



BURNING DAYLIGHT

By JACK LONDON

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

BURNING DAYLIGHT. Elam Harnish, is introduced to the reader as he enters a Circle City dance hall, saloon and gambling house like the whirlwind that he is.

Possessed of a tidy fortune and sure of making a vast one, Burning Daylight proceeds to stir up the life of the gambling house. The men and women all admire him, for he is of the type that dominates.

Essentially a man's man, Burning Daylight resents, or rather fears, the wives of the women who frequent the dance hall. But he is afraid to be even civil to a woman, because he dreads the idea of being mastered by anybody or anything, and to surrender to a woman means, in his mind, that he is conquered.

Drink leads to boasting, and in the turmoil that follows Burning Daylight shows his amazing muscular strength. He wins all the tests and downs all the plants that come before him.

Then comes a poker game—the greatest ever played in the Klondike. Burning Daylight's luck deserts him at the end, and he rises from the table penniless—worse than "broken."

Then the indomitable courage of this master among men shows itself. He declares himself in readiness to accomplish an impossible task—to run the mail to Dyea and back with a dog team and an Indian.

And so Burning Daylight goes forth, over the frozen, trackless wastes, while behind him bets are made and taken on the chances of his returning inside of sixty days.

As the indomitable man goes on his way the difficulties that come to him seem too vast to be overcome, and his hardy Indian companion and his dogs are remorselessly prodded on by this man from the Southland, who by all the books, should be the softer and should succumb first. At last the Indian breaks. He is lashed to the sled, and, thus handicapped, Daylight gets to Dyea.

For the return the indomitable man gets a fresh Indian and new dogs, and the terrific journey is repeated. At Selkirk Daylight is two days late, but he gets a new dog team, and the rest is easy. He reaches Circle City and plunges into the "pool," winning his victory and the acclaim of the crowd that had seen him depart on his heartbreaking journey.

Then, without rest, this amazing man makes a wild night of it. He outdances men and women, too; wins at roulette, and then, still seeming slumber or any repugnance, starts at daybreak, with three partners and a dog team, for the newest gold strike in the upper country along the Stewart.

Then comes the battle for gold. Strike after strike is explored. Daylight sees himself the dominant figure along the Yukon and in the golden Dawson. Discouraged frequently, he refuses to allow life's loaded dice to beat him, and in the end comes victory and millions. He is at length a great mine owner, and the mighty big pile he had sworn to own in the Circle City dance hall days is his.

And so Daylight leaves the Yukon behind for new fields of endeavor. His departure is an event of great importance, and as the vessel swings clear this all-conquering man weeps a little. He tears off his cap and waves it. "Goodby, you—all!" he called. "Goodby, you—all!"

CHAPTER XVII. (Continued.)

From excited, Daylight had all the seeming of being stunned. He felt absently in his pocket for a match, lighted it and discovered that he had no cigarette. The three men watched him with the tense closeness of cats. Now that it had come, they knew that they had a busy few minutes before them.

"Do you-all mind saying that over again?" Daylight said. "Seems to me I ain't got it just exactly right. You-all said"—

He hung with painful expectancy on Nathaniel Letton's utterance.

"I said you were under a misapprehension, Mr. Harnish, that was all. You have been stock gambling and you have been hard hit. But neither Ward Valley nor I nor my associates feel that we owe you anything."

Daylight pointed at the heap of receipts and stubs on the table.

"That-all represents ten million, twenty-seven thousand and forty-two dollars and sixty-eight cents, hard cash. Ain't it good for anything here?"

Letton smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Daylight looked at Dowsett and murmured:—"I guess that story of mine had some meaning after all." He laughed in a sickly fashion. "It was your deal, all right, and you-all done them right, too. Well, I ain't kicking. I'm like the player in that poker game. It was your deal, and you-all had a right to do your best. And you done it—cleaned me out alskerk's a whistle."

He gazed at the heap on the table with an air of stupefaction.

"And that-all ain't worth the paper it's written on! Got that it, you-all can sure deal 'em 'round when you get a chance! Oh, no, I ain't a-kicking. It was your deal, and you-all certainly done me, and a man ain't half a man that squeals on another man's deal. And now the hand is played out, and the cards are on the table, and the deal's over, but"—

His hand, dipping swiftly into his inside breast pocket, appeared with the big Colt's automatic.

"As I was saying, the old deal's finished. Now it's my deal, and I'm a-going to see if I can hold them four aces."

"Take your hand away, you whited sepulchre!" he cried sharply.

Nathaniel Letton's hand, creeping toward the push-button on the desk, was abruptly arrested.

"Change cars," Daylight commanded. "Take that chair over there, you gangrene-livered skunk. Jump, by God! or I'll make you leak till folks 'll think your father was a water hydrant and your mother a sprinkling cart. You-all move your chair alongside Hammer-smith; and you-all Dowsett sit right there, while I just irreverently explain the virtues of this here automatic. She's loaded for big game and she goes off eight times. She's a sure hummer when she gets started."

"Preliminary remarks being over, I now proceed to deal. Remember, I ain't making no remarks about your deal. You done your darndest, and it was all right. But this is my deal, and it's up to me to do my darndest. In the first place, you-all know me. I'm Burning Daylight—savvee? Ain't afraid of God, devil, death, nor destruction. Them's my four aces, and they sure coppers your bets. Look at that there living skeleton! Letton, you're sure afraid to die. Your bones is all rattling together, you're that scared. And you look at that fat man there. This little weapon's sure to put the fear of God in his heart. He's yellow as a sick persimmon. Dowsett, you're a cool one. You-all ain't batted an eye 'round a bald. That's because you're great on arithmetic. And that makes you-all dead easy in this deal of mine. You're skiting there

adding two and two together, and you-all know I sure got you skinned. You know me, and that I ain't afraid of nothing. And you-all adds up all your money and knows you ain't a-going to die if you can help it."

"I'll see you hanged," was Dowsett's retort.

"Not by a damned sight. When the fun starts, you're the first to plug. I'll hang all right, but you-all won't live to see it. You-all die here and now, while I'll die subject to the law's delay—savvee? Being dead, with grass growing out of your carcase, you won't know when I hang, but I'll sure have the pleasure a long time of knowing you-all beat me to it."

Daylight paused.

"You surely wouldn't kill us?" Letton asked in a queer, thin voice.

Daylight shook his head.

"It's sure too expensive. You-all ain't worth it. I'd sooner have my chips back. And I guess you-all'd sooner give my chips back than go to the dead house."

A long silence followed.

"Well, I've done dealt. It's up to you-all to play. But while you're deliberating I want to give you-all a warning. If that door opens and any one of you cusses lets on there's anything unusual right there and then I sure start pluggin'. They ain't a soul'll get out the room except feet first."

A long session of three hours followed. The deciding factor was not the big automatic pistol, but the certitude that Daylight would use it. Not alone were the three men convinced of this, but Daylight himself was convinced. He was firmly resolved to kill the men if his money was not forthcoming.

It was not an easy matter on the spur of the moment to raise ten million dollars and there were vexatious delays. A dozen times Mr. Howison and the head clerk were called to the room. On these occasions the pistol lay on Daylight's lap covered carelessly by a newspaper, while he usually was engaged in rolling or lighting his brown paper cigarettes.

There were hurried trips to banks with checks for certification and other trips to other banks for currency, and in the end the matter was accomplished. Daylight received a large bundle of big bills and a block of certified checks for the balance.

He placed both in the leather grip and arose to go, pausing at the door to make his final remarks.

"There's several things I sure want to tell you-all. When I get outside this door you-all'll be free to act, and I just want to warn you-all about what you do in the first place, no warrants for my arrest and no stopping those checks, savvee? This money's mine and I ain't robbed you of it. If you-all ain't got money enough in the banks these checks are drawn on to make 'em good, get it there right away. See? If it gets out how you gave me the double cross and how I done you back again the laugh'll be on you."



"The police. It's downright robbery. I won't stand it. I tell you I won't stand it!"

and it'll sure be an almighty big laugh. You-all can't afford that laugh. Besides, having got back my stake that you-all robbed me of, if you arrest me and try to rob me a second time I'll go gunning for you-all, and I'll sure get you. No little fraidcat shrimps like you-all can skin Burning Daylight. If you win you lose and there'll sure be some several unexpected funerals around this burg. Just look me in the eye and you-all'll savvee I mean business. Them stubs and receipts on the table is all yours. Good day."

As the door shut behind him Nathaniel Letton sprang for the telephone, and Dowsett intercepted him.

"What are you going to do?" Dowsett demanded.

"The police. It's downright robbery. I'll stop payment on the checks. I won't stand it. I tell you I won't stand it!"

Dowsett smiled grimly, but at the same time bore the slender financier back and down into his chair.

"We'll talk it over," he said; and in John Hammer-smith he found an anxious ally.

And nothing ever came of it. The checks were



"Now it's my deal, and I'm going to see if I can hold them four aces."

The element of surprise was large. He banked on the unexpected, and, fresh from the wild north, his mind not operating in stereotyped channels, he was able in unusual degree to devise new tricks and stratagems. And once he took the advantage he pressed it remorselessly. "As relentless as a red Indian," was said of him, and it was said truly.

On the other hand, he was known as "square." His word was as good as his bond and this despite the fact that he accepted nobody's word. He always abided at propositions based on gentlemen's agreements, and a man who ventured his honor as a gentleman in dealing with Daylight inevitably was treated to an unpleasant time. Daylight never gave his own word unless he held the whip hand. It was a case with the other fellow of taking it or nothing.

Legitimate investment had no place in Daylight's play. It tied up his money and reduced the element of risk. It was the gambling side of business that fascinated him, and to play in his slashing manner required that his money must be ready at hand. It was never tied up save for short intervals, for he was principally engaged in turning it over and over, raising here, there and everywhere, a veritable pliate of the financial mael. A five per cent safe investment had no attraction for him, but to stake millions in a sharp, harsh skirmish, standing to lose everything or to win fifty or a hundred per cent, was the savor of life to him. He played according to the rules of the game, but he played mercilessly. "When he got a man or a corporation down-and they squealed he gouged no less hard. Appeals for financial mercy fell on deaf ears. He was a free lance and had no friendly business associations. Such alliances as were formed from time to time were purely affairs of expediency, and he regarded his allies as men who would give him the double cross or ruin him if a profitable chance presented. In spite of this point of view, he was faithful to his allies. But he was faithful just as long as they were and no longer. The treason had to come from them and then it was 'ware Daylight."

The business men and financiers of the Pacific coast never forgot the lesson of Charles Klinkner and the California and Altamont Trust Company. Klinkner was the president. In partnership with Daylight the pair raided the San José Interurban. The powerful Lake Power and Electric Lighting corporation came to the rescue, and Klinkner, seeing what he thought was the opportunity, went over to the enemy in the thick of the pitched battle. Daylight lost three millions before he was done with it, and before he was done with it he saw the California and Altamont Trust Company hopelessly wrecked and Charles Klinkner a suicide in a felon's cell. Not only did Daylight lose his grip on San José Interurban, but in the crash of his battle front he lost heavily all along the line. It was conceded by those competent to judge that he could have compromised and saved much. But, instead, he deliberately threw up the battle with San José Interurban and Lake Power, and, apparently defeated, with Napoleonic suddenness struck at Klinkner. It was the last unexpected thing Klinkner would have dreamed of, and Daylight knew it. He knew, further, that the California and Altamont Trust Company was an intrinsically sound institution, but that just then it was in a precarious condition, due to Klinkner's speculations with its money. He knew, also, that in a few months the trust company would be more firmly on its feet than ever, thanks to those same speculations; and thus if he were to strike he must strike immediately. "Ifs" just that much money in pocket and a whole lot more," he was reported to have said in connection with his heavy losses. "It's just so much insurance against the future. Henceforth you men who go in with me on deals will think twice before they try to double cross me, and then some."

The reason for his savageness was that he despised the men with whom he played. He had a conviction that not one in a hundred of them was intrinsically square, and as for the square ones he prophesied that, playing in a crooked game, they were sure to lose and in the long run go broke.

Daylight was philosophical, but not a philosopher. He had never read the books. He was a hard-headed, practical man, and farthest from him was any intention of ever reading the books. He had lived in the slum, where books were not necessary for an understanding of life, and now life in the complex appeared just as simple. He saw through its frauds and fictions and found it as elemental as on the Yukon. Men were

made of the same stuff. They had the same passions and desires. Finance was poker on a larger scale. The men who played were the men who had stakes. The workers were the fellows toiling for gain, slaves. He saw the game played according to the unerring rules, and he played a hand himself. The genuine fullness of humanity organized and befuddled by the bandits did not shock him. It was the natural order. Practically all human endeavors were futile. He had seen so much of it. His partners had started and died on the Stewart. Hundreds of old timers had failed to locate on Bonanza and Eldorado, while Swedes and Czechs had come in on the moose pasture and blindly staked millions. It was life and life was a savage proposition at best. Men in civilization raised because they were so made. They robbed just as cats scratched, famine pinched and frost bit.

So it was that Daylight became a successful financier. He did not go in for swindling the workers. Not only did he not have the heart for it, but it did not strike him as a sporting proposition. The workers were so easy, so stupid. It was more like slaughtering fat, hand reared pheasants on the English pretense he had heard about. The sport to him was in robbing the rich, and in his own fashion, he was wlaying the successful robbers and taking their spoils from them. There was fun and excitement in that, and sometimes they put up the very devil of a fight. Like Robin Hood of old, Daylight proceeded to rob the rich, and in a small way, to distribute to the needy. But he was charitable after his own fashion. The great mass of human misery meant nothing to him. That was part of the everlasting order. He had no patience with the organized charities and the professional charity mongers. Nor, on the other hand, was what he gave a conscience done. He owed no man, and restitution was unthinkable. What he gave was a largess, a free, spontaneous gift; and it was for those about him. He never contributed to an earthquake fund in Japan nor to an open air fund in New York city. When he learned that the wife of his waiter at the St. Francis was suffering from tuberculosis he sent her to Arizona, and later, when her case was declared hopeless, he sent her husband, too, to Arizona. Likewise, he bought a string of horsehair brushes from a convict in a Western penitentiary, who spread the good news that it seemed to Daylight that half the convicts in that institution were making bridges for him. He bought them all, paying from twenty to fifty dollars each for them. They were beautiful and honest things, and he decorated all the available wall space of his bedroom with them.

The grim Yukon life had failed to make Daylight hard. It required civilization to produce this result. In the fierce, savage game he now played his habitual nerve, but now his nerve slipped away from him, as did his lazy Western drawl and mental condition. He was sharp and nervous, so did his mental condition. In the swift rush of the game he found less and less time to spend on being merely good natured. The change marked appeared the playful curl of his lips, the smile in the wrinkling corners of his eyes. The eyes themselves, black and flashing like an Indian's, betrayed glints of cruelty and brutal consciousness of power. His ire, being, but it was vitality under the new aspect of the mental nature had been in a way impersonal; his great battles were wholly with the males of his species, and the hardships of the trail, the river and the frost struggle with his fellows.

He still had recurrences of gentility, but they were largely periodical and forced, and they were usually due to the cocktails he took prior to meetings in the North he had drunk deeply and at irregular intervals, but now his drinking became systematic and disciplined. It was unconscious development, but it was based upon physical and mental condition. The cocktails served as an inhibition. Without reason or thinking about it, the strain of the office, which was ture, required check or cessation, and he found, through the weeks and months, that the cocktail supplied this very thing. They constituted a wall. He never drank during the morning nor in the afternoon, but the instant he left the office he proceeded to raise this wall of alcoholic inhibition atwart his consciousness. The office became immediately a closed affair. It ceased to exist. In the afternoon, after lunch, it lived again for one or two hours, which, leaving it, he rebuilt the wall of inhibition. Of course there were exceptions to this, and such was the nature of his discipline that if he had a dinner or a conference before him in which, in a business way, he encountered enemies or allies and planned or presented campaigns he abstained from drinking. But the instant the business was settled his everlasting call went out for a Martini, and for a double Martini at that, served in a long glass so as not to excite comment.

(To Be Continued.)

WANTED—A...
FARMS WA...
MEN WAN...
WANTED—G...
WANTED—G...
SMART WOM...
AGEN...
\$2 to \$5 a day...
PORTRAIT...
SPLENDED...
SALES...
SALESMEN...
WE W...
Up-to-Da...
Cur...
No Doc...
The Ox...
The Ox...
ON...
U. S.