

ROYAL RANGER RALPH;

The Waif of the Western Prairies.

BY WELDON J. COBB.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

Darrel and his companion disappeared through the aperture in the wall.

The two guards, regarding the scout as an enemy, began firing at him.

The latter sprang behind the boulder that blocked the exit from the cave, and which Darrel Gray had forced aside in entering the mine.

With some aim he saw Despard and others arrive on the scene.

Then he resumed to attack desperately when his foes made another attack.

With a profound curiosity Ranger Ralph surveyed the strange rescuer.

For some moments Ranger Ralph stood silently regarding the beautiful Indian maiden who had rescued him.

White Fawn? he ejaculated in the wilder tones.

Yes, it is the child of Shadow Snake, who is the half-breed?

She peered curiously into the scout's face as she spoke.

The Indian thought so; at least she knew that he was an enemy of the outlaws.

She knows you now. You are the great hunter, are you not?

Ranger Ralph yes. But how came you here?

The Fawn will tell her friend and rescuer all, but they must not remain here.

There is danger?

Yes. The outlaws will soon be on our trail. Come.

She led the scout from the spot to a secluded portion of the valley.

The scout tried to see the horses who were halloped and saddled.

The Fawn told the Modoc princess related how she and Darrel Gray and had led him.

She explained that when she left him to remember the spot of the land.

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"No. He is armed and in a position where we cannot attack him."

Despard started from the place. "Give you an hour to decide your lover's fate," he cried, warningly, to Inez.

What the outlaw had reported was true. Ranger Ralph had been discovered.

Driven to a place behind some rocks, however, he had the bandits at bay.

They were forced to retreat before his rapid fire. Still he knew that when reinforcements came he must necessarily be disclosed and captured.

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The morning light did not materially change the situation of affairs.

He had determined to keep a close watch for Despard, theorizing that the outlaw leader would set on his journey that morning for Waldorf's place of abode.

He encountered him in a thicket at the side of the canyon, and watched as he walked guardedly.

To save her lovers, she had consented to sacrifice her fortune.

The scout waited for some time after the cavaliers had passed by.

Then, cautious and stealthily, he took up their trail.

The bandits troveled straight down the canyon, and Ranger Ralph followed them at a distance until they finally came to a halt.

They seemed to have some difficulty, and delay in locating the man's home, their evident point of destination.

Suddenly the entire party disappeared from view in a thicket in the canyon.

When the scout reached the spot he found a large opening in the rock.

This cave-like aperture the bandits and evident ly disappeared.

Ranger Ralph threaded a dark, low passageway, groped his way blindly round and then paused.

Far above his head he could see a light glimmer dimly. A series of steps cut in the solid rock seemed to lead to the point where the light was.

The steps of the party had been left just outside the place.

The scout began to ascend the steps and at last arrived at the top.

Beyond him was a large apartment filled with evidence of a long career as hunter and trapper.

The apartment was a shallow one and was lighted by a lamp hung from a beam from the roof of the cave.

Standing beneath it was a man, white-haired and aged in appearance.

The man started, and in a moment his clear, steady eyes were fixed upon Despard, who was slightly in advance of the party that accompanied him.

At a glance the scout recognized the stranger, and he uttered an exclamation that had not been for many years.

The latter was speaking as the scout reached the shadowed entrance of the cave.

"Who are you? What does this intrusion mean?" he demanded, sternly.

"I came from Miner's Gulch," was Despard's ready reply.

"To see me?"

"Yes."

"How did you find this place?"

"From description, Mr. Waldorf. I am the friend of a man named Tracy."

The hermit started, and in a moment his clear, steady eyes were fixed upon Despard, who was slightly in advance of the party that accompanied him.

"I have in behalf of that man's daughter."

"Ha! Then you know—"

"All concerning the fortune he left. I have come to claim that fortune."

"You?"

"Yes."

"What claim—"

"As the announced husband of Inez Tracy."

Waldorf glanced suspiciously at the intruder.

"Allowing that there is no fortune," he said, "I must have some further proof that you are to be trusted."

"It shall be forthcoming when you want it," replied Despard, promptly.

"No."

At his word the despatching captives stepped forward.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHICAGO'S OLDEST LETTER CARRIER.

Abram D. Jones Thirty Years a Letter Carrier in the Windy City.

Letter carriers are now wearing their service stripes. Each stripe is indicative of five years of service.

The great honor to be conferred, that of six stripes, was awarded to Abram D. Jones, the veteran letter carrier of Chicago.

It was in 1867 that Jones received his appointment. At that time General Frank S. Sherman was postmaster, Jones had come here from New York a mere lad and gained his position through the influence of Judge Henry Fuller.

GATE TO THE GOLD FIELDS.

Wonderful Growth of the Town of Skaguay.

Skaguay is a modern wonder. Not many weeks ago the place practically did not exist.

Today, with its carefully built out streets and its scores of well stocked and cozy private dwellings, it presents all the appearance of a thriving Northwestern town.

Merchants here are being rushed up with astonishing rapidity, while merchants are so numerous and enterprising that competition has already reduced their prices to almost bottom prices.

The starting up of a steam laundry has caused the "old trail" to be accepted as a good form in this out of the way settlement, while the establishment of thirteen saloons plainly indicates the prevalence of a generous atmosphere of conviviality.

The New York Herald's special correspondent, in an entertaining article published herewith, gives a graphic description of Skaguay as he found it entering the fourth week of its municipal existence. He says:

Nothing in the history of Western Alaska compares with the mushroom growth of Skaguay. Ben Moore, the man who located the town site, left for the Sound on August 10, at which date there was his own log cabin, the store and the bunkhouse of the Alaska and Northwest Trading Company and a number of tents.

When he returned there were whole streets of wood dwellings, while the owners had themselves located and had paid a registry fee to United States Commissioner Smith of five dollars. Not only were these new arrivals permitted to locate on Captain Moore's land on payment of the fee, but it is said that Mr. Smith accepted the fee and gave a registration receipt to half a dozen different people for the same plot of land.

The newly appointed Land Commissioner and Register, Mr. Dudley, will therefore have some difficulty in unravelling the conflicting real estate ownership on the town site.

Skaguay is on a tide flat, with a tide range of twenty feet, and there are no harbors, but a half mile below tidal water mark.

The next steamer, having left his outfit with his partner, who hopes to sell it to some one who will pay for the difficult journey they made with it up the river.

There does not appear to have been any pilfering of goods left on the beach from the steamer. In a short time there will be no chance for this. The two long piers are both completed for the honor of being first completed and early next month both will be in operation. That of the Skaguay Wharf Company is already piled to its apex and a length of over fifteen hundred feet, in a curving line from the northern to the southern side of the bay, thus blocking off all further competition in this line.

This will be done by the Juneau Pier, the pier under the P. J. Ferguson, the large pier under E. Valentine, Jeweller, and E. D. Sylvester, editor of the Searchlight, all of Juneau. The other pier will be known as the Seattle Dock, as it is largely backed by capital from that Sound city. This starts from the street south of Broadway and runs straight to the completed dock at the cliff. Both will have warehouses, to which goods will be taken direct from the ship, and there await the proper claimants.

These two great piers are impressive to the incoming stranger, who knows that the town is only a month old, but as to the rest he can see but little from the steamer's decks. Tents dot the shore the whole of its width, with here and there a small wooden building, the latter are rapidly taking the place of the canvas house and stores, for the reason that cold weather and heavy rains have set in, and more especially very high winds. Captain McKinney, Chairman of the Vigilance Committee, estimates that there are now one hundred and fifty buildings of wood, and that there would have been many more but for the severity of lumber. There is a sawmill hard at work now, lumber is coming in by every steamer, and nearly every one leaving the harbor to winter here is putting up a habitation of wood. Many are erecting larger and more substantial buildings than their needs require, a speculation, hoping to sell at a large profit when the rush is renewed next



SKAGUAY BAY.

by big steamers are taken off in row boats, with a pull of from one to two miles, according to the state of the tide, when they are carried on the backs of the boats to comparatively dry land. It is amusing to hear the shrieks of his women when on the back of the boatmen splashing through the water.

Only a month ago, when the Willamette hauled her couple of thousand of gold seekers, all the freight and passengers' baggage were hauled in these small boats, or small scows, and dumped on the shore poll wall, bridged by gully, from which each owner had to carry his particular baggage to his store.

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I watched this steamer Queen unload in this way. There was a good deal

of hustling, necessarily, but I heard no complaint of any goods being stolen or lost—except temporarily. In fact, the whole community seems wonderfully honest considering that the black flag of the continent are herding in this direction.

Merchants in tents leave their goods hanging outside all night; pilgrims leave their camp on the trail, with all their belongings scattered about; yet but few cases of pilfering have been heard of, and only one theft of money.

This was in the case of a man named W. H. Bayless, of Seattle, who for twelve days has \$1400 in his kit under a pile of feed in his tent. He left his tent often in perfect confidence, but one day he found his belongings had

spring and when they once more pack up for the Klondike.

Probably as many as fifty such substantial dwellings are going up.

A curious phase of the situation among those who have decided to winter here is that nearly every one of them believes that he has just the natural gift necessary to make a successful merchant. They are all putting their great stakes into goods, which they hope to turn into money again, with a large profit. By the spring, they will sell out an established business when the weather permits them to leave for the gold fields. This is the new city building up. There are thirteen saloons, a majority of their proprietors having plans for getting to



THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL.

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the Klondike as soon as possible, and there are between three and four hundred merchants of whom the same thing may be said.

Not only on Broadway, but along the intersecting streets and among the big timbers on each side of the trail, are these merchants' tents and stores, little and big, and all sorts and conditions of men are interested in them, from the spectacle, unmercenary store clerk, cunningly handling the saw and the axe on his new building, to the stock backwoodsman, to whom the making of change is a different mental operation.

One would think that the town would be overdone with so many merchants, and perhaps it will be soon, when the steamers and fewer and passengers on their numerous enough to be worth mentioning. But there is a population of over five hundred still in tents, and it is believed that there will be continued coming and going until the beginning of December, to

Another Seattle man at once gave him \$100 with which to take out his feed, for he had already gotten his goods some distance along the trail. But this was only the beginning of Davidson's bad luck. He was one of the first on the trail, and worked beyond his strength. Just past the summit he had an attack of pneumonia, and getting worse instead of better, had to give up. He is now here waiting for

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