

SLUMBERING GOLD

by Aubrey Boyd

FIFTEENTH INSTALMENT
"And so, gentlemen of the Jury, the Crown will prove that the defendants had a motive for the murder of this Siwash, and did in fact kill him."

The Crown Prosecutor, Wade cast a heavy lidded, mordant stare at the jury and sat down. By contrast Garnet, at the adjoining table nearer the prisoner's dock looked like an urbane courtier.

The arrival of one of the first upriver steamers, some weeks before, had provided the accused men with their distinguished counsel. Garnet's mission in the North had proved to be a political one. Learning, when he landed, of the charge against the two partners, he had offered to undertake their defense.

Maitland looked older for the two months of prison life that had elapsed since his arrest. The shadowed look in his eyes, however, was not wholly due to the ordeal ahead of him; it came from one that was past.

A weather-beaten man he had never seen was being sworn in. Garnet had resumed his seat. Fallon's bulky figure slouched at ease toward the center of the row of witnesses. Nearer Maitland's eyes rested on Pete, with the emotion which the sight of a loved and loyal friend brings to a man in trouble. A wave of tenderness brimmed his heart.

Pete wore a summery frock of light blue; her golden hair was longer than he remembered it, and arranged in a more feminine fashion. It was his first glimpse of her in girl's attire, and she was altogether lovely.

Police records of the finding of the native's body that morning in the breaking ice of Lake Lebarge, had established the fact of murder. The Siwash had been killed by a .44 bullet which struck him in the back. His corpse had been dissected through an air hole in the ice, and had lain in this concealment through the winter. Its having floated finally to the surface was due to the strong warm currents from the lake bed.

Wade's first witness was a trader from the old post at Ogish on the Yukon. The trader told a very queer story, which went back into earlier Yukon days, and rehearsed the tale which the accused men had already heard from news.

While some of this testimony was open to objections, Garnet passed the witness without cross-examining, and Wade called a seasoned-looking officer of the Mounted Police.

Wade here produced the furs muktuks Dalton had worn. He compared them with those taken from the body of the murdered Indian to prove, by identical working of the ornaments, that they had been fashioned by the same hand.

Garnet had passed this evidence without question. Wade called Corporal Cathcart to the stand.

Cathcart explained that the tracks tangled in an odd way through the timber that shielded the camp, and were difficult to read. He told of finding a pool of blackening snow crystals near the head of the lake, and showed through the dark shadow. He had sought out the defendants and questioned them.

They said they had met no Siwash, and showed an unwillingness to say anything more. When I asked them about the dust, they explained it was the blood of a caribou they had shot, and produced a fresh caribou to prove it. Their caribou, a .44 calibre gun, had been cleaned, and still showed a powder mark.

The witness told of his visit to the cabin in the wane of the day, while Speed was bent to Skagway. Before he reached the door, a Siwash had slunk out of his way and hid behind the cabin wall, and he had only a storm-whitened glimpse of it. The discovery of the defendants had a maddening was, of course, started a fact of great importance. Maitland, when asked where it came from, claimed to have found it astray, not

long after his partner shot the caribou on Lake Lebarge.

"In the meantime, the Siwash's body was found in the breaking ice of Lake Lebarge, establishing the fact of murder.

"To establish our case against the accused men, it remained to be proved that they actually used the dog to trace its camp or origin, and that that camp was the hide-out of an unknown white prospector with a gold secret. As was proved."

Garnet, after a brief address to the jury as to the circumstantial nature of the evidence called the first, and so far as was known, the only witness for the defense.

Pete was unmistakably a very attractive girl; to this crowd of hard-living men she was something more rare and gracious than the words convey, or than may be imagined by any but men who have lived in frontier mining camps.

"Had you ever seen the defendants before they arrived in Skagway?" Garnet asked.

"No, sir."

"What was Owens' relation to you?"

"I suppose you would call him my foster father. I was raised at his ranch."

"Did he ever speak to you of your real father?"

"Only once. He spoke then as if Dalton were my father. Or anyway some near kin of mine."

"What did you do after Owens died?"

"I went over the pass to find Dalton and warn him. I sold a goldmounted gun and some things I had for grub, and rode down the lakes looking for him. I didn't find anyone waiting, and didn't have much to go on, not even knowing what Dalton looked like. When the cold came, I met a rafting outfit who camped to cut timber a little way up the Teslin, and they gave me a job cooking for them through the winter."

"Why did you leave them?"

Garnet prompted.

"It was only a week or two before the break-up. I hadn't heard anything of Dalton, and was wondering what to do."

"That night I woke up hearing a voice close to my bunk, on the other side of the tent wall. The voice was shouting to me above the noise of the storm, but it sounded dim. The words were something like, 'If you're Pete, get out of the North and get quick! You're in danger. I'm in a tough fix. . . can't take you down river. For God's sake, keep clear of . . .'"

wasn't sure of what it said at the last.

"Soon after that one of Fallon's men happened by the camp and saw me. I knowed Fallon was lookin' for me, and felt that this was what he warning meant. I saddled the mare and started for the coast."

"It was a heavy, cold trail. The going was easier on the level snow of Lake Lebarge, but Chiquita and I were both dead tired by then, and there's more than a day I'm not clear about. All the time I had a feeling of being followed or shadowed by someone or something."

"Then—I kind of lost count. I think I was in a river canyon when the storm broke. There were wild voices in it like wolves. I must have pulled the mare out of it and into the open when the storm struck. Then next thing I know I was in Mr. Maitland's cabin. The dog led him to where I'd fallen in the snow."

"Did you tell Maitland why you were making for Skagway in that weather?"

"No, sir."

"Why didn't you, Pete?"

"He and Speed had had a quarrel with Fallon before, and I didn't want to make it worse because of me. Or to mix them up in any trouble about Dalton either."

"During your stay at the cabin, did Maitland ask you any questions about Owens or Dalton, or his gold secret?"

"No, sir. Anything I told him was of my own accord."

"Did you feel safe there?"

"I felt as safe as if I was in God's pocket."

The courtroom smiled a little at this homely but expressive miners' phrase.

Pete then told what had happened up to the arrest of the accused men in Dalton's camp.

"I will ask you one more question," said Wade, in the deep silence that followed.

"Do you love the defendant, Maitland?"

Pete's gray eyes were shadowed. She bit her lip as she had done that day when she recovered from the throes of cold. Two big tears rolled down her cheeks. "I have told the truth," she murmured.

"I think, Your Honor," said Wade, "that the question has been sufficiently answered."

Next morning, when the court reopened, Garnet produced an unexpected witness. He looked toward the rear of the courtroom and said, "Rose Valery."

At the name, Fallon came upright in his chair, startled and the voice died away. I out of the detachment. He

turned his head in frowning disbelief.

But he was unnoticed by the courtroom as Rose approached the stand. Though the river had carried many rumors of her beauty, this was her first appearance in Dawson.

Indifferent to the crowd's stare, she looked at the accused men and then at Pete, with some inward, unreadable thought. Her dark eyes showed a glitter of fire when they crossed with Fallon's, who slouched back now, carelessly, while she was being sworn.

"Miss Valery," said Garnet, "where were you born?"

"I don't know," Rose answered. Her low voice had the quality of plucked harp strings.

"Where were you cared for as a child?"

"In the convent school at Notre Dame at the Mission Dolores in San Francisco. I was taught music and singing at the convent," Rose ventured, "until I was 15, but I was restless, and discipline only made me unhappy. I decided to run away, and did, and so became a professional singer."

"I had a plan of reaching the gold country. A little after dark I climbed over the convent wall at a place where a sloping barn roof touched it. I got on a street car at Guerrero Street. As I hadn't any carfare the conductor put me off at the second stop, two blocks below."

"A boy was singing in a high soprano voice in front of an open air boot-black stand next to the saloon, where the sports were getting shined up for the evening."

"It surprised me to see the men at the shoe stand throw him money—even one half-dollar piece—for what wasn't really a good song, or very good singing, except for being strong and clear. While he gathered up the coins, I sang the refrain of the song. The boy was angry, but the men encouraged me, and we tried to sing each other down. As it was easier to chord with him, I sang alto, and our duet stopped the shoe shining. When

we finished, the men gave me a handful of silver; one of them handed me a dollar piece.

"I divided what I got with the boy, and then he wanted us to throw in together and play the corner, but I said I was going to Nevada to sing in the gold camps."

"The boy got excited and wanted to go. While we were talking it over, a shadow fell between us from the street lamp, and I found that the man who'd given me the dollar was standing there listening."

"So you're headin' for Nevada?" he asked.

"When I agreed we were, he said he knew all about the country; had been there not so long before and brought out a heap of gold and he was going again, so he could give us a steer and see that we were treated right."

"On the car going downtown, he said something to the boy I couldn't hear, and gave him a gold coin. The boy got off, telling me he was going to buy some things and meet us later."

"I wasn't so sure about the man's looks. He was big, rather handsome, and sunburned. He said we couldn't start till morning, and he got me a room at a hotel near the Baldwin. He told me he wasn't going to Nevada."

"I was angry and disgusted. While he was sleeping, I got out. I still had some of the small change I'd sung for, and soon found that money was easy to earn that way."

"I bought a guitar and some clothes, and paid my own way to Nevada. One night I was playing at a camp casino in Golconda when a woman who was drinking with a fuddled miner called me to their table to sing for them. She was half drunk herself. Her face must have been beautiful once."

(Continued Next Week)

It Wouldn't
The old saying that all's fair in war wouldn't be true in the event of a war between the Black Shirts and the Ethiopians.—Louisville Times.

BRIEF; VERY BRIEF

United States lagging in aviation, yearbook reports.

Catholics in U. S. total 20,523,053, year's gain of 200,459.

Rustproof all-steel piano is being built as an experiment.

Physician calls Indian medicine men effective doctors.

Supreme Court, 5 to 4, voids the railroad pensions act.

Roosevelt sets up three divisions to handle relief work.

Senator Cutting among four killed in crash or airliner.

Johnson advises administration to repudiate "bugaboos."

Stalin says fears of attack forced Soviet to rapid advance.

Kipling warns Britain of Germany's "religion of war."

Business Up 21 Per Cent
New York—Evidences of national economic advancement were seen in the fact that there

has been an increase of more than 21 per cent in the first quarter profits of industrial corporations over the same period in 1934.

Ain't It So?
Don't be too hard on the radicals. No method of getting money sounds silly when you are dead broke.—Jackson (Miss.) Daily News.

Information Needed
A naturalist reports that mosquitoes can get along and be amply nourished without preying on humans. Don't tell us—tell the mosquitoes.—Detroit News.

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"ONE MORE SPRING"
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