

The Spoilers.

By REX E. BEACH.

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[CONTINUED.]

ty gold pan, rinsing it out carefully. The other boot he emptied likewise. They held a surprising amount of sediment, because the stream that had emerged from the crack in the sluices had carried with it pebbles, sand and all the concentration of the riffles at this point. Standing directly beneath the cataract, most of it had dived fairly into his inviting waistband, following down the lines of least resistance into his boot legs and boiling out at the knees.

"Wash that," he said. "You're apt to get a prospect."

With artful passes Dexty settled it in the pan bottom and washed away the gravel, leaving a yellow glittering pile which raised a yell from the men, who had lingered curiously.

"He pans \$40 to the boot leg," one shouted.

"How much do you run to the foot, Slapjack?"

"He's a reg'lar free milling ledge."

"No, he ain't; he's too thin. He's nothing but a stringer, but he'll pan to work."

The old miner grinned toothlessly.

"Gentlemen, there ain't no better way to save fine gold than with undercurrents an' blanket riffles. I'll have to wash these garments of mine an' clean up the soapsuds 'cause there's a hundred dollars in gold dust clingin' to my person this minute." He went dripping up the bank, while the men returned to their work singing.

After lunch Dexty saddled his broncho.

"I'm goin' to town for a pair of gold seats, but I'll be back by supper; then we'll clean up between shifts. She'd ought to give us a thousand ounces the way that ground prospects." He loped down the gulch, while his partner returned to the pit, the flashing shovel blades and the rumbling undertone of the big workings that so fascinated him.

It was perhaps 4 o'clock when he was aroused from his labors by a shout from the bunk tent, where a group of horsemen had clustered. As Glenister drew near he saw among them Wilton Struve, the lawyer, and the big, well-dressed tenderfoot of the Northern, McNamara, the man of the heavy hand. Struve straightway engaged him.

"Say, Glenister, we've come out to see about the title to this claim."

"What about it?"

"Well, it was relocated about a month ago." He paused.

"Yes. What of that?"

"Galloway has commenced suit."

"The ground belongs to Dexty and me. We discovered it, we opened it up, we've complied with the law, and we're going to hold it." Glenister spoke with such conviction and heat as to nonplus Struve, but McNamara, who had sat his horse silently until now, answered:

"Certainly, sir; if your title is good you will be protected, but the law has arrived in Alaska and we've got to let it take its course. There's no need of violence—none whatever—but, briefly, the situation is this: Mr. Galloway has commenced action against you, the court has enjoined you from working and has appointed me as receiver to operate the mine until the suit is settled. It's an extraordinary procedure, of course, but the conditions are extraordinary in this country. The season is so short that it would be unjust to the rightful owner if the claim lay idle all summer, so to avoid that I've been put in charge, with instructions to operate it and preserve the proceeds subject to the court's order. Mr. Voorhees here is the United States marshal. He will serve the papers."

Glenister threw up his hand in a gesture of restraint.

"Hold on! Do you mean to tell me that any court would recognize such a claim as Galloway's?"

"The law recognizes everything. If his grounds are no good, so much the better for you."

"You can't put in a receiver without notice to us. Why, good Lord, we never heard of a suit being commenced. We've never even been served with a

summons, and we haven't had a chance to argue in our own defense."

"I have just said that this is a remarkable state of affairs and unusual action had to be taken," McNamara replied, but the young miner grew excited.

"Look here, this gold won't get away! It's safe in the ground. We'll knock off work and let the claim lie idle till the thing is settled. You can't really expect us to surrender posses-

sion of our mine on the mere allegation of some unknown man. That's ridiculous. We won't do it. Why, you'll have to let us argue our case at least before you try to put us off."

Voorhees shook his head. "We'll have to follow instructions. The thing for you to do is to appear before the court tomorrow and have the receiver dismissed. If your title is as good as you say it is, you won't have any trouble."

"You're not the only ones to suffer," added McNamara. "We've taken possession of all the mines below here." He nodded down the gulch. "I'm an officer of the court and under bond"—

"How much?"

"Five thousand dollars for each claim."

"What? Why, heavens, man, the poorest of these mines is producing that much every day!"

While he spoke Glenister was rapidly debating what course to follow.

"The place to argue this thing is before Judge Stillman," said Struve, but with little notion of the conflict going on within Glenister. The youth yearned to fight, not with words nor quibbles nor legal phrases, but with steel and blows. And he felt that the impulse was as righteous as it was natural, for he knew this process was unjust, an outrage. Mexico Mullins' warning recurred to him. And yet—

He shifted slowly as he talked till his back was to the door of the big tent. They were watching him carefully, for all their apparent languor and looseness in saddle; then, as he started to leap within and rally his henchmen, his mind went back to the words of Judge Stillman and his niece. Surely that old man was on the square. He couldn't be otherwise with her beside him, believing in him, and a suspicion of deeper plots behind these actions was groundless. So far all was legal, he supposed, with his scant knowledge of law, though the methods seemed unreasonably. The men might be doing what they thought to be right. Why be the first to resist? The men on the mines below had not done so. The title to this ground was capable of such easy proof that he and Dex need have no uneasiness. Courts do not rob honest people nowadays, he argued, and, moreover, perhaps the girl's words were true; perhaps she would think more of him if he gave up the old fighting ways for her sake. Certainly armed resistance to her uncle's first edict would not please her. She had said he was too violent, so he would show her he could lay his savagery aside. She might smile on him approvingly, and that was worth taking a chance for. Anyway it would mean but a few days' delay in the mine's run. As he reasoned he heard a low voice speaking within the open door. It was Slapjack Simms.

"Step aside, lad. I've got the big un covered."

Glenister saw the men on horseback snatch at their holsters and just in time leaped at his foreman, for the old man had moved out into the open, a Winchester at shoulder, his cheek cuddling the stock, his eyes cold and narrow. The young man flung the barrel up and wrenched the weapon from his hands.

"None of that, Hank!" he cried sharply. "I'll say when to shoot." He turned to look into the muzzles of guns held in the hands of every horseman—every horseman save one, for Alec McNamara sat unmoved, his handsome features, nonchalant and amused, nodding approval. It was at him that Hank's weapon had been leveled.

"This is bad enough at the best. Don't let's make it any worse," said he.

Slapjack inhaled deeply, spat with disgust and looked over his boss incredulously.

"Well, of all the different kinds of blame fools," he snorted, "you are the kindest!" He marched past the marshal and his deputies down to the cut, put on his coat and vanished down the trail toward town, not deigning a backward glance either at the mine or at the man unfit to fight for.

CHAPTER VII.

LATE in July it grows dark as midnight approaches, so that the many lights from doorway and window seem less garish and strange than they do a month earlier. In the Northern there was good business doing. The new bar fixtures, which had cost a king's ransom or represented the one night's losings of a Klondike millionaire, shone rich, dark and enticing, while the cut glass sparkled with iridescent hues, reflect-

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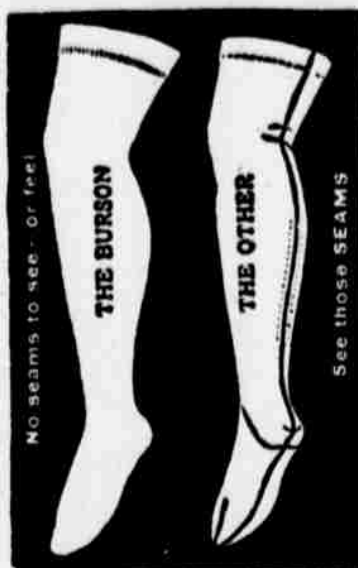
3 Dolls Given Away Dec. 24. Commencing Saturday, November 9, we will give a number with every 25c purchase entitling you to a draw on the Dolls. The one holding the most tickets gets the largest Doll. The one holding the first lucky number gets the next Doll. The one holding the second lucky number gets the third Doll. Call for your tickets when making purchases.

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" " " " Vests at.....
" " " " Pants, gauze, at.....

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