

# SLUMBERING GOLD

By Aubrey Boyd

**SECOND INSTALLMENT**  
**SYNOPSIS:** Strange friends they were—youth Ed Maitland, whose fathers had followed the sea from New England, but who had started north to make his fortune when the first news of the Yukon gold find in '97 found him stranded on the Pacific coast; and Speed Malone, who told little enough of his past but admitted to a knowledge of all the gold camps. With ten dollars—half of Maitland's total wealth—Speed gets into a game of Solo, and seems to be winning.

Maitland knew nothing of the game but was fascinated by the movement of his companion's hands while dealing. The fingers that moved so supple over the keys of an accordion, seemed to lure music of another kind from the smooth cards, as he riffled and snapped them into place and shot them out with clean precision, dropping the last of the round and the three cards of the widow almost in one gesture.

He won the next bid with a heart solo. This time his opponents did not conceal their conviction that the game was unsound. But before they had recovered from that certainty, he had made his point by a shrewd handling of low cards. The sweet singers took a firmer grip on their cigars and settled into the game.

Stakes began to climb. Frog bids vanished. Onlookers edged in from other groups to watch the play—among them a burly red-faced man who stood obscurely at the rim of the circle with his eyes fixed intently on Speed's face and hands. The gambler remained calm and composed as a deacon, playing good hands and bad with equal devoutness—or rather making bad ones good, for the cards were running hard against him.

"Wouldn't surprise me a whole lot to hear you'd played this game afore," the man declared as he lit a cigar before picking up a new hand.

Speed was busy arranging his cards and did not answer. When he raised his eyes it was in a pre-occupied way in Maitland's direction, but they rested instead on someone else in the crowd. One of his eyelids flickered slightly, as if to evade a wreath of cigarette smoke. From the gold he had collected, he transferred two handfuls to his pockets. The remainder of the pile he pushed out to center.

"This stack says I don't take a trick," he observed. "I'm goin' 'misere.'"

Had Maitland been watching closely, he would have noticed a slight shifting on the part of the red-faced man among the spectators. He might have remembered that skill in this game was one of the few identifying traits of the bandit, Buck Solo—if he had not believed the bandit to be a captive in the Okanagans. He might have noticed, too, that in a lazy upward glance that seemed to take cognizance of nothing, this fact had been caught and registered by the man under observation. But no one's attention is sharpened by watching a game he does not understand, and Maitland's interest had begun to stray. He elbowed his way out of the circle to ramble over the ship.

Most of the passengers having chosen a position amidship, he found that the crowd thinned as he went forward of the main cabin. At the forward rail a lookout stood alone, peering into the blanket of mist ahead. They were now in the outer waters of the Sound; the traffic had dwindled and the hooting of sirens was muffled in far distance. "How does she lie?" he asked the lookout.

"Off Port Townsend," the man said, without turning.

The boy stood by the rail awhile, eyeing the dim froth of water below, and that gray essence of things unseen and unforseen through which the steamer was cleaving her blinded course.

He was not conscious of a contradiction in his advice to the Westerner about gambling, though it ran deeper than his mere presence on the George E. Starr. Men of his name and blood had raced for cargoes in the days of the clipper ships, and later plunged the winnings into deep-bottomed carriers—to lose them finally in wilder games of chance with the sea. His father had gone down in a storm with two of their ships. This tragedy had caused his mother's death when he was born. The remnant of the original stakes left in play had been involved by a defect in the underwriting of the lost cargoes.

His earliest memory was of a small schooner which his grandfather had managed to salvage out of the general wreck. From the old man he had learned, along with a knowledge of ships and water. After his grandfather's death, he had found employment with a firm of underwriters' agents, reporting on wrecks and salvage. It had led him into the study of admiralty law—a vocation his sea-going fathers would not have admired.

He was sent west to investigate a

wreck off the Farrallones, near San Francisco—his first important commission. But he had found the owners in a position rather like that of his own people when they crashed. His sympathy and the rights of the case were with the stranded adventurers as against the bankers. He had wired a report as fair to both sides as he could make it.

The return wire had virtually accused him of being bought by the owners. In a gust of anger he had resigned, though the whole structure of his plans went foundering on that reef. He was unwilling to return home till he had regained his footing, but his career was not an easy wreck to salvage.

Jobless, and with his small capital dwindling, he had been roving the wharves of that misty western port of adventure when the news of the gold strike on Bonanza Creek burst on the world like a rocket—promising him a means of recovering more than he had lost.

"If you wasn't a gambler, Bud . . ." Something the Westerner had said recurred to him now. He had been careful in buying his outfit, weighing the value of every purchase against his resources. His having drawn a passage on this derelict side-wheeler was a queer mischance, but he believed the old tub was a little stancher than she looked. Whether it was a wild gamble depended rather, he thought on himself.

The pistol shot that cut the thread of his reverie came from the region of the ship where he had left his pack. As he turned, he obtained a sheer view of the ship's side, and saw, sharply outlined in the fog, the figure of a burly, red-faced man who was peering over the rail with a smoking revolver in his hand.

Someone touched his elbow. "Man shot your pardner," a voice said. "He's overboard."

He picked up the words on the wing and shredded them for sense. A handful of cards held by one of the watchers at the rail gave him the inkling of an answer. A gambler's quarrel—quick fingers . . . not quick enough—a shot, a rush . . . ? He had often seen men take that plunge for much less, but this man—?

Heads were craned back toward the blank space the ship was leaving. "Wounded? Probably not much of a swimmer, if he came from inland. The boats would be slow . . ."

Maitland's leap from the rail was so swift that the engines were not reversed for a minute after he dived. When he came to the surface, hardly knowing in that gray murk whether he was breathing fog or sea, the steamer was out of sight.

Unable to see through the blur of spray and fog he paused to listen for a cry. Relaxing was an effort; the cold brine had teeth of fire. Soon he caught a splashing sound not far ahead. Swiftly as he went, the sound receded. He stopped again. Hearing a sound once more, he shouted.

There was no answer, and he kept on, losing count of the space he was putting between himself and the steamer. The gambler, if the sound he heard was his swimming, might either be trying to make his way ashore, or might have lost his bearings in the fog. It seemed more probable that he had drowned.

He halted to tread the water in the icy swell and shouted. The cry rasped in his throat. This time he seemed to hear an answer, but in the same instant his body was pierced by a searing stab. The muscles of his back twisted in a paralyzing knot that stopped his breath. Though the cramp was unbreakable, he fought it with every reserve of will, as it dragged him down, impotent, into shadowed, swirling freezing depths. His lungs heaved; drums roared in his ears; his heart seemed to wedge in his throat.

Shadows dissolved around him into misty daylight. Something was supporting him, choked and numb, on the summit of a swaying world of waters, and he heard a voice saying between breaths:

"Well, I'll be doggoned. So it's you . . . you onery young son of a sea dog. Last dive most got me . . . winded . . . Reckoned you was the deputy."

Even the sight of the gambler's dripping face failed to make this clear.

Don't figure I could swim ye ashore," the voice continued. "And I'm loosed if I call that boat." Yet this was exactly what Maitland heard him do a few moments later, but there was no answer.

Maitland knew too well the disadvantage of a buoy as a refuge for drowning men in a fog. Passing ships give it as wide a berth as possible. With this thought he realized the full irony of what had happened. His attempted rescue was worse than useless; he was actually dragging down the man he had tried to save. That final detail struck him as unfair.

He tried to wrench himself free. But though the gambler's hold way-

ered, he could not loosen it. When he struggled to speak the arm only gripped him tighter. Then everything was drenched in a fantastic ether, through which floated images of boyhood things long forgotten, and he sank into a billowing haze of darkness.

He was recalled to semi-consciousness for the last time by what sounded like a cry from the other; then he heard waves slapping against the hollow prow of a small boat, and the familiar creak and thump of oarlocks.

When he opened his eyes, the gambler was sitting at a table with a steaming cup in one hand and a cigarette in the other, watching him. He found himself swathed in blankets in a dim enclosure. The floor rolled slightly and at first he did not know whether he was dizzy or at sea.

Before he had time to observe

more, the gambler was handing him a cupful of hot wine with the cheerful suggestion,

"Hoist yourself round this." The drink helped clear his head. "Where's the steamer?" He asked. "Hell and gone by now," said Speed, watching the boy's face darken and then light again with an illusory hope.

Maitland stretched himself painfully. "Whose boat is this?" "Some frog fisherman from Seattle was headin' for the halibut banks when the fog stopped him. He pulled in close to the buoy to be clear of the shippin' track. Now he says he'll take us ashore when he gets a wind. Don't reckon he'll get one for a piece, but it won't hurt ye none to thaw a while."

A dark wavering in a shaft of light that fell into the cabin from the cockpit caused him to look up. Through the aperture two heavy sea boots came into view, followed by a pair of corduroy trousers, a blue, close-fitting jersey with shrunken sleeves and a plump and swarthy face, bluish around the chin where the beard was shaven and topped with a black cap with a shining visor.

"How does she blow, Boss?" asked Speed, as the man entered. "Ze win' he draw ver' slow. I tek you ashore, feefteen dollar. Non?" "No," was the gambler's dry comment. "With the price of wind goin' up this way I reckon we'll stay where we set."

The fisherman sprayed his hands. "C'est la blague, quoi? I mek ze freshen' one, two, zree day. B'en," he added in a quieter tone. "I tek you back to Seattle, feefty dollar." "Go on, you horse thief," Speed answered good-humoredly. "You've got chuck enough in this wagon to ride us to the fishbanks and back,

and it wouldn't cost you five dollars. How-ver, we ain't goin' to Seattle, or fishin' neither."

Continued Next Week  
 Various species of rhinoceros were abundant in North America, millions of years ago.

**R. E. FAW, Jr.**  
**Drilled Wells**  
 Any size or depth for all purposes  
 North Wilkesboro, N. C.



## ... Successful aid in PREVENTING Colds

At the first nasal irritation or sniffle, apply Vicks Va-tro-nol—just a few drops. Used in time, it helps to avoid many colds entirely. (Two sizes: 30¢, 50¢.)

**VICKS VA-TRO-NOL**

# Always the Best in Movies

# PROGRAM

# LYRIC THEATRE

Don't Forget Wednesday Is Family Show. A Good Show For Only 10c

THURSDAY ONLY—(Today)—  
**BARBARA STANWYCK**  
**WARREN WILLIAMS**

— in —  
**"The Secret Bride"**  
 Paramount News — Admission 10c-25c

FRIDAY ONLY—  
**"Ruggles of Red Gap"**  
 — with —  
**CHAS. LAUGHTON — MARY BOLAND**  
 Also  
 Comedy — Admission 10c-25c

SATURDAY—

**RED HOT TIRES**

A First National picture with  
**LYLE TALBOT**  
**MARY ASTOR**

Also Added Screen Attraction  
**"La Cucaracha"**  
 A Melody Drama of Dazzling Splendor in  
 Technicolor  
**CARTOON — SERIAL**  
 ADMISSION 10c-30c

## NEXT WEEK...

MONDAY AND TUESDAY—

HERE COMES THE BRIDE—AND HER BEST MEN!

WHICH LOVER WILL KAYOKAY?  
 GEORGE... a happy-go-lucky thrill-hunter who thumbs his nose at the world!  
 WARREN... who turns out to be a regular guy at the most irregular honeymoons 1 people ever went on!

Here They Come!—The Vagabond Three!  
**KAY FRANCIS**  
*Living on Velvet*  
 WARREN — GEORGE  
**WILLIAM BRENT**  
 A First National Hit directed by famous FRANK BORZAGE

News-Cartoon — Admission 10c-30c

WEDNESDAY—  
**'Lottery Lover'**  
 ADMISSION ONLY 10c

## COMING ATTRACTIONS!

March 28-29—  
**"THE LIVES OF A BENGAL LANCER"**  
 April 1-2—  
**"DEVIL DOGS OF THE AIR"**  
 April 4-5—  
**WILL ROGERS in**  
**"COUNTY CHAIRMAN"**