

The TRAIL OF '98

A Northland Romance

by ROBERT W. SERVICE

WNU Service

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

STORY FROM THE START

Athol Meldrum, young Scotsman, starts out to seek his fortune. He arrives at San Francisco practically broke and meets a fellow adventurer whom he dubs the Prodigal. With Jim Hubbard they join the gold rush to Alaska. On the boat Athol meets Berna, a young woman traveling with her grandfather and a hard-looking couple named Winkenstein who figure as her aunt and uncle. Landing at Skagway, Athol's party at once takes the trail. In a snowslide on the Chilcoot trail, which Berna and her companions had taken, hundreds of lives are lost. Fearful for Berna's safety, Athol hastens to the scene. He finds the old man dead, and Berna, who comes to Athol, confesses her love, and begs him to marry her, to save her from the harsh fate she foresees. He is unwilling to take such a decisive step, and tells her they must wait. Some days afterward Berna tells Athol that Madam Winkenstein plans to sell her to "Black Jack" Locasto, millionaire miner of evil reputation. Reaching the gold fields, Athol and his party find the claims all taken. Unable to locate Berna, Athol seeks information from Locasto. "Black Jack" disclaims knowledge of her whereabouts, and leaves Meldrum to a lonely spot and beats him into unconsciousness. Through a lucky chance Athol finds Berna. They set a date for their marriage, the first of June.

CHAPTER VIII

-10-

"You'd better quit," said the Prodigal. It was the evening of my mishap, and he had arrived unexpectedly from town. "It just fits in with my plans. I'm getting Jim to come in, too. I've realized that stuff I bought, made over three thousand clear profit, and with it I've made a dicker for a property on the beach above Bonanza. Gold hill they call it. I've a notion it's all right. Anyway, we'll tunnel in and see. You and Jim will have a quarter share each for your work, while I'll have an extra quarter for the capital I've put in. Is it a go?" I said it was.

Next day found us all three surveying our claim. The first thing to do was to build a cabin. Right away we began to level off the ground. The work was pleasant, and conducted in such friendship that the time passed most happily. Indeed, my only worry was about Berna. I schooled myself into the belief that she was all right, but, thank God, every moment was bringing her nearer to me.

We had hauled the logs for the cabin, and the foundation was laid. Every day saw our future home nearer completion.

One evening I spied the saturnine Ribwood climbing down the hill to our tent. He halted me: "Say, we want a night watchman up at the claim to go on four hours a night at a dollar an hour. You see, there's been a lot of sluice-box robberies lately, and we're scared for our clean-up. There's four hours every night the place is deserted, and Hoofman proposed we should get you to keep watch."

"Yes," I said; "I'll run up every evening if the others don't object."

They did not; so the next night, and for about a dozen after that, I spent the darkest hours watching on the claim where previously I had worked.

It was the dimmest and most uncertain hour of the four, and I was sitting at my post of guard. As the night was chilly I had brought along an old gray blanket, similar in color to the mound of the pay-dirt. There had been quite a cavity dug in the dump during the day, and into this I crawled and wrapped myself in my blanket. From my position I could see the string of boxes containing the rifles. By my side lay a loaded shotgun.

"If the swine comes," Ribwood had said, "let him have a clean-up of lead instead of gold."

Lying there, I got to thinking of the robberies. They were remarkable. All had been done by an expert. Each time the robber had cleaned up from two to three thousand dollars, and all within the past month. There was some mysterious masterstroke in our midst, one who operated swiftly and surely, and left absolutely no clew of his identity.

I was quiet for a while, watching fleetly the dark shadows of the dusk.

Hist! What was that? Surely the bushes were moving over there by the hillside. I strained my eyes. I was right; they were.

I watched and waited. A man was parting the bushes. Cautiously, crawling like a snake, he worked his way to the sluice-boxes. None but a keen watcher could have seen him. Again and again he paused, peered around, listened intently. Very carefully, with my eyes fixed on him, I lifted the gun to my shoulder. I had him covered.

I waited. Somehow I was loath to shoot. My nerves were a-quiver. Proof, more proof, I said. I saw him working busily, lying flat alongside

the boxes. How crafty, how skillful he was! He was disconnecting the boxes. He would let the water run to the ground; then, there in the exposed rifles, would be his harvest. Would I shoot . . . now . . . now . . .

Then, in the midnight hush, my gun blazed forth. With one scream the man tumbled down, carrying along with him the disconnected box. The water rushed over the ground in a deluge. I must capture him. There he lay in that pouring stream. . . . Now I had him.

In that torrent of icy water I grappled with my man. Over and over we rolled. He tried to gouge me. He was small, but oh, how strong! He held down his face. Fiercely I wrenched it up to the light. Heavens! It was the Worm!

I gave a cry of surprise, and my clutch on him must have weakened, for at that moment he gave a violent wrench, a cat-like twist, and tore himself free. Men were running in from all directions.

"Catch him!" I cried. "Yonder he goes."

But the little man was shooting forward like a deer. Right and left ran his pursuers, mistaking each other for the robber in the semi-gloom, yelling frantically, mad with the excitement of a man-hunt. And in the midst of it all I lay in a pool of mud and water, with a sprained wrist and a bite on my leg.

"Why didn't you hold him?" shouted Ribwood.

"I couldn't," I answered. "I saved your clean-up, and he got some of the lead. Besides, I know who he is. Pat Doogan."

"You don't say. Well, I'm darned. We'll get him. I'll go into town first thing in the morning and get out a warrant for him."

He went, but the next evening back he returned, looking very surly and disgruntled.

"Well, what about the warrant?" said Hoofman.

"Didn't get it," snapped Ribwood. "Look here, Hoofman, I met Locasto. Black Jack says Pat was cached away, dead to all the world, in the backroom of the Omega saloon all night. There's two loafers and the barkeeper to back him up. What can we do in the face of that? Say, young feller, I guess you mistook your man."

"I guess I did not," I protested stoutly.

They both looked at me for a moment and shrugged their shoulders.

Time went on and the cabin was quietly nearing completion. The roof of poles was in place. It only remained to cover it with moss and three-foot earth to make it our future home.

More and more my dream hours were jealously consecrated to Berna. How ineffably sweet were they. How full of delicious imaginings! How pregnant of high hope! O, I was born to love, I think, and I never loved but one. This story of my life is the story of Berna. It is a thing of words and words and words, yet every word is Berna, Berna. Feel the heartache behind it all. Read between the lines, Berna, Berna.

The Prodigal was always "snooping" around and gleaning information from most mysterious sources. One evening he came to us.

"Boys, get ready, quick. There's a rumor of a stampede for a new creek, Ophir creek they call it, away on the other side of the divide somewhere. A prospector went down ten feet and got fifty-cent dirt. We've got to get in on this. There's a mob coming from Dawson, but we'll get there before the rush."

Quickly we got together blankets and a little grub, and, keeping out of sight, we crawled up the hill under cover of the brush. Soon we came to a place from which we could command a full view of the valley. Here we lay down, awaiting developments.

On the far slope of Eldorado, I saw a hawk soar upward. Surely a man was moving amid the brush, two men, a dozen men, moving in single file very stealthily. I pointed them out.

"It's the stampede," whispered Jim. "We've got to get on to the trail of that crowd. Travel like blazes. We can cut them off at the head of the valley."

"Throw away your blankets, boys," said the Prodigal. "Just keep a little grub. We must connect with that bunch if we break our necks."

It was hours after when we overtook them, about a dozen men, all in the maddest hurry, and casting behind them glances of furtive apprehension.

The leader was going like one possessed. We blundered on behind in the same mad, heart-breaking hurry, mile after mile, hour after hour, content to follow the man of iron who was guiding us to the virgin treasure.

We had been pounding along all night, up hill and down dale. The sun rose, it was morning. Still we kept up our fierce gallop. Would our leader never come to his destination? By what roundabout route was he guiding us? Who panted as we pelted

on, parched and weary, faint and foot-sore. But still our leader kept on. Suddenly the Prodigal said to me: "Say, you boys will have to go on without me. I'm all in."

He dropped in a limp heap on the ground and instantly fell asleep. Several of the others had dropped out, too. They fell asleep where they gave up, utterly exhausted. We had now been going sixteen hours, and still our leader kept on.

It was about four in the afternoon when we reached the creek. Up it our leader plunged, till he came to a place where a rude shaft had been dug. We gathered around him.

"Here it is, boys," he said. "Here's my discovery stake. Now you fellows go up or down, anywhere you've a notion to, and put in your stakes. May-

"It's no use, young fellow; you'd better make up your mind to lose that claim. The film-film you put out it somehow. They've sent some one out now to stake over you. If you kick, they'll say you didn't stake proper. Them government officials is the crookedest bunch that ever made fuel for hell-fire."

I was stunned with disappointment. "What you want," he continued, "is to get a pull with some of the officials. Get a stand-in, young fellow."

"Well," I said, "I'm not going to be cheated out of my claim. If I've got to move heaven and earth—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind. If you get sassy there's the police to put the lid on you. You can talk till you're purple round the gills. It won't cut no figure. They've got us all cinched. We've just got to take our medicine. It's no use goin' round belyaching. You'd better go away and sit down."

And I did.

I had to see Berna at once. Already I had paid a visit to the Paragon restaurant, that new and glittering place of resort run by the Winkensteins, but she was not on duty.

In the evening I returned. I took a seat in one of the curtained boxes. The place was brilliantly lit up, many-colored and flashily ornate in gilt and white. In the box before me a white-haired lawyer was entertaining a lady of easy virtue; in the box behind, a larrikin quartette from the Pavilion theater was holding high revelry. There was no mistaking the character of the place. In the heart of the city's tenderloin it was a haunt of human riff-raff, a palace of gilt and guilt.

And it was in this place Berna worked. She waited on these wantons; she served those swine. She heard their loose talk, their careless oaths. She knew everything. Oh, it was pitiful; it sickened me to the soul. I sat down and buried my face in my hands.

"Order, please."

I knew that sweet voice. It thrilled me, and I looked up suddenly. There was Berna, standing before me.

She gave a quick start, then recovered herself. A look of delight came into her eyes, eager, vivid delight.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you again," "Berna," I said, "what are you doing with that paint on your face?"

"Oh, I'm sorry." She was rubbing distressfully at a dab of rouge on her cheek. "I knew you would be cross, but I had to; they made me. It's just a little paint—all the women do it. It makes me look happier, and it doesn't hurt me any."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

be you'll stake a million-dollar claim, maybe a blank. Mining's all a gamble. But go ahead, boys. I wish you luck."

So we strung out, and, coming in rotation, Jim and I staked seven and eight level discoveries.

Then I threw myself down on a bit of moss, and, covering my head with my coat to ward off the mosquitoes; in a few minutes I was dead to the world. I was awakened by the Prodigal.

"Rouse up," he was saying; "you've slept right round the clock. We've got to get back to town and record those claims. Jim's gone three hours ago."

I was sleep-stupid, sore, stiff in every joint. Racking pains made me groan at every movement, and the chill night air had brought on twinges of rheumatism, but we started off.

It was about nine in the morning when we got to the gold office. There was quite a number ahead of me, and I knew I was in for a long wait. I will never forget it. For three days, with the exception of two brief sleep-spells, I had been in a fierce helterskelter of excitement, and I had eaten no very satisfying food. As I stood in that sullen crowd I swayed with weariness, and my legs were doubling un-

der me. I staggered forward and straightened up suddenly. I was near the wicket. Only two were ahead of me. A clerk was recording their claims. One had thirty-four above, the other fifty-two below. The clerk looked dustered, fatigued.

It was my turn. "I want to record eight below on Ophir," I said. "What name?" he asked. "I gave it. He turned up his book. "Eight below, you say. Why, that's already recorded."

"Can't be," I retorted. "I just got down from there yesterday after planting my stakes."

"Can't help it. It's recorded by some one else, recorded early yesterday."

"Look here," I exclaimed; "what kind of a game are you putting on me? I tell you I was the first on the ground. I alone staked the claim."

"That's strange," he said. "There must be some mistake. Anyway, you'll have to move on and let the others get up to the wicket. You're blocking the way. All I can do is to look into the matter for you, and I've got no time now. Come back tomorrow. Next, please."

The next man pushed me aside, and there I stood, gaping and gasping. A man in the waiting line looked at me pityingly.

"Here it is, boys," he said. "Here's my discovery stake. Now you fellows go up or down, anywhere you've a notion to, and put in your stakes. May-

"It's no use, young fellow; you'd better make up your mind to lose that claim. The film-film you put out it somehow. They've sent some one out now to stake over you. If you kick, they'll say you didn't stake proper. Them government officials is the crookedest bunch that ever made fuel for hell-fire."

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NEED FOR SUPERIOR MANHOOD

By REV. W. H. WEIGLE, JR., Chaplain Episcopal Actors' Guild.

THE need of America is superior manhood, personalities and individuals who will counteract our materialistic tendencies and who will listen to the voice of God instead of the ring of the almighty dollar. The truth and hope of any time must always be sought in minorities. All history, whether in the field of religion or art, is a record of the power of minorities.

There needs but one wise man in a company and all become wise, so rapid is the contagion. Great men exist that there may be greater men. As Christians we were never meant to be lost in a crowd. We are to speak, act, and live differently than the multitudes. In a democratic country it requires an unusual amount of courage to draw apart and rise above the common herd.

There are disquieting signs in our national life today. We may not be worse than our ancestors, but I doubt very much if we are any better. There is a danger that we mistake license for freedom, and that we select the laws we choose to follow and scorn the others.

In America we have been constantly exposed to religious influences, but with it there have been only sputters of righteousness. There is a tendency to accept institutional religion and organized Christianity rather than the compelling person of the Galilean Peasant. We have become so familiar with the outward aspects of the manifestations of Christianity that our attention and devotion and consecration have been weaned away from that which is most lasting and vital—an individual and personal relationship with the Risen Christ.

TEACHERS AND LABOR UNIONS

By MARY C. BARKER, President American Teachers' Federation.

Through struggle of body and soul the workers of the world have attained, or are attaining, their right to associate for the advancement of their just interests. We know that the labor movement is not just a selfish demand on the part of a particular group for something that it does not have, but wants to possess. It is a humanitarian movement, whose watchword could be stated thus: Help yourself to attain the conditions necessary for you to function as a human being, as a worthy member of your community. Help others to help themselves.

We teachers are in a real sense a labor organization. We are one of those 100 or more national and international unions that make up the larger part of the American Federation of Labor.

We are part of the labor movement, and we are so organized because we believe that the principles of organized labor are sound, that organization of workers into unions is a necessary part of the human machinery that has been set up in the world to promote human progress.

We acknowledge our debt to organized labor for the conditions that make it possible for us to operate in this way. It is our privilege, along with all other workers of today, to build upon a foundation that was laid by the struggles of those who have preceded us.

Labor's program is our program and labor's interest is our interest, for what labor wants is that the interest of no group shall be subservient to the interest of any other group, that all shall share justly in the good things of life.

BURDEN IMPOSED BY EDUCATION

By DR. ALBERT PARKER FITCH (Presbyterian), New York.

The educated person faces life with certain handicaps and burdens which are the price of the knowledge he has acquired. Along with the great value that it brings, education brings into life a great burden, and with the burden, sorrow.

Even though a man has a large store of general knowledge there is a danger for him in the present day tendency toward specialization. A genuinely educated man must keep his mind on the whole human scene. The insistence upon highly specialized training is turning upon the modern American world educated men and women with small minds.

There is a pitfall into which the man falls who knows just enough to find a flaw in everything, the temptation to retire into one's mind and watch the world go by. As though any knowledge is ultimate without action! It is nothing without the power to beget ideas, to beget action.

The habit of dealing in "universal concepts rather than realities," is a handicap, too, in that it makes its addicts "forget that man faces conditions, not theories."

And finally there is disillusionment. Unless they make their "minds the accomplices of their prejudices," the learned, even though they would, cannot share the soothing convictions of the untutored, for they look on history realizing that man, though he had made material gains, remained always just the same.

The genuinely educated man rises above "the burdens that education has to carry" as did Jesus, "the consummate genius."

IDEA OF UNIVERSITY TRAINING

By DR. ROBERT M. HUTCHINS, President-Elect Chicago University.

My view of university training is to unsettle the minds of young men, to widen their horizons, to inflame their intellects. It is not a hardening, or settling process. Education is not to teach men facts, theories or laws; it is not to reform them, or amuse them, or to make them expert technicians in any field; it is to teach them to think, to think straight, if possible; but to think always for themselves.

I would advise young persons contemplating entering school "to know the fellows" and to get a diploma, because it is the open sesame into the company of persons who matter, and to join their local country club or fraternal organization.

These bodies have high ideals. They are organizations for mutual improvement. Their dues are lower than those of most colleges. You get to know the fellows in one. It would seem plausible to suppose that anyone can get from them most of the things one gets at the university, if one goes to the university because it is the thing to do.



Acidity

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Corsica's Good Bandit

Banditry in Corsica does not necessarily mean robbery and murder as for many years the country was practically ruled by a recognized bandit, who permitted plunder and bloodshed only in the case of the vendetta, which was regarded as a sufficient excuse for any kind of outlawry as long as it was confined to the principals and their following. This bandit was Romanetti, whose edicts and wishes were recognized throughout the country although he had no official capacity.

Sure Enough

"These chickens were hatched in an incubator!" "My goodness! They look just like real ones."

A woman laughs when she can and weeps when she will.

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FINNEY

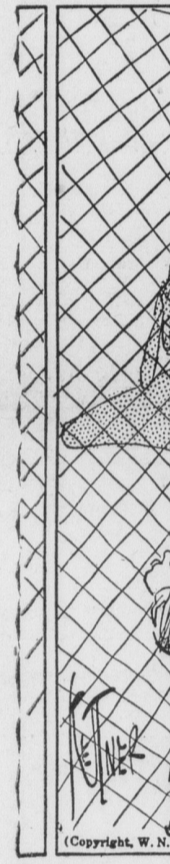
THE FE

WELL, YOU'RE EARLY THIS MORNING, FELIX?



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