

The MICHIGAN KID.



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FIRST INSTALLMENT

Rose Morris was at once the richest and the prettiest girl in Dover, Michigan. She drove a sleek, fat little pony hitched to a marvelous wicker dogcart, the envy of every child in town, and to Jimmy Rowan she represented all that was both desirable and unattainable.

By the time he was fifteen he was hopelessly in love with her and he carved hearts and arrows on all the trees in his yard and initialed them with interlocking R's and J's. He wrote her passionate misspelled love notes and in words of fire he told her of his undying devotion. He never sent the notes, of course, and his declarations were only whispered to the empty air, for he still remained "the Rowan kid," his people were desperately poor and he was cursed with a sensitive pride.

Jim was surprised one day to hear that Mr. Hiram Morris had "gone out of business" and was leaving for the West. What that meant the boy did not know, but he understood that the Morris fortune was not what it had been. Rose and her mother remained in Dover. They lived on much as usual and they referred vaguely to those large interests which kept Mr. Morris away from home. But the pony and dogcart were gone, and so were the high-stepping bays. It was while Jim was working his way through college that they quietly moved away. The Morris house sold for barely enough to pay the mortgage.

Some people endure poverty cheerfully, others with a grim stoicism; the majority of people who are born poor accept it with a fatalistic resignation and never look forward to anything else.

Jim Rowan was unlike any of these. He loathed poverty; it was unendurable. It had kept him from knowing Rose Morris. He swore he would make himself rich for her sake. In time this became a fixed idea with him and he quit college and went to work, savagely. It took him quite a while, however, to realize that riches are not come by in a hurry and that he was getting nowhere.

He had lost track of the Morrises completely—there was no use of keeping in touch with them—but he still had his day-dreams, he still thought of himself as Rose's prince who sooner or later would search her out and seat her upon a throne. Depression seized him occasionally when he saw how hopeless was the task he had set for himself.

At such times he grew desperate and he told himself that no price was too great to pay for success; he longed for some opportunity of becoming suddenly rich and vowed that he would sell his soul for such a chance.

The chance came finally, or it seemed to come, with the news of the Klondike discovery. Jim joined the first rush to the Yukon and he arrived in Dawson City with the firm determination to make a fortune somehow, anyhow. Here again however, he learned that money was not to be had for the asking.

Placer mining was a hazardous undertaking, with the odds a thousand to one against success. Education counted for little in a country where men were judged on a pick-and-shovel basis and paid for the actual work they did. Jim saw that here was not the place in which to earn a fortune; here was nothing but speculation, chance, a gamble either with men or with nature.

In order to beat the game one had to risk all, then double his winnings and risk them again and again. To gamble here was not a sin, it was the daily practice of everybody. Men gambled with death when they hit the trail; they gambled again when they staked their labor and their time against Nature's bedrock secrets, only they took longer chances than when they heaped their chips on the roulette table or dropped their

"pokes" on the high card. There was this difference, too; Nature seldom played fairly, whereas there were many square gambling houses in Dawson.

Jim Rowan fitted himself to his new surroundings and adapted himself to a new code of morals. He played as other men played, except in one respect; he never played for the excitement or for the fun of it, he played only to win. He played for Rose Morris. He tried speculating in claims, but he was unlucky; his only winnings came from the manipulating of Dawson City real estate or at cards, and the time when he found himself the owner of a huge Front Street saloon and gambling

Colonel Johnson, a great engineer and mining promoter who represented a London syndicate. He and Rowan met, finally, much as famous duellists meet, and behind locked doors they played for twenty hours.

What the stakes were nobody knew, but they must have been enormous, and luck must have run the Kid's way, as usual, for Colonel Johnson rose finally, stepped out into the hall, and killed himself.

That at least was the story which was made public and which the authorities accepted. Certain spiteful-minded persons whispered knowingly that this story was all a fabrication: that "Michigan's" luck



Behind locked doors they played for twenty hours

house, together with a nickname of the Alaskan flavor.

Perhaps a score of people knew him as James Rowan, but to the thousands that went in and out of his place he was "The Michigan Kid." That was the way he even signed his checks, for the name had brought him luck, and superstitiously he clung to it.

Life flowed at a furious pace in those early days. Reputations were made in a night; in six months they were hallowed; in a year they had become legendary. There were many celebrities in the Yukon country the mere mention of whom evoked tales of sensational exploits on the trail, at the mines, or at the gambling tables; the one perhaps best known of all was "The Michigan Kid." He it was who best typified the composure, the steady nerve, the recklessness of his profession.

A hundred stories were told about the Michigan Kid and some were not pleasant, for it required a ruthless man to hold down the job that Jim had taken, but most of them had to do with his luck. That luck became a byword, finally; men blessed with some extraordinary and unexpected good fortune were apt to boast that they had "Michigan's luck." "Michigan's luck" became an Alaskan phrase.

More than once Rowan took stock of his winnings and realized that he had nearly attained the goal he had set for himself, but invariably Fate intervened to prevent him from quite reaching the quitting point. Time crept along. The cycle of life for placer camps is brief.

Dawson grew, flourished, began to die; representatives of big companies appeared and bought up tracts of property; they talked of huge dredging and hydraulic projects.

Some of these newcomers were possessed of the gambling fever and they tried their luck against the Michigan Kid's. Rumors spread of big games in the back rooms of the Kid's place, games where the sky was the limit. One man in particular scoffed at "Michigan's luck" and prophesied that he would "get" the Kid—send him out of the country broke. This was a

had finally deserted him and that the shot had been fired inside, not outside, the room.

Ugly rumors such as these flew through the streets, but whether they reached the ears of the Kid nobody ever knew. Perhaps they did. Perhaps that was why he sold his place two weeks later and without so much as saying goodbye to anybody he caught the next down-river boat.

When Jim Rowan closed the door of his steamer stateroom behind him, he closed it, as he thought, upon the Michigan Kid and everything that had to do with that notorious character.

When the first bend of the river had hidden Dawson City from view he drew from his pocket a wallet, and from this he carefully extracted a blurry, time-yellowed picture of Rose Morris. It was a picture he had clipped from a Dover newspaper on the day Rose graduated from the local high school and it showed her as a girl in white with a floppy hat and a sash of ribbon about her waist. It was perhaps the one and only personal possession that he had never risked losing at some time or other. He gazed at it now for quite a while.

He wondered if Rose were still alive. If so, she must have grown into a beautiful woman, yes, and a good woman—here the gambler was speaking. No doubt she was married. He pondered this thought deliberately and it awakened a feeling of regret too indefinite to be called a pang, for long ago he had realized that it was not the flesh-and-blood Rose Morris that he worshiped, but an idea and an ideal. Of course he proposed to find her—that was the one thing he had in mind—but what would happen when he had found her was another matter.

When he boarded the steamship at St. Michael he saw no familiar faces, and, inasmuch as his name meant nothing to his fellow passengers, he felt a great relief. Already he had begun to realize, as he had not realized in Dawson, that whatever the Michigan Kid may have stood for on the upper river, back home that name would

stand for something altogether different.

Back home! The words possess a peculiar significance for men who have not been "outside" in more than five years. Nobody but the homeward-bound Alaskan could in the least appreciate them.

At Nome the ship hove to for twenty-four hours, and Rowan went ashore to see what the place looked like. Here again he passed unnoticed, and he was greatly cheered by that fact. If he could walk the streets of an Alaskan gold camp without being recognized, it argued that he would have no difficulty whatever in the big world outside.

His attention was attracted by a poster which advertised an informal rally of all the citizens of Nome who hailed from Michigan. The meeting was to be held that night for the purpose of general good-fellowship and acquaintance-ship and with the ultimate view of organizing a Wolverine Society. Jim decided to go.

It turned out to be a pleasant gathering. A glad-hand committee was at the door to introduce strangers around; there was a program of entertainment, with refreshments promised afterward.

Jim Rowan grinned. Here was old home stuff. He wondered what these pleasant-faced men and women would think if they knew that he, the unobtrusive visitor, was the Michigan Kid, the most notorious "sporting man" in all the north.

He heard his name mentioned during the evening—when a judge from Lansing delivered a speech eulogizing the home state and referred to the Kid as "that unsavory character of the upper Yukon who has brought odium upon the fair name of our birthplace." Again Jim grinned. Well, he had the money anyhow. One has to pay something for success.

Nowhere did he hear a name or see a face that he knew, with perhaps one exception—the face of an old man who sat in a quiet corner. It was a bearded face and the man was poorly dressed. He wore rubber boots and overalls and a faded threadbare mackinaw that hung loosely from his stooping shoulders. His hair was thin and gray and he coughed a good deal.

Jim studied the old fellow's profile and decided that he had probably seen the man across the gambling table or the bar—a river of derelicts like this one had flowed in and out of this place during these recent years. He had about put him out of his mind when the man rose to leave. Then Rowan started, leaned forward; his eyes fixed themselves upon the stranger's bearded cheek.

(Continued next week)

Boy Scout News

The Franklin troop of Boy Scouts was honored at its regular meeting Friday, Oct. 18, with a visit from the Scout executive of the Daniel Boone council, A. W. Allen. It was also a pleasure to have with us the full Scout committee and the new pastor of the Baptist church, Mr. Burns. Mr. Allen, in a talk to the boys, expressed himself as being highly pleased with the progress of the troop and pointed out the advantages that the boys in Franklin have over many of the boys belonging to other troops. We have now full camping equipment for the whole troop and Scout literature which will materially help in the boys' advancement. Mr. Burns, himself keenly interested in Scouting, said what a pleasure it was for him to be present and promised cooperation in the troop's work.

Yet another treat awaited us on Friday night. The Girl Scouts had prepared a special program for us and we paraded over to their headquarters and spent a very happy hour during their entertainment. It was a pleasure to be with them

and see something of their work and we believe that both the boys and the girls received inspiration and encouragement from the visit.

On Saturday the members of the troop journeyed over to the Cherokee Indian Reservation to take part in the Smoky Mountain district Scout-O-Ral. In competition with troops from Sylva, Bryson City and Cherokee the boys from Franklin won awards in the following events: Inspection, compass and pacing, knot tying, relay, semaphore signalling, antelope race, fireman's lit relay and water-boiling. The officials of the troop are highly pleased at the showing the boys made and the citizens of Franklin should be gratified that these boys are taking their work so seriously that in open competition they can prove their worth.

On Saturday night around the camp fire the Court of Honor was held and several boys received awards at that time. George Sellers and Henry Cabe received Second Class awards; Bert Hall, Allan Ordway and Harry Higgins received First Class awards and Charles Hunnicutt and Eugene Furr received merit badge awards for life-saving, First Aid, Animal Industry and Cooking.

The next Court of Honor will be held in Franklin on the third Monday in November at 7:30 p. m. Will everyone please make a note of the date and plan to come? It is something that you will never forget and you will find out what is the real interest and intent of Scouting.

There are a few vacancies in the troop for boys 12 years of age and up who are keen to learn how to become good and useful citizens in the great game of Scouting.

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