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THE YUKON TRAIL

A TALE OF THE NORTH
WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—As a representative of the government Gordon Elliot is on his way to the Yukon. On the boat he meets and becomes in terested in a fellow passenger whom he learns is Sheba O'Neill, also "going in" to the Yukon. Sheba O'Neill, active head of the land-claiming syndicate, makes investigation comes aboard. Macdonald is attacked by mine laborers who had discharged and the active intervention of Elliot probably saves his life.

CHAPTER II—Elliot and Macdonald become intimate friends, though the latter does not know that Elliot is on a mission which threatens the political and financial interests of Macdonald. Macdonald acquires millions of dollars through the unlawful exploitation of im mensely valuable coal fields. Elliot also "gets a line" on the position occupied by Wally Selfridge, Macdonald's right-hand man, who is returning from a visit to the States, where he had gone in an effort to convince the authorities that there was nothing wrong in Macdonald's methods.

CHAPTER III—Elliot secures an introduction to Miss O'Neill and while the latter is taking on freight the pair set out on a local mountain. Elliot also ventures too high and reaches a position from which he is unable to descend. Miss O'Neill goes forward to turn back.

CHAPTER IV—Elliot leaves Sheba and at imminent peril of his life goes for assistance. He meets Macdonald, who had become alarmed for their safety, and they return and rescue Sheba.

CHAPTER V—Landing at Kuskiak Elliot finds that old friends of his, Mr. and Mrs. Paget, are the people whom Sheba has come to visit. Mrs. Paget is Sheba's cousin. Strong Elliot reveals to Macdonald the object of his coming to Alaska. The two men, naturally antagonistic now also become rivals for the hand of Sheba.

CHAPTER VI—Macdonald, foreseeing future plans of Elliot, learns the facts, sends Selfridge to Kuskiak to let Elliot know that he will be deceived as to the true situation.

CHAPTER VII—Elliot, on his way to Kamatlah, wanders from the trail. He comes to a local Indian village and is com pelled to throw away rifle and provisions and all other valuable things. After long struggle he reaches the village, where he will reach Kamatlah, and resigns himself to death.

CHAPTER VIII—At Kamatlah, Gideon Holt, old prospector and bitter enemy of Macdonald, learns of Elliot's coming and sends Selfridge to Kuskiak to let Elliot know that he will be deceived as to the true situation.

CHAPTER IX—Holt recognizes Elliot and the two overcome the local Indian de stroyer Kamatlah. Holt gives Elliot the real facts concerning the coal lands.

CHAPTER X—Having all the informa tion he wants, Elliot, with Holt as guide, goes back to Kuskiak. On the way they meet Mrs. Paget, who is the daughter of who is Macdonald's son. Reaching Kuskiak Elliot becomes convinced that Mrs. Paget is doing her utmost to induce Sheba to marry Macdonald. He de termines to win her himself.

CHAPTER XI—Macdonald confesses to Sheba that he had wronged her father in a mining transaction and makes financial reparation. Sheba and Elliot are sent down the river on official business.

CHAPTER XII—Genevieve Mallory, adventures, who has determined to win Macdonald, learns of Meteeze and her plans for the Yukon. Sheba and Elliot are sent down the river on official business.

CHAPTER XIII—Convinced that Elliot had induced Meteeze to visit Sheba, Macdonald sends Selfridge to warn him to leave Kuskiak. Elliot refuses to go, and purchases a revolver.

CHAPTER XVI.

Gordon Spends a Busy Evening. Paget smoked placidly, but the heart within him was troubled. It looked as if Selfridge had made up his mind to frame Gordon for a prison sentence. The worst of it was that he need not invent any evidence or take any chance. If Macdonald came through the hands with an identification of Elliot as one of his assassins, the young man would go down the river to serve time. There was enough cor roborative testimony to convict St. Peter himself.

"I'm just telling you what he said," Diane explained. "And it worried me. His smile was cynical. I couldn't help thinking that if he wants to get even with Gordon—"

Mrs. Paget stopped. The mind had just brought into the room a visitor. Diane moved forward and shook hands with him. "How do you do, Mr. Strong? Take this big chair."

Hanford Strong accepted the chair and a cigar. He came promptly to the object of his call.

"I don't know whether this is where I should have come or not. Are you folks for young Elliot or are you for Selfridge?" he demanded.

"If you put it that way, we're for El liot," smiled Peter.

"All right. Let me put it another way. You work for Mac. Are you on his side or on Elliot's in this matter of the coal claims?"



Was on Top of Him Like a Panther.

Up your keys and get them for me," Elliot commanded.

Wally did not need any keys. He knew the combination of the safe and opened it. From an inner drawer he drew a bunch of papers. Gordon looked them over carefully. Strong sat on a table and toyed with a revolver which he jammed playfully into the stomach of his fat prisoner.

"All here," announced the field agent. The safe-robbers locked their prison ers in the office and disappeared into the night. They stopped at the house of the collector of customs, a genial young fellow with whom Elliot had played tennis a good deal, and left the papers in his hands for safe-keeping. After which they returned to the hotel and reached the second floor by way of the back stairs used by the serv ants.

Here they parted, each going to his own room. Gordon slept like a school boy and woke only when the sun poured through the window upon his bed in a broad ribbon of warm gold.

He got up, bathed, dressed, and went down into the dining room. The waiters looked at him in amaze ment. Gordon sat as if nothing were the matter, but he was conscious of the excitement he was causing. He paid not the least attention to the nudging and the whispering. After he had finished breakfast, he lit a cigar, leaned back in his chair, and smoked placidly.

Presently an eruption of men poured into the room. At the head of them was Gopher Jones. Near the rear Wal ly Selfridge lingered modestly. He was not looking for hazardous adven ture.

"What you doing here?" demanded Gopher, bristling up to Elliot.

The young man watched a smoke wreath float ceilingward before he turned his mild gaze on the chief of police.

"I'm smoking."

"Don't you know we just got in from hunting you—two posesses of us been out all night?" Gopher glared savagely at the smoker.

Gordon looked distressed. "That's too bad. There's a telephone in my room, too. Why didn't you call up? I've been there all night."

"The deuce you have," exploded Jones. "And us cooking the hills for you. You can't see the hills for me. But I want to tell you that you'll pay for this."

"Did you want me for anything in particular—or just to get up a poker game?" asked Elliot suavely.

The leader of the posse gave him a look that said he was not to be trifled with. "You're invited to our party. It's yours to tell you why do I?"

The engineer understood the reason. He was an employee of Macdonald, a man thoroughly trusted by him. Even though Gordon intended only to right a wrong, it was better that Paget should not be a party to it. Reluctantly Gordon turned to Strong. "I owe you a lot already. There's no need for you to run a risk of getting into trouble for me. If things break right, I can do what I have to do without help."

"And if they don't?" Strong waved an impatient hand. "Cut it out, Elliot. I've taken a fancy to go through with this. I never did like Selfridge anyhow, and I ain't got a wife and I don't work for Mac. Why shouldn't I have some fun?"

Gordon shrugged his shoulders. "All right. Might as well play ball and get things moving, then."

The little miner knocked at the door. Wally himself opened, Elliot, from the shelter of the pine, saw the two men in talk. Selfridge shut the door and came to the edge of the porch. He gave a gasp and his hands went trem bling into the air. The six-gun of the miner had been pressed hard against his fat paunch. Under cut orders he moved down the steps and out of the yard to the tree.

At a stand of Gordon the eyes of Wally stood out in amazement. Little sweat beads burst out on his forehead, for he remembered how busy he had been collecting evidence against this man.

"W-w-what do you want?" he asked. "Got your keys with you?"

bing some proof of it?"

"Proof?" he cried scornfully. "Be lieve me, I despise him. The man is a scoundrel. I despise him."

"And I am liking him very, very much," she flung back loudly.

Macdonald looked up at the vivid, flushed face and found it wholly charming. He liked her none the less because her fine eyes were hot and defiant in behalf of his rival.

"Very well," he smiled. "I'll get him out if you'll do me a good turn."

"Thank you. It's a bargain."

"Then shall I sing?"

"What shall I sing?"

"Sing 'Divided.'"

The long lashes veiled her soft eyes while she mooned or star gazed. In a way he had tricked her into singing for him a love-song she did not want to sing. But she made no protest. Swiftly she turned and slid along the bench. Her fingers touched the keys and she be gan.

Sheba paid her pledge in full. After the first two stanzas were finished she sang the last ones as well.

An' what about the water when I'd be in the woods would be afraid to grip the oars an' go aloof?"

Oh, I could find him by the light of sun or moon or star, but the cauldier things than salt waves between us, so they are.

Oh anee!

Sure well I know he'll never have the heart to come to me.

An' love is wild as any wave that wanders on the sea.

'Tis the same if he is near me, 'tis the same if he is far.

His thoughts are hard an' ever hard be tween us, so they are.

Her hands dropped from the keys and she turned slowly on the end of the seat. The dark lashes fell to her hot cheeks. He did not speak, but she felt the steady insistence of his gaze. In self-defense she looked at him.

The pallor of his face lent accent to the fire that smoldered in his eyes.

"I'm going to marry you, Sheba. Make your mind up to that, girl," he said harshly.

There was infinite pity in the look she gave him. "There's cauldier things than salt waves between us, so they are," she quoted.

"Not if I love you and you love me. By the Lord, I trample down every thing that comes between us."

She knew the tremendous driving power of the man and she was afraid in her heart that he would sweep her from the moorings to which she clung.

"There is something else I haven't told you. The embarrassed lashes lifted bravely from the flushed cheeks to meet steadily his look. "I don't think—that I care for you. 'Tis I that am ashamed at my—fickleness. But I don't—not with the full of my heart."

His bold, possessive eyes yielded no fraction of all they claimed. "Time enough for that, Sheba. Truth is that you're afraid to let yourself love me. You're worried because you can't measure me by the little two-by-four foot-rule you brought from Ireland with you."

about his business just as if he were not under a cloud.

None the less, he walked the streets a marked man. Women and children looked at him curiously and whis pered as he passed. The sullen, hos tile eyes of miners measured him st lently.

In the states the fight between the coal claimants and their foes was growing more bitter. The muckrakers were busy, and the sentiment outside had settled so definitely against grant ing the patents that the national ad ministration might at any time Jettison Macdonald and his backers as a sop to public opinion.

It was not hard for Gordon to guess how unpopular he was, but he did not let this interfere with his activities. He moved to and fro among the mining camps with absolute disregard of the growing hatred against him. Paget came to him at last with a warning.

"What the hell about you being almost killed up on Bonanza?" Peter wanted to know.

"Down in the None Such mine, you mean? It did seem to be raining hammers as I went down the shaft," admitted his friend.

"Were the hammers dropped on pur pose?"

Gordon looked at him with a grim smile. "Your guess is just as good as mine, Peter. What do you think?"

Peter answered seriously. "I think it isn't safe for you to take the chances you do, Gordon. I find a wrong im pression about you prevalent among the men. They are blaming you for stirring up all this trouble on the out side, and they are worried for fear the mines may close and they will lose their jobs. I tell you that they are in a dangerous mood."

"Sorry, but I can't help that."

"You can stay around town and not go to lone flights."

"I dare say I can, but I'm not going to."

"I think you had better use a little sense, Gordon. I dare say I am ex aggerating the danger. But when you go around with that jaunty devil-may-care way of yours, the men think you are looking for trouble—and you're likely to get it."

"Am I?"

"I know what I'm talking about. Nine out of ten of the men think you're looking for trouble—and you're likely to get it."

"I know what I'm talking about. Nine out of ten of the men think you're looking for trouble—and you're likely to get it."

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his rival. He would not let the case come to a jury until the time when a conviction would have most effect in the States, the gossip predicted. They did not know that he was waiting for the return of Wally Selfridge. The whispers touched closely the personal affairs of Macdonald. The report of his engagement to Sheba O'Neill had been denied, but it was noticed that he was constant guest at the home of the Pagets. Young Elliot called there too. Almost any day one or other of the two men could be seen with Sheba on the street. Those who wanted to take a sporting chance on the issue knew that odds were offered sub rosa at the Pay Streak saloon of three to one on Mac's victory.

Sheba rebelled impotently at the situation. The mine-owner would not take "No" for an answer. He wooed her with a steady, dominant persist ence that shook even her strong will. There was something resistless in the way he took her for granted. Gordon Elliot had not mentioned love to her, though there were times when her heart fluttered for fear he would. She did not want any more complica tions. She wanted to be alone. So when an invitation came from her little friends the Huesteds, signed by all three of the children, asking her to come and visit them at the camp back of Katma, the Irish girl jumped at the chance to escape for a time from the decision being forced upon her.

Sheba pledged her cousin to secrecy until after she had gone, so that Miss O'Neill was able to slip away on the stage unnoticed either by Macdonald or Elliot. The only other passenger was an elderly woman going up to the Katma camp to take a place as cook.

Later on the same day Wally Selfridge, coming in over the ice, reached Kuskiak with important news for his chief. He brought with him an order from Whinton, commissioner of the general land office, suspending Elliot pend ing an investigation of the charges against him.

Oddly enough, it was to Genevieve Mallory that Macdonald went for consolation when he learned that Sheba had left town. He had always found it very pleasant to drop in for a chat with her, and she saw to it that he met the same friendly welcome now that a rival had unseized his scalp to her slender waist. For Mrs. Mallory warned Macy.

Gordon fervently wished he had. But he was unarmed. While his eyes quested for a weapon he played for time.

"You can't get away with this, you know. The United States government is back of me. It's known I left the Willow Creek camp. I'll be traced here."

Through Gordon's mind there flashed a word of advice once given him by a professional prizefighter: "If you get in a rough house, don't wait for the other fellow to hit first."

They were crouching for the attack. In another moment they would be upon him. Almost with one motion he stooped, snatched up by the leg a heavy stool, and sprang to the bed upon which he had been sitting.

The four men cloaked with him in a rush. They came at him low, their heads protected by uplifted arms. His memory brought to him a picture of the whitewashed gridiron of a football field, and in it he saw a vision of safety.

The stool crashed down upon Big Bill Macy's head. Gordon hurled the crumpling figure, plunged between

hands outstretched to seize him, and over the table went through the win dows, taking the flimsy sash with him.

To be continued.

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