guard. Cummins was relieved and four men sent to take his place. The Indians went with Cummins, and Kate had four white men to contend with.

She often eavesdropped the four men when at quarters, and gained enough of their plans to realize that they must act promptly.

The very night the "Old Man of the Mountains," as he called himself, so suddenly appeared in the tent where Laura was expelling her unwelcome suitor, they set out. On and on they hastened over the frozen snow, and Paul's heart began to beat with pleasure. But hark! What are those ominous sounds in their ears? They have been four or five hours on the route when they hear the sound of feet crushing the hardened snow.

"Paul!" Kate whispered, "we are pursued! Can you run?"

"I can—and I can do more—I can shoot!"

"Run first and shoot when you have to. Gimme yer hand."

The strong woman took his hand in her own and they ran along the snow-covered trail swiftly as hares. They were almost at the point where the river was crossed on the ice when a voice behind them cried:

"There they go!"

"Halt—stop, or we'll fire!"

Paul wheeled around and leveled his rifle at one of the dark objects coming toward him, but just as his finger was ready to press the trigger he was struck a blow between the shoulders, which sent him sprawling in the snow.

It was Cummins, going after reinforcements, who came up at this inopportune moment.

The two prisoners were lifted from the ground and carried to the cavern, where they were left tied hard and fast, their fates to be determined later.

Paul Miller was not unconscious at any time, and when he found himself tied, lying on the hard floor of the cavern, he began to calculate on his chances.

Suddenly he heard a groan in the darkness.

"Kate—Kate—was that you?" he whispered.

"No!" was the answer.

"Who was it?"

And another hollow groan came on their ears.

"Great goodness gracious! What is it?" shrieked Kate Willis. "What is it?"

"Hush, Kate!" whispered Paul. "Some other unfortunate is here as well as ourselves!"

Then came another deep groan, which seemed to be only a few paces away.

"Who are you?" asked Paul. "I'm Ben Holton," came a feeble answer. "I ain't done nuthin' 't be tied up here an' left 't die in this way!"

"I know him!" gasped Kate. "He was Laura's faithful servant!"
In the anguish of his soul Paul groaned:

"Oh, Laura, Laura, why can I not reach your side and save you from those fiends?"

Paul had deep thoughts, but kept those to himself. He still had faith that heaven would never permit such an evil as these unscrupulous men contemplated to succeed. How divine interposition would come he had no idea, but he believed it would come.

At that very moment Paul had a faithful friend of whom he had never thought coming to him. The dog courier that had borne the tidings that he and his companion were perishing in the forest had always shown a strange fondness for him.

On the night Paul left, his canine friend was tied with the other dogs, lest he should follow and betray their flight. The dumb brute determined to follow, and when Paul was gone set to work to deliberately gnaw the seal riata in twain. His sharp incisors did the work and his keen sense of smell soon told him the course they had gone, and he finally brought up at the cavern.

Paul was lost in painful thought when he suddenly felt the touch of a cold nose tip on his cheek and became aware that a friend was near. The dog sniffed about him for a moment, and, reaching his wrists, at last, realizing that something was wrong, seized the thongs with his teeth and began pulling at them.

"What is that noise?" asked Kate Willis.

"Be quiet!" Paul answered in an undertone.

The sharp teeth of the dog were silently cutting the thongs, which tied his master. In a few minutes Paul's hands were free. Then untying his ankles, he crept to where Kate sat against the big rock, her arms tied around it.

"Who's that?" she asked.

"Keep quiet!" he whispered. Kate was a bit nervous and very anxious to know if there was any chance for escape, but she restrained her natural inclination and said nothing.

Paul released her and went next to old Ben Holton who was groaning as if he was breathing his last.

The old fellow, dumb with astonishment for a moment, blurted out: "Be ye agoin' 't untie me?"

"No, no, ye won't!" roared the sentry, who began to suspect what was up. Lighting a torch, he started to the interior of the cavern, where they had left the captives, when suddenly there came a sharp growl, an oath, a cry and a man was on his back, a furious dog at his throat.

(To be continued.)

TRADE IN OLD CLOTHES.

Philadelphia Does Large Business in Cast-Off Raiment.

Philadelphia is said to do a bigger business in old clothes, says the New York Commercial—that is, of course, in the cast-off or second and third hand clothes of men—than any other city on the American continent. It is the center of the trade in the east and the buyers of New York—men with bags from Canal, Hester and Baxter streets—and from all over the middle states—"work" the City of Brotherly Love for old clothes every business day of the year. These outsiders number nearly 600 on an average. The capital invested in the old clothes trade of Philadelphia aggregates \$2,500,000. There are about 1,000 flourishing retail stores, and the average value of their stocks is set by experts in the trade at \$3,000. Each of a half dozen stores carries goods valued at \$15,000 or \$20,000. Each store gives employment to three persons on an average—the proprietor, his wife, and the "busheler," or mender. In all there are fully 3,000 in the retail shops.

Honduras in Hard Straits.

Honduras, since 1900, has had no market for her cattle. In the past she depended on Guatemala, but financial conditions in that republic have closed the market.

All He Needed.

"Wonder what Brown needs to make him a successful author?" "Nothing but a story to tell, and brains to tell it."—Atlanta Constitution.

Value of Texas Cattle.

It is said that Texas alone market \$50,000,000 worth of cattle annually.

JEST and JOILITY

A Better Understanding.

"Do you think you will like me just as well," she asked, "when I tell you my hair is dyed?"

"Yes, dear," answered her elderly lover. "I have known it all the time. Will you think any the less of me when I confess that my hair is a wig?"

"Not at all. I knew it was, the first time I ever saw you."

After which the billing and cooing went on with even greater tenderness than before.

The Woes of Cupid.

"Men is sho' feeble," said Miss Miami Brown. "Dey goes back on you on de slightest provocation."

"What's been happenin'?" asked Miss Orlina Jefferson Tompkins.

"Mr. Rastus Pinkley come aroun' tryin' to kiss me, an' so as not to seem too willin' an' audacious, I smashed 'im wif a flatiron, an' jes' foh dat he jilted me."

Outclassed.

The headless horseman was recently observed standing on the Tarrytown bridge.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, as an automobile whizzed by. "I'm out of date. The proper thing is to be a horseless headman."

Just then the clock struck twelve, and he jumped into the creek with a howl of despair.

Organized Labor.

"You are not a workman," said the curbstone orator, "for you wouldn't talk that way."

"You are wrong, sir!" fiercely answered the man who had interrupted him. "I am a member of a Browning club and if an institution of that kind isn't organized labor, I don't know what it is!"

A HOT ONE.



Lord De Broke—You have—aw—no natural curiosities—aw—over heah?
Miss Cutting Hintz—No; we import them.

Not a Pleasure Trip.

"I suppose you can let me have a decent room for a few days," said the Eastern man.

"Sure, for as long as you want to stay," replied the Chicago hotel clerk.

"I'll need it longer than that. I don't want to stay in this town ten minutes, but I'll have to stay a week at least."

As Others See Us.

Pat—Did yer iver notis how them Oytallians are after wavin' their hands an' shakin' ave their heads whin they're talkin'?

Mike—Faith an' O' hove. That do be th' only way the jabberin' furriners can make sich other understand. Phwat they're talkin' about, b'gorry, I dunno.

Wild Guess.

"There, thank the stars, that's the last load! By jove, I hope we don't have to move again for 20 years!"

"Look, George there's a man with a camera! See, he is setting it up. What do you suppose he wants?"

"Guess he's after a moving picture, my dear."

Between Friends.

Clara—Mr. Clumally paid me a queer compliment last evening.

Maude—What was it?
Clara—He said I reminded him of sugar.

Maude—Well, dear, you certainly have your share of sand.

In the Crowded Car.

"Squeeze along a little, will you?" "Don't you see I'm right up against a big, fat man?"

"That's why I asked you to squeeze along. He can be compressed nearly a foot more. Squeeze along."

In After Years.

Wife—You once said I was the only woman in the world.

Husband—Yes, and I ought to have been sent to an insane asylum before it was everlastingly too late.

Sparkling Sermon.

Husband—I don't believe you heard a word of the sermon to-day. You were looking the whole time at the diamonds that woman in front of us wore.

Wife—Well, there are sermons in stones, you know.—Pack.

The Worm Turns.

Little Tompkins (on his dignity)—Marie, I've been a good husband to you all these years, have been patient, and have put up with every humiliation, but, mercifully, the worm has turned at last—you shall not have my son's trousers cut down for me.

A HOT COMEBACK.



Weary—I'm afraid I'll injure my teeth if I eat this pie.
Kind Lady—I'll let you understand, sir, that I made pies before you were born.

Weary—This must be one of them.

No Embarrassment.

"Is it true that Fikor is financially embarrassed?"

"He is awfully in debt, but it doesn't seem to embarrass him any."

Guaranteed Cure.

"Is hard cider a temperance drink?" asks the visitor of the farmer who is pouring the apples into the cider press.

"It is," says the farmer, while a reminiscent smile flits across his face. "It is. I reckon that after a man sobs up off of hard cider he is fuller of remorse and readier for the pledge than after surroundin' almost any other kind of joy-producer."

Vicinity Counted.

"I have come to the city with my son, who is about to enter the law school. The first thing is to find a boarding place. Do you know any place that you can recommend?"

"Well, no, not near the law school. But I know a good place near the medical school."

"Indeed? Then I'll have him study medicine."

The Wise Deacon.

"Deacon," began the old colored parson, "do you eber say 'Git behind me, Satan'?"

"No, bruddah, Ah do not," said Deacon Green. "Ef Ah told Satan to git behind me he might stick me when Ah wa'n't lookin'. Ah keep him right in front whah Ah kin see him."

Unfortunate Remark.

He (pleadingly)—Why can't we be married right away?

She (coolly)—Oh, I can't bear to leave father alone just now.

He (earnestly)—But, my darling, he has had you such a very long time. She (freesly)—Sir!

The New Poster Girl.

"Miss Sereleaf says that she was called 'The Poster Girl' at the resort where she spent the summer," remarked Maude.

"Very appropriate," replied Mamie. "She was up against the wall most of the time, I noticed."

A TIP FOR HIM TO GO HOME.



Edith Hintz—You must not play with Mr. Borem's new hat, Willie.

Willie—Why not?
Edith Hintz—You might hurt it or lose it, and he'll want it in a few minutes.

Two Points of View.

"You can never tell what will turn up in politics," observed the ward beeler.

"Yes, that isn't the worst of it," rejoined the ex-candidate. "You can never tell who will be turned down."

Really Unkind.

Softiegh—"Yaws, foh two whole days I—aw—was alone on the boundless prairie—alone with me thoughts, doncher know."

Miss Cutting—Poor fellow. How you must have suffered from ennui.

A Fatal Case.

"All is at an end between us," said the haughty maid with the lemon-tinted hair. "My love for you is dead."

"Another case of heart failure, eh?" queried the young man in the case.