

# The Klondyke Gold Mystery.

By JOHN R. MUSICK,

Author of "Mysterious Mr. Howard," "The Dark Stranger," "Charlie Allendale's Double," Etc.

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## CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

"What do you think it is, captain?" Paul asked his companion.  
"It is not a stone, Crack-lash."  
"No, I can see it move."  
"That is why I know that it is an animated object."

"Perhaps it is a horse."  
The old man shook his head, saying:

"No horse could climb these steep." "Then it may be a polar bear."  
"More likely than a horse, and yet I think it is neither, as a polar bear is white, and this object has some black spots on it."

They journeyed on until nightfall, and went into camp in a spot somewhat screened by rocks. Next day they resumed their weary march through the most desolate country. The skies became overcast, and the snow began to fall in great white flakes, which rapidly covered the ground.

When night came they halted under the shelter of some rocks and thick, bushy spruce pine. A blanket was stretched over them, forming a partial shelter.

"We are almost out of food," the captain said as they ate a small portion of the dried moose meat.

"How are we to replenish our stock?"

"I don't know."  
It was a painful subject to discuss. Their chances of ever reaching a civilized camp were gloomy indeed. Paul's fortitude was tried to its utmost when, weak and faint, he was continually spurred on by the remembrance that Laura was in the wilds of Alaska.

About the middle of the afternoon the snow ceased falling, and the two men trudged on, sinking into the white covering almost to their knees. Suddenly the hermit stopped and said:

"Do you see that?"  
He was pointing to a trail made in the snow by some animal, and Paul answered:

"Yes; what made it—a bear?"  
"No; it is either a dog or wolf."

The thought of a supper on either was repulsive, and the two trudged on in silence. A mile farther they saw a white dog with black spots on the side of his head reaching at one of the lakes. Paul reached for his rifle, but the captain said:

"No, don't shoot him; he may prove our friend."

Paul began to call and whistle to the dog, using terms like the Esquimaux. The animal gave them a look of surprise, and then bounded toward them, yelping in his joy at meeting a human companion.

"He has a collar about his neck," said Paul.

"I say, captain, if we release him he will go back to his master, will he not?"

"Certainly."  
"Then we may make a courier of him. Let us write a message, tie it to his collar and send him away."

"An excellent idea."  
Paul had a small strip of seal skin, and under the embankment he dug out a bit of red chalk, or ochre, usually called keel, and, dressing one end to a pencil point, wrote:

"We are in the forest, out of food and starving. Follow on the trail at once and find us."  
"PAUL MILLER AND COMPANION."

When this had been fastened about the dog's neck, he was released and sent bounding away through the forest.

When the dog courier had been dispatched with his message, the two men trudged on a mile or two farther and halted. Evening was approaching, and they were on the banks of a lake in a marshy ground covered with a thicket of bushes. Here they built a small fire and made a supper on a part of their slender stock of food.

Suddenly they were startled by a crashing in the bushes, accompanied by a snort half of terror and half of defiance. Paul seized his rifle and both leaped to their feet.

"A moose."  
The captain nodded.

"It is our only chance for life."  
Again the captain nodded. Paul gave him an inquiring glance, and the captain made a sweeping motion with his left hand at the same time disappearing on the right.

Slowly and carefully through the melting snow and tangled thickets Paul groped his way, holding his rifle in one hand and parting the bushes with the other. Hour after hour he trudged on, pausing occasionally to listen. At last he was about to give up and return to the camp, when the crashing of the bushes not far off again aroused his hopes.

Suddenly a dark object loomed up through the night. He only caught a glimpse of it, and before he could raise his rifle to his shoulder it was gone.

Wet to the waist, tired out and despairing, he sank down upon a stone to rest. A dense fog had settled over the low ground, and Paul felt damp and chilly. He was stunned and confused, and only half-conscious when there came on his ears the sound of splashing feet.

Next he was conscious of a large, dark object coming through the woods. A large animal was drinking

at the lake. He roused himself in a moment, raised his gun, brought it to his shoulder, and without hardly taking aim, fired.

There was a wild, spasmodic leap, a splashing and plunging. He fired again and again at the struggling beast. With a snort of agony it made a few plunges blindly into the thicket and fell.

Paul roused himself in a moment and rushed to its side. Despair quickly gave way to joy, for here was food. The moose was a giant in size, and would furnish them with food for days. He cut its throat with his knife and then for the first time thought of his companion. He called aloud, and fired a shot in the air, but only the echoes answered him.

"He will get on my trail and follow me," thought Paul, and began to skin the dead moose without feeling in the least uneasy. Having at last completed his task, he built a fire, and, cutting off some of the choicest steaks began to broil them over it. Paul had been on short rations a long time, and never steak tasted better.

Paul wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down by the fire to warm himself and dry his clothing. The night passed in troubled dreams. When he awoke it was broad daylight.

When it was noon and Paul's companion did not come he began to feel uneasy. Could it be they were lost? To become separated he thought would be fatal to both. He roasted and packed away all the moose meat he could carry, and after another, restless night, started out to return to the spot where he had last seen his companion.

The lowering skies portended another storm, and before he had gone five miles the snow was falling in blinding fury, completely obliterating the trail. For hours and hours Paul staggered on until he came upon a great, high wall of stone, which barred his farther progress and partially sheltered him from the driving storm.

He spread his blanket above him, and, finding some dry pine sticks, kindled a little fire, over which he stretched his half-frozen fingers. His suffering throughout that night was intense, and it is a wonder that he did not perish.

But morning came, and, cold and hungry and in despair, he crept away from the great cliff under shelter of which he had passed such a miserable night.

He reached a deep ravine in which was a great deal of dry pine wood, and he proceeded to make a fire. The fire blazed and roared and gave out a generous heat. He was soon warmed, and, wrapping his blanket about him, slept throughout the day. Night came and he awoke, and, building another fire, slept throughout the night.

Next day the sky was clear, and he started on his wandering, going in the direction of the Yukon. He slept that night in the shelter of a rock, and the next morning started again on his journey.

About the middle of the forenoon he saw a party of men coming toward him, and shouted and danced for joy. He ran to meet them yelling like a madman.

At last he came up with them. The leader was a tall man about his own age. He gazed on the being whom hardship, exposure and toil had so completely metamorphosed that he was unrecognizable, and asked:

"Who are you, and what are you?"  
Paul started back with an exclamation of horror, and well he might. He was face to face with his most bitter enemy, Theodore Lackland.

It is necessary at this point in our story that we take leave of Paul for the time being and return to the brave girl whom we left hastening to the dangers and wilds of the polar world for the man she loved.

Laura kept up bravely so long as she could discern the form of Mrs. Miller on the dock, but when it faded from view she fell upon a steamer chair and burst into tears. A hand hardened by toil and softened by love was laid upon her shoulder and a low, gentle voice whispered in her ear:

"Don't cry, pretty one. It's a hard lot ye've chosen, but there's a rich promise in the future for ye."

Looking up she saw the kind face of the woman called Kate Willis bending over her.

"I know, child, it's tough on ye 't go away from friends and relations, perhaps, but ye'll find friends where yer goin' that'll be true to ye."

"I don't doubt you, my good woman. I don't doubt you," Laura declared.

"Pardon this weakness and let me assure you that it will not last long. The knowledge that I shall perhaps never see the face of that dear friend has quite overwhelmed me for the time being."

"Oh, it's nothin', my dear, after ye git used to it; but gittin' used 't it's the trouble. I tell ye, Laura, I'll look after ye when we git to Alaska. Ye shan't work. I'll do it for ye. Them pretty little hands shan't do anythin' to spoil 'em."

"I am not going to the Klondyke to work," answered Laura.

"Not goin' there 't work?"  
"That is, I am not going to dig gold from the mines."

"Well, what are ye goin' for?"  
It was a long, sad story, but Laura was a confiding creature and told her.

When she had finished tears were trickling down the furrowed cheeks of her companion.

"Ah, child, yer story is so like my own I can but believe yer livin' over my own sad life. When I was young like you, and some said pretty, I had a lover, a gallant young sailor lad. He always told me how he loved me and wouldn't never marry another. We were goin' 't be married when Jack came back from the next cruise.

He was tired o' the sea, and I was tired o' havin' him go away so much, so we decided that it was to be the last voyage. He sailed 't the north in the Arctic seas somewhere an' never came back." She sobbed a moment in silence and resumed:

"A long time I couldn't give him up. I didn't believe that he was dead, but at last I had to give in that he was. Two years after a sailor came into port who had been in Jack's crew and he told how Jack and his captain had been led out into the forest by savages on promises o' findin' a great amount o' gold, and both killed."

Laura, who was very much interested in her sad story, asked:

"Why are you going to the Klondyke?"  
"I am goin' where I kin make money; where I kin git rich, and help young people, so they won't suffer as I have."

From that time on they became the best of friends. They were together most of the time and exchanged hopes and fears, and both knelt at night to ask God for guidance in their course in the future.

Their long voyage was at last ended. The great engine was slowly puffing as the vessel was driven slowly into the bay.

The vessel ran to within three-fourths of a mile of the shore and dropped anchor.

They had been discovered by the people on shore, who were waving handkerchiefs and hats, firing guns and pistols in the air. The boats were lowered and men climbed into them.

"Don't be in a hurry to go, child," whispered Kate, who exercised a sort of motherly control over the girl.

"There's another ship in."

"Where did it come from?" Laura asked.

"San Francisco, I'm thinkin'. Fact, I know it's from San Francisco."

Poor Laura little dreamed who had come on that vessel, starting after she did, but beating her to the land of gold. Even had she known whom the vessel brought she would not have been able to guess his object in coming to this country.

They went out on deck again to find it cleared of passengers. Another boat was lowered, and they were asked if they wished to go ashore.

"Certainly," said Laura. They descended to the rocking boat, and were pulled ashore by eight sturdy oarsmen. A porter came from the boat with her pretty, white bag, which seemed in harmony with the spotless purity which surrounded them.

She thanked him and gave him a silver dollar for his trouble. Then she turned to go with Kate to the hotel, when she suddenly stopped, started back, and with a cry of alarm, fell into the arms of Kate Willis. Before her stood Theodore Lackland, a smile on his contemptible features.

Kate Willis was dumbfounded at the conduct of her charge. She knew the girl had unexpectedly met some one, and the meeting was highly disagreeable, but could not, of course, understand the true cause. Kate knew the man before her was the cause of the trouble, and at once began to berate him.

"You unprincipled scoundrel," she cried. "What do you mean by comin' here to frighten this poor child to death?"

In a moment Laura had recovered her self-possession, while Kate continued:

"You ugly, hatchet-faced, spider-legged kangaroo! You flannel-mouthed red-headed dude with brute's milk eyes! You three-card monte, faro bank shark, with a tongue as black as your heart! You—"

"That will do, Kate," interrupted Laura, regaining her speech. "This man's sudden appearance startled me."

(To be continued.)

## As to Two Evils.

Theodore Hallam, one of the most celebrated of legal practitioners, once defended a burglar; and the case gave him a story that he never tired of telling. The prosecuting attorney was fighting vigorously, and had the defendant's wife on the stand.

"You are the wife of the prisoner?" he asked her.

"Yes," she replied.

"Did you know his mode of life when you married him?"

"I did, sir."

"Will you tell us, then," went on the prosecutor, surprised by this admission, "how you came to contract an alliance with one of his kind?"

"Well," she answered, ingenuously, "I was getting on, the other girls had all been married, and I at last had no choice but between him and a lawyer who was courting me."

## Look Out for Your Pate.

So "pate" is slang for head, eh? Wherefore? Surely the word is used in a trivial or derogatory sense, as noodle, noggin, cranium, brain-pan, etc., but its origin is eminently respectable. Shakespeare says "the learned pate ducks to the golden fool." Pope's epigram is good—

"You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come;  
Knock as you please, there's no body at home."

We have "bald pate" and "shave pate." Why, the word is used once in the Bible, and by David, in Psalm vii, 16: "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Accurately, pate does not mean the head, but the crown of the head.

## Preventing Lead Poisoning.

Improvements in the arrangements of two large factories in England reduced the number of cases of lead poisoning in one year from 173 to 74.

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## CHAPTER XII.

"D'ye know him?" Kate asked.  
"Yes, I have seen him."  
"Ye know no good o' him, I be bound, and I'm one as is not slow in expressin' my mind about such cattle."

"Don't, Kate, I beseech you."  
All the while the marble white face of Theodore was unmoved.

"Is this your hand-bag, Laura?" he asked, picking up the pretty, white bag where the porter had left it.

"Yes."  
"Let me carry it to the hotel for you. This good woman will assist you. Come, there is but one hotel in the place, and there is no missing it. It is a long way from the landing, with no cable line."

In a maze the unfortunate Laura was led from the landing back toward the hotel. She had left home, hoping to be rid of her persecutor, and found him waiting at the landing for her. She longed to know, and yet dreaded to ask him why he had come to Alaska. Her heart told her he was on his way to the Klondyke, and she felt a strange dread of him.

On reaching the hotel, which was a miserable affair made of boards and but roughly finished, she ordered a room and was taken to it. Kate was assigned a miserable little apartment near the kitchen, where she could smell the beef roasting and hear the cooks quarrelling.

Laura had not been long in her apartment when there came a tap at her door, and a boy with tangled, red hair entered and said:

"Ef yer please, mum, thar's a feller downstairs who gin me this heard fer ye, an' says he'd like ter chin yer a bit."

Laura took the small, neat card from the dirty hand of the boy and, glancing at it, read the name of Theodore Lackland. Should she see him? She knew the interview must come. In fact she wished for it on her own account, so why not have it at once, understand each other and have it over with?

She told the boy that she would see the stranger at once, and he bowed his red head and retired from the apartment. She nervously herself for the coming interview.

There came a light rap at the door. "Come in," she said.

The door opened and Theodore Lackland entered the apartment. There was an insidious smile on his face, as he said:

"You did not expect to meet me, did you?"

"I certainly did not," she answered, her eyes growing round with astonishment.

"I hope my appearance did not cause any unpleasant shock to your nerves, and now that it is over I trust you will be glad to have a friend in this strange, wild land."

There was a short pause, after which he went on:

"I will be frank with you, Miss Kean. I came that I might be near you."

"I am capable of taking care of myself," she answered.

"But while I concede all that, I reasoned that you were coming to a land beset by many dangers, and could not feel comfortable in the thought that you were alone. I had leisure and means, and consequently why not devote them to your service? Oh, Laura, and he drew his chair a little nearer to her. "I know you spurn me. I know you believe me to be a deceitful hypocrite, but I am not so bad as you think. I am your friend—your best friend if you will only permit me—"

"I cannot."  
"You have mistaken me all along."  
"Perhaps at times I have, but I know you now."

"Laura, will you listen to me a moment—just one moment?"

"Yes, I will have to do so, as I have no other choice."

His voice regained its calmness, but his manner was still agitated.

"I may serve you even yet," he said. "I have done you much wrong—I know that—and him, too. I did you and him a wrong, knowing I would repent it to the last hour of my life, but I was driven to it; I had no power to resist it—I mastered me then; it masters me now."

Theodore had risen and took a step nearer.

"Laura," he said, and his voice fell to a broken whisper, "I love you so I can see you the wife of another if he can make you more happy than I. Do you believe there can be an unselfish love? I know it, and I swear that if you can be more happy as the wife of Paul Miller, then I will go with you all over the world to find Paul Miller, and if he be living will find him and give him to you."

His words had produced a profound effect on Laura, and she could only gaze on him in wonder. Overwhelmed by the ardent manner of the man, she was speechless and dumbfounded. When she could regain her voice she said:

"Heaven forgive me, Mr. Lackland, if I have done you injustice."

"I freely forgive you. It is so difficult for us to understand each other that we are continually blundering and making mistakes. But now that my motives are plain, now that you see how unselfish I am, I hope you

will trust me implicitly. You may think you have money sufficient to push this search and may be mistaken; all I ask of you is that you allow me to furnish the funds you need. You shall not lack means to find Paul."

The man watched with anxious eyes the face of the girl to read the impression his great generosity would make.

It was favorable, and his delight at the discovery was almost diabolical.

"Thank you, Laura. You have made me supremely happy by accepting my favor. I will endeavor to find Paul for you. We will go together, and do all that can be done to find him."

He bowed and went out. She bowed her face in her hands and wept.

"My heart misgives me," she sobbed. "He talks fair and seems honest, but something within keeps saying: 'Trust him not!'"

Ben Holton, who had remained behind to look after her heavier luggage, arrived at the hotel, and went to consult with his mistress about some missing packages. On his way to her room he met Lackland, and was much astounded to see a man whom he thought in Fresno that he was half inclined to think himself mistaken.

"I say, Miss Laura, was a feller in here a minit ago?" he asked.

"Yes."  
"He looked just like Lackland."

"It was Lackland."  
"Well, Miss Laura, I jist be dodgasted if he's here for any good. He's after grub stakes, ye kin depend on et. Look out for him."

She then told her faithful employe the proposition he had made, and old Ben listened carefully to her, and at the conclusion said:

"I'll bet my head for a football that it's a salted mine he's a-plantin'. Don't ye bite at his bait, Miss Laura; don't ye bite."

Laura was more distressed after the departure of Ben Holton than before. She began to realize how utterly helpless she was.

There was quite a change in the expression on Lackland's face after he left Laura's room. All the benevolence and unselfish concern for the girl's welfare gave way to a look of selfishness, and he chuckled in triumph.

"I will have her yet. She will be wholly in my power. A few weeks more, another turn of the cards and the game is mine."

At a low grocery in the town he found his two employes, Ben Allen and Horsa Cummins.

"Well, how are you faring?" asked Lackland.

"Dry!" growled Cummins.  
"Come, Cummins, you remember the obligation imposed on you when you were employed—you were not to drink."

"Yes, but that makes me dry," said Cummins, with a wink.

"Now, you have both been here before, have you not?"

"Yes."  
"Do you know where to procure good outfits?"

"Right here is the best place in Alaska," declared Cummins.

"How much will a first-class outfit cost?"

Cummins reflected a moment and said:

"Well, I think it will take about two thousand dollars."

Without returning a word his employe counted out the money and told him to go and procure it at once.

Cummins and Davis set out, and next morning reported that all had been secured.

"It is well," declared the shrewd Mr. Lackland. "Be prepared to go whenever I give the word."

"We'll be ready."  
When his hirelings had gone Lackland went to the hotel and sent up his card to Miss Laura Kean. She admitted him, and he asked:

"Miss Kean, when are you going to cross the pass and start for the Klondyke?"

"As soon as I can. I want to go with the first train."

"There are some gentlemen ready to start in the morning."

"Then I can get ready. I will go with them," she declared.

"Would you like my services in securing you an outfit?"

"Yes, yes; if you can, secure me an outfit at once."

"I'll do so. I would as soon start myself to-morrow as any other time. You will want Indian porters for your luggage and a sled and dogs for yourself. Have Ben Holton pack up all your effects and be ready," and he left.

Ben Holton was only a stupid fellow, but he declared he did not like the arrangements at all, and smelled a greatbig mouse somewhere. Nevertheless, Ben went to work packing up the goods and preparing for the journey.

Laura took her place on the sled, and the Esquimaux with big snow shoes came to strap her in and draw the robes and furs over her.

"Are you strapped in securely?" Lackland asked Laura.

"Yes."  
"Do you think you will be comfortable?"

"I know I shall."  
They were soon in the midst of a driving snowstorm, and Kate Willis declared that she "just knew that child would freeze."

They halted before reaching the summit and camped. Tents had been brought and every precaution was taken to provide for the comfort of Laura Kean. She and Kate were housed in a tent warmed by a gasoline stove, which made it quite comfortable.

Next day they resumed their march, crossed the summit and began the descent.

Lackland was often seen talking with one of the Indians, who spoke English fairly well, and was a big, burly, villainous-looking fellow. One day two men came to their camp. They held long and earnest conferences, and when they went away that night the man named Ben Allen went with them. It is perhaps needless to inform the reader that the two men were Morris and Ned Padgett, who brought the information that Paul and the old hermit were prisoners in the cavern.

"It is lucky I learned of his capture," thought Lackland. "Curse him, why isn't he dead? For over a year he has been lost in the forest and thought to be dead; now, why isn't he dead?"

Lackland little dreamed that the very tools he was using were willing to betray him if they could make more out of it, and that they were trying by bribes and threats to extort from the prisoners in the cavern the secret of the cached treasure.

After Ben left the party to fulfil his orders they camped three weeks in a valley.

Laura inquired why they delayed so long, but Lackland had abundant excuses, and assured her they would go on before winter set in earnest. Already lowering clouds had hung over the valley and covered it with snow.

At last they broke camp and were moving slowly toward the Yukon, when a dog was discovered coming toward them. Beyond a doubt it was the property of some of the Klondykers. Horsa Cummins discovered a strip of tanned skin about its neck and called the attention of Lackland to it.

He quickly removed it and read:

"We are in the forest out of food and starving. Follow on the trail at once and find us. Paul Miller and Companion."

The bit of tanned skin dropped from the trembling hand of Theodore Lackland. He pressed his hand to his forehead and groaned.

"What is it, boss?" asked Cummins.  
"Go into camp. We must start at once to find some men who are starving."

When they went into camp, after taking care to see that Laura was made comfortable, he took one man and three Indians and started on the back trail made by the dog. All the while he was thinking:

"Paul Miller and one companion. Who can that companion be?"

## CHAPTER XIII.

Clarence Berry and the Metlakahltans.

Clarence Berry and his brave little wife Ethel continued to heap up their golden treasure day by day, but they had not forgotten their unfortunate friend, Paul Miller. One evening, as they sat in their shanty, before the great, blazing fire, they received the usual visitors, Long Dick and Gid Myers.

"Say, ef ye want 't see d' worst old geezers ye ever clapped yer lamps upon, ye want 't go down d' camp," began Dick.

"Dunn know, but it looks mighty 't me like it was some starved-out Egyptian mummies as had been resurrected from de pyramids."