

SLUMBERING GOLD

By AUBREY BOYD

SYNOPSIS: Young Ed Maitland, son of a New England seafaring family, and the hardened gambler, Speed Malone, met on a trip north to the Yukon gold fields in '97, when word of the rich ores there first came down the Pacific coast. Maitland was determined to win back his lost fortune before he returned home. The two men became partners, Speed promising not to get tangled with the law if he could help it, and to clear out from the partnership if he did. Frenchy, the fisherman whose smack took the two men north; Lucky Rose, the beautiful girl who had given a ring to Maitland as a keepsake; Fallon, camp leader, resentful of Rose's attention to Maitland; Steiner, the money lender; young Pete and his drunken partner Bill Owens; Brent, old-time prospector; Garnet, well-to-do traveler who hired Maitland and Speed to take his things over the mountains—these are the principal figures in the story. Malone, Maitland and Garnet hailed part of his stuff from the canvas camp on the Skagway beach over the trail to the camp in the hills called Liarsville. The trail was in bad condition. Speed wanted to close it and mend it Fallon wanted to push on. Now go on with the story:

SIXTH INSTALLMENT

"A bunch of us," said Brent, with a squalor in his tired eyes, "aim to call a camp meetin' at one o'clock when the crowd's in and before the backtrailin' starts, so we can get a full vote. That's why I spoke to ye. Can we figure on you boys to stand in?"

Speed looked at his partner. It was their one remaining chance of keeping Garnet on the trail. "You can count on us to vote," he said, "but that's all."

Brent signified that he asked for nothing more, and leaving them, went up the trail to collect more voters.

When they returned to Liarsville the camp was crowded. Here and there the dispirited faces of mud-dragged men showed that Fallon's decision meant the end of the trail for some of them, but they accepted it as the harsh law of the stampede. Brent's chance, even of a hearing, was more than doubtful. The trail of the partners had reached a critical impasse.

Before they reached the cache, they met Garnet coming toward them, looking refreshed and clean as he stepped carefully along the river path. He listened in silence to Speed's careful account of the trail and agreed to attend the mass meeting.

But he was visibly more interested in some sounds that came to them from the vicinity of the bridge. A metallic "come-on" chime rang steadily through the hollow above a label of silver and the river's track.

"Not a game of chance, friends. A simple test of skill. The quickness of the hand deceives the eye."

"Suppose we give the game a spin while waiting for one o'clock?" Garnet suggested. "You need some relaxation."

"You can spin it," Speed declined. "If I had the jack it wouldn't relax me none to give it to a shell rigger."

The snatched that pierced the canyon must fell on a noisy crowd around the dealer's pitch table, many of them not knowing the game, but simply holding there to wait for the backtrail to clear. A player had just placed a

bet. From the higher ground at the bridge-head they saw it to be the man with the sheepskin coat—Pete's partner Bill. Noticeably drunk, Bill was swaying on his heels. Fallon and one of his outfit stood near, watching him play.

"I guess we'll pass this," said Garnet prudently.

Speed did not answer. His attention had been arrested by the pallid, narrow-eyed face of the dealer, on which the sunlight fell squarely. "It seems like I've seen that bice somewhere," he muttered.

While Bill stood shifting his wealth between his hands, the yellow head of his young partner appeared beside him. Pete was trying to pull him out of the game, ignored by Bill, the boy said something to Fallon—not audible from the bridge. Fallon brushed him out of the way with an impatient, backward fling of his hand. The blow might have been unintentional, but the hand was heavy and ringed. It cut the boy's cheek and sent him stumbling.

"Damned shame," said Garnet.

Speed swore to himself. Pete broke away and went up the canyon while Bill was oblivious to everything but the stakes he was vaguely counting.

The dealer hastened to cover the incident. "Not a game of chance, miners. The quickness of the hand—Here the dealer's voice hung trailing, his cold eyes, roving over the crowd, suddenly encountered and locked with Speed's. A look of incredulous wonder pierced his mask.

"A thousand," muttered Bill.

"Shoot it, Bill," said Fallon. "I'll copper you some in case you lose."

He laid a small stack of gold pieces on the table, as Bill lurched forward and placed his double handful of money.

The dealer's eyes, which had returned to the game, quivered upward as a clear draw suddenly spoke over the heads of the crowd.

"I'll place a thousand on Bill to win."

The discovery that it was Speed who had spoken astonished no one quite as much as Maitland, who knew the limits of his resources. The offer had been made to the dealer, but Fallon wheeled around with a snarl that darkened when he recognized the speaker. Cocking his cigar, he drew a large roll from his pocket, and slapped down a counted sum on the table. "There's a thousand says you're a cheap four-flusher," he said.

"Look out!" The words fell from the dealer's lips in an involuntary murmur.

"Oh, he won't shoot," said Fallon, easily. "He's one of them would-be gunmen. Chews a lot but ain't got no fangs. Ain't got no money neither."

Speed, in fact, had not moved except to reach into his pocket for money that was not there. He had not looked for this exact result, and was still counting his next move. Note the ease his composure remained perfect—even when, to his surprise, his fingers closed over a wad of bills. Fortune sometimes favors the absolute gambler. This time the means of her miracle was Garnet, who had quietly slipped the roll into his pocket.

"I mean money," growled Fallon, at the first hint of delay. You can't run a whispin' bluff in this game."

Doubt struggled with fear in the dealer's face when the insult was ignored. Speed walked up to the table stripping a sheaf of clean one-hundred-dollar bills from Garnet's roll, and laid it alongside Fallon's. Then

"MIGHTY CASEY"

Baseball Player of Yesteryear Poses for Camera.



WASHINGTON. Daniel M. Casey (above), now 71, rode to fame 48 years ago on the baseball poem, "Casey at the Bat," all of which was wrong, says Mr. Casey. "I was a pitcher and was not supposed to be a good hitter." Still the poem lives.

his eyes pinned the dealer. "You can deal this any way you figure healthy," he said. "Only remember I'm backin' Bill to win."

The dealer's pale visage turned paler; he lowered his head to conceal a twitching of his mouth.

There was a craning moment of silence. A him ran through the crowd as the dealer lifted the shells. Fallon ripped out an oath of chagrin and snatched the roll. Speed nicked up his own and the other's stake, and was turning away when Fallon called him back.

"What I took ye for," snarled the camp boss. "A brag-and-run gambler. Pull up there, fellow. The play ain't through yet."

A slight twist in the corner of Speed's mouth showed that this was not unexpected. "No," he said, "the plain ain't through yet, only it's a new game. They's a stretch of trail between here and the bridge up the line that needs fixin' almighty bad. Horses and outfits has been lost on it. You're the boss of this camp, and you've blocked the move to fix it because you've a big string of mules and can take a chance of lightin' through in one haul. You don't give a damn for the small miner who has to relay his pack over that slew with one horse or none. Well, some of us figure different. Four day's work with the camp drafted will put the trail in shape. It's the only chance for a lot of the boys who've sung their last red to get here. You can't run a white miner's camp without takin' count of the common prospector. That's rock bottom—stampeded or none. If you doubt it, Fallon, and want to gamble, I'll bet you this yet thousand the camp ain't back of ye."

The stillness in the canyon was complete, save for the gush of the river. Quietly as the words had been spoken, they had touched every instant of the crowd at once.

Shrewd malice curled Fallon's eyes. "I'll take your bet," he said. "These men know what a delay would mean. If you think you can hat 'em, the idea will cost you a thousand and somethin' more."

Now that it had an outlet, the response of the crowd broke loose. "I'm with you, brother," a man called out to Speed. "That's talkin' . . ." and similar endorsements mounted over the voices of dissent.

"Hold on!" barked Fallon above the tumult, "and swivel your muzzle-loadin' brains on what this crook's playing for. Who is he? Where's he from? Blowed into camp two days ago a busted drifter; now he's flashin' money. Ever meet a 'fixer' on the gold trails? Well, the inside crowd in the Yukon is workin' hard to plaster ever' good location before the stampede arrives, and here's a slick frame to freeze you out."

The argument was far-drawn, but cunningly gauged to an audience of credulous, impatient, gold-fevered men.

Speed parried it promptly. "That won't hold gravel," he declared. "The river don't freeze till the first week in October. Four days won't hurt that margin, and most of the camp will gain time on a good trail."

"What you ain't primed to answer," returned Fallon, "is who you are and what you're doin' here with that bunch of money and no outfit."

The outlaw creased a cigarette paper. "You're switchin' your bet," he said evenly. "The question is whether the boys want to make a trail. But if you want to talk personal—how does it come that a man who's so all-fired anxious to see ever' one get to Dawson, spends his time makin' this miner drunk and persuadin' him to bust hisself at a skin game. Another is that cowards' lick you took at the kid a while back?" The cool temerity of the challenge held the crowd in a spell. "You ask where I come from," Speed continued. "I come from a state where a man low enough to do a thing like that would be booted out of a camp of horse thieves."

Fallon's hands flashed to his guns and slipped then a puzzled seam deepening between his eyes. He could not imagine anyone taking such a chance unless he were sure of an advantage. On Speed's part it was sheer gambling—one of those reckless yet clear-headed gestures of which incidents are not unknown in the annals of the West, where gamblers have sometimes been challenged and held without the touching of a weapon.

The hush was suddenly broken by Brent, who had arrived with his backers, and judged it time to cut this case. "Who's for Fallon? Make it a showdown, boys!"

"I'll oppose Fallon to suspend dealings with Speed while he has a different throat. Heads were counted in a confused out. A majority showed for Brent's proposition, but many had not declared themselves either way.

"That's no showdown!" yelled Fallon. "To fix the trail you've got to get it. Try that and you'll damn near find out how much of the camp's behind you. You can't bar it."

"We'll go to bedrock on that point right now," Brent shot back. "We've got the man who'll see the job done, and the miners' committee sure needs a new chairman. Get behind this, men."

There was a tangled burst of enraged and jubilent shouts. In the confusion it was a moment before Speed could make himself heard. This was more than he had counted on. "I ain't the man for the job," he said. "I'm a stranger and I ain't patient enough to argue with suspicious. Put up one of your own men."

"Patience be damned," growled a sun-browned Arizona miner. "Who ain't askin' you to be patient?"

Fallon, sure of himself now, lit a fresh cigar and flicked the match meditatively in Speed's direction. "The man don't live," he said complacently, "who can bar a trail when my outfit gets ready to go through. As for this meddler, he don't amount to a puff of smoke, and I'll show you he don't." and the camp boss put his hands on his guns. "I called him yesterday for a bar and a horse thief, whichever was his fightin' word, but that was too mild, I say now that he's a sneakin' bar and a yellow coyote, both."

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

FARM QUESTION

How much fruit and vegetables should be canned for each member of the family.

Answer: Each adult member of the family should have at least 57 pints of canned vegetables and 45 pints of canned fruit for use during the winter. To the canned articles should be added twelve pints of dried fruits and six pints of dried vegetables. Preserves and jam will add the required sugar or sweets to the diet and a small supply should be prepared and added to the pantry shelves.

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