

STANDS OF CHANCE

by Rex Beach

Published by Arrangement with First National Pictures, Inc., and Frank Lloyd Productions, Inc.

CHAPTER XXX. (Continued)

Dawson awoke, on the second morning, to behold a long queue of fursled miners waiting outside the Gold Commissioner's office; the town took on an electric liveliness. This signified big things; it gave permanence; it meant that Dawson was to be the world's first placer mine. Business picked up, the saloons became thronged, an every corner knots of gossiping men assembled. There began a considerable speculation in claims on Frenchman's Hill; merchants planned larger stocks for the next season; the price of town lots doubled.

Late that afternoon through the streets ran a cry that took every foot-free man hurrying to the river-front. "Rock was coming!" In a jiffy the vantage-points were crowded. Sure enough, far down the Yukon two teams were approaching; with the smoke of Dawson on their nostrils they were coming keeled-eyed spectators announced that they could make out "Polon Doret." The lieutenant himself, however, was not in evidence. Instantly speculation became rife. Here was a sensation indeed, and when the second runner was identified beyond question as Joe McCuskey, excitement doubled. Where was Rock? Where was the other fugitive? What, in the name of all that was unexpected, had occurred?

What happened? How did you manage?

"Polon testified. There was a reason why he did not wish the details of that affair on the upper Forty Mile to become public. Joe McCuskey was beginning to talk loudly about his outraged rights, his citizenship, international law, and such incoherent rubbish. But stronger by far than any fear of consequences to himself, remote at best, Polon felt a desire to help his friend, the Police lieutenant. Rock was deeply in living up to his reputation; he felt that he had cut a very sorry figure indeed; and, although he had no intention to conceal that feeling from Polon, the latter had read him like a book and had secretly made up his mind to give full credit to the officer, eliminating himself as much as possible. There was no reason why the actual facts should be made public, so far as he could see, and, once an artfully colored account of the exploit had gained currency, Rock could not well contradict it. He might, undoubtedly, make a truthful report to his superiors, but Polon determined that in the eyes of the worshipping people of Dawson the fellow should still remain a hero and stand for one hundred per cent efficiency. That was quite as it should be.

A shout of relief issued from the crowd when the team drew in under the bank and Rock sat up waving a mitted hand; the shout was quickly hushed as the lookers-on saw what sort of burden Joe McCuskey was driving.

Up in the main street came the cavalcade. The crowd fell in alongside and ran with it to the barracks, clamoring for details, pouring questions upon the travelers. Joe McCuskey, of course, was speechless, this ordeal proving, as a matter of fact, scarcely less trying than that other one at Sheep Camp when he had run the gauntlet. As for Rock and the French Canadian, neither had much to say, as a result of sensational stories soon spread through the reports. The Mounted Policeman had got his men as usual, but only after a desperate affray in which Frank McCuskey had fallen and the wounded—so ran the first account. Those who had gone for the barracks returned with a fanciful tale of a siege in the snow and of Rock's single-handed conquest of the two fugitives. These conflicting reports were confusing and served to set the town so completely agog that it was the first time since the most feverish impatience. One thing only was certain—the lieutenant had again made himself a hero; he had put a new feather in his cap. Men lifted glasses to him and to the Force. Such effluence as this commended their deepest respect and admiration.

It was not difficult to distort the story enough to reverse the roles, and the officer had played, and when he had finished, Polon was loud in his praise of the Mounted Policeman.

"Well, things happened here, too," the youth declared. Succinctly he told the story of Laura's delayed confession, proving that he had been the victim of a deliberate conspiracy. "Believe me, I'm glad it has all come out so well," he said. "People didn't actually accuse me, but I was conscious of their suspicion, their doubt. I had talked too much. Then, too, there was that beastly rumor the Countess and me. It was fierce! Appearances were wrong. I'd—have come on the stampede, only I didn't have the heart. You've heard about that, of course? The new strike? When Polon shook his head the young man's eyes kindled. "Why, man," he broke out, "the town's crazy! dippy! It's the biggest thing ever! Frenchman's Hill it's called, got that? Frenchman's Hill!"

"Some French fellow make lucky strike, eh?" Polon was not greatly interested. "Where de place is? Who de Frenchman?"

"It's a higher bar somewhere above El Dorado—a mountain of pay gravel. They say it's where all the gold came from, the mother lode. You can see it right at the granite rock."

"Polon started and his mouth opened; then he shook his head.

"By Gar! Dat's funny! I never gravel up dere, but me—I'm on-lucky. Never I quite get not in; always I'm close by when 'noder fellow make strike."

Polon still managed to control himself enough to explain: "They were shooting dead timber down into the gulch and they were the snow off where the rim dropped out. It happened to be staked ground right there." Polon's excitement, the old light in his dancing eyes, bore to Polon a significance. "Some Frenchman had taken it up, so they called it Frenchman's Hill."

Doret's blank, confounded stare came the speaker finally to burst out: "Good Heavens! man, wake up! I'm trying to break the news gently that you're a millionaire!"

"Frenchman's Hill, of course?" Polon asked, his eyes wide.

"First time in history a miner ever left his claim and another fellow came along—"

Doret uttered a feeble cry and rose to his feet. "Ma assure!" he exclaimed. "She's got claim up dere—I stake it for her. For me, I don't care if I lose mine—plenty tam I come just so close as dis; but if dem fellow jump her ground—"

"Wait, wait! There's no question of anything like that. Nobody has jumped your claim, or hers, either. The law wouldn't let 'em. I wonder if she knows. Why, she can't know! I left her not two hours ago—"

"She don't know?"

Polon shook his head. "She doesn't dream. I wish I'd known, I'd have loved to tell her."

"Polon Doret gazed fixedly, curiously at the speaker. He nodded his head, a peculiar, set, hopeless look preat into his eyes, his broad shoulders sagged wearily. He had traveled far and swiftly on this young man's affairs; he had slept but little; and now a great fatigue mastered him. Oddly enough, too, that fierce, consuming desire to see Roulette which had hourly gnawed at him was gone; all at once he felt that she was quite the last person he wished to face. This weakness, this smallness of spirit, was only temporary, he assured himself; it would soon pass and then he would find strength to go to her with his customary smile, his mask in place. Now, however, he was empty checked, frightened, by the portent of this thing. It could have but one significance—it meant that he would lose his "sister" that she would have no further need of him.

"Well, that was all right. It was something like this that he had worked for. Why cherish a memory of this happy boy? Why permit a narrow selfishness to mar this supreme moment?"

Doret was not a forgiving giver; he straightened himself finally, and into his breast eyes there came the gleam that Phillips had been waiting for.

"Dere," he breathed, "my bird point wear de plumage she deserve. She's goin' be reek an' happy all her life. By golly! Dat's



nice, for me. I feel lak gettin' drunk."

"She'd never stand for that."

"I s'pose you tell her you ain't me in jardens on de Frenchman's Hill, eh? An' she's glad 'bout dat?"

"Oh, see here!" Pierce's tone changed abruptly. "Of course I didn't tell her. That's cold; it's off. If you think I'd permit—The boy checked and stammered. "If you imagine for a minute that I'd let you go through with a proposition like that? I understand why you made it—to get me away from the life I've been leading. It was bully of you. But—well, hardly. I'm not that sort. No, I've laid off the old stuff, absolutely—straightened out. I've lived ten years in the last ten days. Wait and see. Polon, I'm the happiest, the most delightfully happy man you ever saw. I only want one thing. That's better, and lots of it—the harder the better, so long as it's honest and self-respecting. What d'you think of that?"

"What I think?" the woodsman said warily. "I think dat he best news of all. Mon ami, you got reecher pay-streak in you as Frenchman's Hill, if only you work 'im hard. But you need partner to get 'im out." He winked meaningly. "I guess mebbe you fin' dat partner, eh?"

Pierce flushed; he nodded vigorously and laughed in the purest, frankest joy. "You're a good guesser. A partner—life partner! I—She— Oh, my Lord! I'm overflowing! I'm— Funny thing, I've never said a word to her; she doesn't know."

"Ho, ho!" cried the elder man. "Oh, she does know, of course. If she didn't I wouldn't feel as I do, but we've never actually mentioned it. I've got to prove myself, understand? It came to me of a sudden, struck me all in a heap. I can tell you. I saw what a fool I'd made of myself. What a damnable thing chance is, anyhow! It makes you, breaks you, carries you along and leaves you stranded finally, then sweeps you on again. Fortunately, she's big enough to understand and make allowances. If she weren't, I'd die. I wouldn't want to live and not make good. It's ecstasy and it's—pain. I'm frightened, too, at my own unworthiness. Absurdly the speaker's voice ceased and he bowed his head.

"Polon wet his dry lips and essayed to speak, but he could find nothing to say. Of course Roulette was big enough to understand and make allowance for any human shortcomings. She was the sanest, the most liberal, the most charitable of girls. And it was true, too, that love came unbidden. He had learned that, to his cost. It was pretty hard to stand quietly and read a sympathetic ear to this lucky devil; it took an effort to maintain a smile, to keep a friendly gaze fixed upon Phillips' face. The big fellow was growing weary of forever flitting himself. It would be a relief to get away and to yield to his misery.

But with a lover's fatuous absorption in his own affairs Pierce resumed: "I've been thinking lately how I came to this country looking for life, the big adventure. Everything that happened, good or bad, was part of a stage play. I've been two people in one—the fellow who did things and the fellow who looked on and applauded—actor and audience. It was tremendous, interesting in an unreal sort of way, and I jotted everything down mentally. I was stocking up with experience. Understand? Well, the whole thing has suddenly become very different. I'm not in the gallery now, not in the theatre at all, not acting. And I thank God for it. I don't imagine that I make much plain in the least."

Evidently he did not; evidently, too, his auditor's mind had strayed slightly, for the latter said: "I s'pose you think all at once 'bout gettin'—marry eh?"

Phillips smiled; he uttered a paucity of words. "Not yet! Oh no— That is I've thought about it a good deal—can't think of anything else—but it's too early yet. I'm in no position; I must make good first."

"For why it's too early? Mebbe

reminded him.

In a choking voice Pierce exclaimed: "You're a prince, Doret, and I won't forget! A prince!"

He was gone; the cabin door had slammed shut with a crash. Polon sank to a seat and with a long sigh bowed his head.

(To be continued)

Strange things happen. We know a man who has everything in the world he wants, and still he's happy.

New Shape

If you've never tasted Tru-Bake Crackers

you have no idea how GOOD crackers can be. Their flavor and shape are distinctive. And their texture is crisp, flaky—honey-combed—so that they fairly melt in your mouth.

That's why Tru-Bakes are so delightful with soups, salads, hot chocolate—and for cracker sandwiches.

The name "TRU-BAKE" on every cracker is your guarantee that it is baked Tru-Blu.

Ask your Grocer for Tru-Bake Crackers.

Baked by the TRU-BLU BISCUIT CO., Spokane and Portland
The Home of Tru-Blu Graham's, English Style Biscuits and the Famous Tru-Blu Fruit Cake

Buying Clothes Should Be A Business Proposition

Hall's Catarrh Medicine will do what we claim for it—rid your system of Catarrh or Deafness caused by Catarrh.

Sold by druggists for over 40 years
F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, Ohio

SPERRY offers you the personal service of Mrs. De Graf

THE WEST'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON HOME COOKERY

Maybe you've heard her over KPO, San Francisco. Perhaps you have her cook book—over a hundred thousand women do. Surely you have seen her articles in the newspapers or magazines.

Rated among America's leading cooking authorities, Mrs. Belle De Graf is best acquainted with the special cooking problems of women in the West. Because of that, and because she loves to help other women in a friendly way, we have chosen her to direct our new Home Service Bureau.

What the Sperry Home Service Bureau will do

The Home Service Bureau will help you in your baking—will tell you how to do it easier and better with Master Recipes. It's the new way, you know. You learn a simple Master Recipe and, with a few variations of it, make from four to a dozen different food delights!

Menus? Mrs. De Graf will give you a fine one for any occasion—or help you give new interest to your everyday ones. If you're planning a party, Mrs. De Graf will help you work out every detail for its success.

To get Mrs. De Graf's Personal Service

Watch for the Sperry Home Service Bureau announcements in later issues of this paper.

Write to Mrs. De Graf. Ask her any question on cooking that puzzles you. You will get a personal, helpful reply.

This service is for you, whether you use Sperry products or not. We invite you to test it with a request today. Address Mrs. De Graf at the Sperry Flour Co., 141 California St., San Francisco, marking your envelope, Home Service Bureau, Dept. 9201-B.

ASH BROS.
The Store That Keeps Faith
"Pioneer Clothiers"

A SMALL HEATER With Much Heat.

The Westinghouse "Cody Glow" electric heater will take the chill out of these frosty mornings. Just attach to your lamp socket—the current consumption is small and the initial cost is very low.

H. & S. ELECTRIC
Sumner Hotel Building.

Delicious

To suit the purse Good Delicacies At any price. More than a Thousand boxes That will be Moved at from Thirty-five cents To three dollars Per box.

Bring your boxes For the cheaper grades.

La Grande Warehouse & Storage Co.
Main 792

Electric Sup

A SMALL HEATER With Much Heat.

The Westinghouse "Cody Glow" electric heater will take the chill out of these frosty mornings. Just attach to your lamp socket—the current consumption is small and the initial cost is very low.

H. & S. ELECTRIC
Sumner Hotel Building.

Delicious

To suit the purse Good Delicacies At any price. More than a Thousand boxes That will be Moved at from Thirty-five cents To three dollars Per box.

Bring your boxes For the cheaper grades.

La Grande Warehouse & Storage Co.
Main 792