

The Trail of '98

(A Northland Romance)

by Robert W. Service

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WNU Service

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, with 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. At Bennett, Berna 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 Winkenstein plans to sell her to "Black Jack" Locost, 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 Locost. "Black Jack" disclaims knowledge of her whereabouts, and lures 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. The Prodigal secures a claim and he, "Salvation Jim," and Athol begin work on it. The Winkensteins have opened a questionable resort known as the Paragon and Berna is there, as a waitress.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued

"Berna," boomed the rough, contumacious voice of Madam, "attend to the customers."

"All right," I said; "get me anything. I just wanted to see you." She hurried away. Presently she came hurrying round, bringing me some food.

"When can I see you, girl?" I asked.

"Tonight. See me home. I'm off at midnight."

"All right. I'll be waiting."

I wandered up and down the now familiar street, but the keen edge of my impression had been blunted. I no longer took the same interest in its sights. More populous it was, noisier, livelier than ever. Success was in the air. Men were drunk with it; carried off their feet, delirious. Money! It had lost its value. Every one you met was "lousy" with it; threw it away with both hands, and fast as they emptied one pocket it filled up the others.

At midnight, at the door of the Paragon, I was waiting in a fever of impatience when Berna came out. She showed a vast joy at seeing me.

"Tell me what you've been doing, dear—everything. Have you made a stake? So many have. I have prayed you would, too. Then we'll go away somewhere and forget all this. Won't we, honey?"

She nestled up to me. She seemed to have lost much of her shyness. I don't know why, but I preferred my timid, shrinking Berna.

"It will take a whole lot to make me forget this," I said grimly.

"Yes, I know. Isn't it frightful? Somehow I don't seem to mind so much now. I'm getting used to it, I suppose. It's wonderful how we get accustomed to things, isn't it?"

"Yes," I answered bitterly.

"You know, I've had several offers of marriage, too, really, really good ones from wealthy clean-owners."

"Yes," still more bitterly.

"Yes, young man; so you want to make a strike and take me away. Oh, how I plan and plan for us two. I don't care, my dearest, if you haven't got a cent in the world, I'm yours, always yours."

"That's all right, Berna," I said. "I'm going to make good. I've just lost a fifty-thousand dollar claim, but there's more coming up. By the first of June next I'll come to you with a bank account of six figures. You'll see, my little girl. I'm going to make this thing stick."

"You foolish boy," she said; "it doesn't matter if you come to me a beggar in rags. Come to me anyway. Come, and do not fail."

She was extraordinarily affectionate, full of unexpected little ways of endearment, and clung to me when we parted, making me promise to return very soon. Every look, every word, every act of her expressed a bright, fine radiance. I was satisfied, yet unsatisfied, and once again I entreated her.

"Berna, are you sure, quite sure, you're all right in that place among all that foll'ry and drunkenness and vice? Let me take you away, dear."

"Oh, no," she said very tenderly; "I'm all right. I would tell you at once, my boy, if I had any fear. Good-by, darlin'."

"Good-by, beloved."

I went away treading on sunshine, trembling with joy, thrilled with love for her, blessing her anew.

Yet still the rouge stuck in my crop as if it were the symbol of some insidious decadence.

CHAPTER IX

It was about two months later when I returned for a flying visit to Dawson.

"Lots of us for you two," I cried, exultantly bursting into the cabin. Jim and the Prodigal, who were ly-

ing on their bunks, leapt up eagerly. For two whole months we had not heard from the outside.

I threw myself on my bunk voluptuously, and began re-reading my letters. There were some from Garry and some from mother. While still unrecalled to the life I was leading, they were greatly interested in my wildly cheerful accounts of the country. For my part I was only too glad mother was well enough to write, even if she did scold me sometimes.

But I was still aglow with memories of the last few hours. Once more I had seen Berna, spent moments with her of perfect bliss, left her with my mind full of exaltation any bewildered gratitude. I saw the love mists gather in her eyes, I felt her sweet lips mold themselves to mine, I thrilled with the sheathing ardor of her arms. Never in my fondest imaginings had I conceived that such a wealth of affection would ever be for me.

Then I remembered something.

"Oh, say, boys, I forgot to tell you. I met McCrimmon down the creek. You remember him on the trail, the halfbreed. He said he wanted to see us on important business. He has a proposal to make, he says, that would be greatly to our advantage. He's coming along this evening—What's the matter, Jim?"

Jim was staring blankly at one of the letters he had received. His face was a picture of distress, misery, despair.

"Had bad news, old man?"

"I've had a letter that's upset me. I'm in a terrible position. If ever I wanted strength and guidance, I want it now."

"Heard about that man?"

"Yes, it's him, all right; it's Mosher. I suspected it all along. Here's a letter from my brother. He says there's no doubt that Mosher is Moseley."

His eyes were stormy, his face tragic in its bitterness.

"Oh, you don't know how I worshiped that woman, trusted her, would have banked my life on her; and when I was away making money for her she ups and goes away with that slimy reptile. What am I to do? What am I to do? The Good Book says forgive your enemies, but how can I forgive a wrong like that? And my poor girl—he deserted her, drove her to the streets. Oh, my girl, my girl!"

Tears overran his cheeks. He sat down on a log, burying his face in his hands.

I was at a loss how to comfort him, and it was while I was waiting there that suddenly we saw the halfbreed coming up the trail.

"Better come in, Jim," I said, "and hear what he's got to say."

We made McCrimmon comfortable. Jim regained his calm, and was quietly watchful. The Prodigal seemed to have his ears cocked to listen. There was a feeling amongst us as if we had reached a crisis in our fortunes.

The halfbreed lost no time in coming to the point. "I've got next to a good thing—I don't know how good yet, but I'll swear to you it's a tidy bit. It's a gambling proposition, and I want partners, partners that'll work like blazes and keep their faces shut. Are you on?"

"That's got us kodaked," said the Prodigal. "We're that sort, and if the proposition looks good to us we're with you. Anyway, we're clams at keeping our food-traps tight."

"All right; listen. You know the Arctic Transportation company have claims on upper Bonanza—well, a month back I was working for them. Well, one morning I went down and cleaned away the ash of my fire. The first stroke of my pick on the thawed face made me jump, stare, stand stockstill, thinking hard. For there, right in the hole I had made, was the richest pocket I ever seen. Boys, as I'm alive

there was nuggets in it as thick as raisins in a Christmas plum-dum."

"Good Lord! What did you do?"

"What did I do? I just stepped back and picked wherever the dirt seemed loose all the way down the drift. Great heaps of dirt caved in on me. I was stunned, nearly buried, but I did the trick. There were tons of dirt between me and my find."

We gasped with amazement.

"The rest was easy. I went up the shaft groaning and cursing. I pretended to faint. I told them the roof of the drift had fallen in on me. It was rotten stuff, anyway, and they knew it. The manager was disgusted, he went down and took a look at things; declared he would throw up the work at that place; the ground was no good. He made that report to the company."

The halfbreed looked round triumphantly.

"Now, here's the point. We can get a lay on that ground. One of you boys must apply for it. They mustn't know I'm in with you, or they would suspect right away. We'll make a big clean-up by spring. I'll take you

going to work for all we're worth—and then some. Are you there, boys, are you there?"

"We are," we shouted with one accord.

There was no time to lose. Every hour for us meant so much more of that precious pay-dirt that lay under the frozen surface. We ran up a little cabin and banked it nearly to the low eaves with snow. By and by more fell on the roof to the depth of three feet, so that the place seemed like a huge white hummock. In this little box of a home we were to put in many weary months.

Not that the time seemed long to us; we were too busy for that. Indeed, often we wished it were twice as long. We didn't talk much in those days. We just worked, worked, worked, and when we did talk it was of our work, our ceaseless work.

Neither cold nor fatigue could keep us away from the shaft and the drift. We had gone down to bed-rock, and were tunneling in to meet the hole the halfbreed had covered up. So far we had found nothing.

We were working two men to a shaft, burning our ground overnight. Our meals were hurriedly cooked and bolted. We grudged every moment of our respite from toil. Surely we would strike it soon.

Then, one afternoon, the Something happened. It was Jim who was the chosen one. About three o'clock he signaled to be hoisted up, and when he appeared he was carrying a pan of dirt. "Call the others," he said.

All together in the little cabin we stood round, while Jim washed out the pan in snow water melted over our stove. We could see gleams of yellow in the muddy water. We had got the thing, the big thing, at last.

"Hurry, Jim," I said, "or I'll die of suspense."

Patience he went on. There it was at last in the bottom of the pan, glittering, gleaming gold, fine gold, coarse gold, nuggety gold.

"Now, boys, you can whoop it up," said Jim quietly; "for there's many and many a pan like it down there in the drift."

Solemnly we shook hands all round. It was the night of the discovery when the Prodigal made us an address.

"Look here, boys; do you know what this means? It means victory; it means freedom, happiness, the things we want, the life we love. We've got it now, every cent of it, boys. There's a little over three months to do it in, leaving about a month to make sluice-boxes and clean up the dirt. We've got to work like men at a burning barn. For my part, I'm willing to do stunts that will make my previous record look like a plugged dime. I guess you boys all feel the same way."

"You bet we do."

"Now, sod's! let's get busy."

So, once more, with redoubled energy, we resumed our tense, unremitting round of toil. It proved a most erratic and puzzling paystreak—another day rich beyond our dreams, another too poor to pay for the panning. We swung on a pendulum of hope and despair.

Looking back, there will always seem to me something weird and incomprehensible in those twilight days, an unreal, a vagueness like some dreary, feverish dream. For three months I did not see my face in a mirror. Not that I wanted to; but I mention this just to show how little we thought of ourselves.

It was mid-March when we finished working out our ground. We had done well, not so well, perhaps, as we had hoped for, but still magnificently well. There were our two dumps, pyramids of gold-permeated dirt, of whose value we could only guess. We had wrested our treasure from the icy grip of the eternal frost. Now it remained—and Oh, the sweetness of it—to glean the harvest of our toil.

We were working at the mouth of a creek down which ran a copious little stream all through the spring-time. We tapped it some distance above us, and ran part of it along our line of sluice-boxes. I remember how I threw in the first shovelful of dirt, and how good it was to see the bright stream discolor as our friend the water began his magic work. For three days we shoveled in, and on the fourth we made a clean-up.

When we ran off the water there were some of the boxes almost full of the yellow metal, wet and shiny, gloriously agleam in the morning light.

Day after day we went on shoveling in, and about twice a week we made a clean-up. The month of May was half over when we had only a third of our dirt run through the boxes. We were terribly afraid of the water falling us, and worked harder than ever.

One afternoon I was working on the dump, intent on shoveling in as much dirt as possible before supper. When, on looking up, who should greet me but Locost. He had got his right hand to me, and, as I had no desire to antagonize him, I gave him my own.

"I've just been visiting some of my creek properties," he said. "I heard you fellows had made a good strike, and I thought I'd come down and congratulate you. It is pretty good isn't it?"

"Yes," I said; "not quite so good as we expected, but we'll have a tidy sum."

"I'm glad."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"There's Many and Many a Pan Like It Down There."

right to the gold. There's thousands and thousands lying snug in the ground just waiting for us. It's right in our mitt. Oh, it's a cinch, a cinch! If you boys are willing we'll just draw up papers and sign an agreement right away. Is it a go?"

We nodded, so he got ink and paper and drew up a form of partnership.

"Now," said he, his eyes dancing, "now, to secure that lay before any one else cuts in on us. Gee! but it's getting dark and cold outdoors these days. Snow falling; well, I must mush to Dawson tonight."

It was late next night when he returned, tired, wet, dirty, but irrepressibly jubilant.

"Hurrah, boys!" he cried. "I've clinched it. I saw Mister Manager of the big company. He was very busy, very important, very patronizing. We sparred round a bit like two fake fighters. Finally, he agreed to let me have it on a 50 per cent basis. Don't faint, boys. Fifty per cent, I said. I'm sorry. It was the best I could do, and you know I'm not slow. That means they get half of all we take out. We signed the lay agreement, and everything's in shape. We've got the ground clinched, so get action on yourselves. Here's where we make our first real stab at fortune. Here's where we even upon the hard jobs she's handed us in the past; here's where we score a bull's-eye, or I miss my guess. We're

was a color and sparkle which the more or less sophisticated rural life of the present time knows not.

Think of the sleighing parties, the husking bees, the apple-paring bees, the quilting parties and the singing school, to say nothing of the "raisings." Some of these involved labor, of course, but the social element overshadowed the work element; and a "raising" was an eagerly anticipated event.—Boston Globe.

Queer Causes of Waste

It is estimated by a British expert that 4,000,000 bottles of medicine are wasted annually because the average teaspoon holds more than the usual dose. Another queer cause of waste is the railroad whistle. More than 2,434,026 tons of coal are used every year to blow the whistles on the railroad engines in the United States, and it is estimated that 1,000,000 pounds could be saved if the whistles were moved slightly forward and adapted to a single high-pitch note.

Any course in efficiency has to be diluted with your own common sense.

Greeting Post Laureate

An English book brings up again the anecdote of Robert Bridges' arrival in America. The poet laureate refused firmly to see reporters and felt highly gratified in putting them to rout. He was duly vanquished the next morning to read the headline "King George's Canary Refuses to Twitter."—Sporting and Dramatic News.

MANIAC SLAYS SISTER WITH AX AND HACKS SELF

Mild-Mannered Apartment House Manager Suddenly Goes Insane.

New York.—Fred Robinson, a quiet spoken man, whose sad, thin face and horn-rimmed glasses accentuated a wistfulness of manner, had been the superintendent of a brown-stone apartment house in Brooklyn until several months ago when he moved out with Mrs. Evelyn Low, a half-sister, one year his junior, whom he has supported for the last ten years.

The old tenants, who had known the fifty-two-year-old man during his years of service in the apartment house, were glad for his sake that he had found "a better job" in Elmont, L. I., where he told them he intended to live.

They knew he had been worrying about debts.

Returns as Tenant.

He packed an old trunk and moved three months ago from his room in the basement of the apartment house. He took Bobbie, his Alredale dog, and Minnie, an Angora cat, with him.

When Robinson and Mrs. Low returned to Brooklyn two weeks ago with Bobbie and Minnie the old tenants learned that he came back not as superintendent but as a tenant, himself. They thought he had hit it rich in Elmont and were glad for his sake.

Robinson came out from his apartment one day soon after his arrival and surprised the old tenants by com-

plainting about noises he said they made, noises that kept him awake. The former superintendent's behavior seemed queer.

Charles Rear was one of the tenants who lived on the third floor with Robinson and Mrs. Low. He was awakened recently by a sound of commotion in the Robinson apartment. He dressed and walked down the hall to their apartment. He rapped on the door. He heard Bobbie whining on the other side of the door.

Rear opened the door. He walked into the room and almost stumbled over Mrs. Low, who lay on the floor moaning. Her head was badly cut and she was unconscious and dying. Rear went on to Robinson's room. He found the superintendent sitting on the side of his bed pounding his head with the sharp edge of a small hatchet.

Rear telephoned the police of the Empire boulevard station. Detectives Downey and Murtha arrived just before Robinson fainted.

"I Got Him," He Says.

"I got that strange man," he told them. "I finally got him. He's been after me for weeks. After I hit him with the hatchet he came in here and told me to hit myself with it."

A niece of Mrs. Low told the police that her aunt had been worried by Robinson's strange behavior for the last weeks. Her aunt told her that how I threw in the first shovelful of dirt, and how good it was to see the bright stream discolor as our friend the water began his magic work. For three days we shoveled in, and on the fourth we made a clean-up.

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"I'm glad."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Texas's Rifle Silences Loud Speaker of Radio

Dallas, Texas.—Taking deadly aim with his trusty rifle, H. C. Keen, acting county judge of Jefferson county, Texas, silenced the voice and strains of a radio loud speaker next door. He fired three shots, demolishing the radio set.

The assault resulted when owners of a rustic cabaret failed to heed his complaint that the loud speaker was disturbing his sick children and his peace of mind. Keen has received letters of congratulation from many parts of the country.

Judge Demands Proof of Bomb and Gets It

Cincinnati.—Judge George Tebbis in Municipal court demanded evidence when two men were brought before him charged with releasing a stench bomb in a theater. Court attendants opened the bomb and Judge Tebbis shouted "\$50 and costs" as he fled the courtroom.

BANKING SYSTEM OUTWORN

By CHARLES W. COLLINS, New York Bank Lawyer.

WE OF this generation have inherited an antiquated and outworn system of banking. Our attempt in this modern age of mass production to give a banking service to business and the public through more than 25,000 separate and independent corporations, most of which are small and weak and situated in the rural communities, is as much of an anachronism as would be the attempt to restore the horse and buggy to the arterial highways of the United States.

In the old days when local communities were isolated the business of every small town was autonomous and the local bank could diversify its business. The bank was integrally associated with local enterprises. It represented a cross section of the business of the community. Now, however, isolation has been wiped out by the automobile, telephone and radio. The local utility enterprises and other concerns have become absorbed by larger companies backed by great aggregations of capital, and their banking business goes to the large city bank.

I am confident that congress will in the near future amend the banking laws to prevent the repetition of the nearly 6,000 bank failures we have witnessed during the past eight years. I believe we are headed toward a system of world-wide branch banking which will give us strong banks with branches wherever banking services are needed.

This would give the most complete diversification, making a bank failure as nearly impossible as human ingenuity can devise. In my opinion, a system of branch banking such as exists in every other advanced country of the world is the only form adapted to modern conditions, the only form which will give to the public the safety and the service to which it is entitled.

PUBLIC ACCORD TEST OF LAW

By ROBERT F. WAGNER, United States Senator.

Law must never be merely a business; the primary thing is justice. The lawyer today must be an artist. He must have a knowledge of science and of social behavior. Tradition through generations has raised him in the profession to an artist.

We may as well realize that whatever may be our theoretical notions as to the common origin of law, citizens and officials alike carefully discriminate between law and law. In a democracy the best test of law is public accord. When that is lacking the law becomes a hollow phrase, devoid of the living spirit. No amount of mechanical tinkering can make it a living thing. The repeal of such a law merely prevents its already lifeless form from cluttering our statute books.

As to President Hoover's crime commission, if it starts out in a spirit of adventure, discovers its own facts and draws its own inferences it will be a success. But if it accepts the views of the President in his address on law observance it will from the beginning be tied to an unrealistic view of the law which may well spell the wreck of the whole adventure.

DEMOCRACY FACING CRISIS

By REV. CLYDE H. LININGER, Indianapolis (Methodist).

Loss of our idealistic tendencies is one of the weaknesses of our government. America is the largest country ever to try the democratic form of government, but we have lost some of our idealism. We don't find the high ideals that formerly characterized American life. One of the dangers we are facing is that of allowing minorities to rule our civic righteousness. Our forefathers fought that we might have a free country, and yet a large number of us pass up the right our forefathers fought for—the right to rule ourselves—and thus we leave the minority in power.

People seem to place the burden on the minorities and thus fail to assume the responsibility of shouldering their part of the load. Too many people believe good men should keep out of politics, when, in fact, good men should get into politics.

Americans need courage, faith and leadership and the idealism to stand back of the leaders that are put into office. Democracy lies with the individual and the character of the citizens.

NEED FOR BROTHERHOOD SPIRIT

By DR. JULIUS ATWOOD, Former Episcopal Bishop of Arizona.

Right and wrong are undeniable facts of the universe. Although we may differ regarding prohibition and total abstinence, we must surely recognize that drunkenness is wrong, and the laws of the nation must be obeyed. It is harder to live for one's country than to die for it. With the strong appeal these days for money and power, it is still harder. The integrity of our nation is at stake when money and power are used dishonestly by our public officials.

There cannot be a national faith without trust, a national fame without truthfulness and a national responsibility without justice. You and I are not only responsible for our own selves but for the welfare of all. What shall it profit a nation, as much as man, to gain the whole world and lose its own soul. The spirit of brotherhood, sympathy and service are needed in this new age to guide us, for men cannot worship Christ and the devil at the same time. The spirit of Him who first gave us an expression of a true democracy will in turn give us perfect liberty as a nation.

ORGANIZED LABOR'S POSITION

By WILLIAM GREEN, President A. F. of L.

Organized labor is as beneficial to great corporations as it is to the workers. We live in an age of organization. Individual effort alone can count for little these days. Massed production is the watchword of our times. It is the duty of workers to organize so they can collectively protect their just interests. And in this way the important employers of labor also benefit. Organized units are more efficient and work more intelligently.

The American Federation of Labor is built upon constructive lines. We are unlike those who come preaching dangerous doctrines of revolution. We believe in this country and in its laws and customs and it is our purpose to uphold those laws and customs.

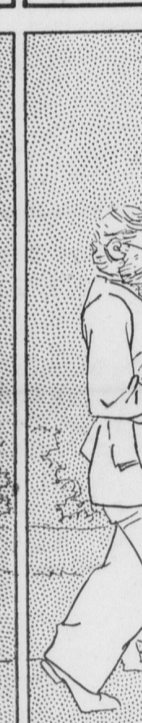
FINNEY



THE FE



THE FIR



MICKIE



Clan



PERCY

