

CHAPTER I.

and of jewels, garnet and turquots vimming in a sea of molten gold. The

oused from deep sleep. Except for a faint murkiness in the olf it was still day. There was light weigh for the four men playing chairs grouped near at hand, had at tions?" had put aside their embroidery. The del who sat by herself at a little di held a megazine still open in

har lap. Gordon Elliot had taken the boat at Plerre's Portage, fifty miles farther om the creeks, and his impressions of the motley pioneer life at the g and an included corner of the dech where he could scribble them in a notebook while still fresh.

Hot he had not been too busy to see the girl in the wicker chair was Plainly this was ber first trip in. Gordon was a stranger to the Yukon country, one not likely to be overwelcome when it became known what his mis-

don was From where he was leaning against the deckhouse Elliot could see only a chiseled profile shading into crtsp, black bair, but some in the detachment of her perconclity stimulated gently his imagina-Non. He wondered who she could be A short, thicknet man who had ridden cown on the stage with Elliet to Pierre's Portage drifted along the deck toward him. He were the careless care of a mining man in a country which looks first to comfort.

"Bound for Kusiak?" he asked by

way of opening conversation. "Yes," answered Gordon. The miner nedded toward the group under the awning. "That bunch lives at Kusiak. They've got on at different aces the last two or three daysscept Belfridge and his wife; they've red with the snappy black eyes. She's dilin' over with talk about the styles to New York and the cabarets and the new shows. That pot-bellied little fellow in the checked suit is Selfridge He is Colby Macdonald's man Friday." Elliot took in with a quickened in-

terest the group bound for Kusiak. He had noticed that they monopolized as a matter of course the best places on the deck and in the dining room. They were civil enough to outsiders, but their manner had the unconscious self inhoms that often regulates social activities. It excluded from their gay ety everybody that did not belong to the proper set. "That sort of thing gets my goat," the

miner went on sourly. "Those women over there have elected themselves Society with a capital S. They put on all the airs the Four Hundred do in New York. And who are they anyhow?-wives to a bunch of grafting politicians mostly." "That's the way of the world, isn't

it? Our civilization is built on the group system," suggested Elliot. "Maybe so," grumbled the miner.

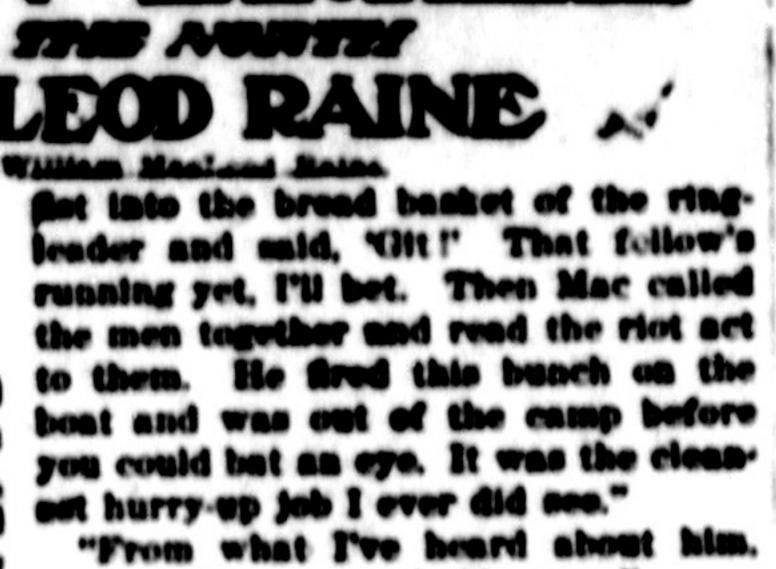
"But I hate to see Alaska come to it. Me, I now this country first in ninetyseven-packed an outfit in over the pass. Every man stood on his own hind legs then. He got there if he was strong-mebbe; he bogged down on the trail good and plenty if he was weak. We didn't have any of the artificial stuff then. A man had to have the guts to stand the gaff." "I suppose it was a wild country.

Mr. Strong." The little miner's eyes gleamed.

"Best country in the world. We didn't stand for anything that wasn't on the level. It was a poor man's countrywages fifteen dollars a day and plenty mmble on his luck. Now the big corporations have slipped in and grabbed the best. It sist a prospector's proposition any more. Instead of fare banks we've got mavings banks. The widepen dance ball has quit business favor of moving pictures. And, as mid before, we've got Bociety." "All frontier countries have to come

In the days I'm telling you with a groun and lay still.

With a wave of his hand Strong pointed to a group of miners who had be inch lie leased forward eligibily. So beard a cry of clara. He could bear tag-just a scretch," was the treate I commend to the lease the lease the lease the treate I commend to the lease the lea



"He's the biggest man in Alaska. soft, wrinkled cheek of a girl just bur none."

> denald and his activities had brought him to the country. cause he represents the big corpora-

"You've said two things, my friend," answered Strong dryly. "He's square. Hancock before a notary. Don't waste any time looking for fat or yellow strenks in Mac. They sin't there. Nobody ever heard him aquesi yet and what's more nobody ever will."

"No wonder men like him." "But when you say honest- No! Not the way you define honesty down to the States. He's a grabber, Mac ts."

"What does he look like?" tated, while he searched for words to spring-blue-gray eyes that bore right through you."

when you're looking at him. Forty a five, mebbe or fifty-I don't know."

"Married !" the direction of the Kustak circle. hwney, but you bet he saw him start. "They may be's going to marry Mrs. That suttense traveled like a streak of bair."

was dismissing Mrs. Mallory to too was in that grip." meaning she could convey with a lift of the eyebrow or an intonation of the again upon the big Canadian Scots-

musical voice. If she was alread)

opulent good looks. and I liet were talking. plank, was thrown out.

dered. Looking down from above

ing little shout of welcome. "Oh, you and won it by indirection. Manifestiy for you," she cried. The man on the gangplank looked send men to their wills.

gray hat in a wave of greeting.

grouped together on the lower deck idge and her friends disappeared with At sight of the man with the suitcase heir men folks, calling gay good a sullen murmur rose among them tights to one another as they left. Those in the rear pushed forward and Macdonaid and Mrs. Mallory talked closed the lane leading to the cabins lifter a time she too vanished.

as he strode forward did not ever pestion. glance in the direction of the augry men pressing toward him.

"Here. Keep back there, you felordered the mate sharply.

The big Cornishman who had been ballock which had been poleszed, the

man went to the floor. He turned over bette overboard and nedded good night. The new passenger looked across the huge, sprawitng body at the group that's what they of miners facing him. They glared in

They're living off that bunch of pavage hate. All they needed was a nebpecks down there and folks like | leader to send them driving at him with the force of an avalanche. The



axed, the Man Went to the Floor.

Gordon Elliot very much. Colby Mac-They greeted him eagerty, a little effusively, as if they were anxious to prove themselves on good terms with

> "How did the trouble start?" "It didn't start. Some of the outfit thought they were looking for a row. but they balked on the job when Tre-

> lewney got his." Gordon, as he watched from a little Stance, corrected earlier impressions. This man had passed the thirties. He

> Strong had stepped to the wharf signal be made a hurried greatly and mme on board. He rejoined Eillot. what d'you think of ben?

The young man had already guested who this imperious stranger was. house—steps out like a buck in the pever new anybody get away with a hard job as eastly as he did that one. You could see with half an eye that those fellows meant fight. They were

"Bluffed them-bub | I was where I could see just what happened. Colby "No-o." Hanford Strong nedded in Macdonald wasn't even looking at Tre-She's the one with the red light. You'd 's' thought it weighed shout two pounds. That sin't all, et-It struck young Elliot that the miner ther. Mac used his brains. Guess what

"Tou've got another guess---packet

"The usual thing, I suppose."

man. He was talking with Mrs. Maifencing with the encroaching years bry, who was leaning back inpurithere was little evidence of it in her busty in a steamer chair she had rought aboard at St. Michael's. If rould have been hard to conceive The whistle of the Hannah blew for pontrast greater than the one between the Tatlah Cache landing while Strong his pampered betress of the ages and The gang be modern bustress berserk who poked down into her mocking eyes. A man came to the end of the whar! He was the embodiment of the domi-Me straight at feet. What he wanted e had always taken by the sheer Gordon Elliot guessed him to be in the strength that was in him. Back of her miling insolence lay a silken force Mrs. Mallery was the first to recog in match his own. She too had taken nize him, which she did with a drawl what she wanted from life, but she Mr. Man. I knew you first. I speak the was of those wemen who conceive hat charm and beauty are tools to

up, stutled and lifted to her his broad. The dusky young woman with the nagazine was the first of those on the "How do you do, Mrs. Mallory? Glad upper deck to retire for the night. She litted so quietly that Gordon did not The miners from Frozen Guich were sotice until she had gone. Mrs. Self-

One of the miners was flung roughly. The big promoter leaned against the against the new passenger. With a teck rail, where he was joined by Selfwide, powerful sweep of his arm th, idge. For a long time they talked in man who had just come aboard huried ow voices. The little man had most to "Gangway!" he said brusquely, and tily interrupted to ask a sharp, incisive

Millet, sitting farther forward with

Strong, Judged that Selfridge was making a report of his trip. Once h caught a fragment of their talk, enough to confirm this impression. "Ind Winter tell you that himself?

The answer of his employee came in

emanded the Scotuman.

y the shoulders from behind and flung | 1 f the meles. Heavy-fisted miners with rded muscles landed upon ble face ad boad and neck. He did not care T

painet a doren was Colby Macdonald. and shirt were in rags. He was bruised and battered and bleeding from the theat up. But be was still singging

They had him pressed to the rail. A huge miner, head down, had his arms around the waist of the Scotsman and was trying to throw him overboard. Macdonald lashed out and landed flush upon the cheek of a man attempting to brain him with a billet of wood. He hammered home a short-arm job against the ear of the glant who was giving him the bear grip.

The big miner grunted, but hung on like a football tackler. With a Jerk



post as three or four others rushed him again. The rall gave way, splintered the bindling word. The Scotsman and the man at gring with him west ever

"Men everboard-two of 'em!" explained Killet in a shout from the boat which he was trying to lower.

The first mate and another man ran to help him. The three of them lowered and manned the boat. Gordon sat In the bow and gave directions while the other two put their backs into the mroke. Across the water came a call for

beip. "I'm sinking-burry!" The other man in the river was a Sozen yards from the one in distress. With strong, ewift, overhand strokes e shot through the water. "All right," he called presently, "I've

The caremen drew alongside the ewimmer. With one hand Macdonald caught hold of the edge of the boat.

The other clutched the rescued man by the bair of his head. "Look out. You're drowning him." Tonsorial Parlors

mild interest at the bond that had "Shows how absent-minded a man gets. was thinking about how he tried to drown me, I expect."

They dragged the miner aboard. "Go shead. I'll swim down," Macdonald ordered. "Retter come aboard," advised the

"No. I'm all right." The Scotsman pushed himself back

in it, for he reached the Hannah bebelped to the deck.

lower deck, pushed forward eagerly Susty and disheveled. He was wearing | 2 a pair of up to date Oxford pumps.

ble ewellen and disfigured face. said transcally, bis cold eyes fixed on | been kicked by a bealthy mule. "Eh.]

turned away with a low, savage cath.



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