

By JOHN R. HUSICK, Author of "Mystic Mountain," "The Dark Stranger," "Charlie Almond's Double," "B.C."

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CHAPTER I. Strange Information.

From the flowery fields of California to the barren region of the Klondyke, from 1849 to 1897, is a wide reach, but the gulf of time is bridged over and the hopes and fears of thousands of hearts follow the argonauts who go to search for the golden fleece in the confines of the Arctic Circle, as they did forty years ago the California prospectors.

The real story of the discovery of gold on the Klondyke is not generally known, and to unravel that mystery is the purview of this story.

On a certain night, about three years ago last May, five men were seated about a camp fire, built under the south side of a cliff, among the firs, near the banks of the Yukon river, fifteen miles above Dawson City.

As some of this party have become well known by the development of the Klondyke gold fields, it is as well to introduce them to the reader before we proceed with our story.

Years ago the California prospectors, who were known as the "gold seekers," were once well known in the great northwest as "gold diggers" and "gold hunters."

They were Jack Ralston, but his name was commonly known as "Yukon Ralston."

Ralston was once an American, but he had become a Canadian, and his hair was growing frosty, yet his frame was still strong and his heart had not abandoned its hope.

"Lucky George," as the miners nicknamed him, sat on the log just opposite Glim Ralston, George was an Englishman, a brave, adventurous fellow, who was also an expert miner.

Perhaps it was his knowledge of geology and mining that tended to his success. Nevertheless, the miners attributed it to luck.

Gid Myers was a man of thirty, with pale blue eyes and sandy complexion. Gid had had considerable experience as a hunter and miner, or, but in the miner's parlance had never struck it rich.

Porter Allen, or "Big Port," was a giant in size, being over six feet in height, with broad shoulders and sinews of steel. He was forty, his hair and long beard quite grizzled with time.

The fifth was a young man of twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, with the freshness of youth and innocence still on his face. While the older companions were smoking their pipes, the younger man of the party gazed abstractedly into the glowing fire. His mind went back to the mountains, rivers and seas, where he had left his widowed mother, dear to his heart, and his young daughter. Her name was Laura Keen. They were lovers and betrothed.

While he sat gazing into the fire and seeing only the well-bred face of his betrothed, his companions talked and ate their supper and talked of their present situation.

"How long have you been in Alaska?" asked Lucky George. "It's now twenty-one years."

"An" never been back to the States and you're still here?" "No."

"Are you ever going?" "Don't know," he answered, with a smile that he liked very well. "I'm a graveyard man. Most everybody knows the end. If—" but he did not finish the sentence. His weather-beaten face seemed to glow with softer light as he gazed into the glowing fire. His mind went back to the mountains, rivers and seas, where he had left his widowed mother, dear to his heart, and his young daughter. Her name was Laura Keen. They were lovers and betrothed.

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story a silence fell on the group. The youth spoke for several minutes. "The youth, known only by the name of 'Crack,' was gazing abstractedly into the fire. He had heard no part of the story. His mind was still on his far-away home, where he dwelt in peace, and the fair being who had promised to be his wife, for whom he had braved the dangers of the wilderness."

"At early morning he little camp on the Yukon was awake. Paul was the last to awake. Youth is healthful and innocent, so sleep lingers long about his eyelids, and those whose bodies are freighted with disease or minds burdened with care."

"Where's George?" asked Gid, as he looked at the sleeping man. "Been gone these two hours," Big Port answered. "Alone?" "That's strange."

Breakfast was disposed of, the dogs and harness arranged, and the men started for their journey up the river to Dawson City, then an insignificant village, and yet lucky George had not returned.

As the sun rose higher the mud and snow made travel more uncomfortable, yet Paul trudged on, uncomplainingly. He could bear any burden or hardship, but he was not a man to be trifled with. It was for Laura. Her presence gave strength to his arm and keeness to his eye, spurring him on to do more than superhuman things. When they halted at night they were compelled to get to leeward of the slope to protect themselves from the snow-drifts that were blowing down the mountain side.

"What if he does?" asked Port. "We don't know," answered Gid. "We might if he struck pay dirt," said Gid.

"Won't we be just as likely to strike pay dirt as George?" "No."

"Because George is allers in luck, every body knows it. He's got a straight string, but a feller holds a straight string has a flush. I'll gamble my dog's an' packs that he makes a ten trick right now."

"That's a good one, and the men sat and smoked and stoned, to drive away the mosquitoes. At last Paul broke the silence by saying: 'Klondyke let us go and find it ourselves.' 'Now yer should,' cried the prospectors. 'Why not try'n' to give us the slip, I'm a feller, or run a cold deck on us,' said Gid.

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advancing to within a hundred paces, they called to the diggers. At first they were silent, but then the man, who was a shrewd fellow, saw, it was best to admit to the discovery.

"Come down, boys; come down," he cried cheerfully. "I tell you we have made the greatest strike in the world. Look at the work of a few hours."

"George, are there more good claims?" "Plenty of them. Let us all set to work, stake out the best and get the very creditable sum of money that we want. Lattimer here put me onto this; he got it from the Indians."

This was the discovery of the great gold fields in the Klondyke. George got the tip from Lattimer, the white man with an Indian wife, and had determined to work it alone if he could do so, so that his friends had found him, he decided to make the most of it and divide.

The others were sent for, and claim for all was made out. Next morning with the dawn of day Paul began to work his claim. From the first shovelful of earth, he seemed to take out gold. His pick seemed almost to dig out nuggets, and his pan was always rich in gold. He washed out a thousand dollars' worth of dust and nuggets to the party who had followed him for dinner, but toiled on. The small moose-skin bags were quickly filled, and then he poured the renewed accumulation of gold into a tin. His eyes gleamed with the fire of the insane, and in his mind he saw only the faces of sweetheart and mother and the look of triumph and hope of the danger which his accumulation brought him.

There was danger hovering over the happy lot of the prospectors, some distance up the stream, from the others, and one day, as they were talking and heaping up the golden treasure, a hunter, who had been hunting eyes gazed at him from the dense foliage of pines. They watched him a long time as he toiled, and then he came to the stream, with a smile, which said: "Let the fool toil on. When he has taken his thousands from the earth he will have to pay for them."

After the first few days he stopped long enough to eat and sleep a few hours at a time, dreaming of home and of making loved ones there happy. A little later he was overtaken by a cloud was gathering over the loved one at home and another over his own head, threatening to ruin his life and break his heart. (To be continued.)

Feeding Stock in Idaho. From Farmers' Review. The condition of ranges here is good this year. They consist of bunch grass, bruce, and short grass that grows in the spring and sometimes in the fall, if we have the rains to start it. All the ranges that lie next to the valleys are pretty well fed off for ten or fifteen miles north and northeast. From that on the range increases in goodness for 100 miles or more. It is a good deal better with cattle than with more sheep than any other stock here, as divided in lots of 2,000 to 3,000, or even 4,000, and some of the best camp tender looks after the wants of the several bands. As a general thing stock are taken from the ranges in March or April, and brought back in November or December to the feed yards, where they are bought for \$1 to \$1.50 per ton in one-half ton lots. Horse winter on the ranges without any feeding at all, most every season, and so do cattle in some places. The horses consist of a few heavy breeds, and the rest are being brought in and lots of blooded sheep are being placed on the ranges. We have a good wool market here, and the wool is being shipped either east or west, but our horses generally go east. The blood stock are more tender than native stock, and need more care, but they bring a better price—Jason Hallock, Washington County, Idaho.

Benefit of Grinding Grain. Twenty head of young grade calves were purchased by the Kansas Experiment station during April and May. They were divided into two groups, gradually changed to skim milk, with what grain they would eat, composed of a mixture of whole and ground grain. On June 15, the calves were divided into two lots, to receive equal as possible, the lot to receive ground kafir corn weighing 1,575 pounds, or 157 1/2 pounds per head. Each lot was fed all the grain and 157 pounds of alfalfa hay. The calves would eat nothing but ground kafir corn. Lot—For the 112 days under experiment, these ten calves consumed 14,748 pounds of skim milk, 1,324 pounds of ground kafir corn, 2,381 pounds of prairie hay, 120 pounds orchard grass hay, and 6,222 pounds alfalfa hay. The total gain of the lot was 1,725 pounds, or 15.6 pounds per head. The lot to receive whole kafir corn weighed 1,577 pounds, or 157 1/2 pounds per head. Each lot was fed all the grain and 157 pounds of alfalfa hay. 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