

Bench Claim Dick and Eldorado Bill.

(Written for the Klondike Nugget)

(Continued from Wednesday.)
When Eldorado Bill emerged from his icy bath he was a gruesome sight. His teeth chattered like castanets behind pendant icicles that hung to his drooping mustache. His limbs shook as from palsy as his sodden garments began to freeze his body, and his features were drawn and contorted and expressed an awful fear of death. It was some time before he could clear his befuddled brain sufficiently to realize that his own precious person was now safe. By slow degrees he cleared his insensate mind sufficient to remember the cracking ice, the jerking forward of the sleigh, then a fur-wrapped bundle suddenly disappear from his side. Then came a cold rush of water, and his memory told him that he had kicked his feet and legs free from an entangling robe and with both hands he had grasped the sleigh as the current threatened to carry him on. Now, for the first time he began to think of his companion. He looked back at the crossing and saw nothing but a jumbled mass of floating cakes of ice. Then his eyes wandered down the stream and his gaze became fixed upon an object. A human head pops up from beneath a floating mass of ice and slush, then shoulders follow, and arms reach out with powerful strokes that rapidly carries a human being across the current to a floating cake beyond, and upon that cake, standing erect, is an apparently inanimate little object of fur. As the swimmer approaches this furry thing is suddenly embodied with life, and a clear, sweet voice rings out cautioning the rescuer to swim around to the opposite side, as the water is shallow there. This is done, and the swimmer finds firm footing on a pebbly bottom only waist deep in the water. Then a man reaches forth and clasps sweet Bessie in his arms and by wading lands her safe and dry.

Very carefully this man sets his precious burden down. Brown eyes then look up and penetrate the depths of gray ones, and in that glance a world of thankfulness is expressed. Then Bessie gazes at the rapids just below and so near, with the awful yawning ice-capped cavern at their feet, and tears spring from beneath her drooping lids and tremulous rosy lips fail to frame words that the tongue tries to utter. But soft little hands steal forth and nestle in the palms of hard ones, and the unwonted pressure that the little digits give is synonymous of the words that would speak her unbounded gratitude.

"Allow me to offer my thanks, Bench Claim Dick," said Eldorado Bill, at this moment driving up. "A very unlucky mishap, Miss Rose. I would have come to your assistance sooner, but I saw that you were safe, and not even wet. Lucky I landed you on that ice cake. I am soaked through and freezing, so allow me to help you into the sleigh, as I must make the next roadhouse quickly and thaw out. And Mr. Bench Claim," this sycophant added as he cracked his whip and the grays sprang away, "just make out and send me your bill, and drop in at the roadhouse when you pass and take a drink at my expense."

"Who is that noble, handsome man?" asked Bessie, as they were speeding on their way.
"Oh, he's only a bench claim owner on Bonanza, and don't amount to much," answered this Eldorado king, and he scowled sullenly.
"Don't amount to much!" replied Miss Bessie, and her pique was expressed with a scornful curl of the lips.
"Why, I thought—" But her thoughts she did not express in words, but tucked them away in the innermost recesses of her little bosom for safe keeping in memory of a man of noble form and heroic daring, with the handsomest gray eyes she had ever seen.

And what were the thoughts of Bench Claim Dick? As he hurried away to secure his team and seek some miner's cabin where a warm fire would thaw out his sodden garments and take the chill from his benumbed person, recurrent to his mind was the gleam of beautiful brown eyes, heavenly lit by tender emotion and the pathetic squeeze of little hands. And he wondered what evil circumstance had placed this angelic little being in the hands of a man like Eldorado Bill.

Richard Raymond, bench claim owner, musher of a dog team and, in Yukon parlance at this date, of little account generally, sat alone in a little log cabin he had built on his bench claim on Bonanza. He was a man a

trifle over 30 years of age, with athletic frame and strong constitution; his eyes were gray, handsome and expressive, of a noble character, which, set off by wavy blonde hair and a golden mustache made him very pleasing to look upon, at least in feminine eyes. He had come to the Klondike too late to secure a drop of the cream in a creek claim, therefore, necessity compelled him to climb the hillsides, several hundred feet, to the benches above the present creek beds if he desired to become a claim owner. Through a course of study in the Colorado school of mines he had gained much knowledge in mineralogy and was well read in geologic matters, and in following his occupation as a civil and mining engineer much personal experience had been added to his studies.

While prospecting this aid he relied upon as the beckoning hand that would lead him to hidden golden wealth. At a point opposite the junction of Eldorado and Bonanza creeks he found the formation of the country such as to point to the existence there of an older channel of Eldorado. That such old deposits were alluvial there was no question of a doubt, for the wash from the old creek bed above was the means that had enriched the newer channel below. There he built his cabin and unaided commenced to sink. The scoffings of creek claim owners did not deter him, and with the indifference of one to the manor born he had accepted his local sobriquet of Bench Claim Dick. Sinking to bedrock alone kept him busy during the day and at night a theoretic mind absorbed in nature's study brightened the lonely hours. In the bits of plants and huge tusks and bones of animals that the frozen earth revealed he read a queer life existence on the Yukon in prehistoric times, and in these bone-yard deposits he saw an end of the mammoth life corval with the change in the course of the stream. But when had this stream commenced to flow? Down deeper in the clay and gravel that rest upon bedrock there were, no signs of animal life and no vegetable colorings to show a plant existence, and surely its birth must date back to the time when ice first began to meet and water to flow, for is not the silicious wash of Bonanza's great white channel as pure and white as the virgin rock?

This night it is evident that something unusual has happened from the general course of Bench Claim Dick's affairs. He sits upon a stool and his two long legs nearly encircle a tub filled with water and in it he shakes a gold pan vigorously. On the floor near him are sacks filled with snow-white gravel, and on the table is an oyster can nearly filled with yellow dust. Dick's last fire had said 100 feet deep and bedrock, and now added to the list is a Gold Hill king—a bench claim millionaire.

But how fares it with Eldorado Bill, and has he succeeded in his base and low born scheme?
In a large, two-story cabin on Eldorado, in an elegantly furnished room that is carpeted and well stoved, sits the Eldorado king. Standing before him is a little California girl, who at this moment presents a perfect picture of mingled wrath and beauty.

"I will not marry you, Eldorado Bill, neither will I be your mistress," were the words that issued from trembling ruby lips in answer to an ungentlemanly address made by this assuming millionaire.

"You may be an Eldorado king," added Miss Bessie, "but you certainly are no gentleman, and you are a coward, too, for only a brave man will jump into a cold river and rescue a lady from a floating ice-cake. And now I hope you know what I really think of you."

"I would infer by your remarks that you are thinking more of that bench claim fellow than of me just at present," answered Bill, with an angry scowl, and then he added: "Come now, little spitfire, will your choice be an Eldorado creek claim, with diamonds, furs and cutter and span, and me, or a bench claim with its dog and sled? I will wait patiently 12 long hours for your answer."

"You won't have to wait a minute, for your answer is ready now," answered a now thoroughly aroused little tigress. "I wouldn't have you at any price, and all I want of you is my salary, and I want that right away, for I shall go back to Dawson, and I'm going to walk, too."

Eldorado Bill was just going to offer some expostulation when his foreman entered and said:

"Bill, something is wrong at the mine. But come and see for yourself." Bill, accompanied his man in charge to a new shaft that was being sunk on the upper half of the claim to open it up for winter drifting, as the lower half had been worked out the winter before. He descended, and by a dim light that came down from above he was quick to note that there was no wall to the up-stream side of the shaft. He stepped in under the archway and reached his hand out in the darkness beyond and still there was no wall. Lighting a candle he proceeded farther, and in the far dim distance he saw a streak of daylight coming down through some opening from above. For a moment Bill could hardly grasp the true situation, then, of a sudden, the appalling truth struck him. During the past summer a gang of Italian laymen had worked the lower half of the claim above, and at the same time they had drifted down onto him—his wealth, the pay streak in Eldorado was a thing no more.

The body of Eldorado Bill reeked with the cold sweat of despair, his palsied limbs refused to bear their weight and he fell prone upon the ground. Then the frenzy of a madman seized him, and in the darkness he crawled upon his knees and reached forth his hands in search of a solid wall, but they encountered only empty space. Then this millionaire, now with an empty purse; this Eldorado king, shorn of his golden crown, lay down and moaned and uttered deep and terrible oaths as he groveled in the dust.

"Fool! idiot! that I am. While I reveled in wine and women those cursed dagos robbed me of my gold. A thousand curses on them!"

No sleep closed the eyes of Eldorado Bill that night, no bright thoughts entered his mind and no loving hands consoled him. Debts, small and great grimly stared him in the face, and he knew that creditors would soon be upon his trail. He cursed the law of Canada that would put a man in jail for debt, and thought of the mounted police, and how to escape them all an reach the boundary line ahead of a capias was the subject that most engrossed his mind. Two days later Eldorado Bill successfully stepped over the line into pastures new, and the Klondike knows him now only as a "has been."

"Mr. Bench Claim Dick, will you give me a ride? I see that you are on your way to Dawson, and that's where I'm going, too," asked our little heroine as she encountered Mr. Richard Raymond, Gold Hill king and millionaire, and thorough gentleman, with his dog team at the Forks just after her leave taking from Eldorado Bill.

"With the greatest of pleasure," answered Dick, and he helped her into his sleigh. As he tucked her away, warm and comfortable, his heart again went throbbing as those brown eyes as beautiful as a dream looked up demurely into his, and again he felt the thrilling presence of those little hands.

"Now, Mr. Dick," remarked Miss Bessie, as they proceeded along, "I am just going to introduce myself to you, for I do so want to thank you for jumping into that cold river and saving me from being swept down into that awful icy cavern. My name is Miss Bessie Rose, chechako, as you people say, from California. I came to the Klondike with my aunt, who is now in Dawson. We are poor and I hired out to Eldorado Bill as an accountant. He might be an Eldorado king, but he certainly is no gentleman, and I have left my position and am going back to my auntie today. I am going to take you with me to her, and you can introduce yourself to us both. Now, I think you know pretty well who I am, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart and will always remember you as a noble man."

By this time deep emotions were getting the mastery over little Bessie, which begun to show in tears and sobs, but with her hand she brushed away the tell-tale dewdrops, then raising her lids she glanced coyly up and with the sweetest little smile she asked:

"Now, Mr. Dick, how can I ever repay you?"

Dick's gray eyes bravely met her coyish glances, and with his heart throbbing with joy, he answered:

"You can pay me in full by saying you will be my Gold Hill queen next Christmas."

ELDORADO.

Slow to Matrimony.

Princess Victoria Alexandria Olga Mary of Wales, though she is 32 years of age and undeniably plain looking, possesses many charms of person and manner that have won for her the reputation of having refused more suitors than any other princess in Europe. The number of princes alone who have laid siege to the heart of this royal lady is really too long to be printed, while any number of peers of the British realm

have met the same fate. And yet the princess is not a coquette. She has refused all offers of marriage, not through caprice, but simply through sheer disinclination to wed. The rumor has again gone forth in spite of the fate of its forerunners that she is about to bestow her hand. This time the fortunate suitor is said to be Prince George of Greece, the second son of King George and governor of Crete. He is said to have courted her for a number of years.

Should Prince George and Princess Victoria be really betrothed and married their marriage would cause considerable unfavorable comment since they are first cousins. King George of Greece, the father of the young man, is the brother of the Princess of Wales, the mother of Princess Victoria. Eligible princesses are rare in Europe, and intermarriages are common.

Princess Victoria, while not handsome, is said to have a most charming and gracious manner. An American woman who spent an hour in her society at a garden party described her as "quiet and witty." Some time ago she decided to learn a trade and chose bookbinding. She exhibited some of her work in her chosen line under a fictitious name and gained a prize.—Ex.

Damaged \$1000 by a Sermon.

A superior court jury yesterday awarded Jacob Blackman, of Holyoke, damages to the amount of \$1000 against Rev. A. N. Sikorski, of the Polish church in Holyoke, in an action brought to recover for injury to the plaintiff's meat business from a sermon preached by the defendant. The defendant did not appear to go on with the case and was defaulted, but the case was given to the jury on the question of the amount of damages. The plaintiff's testimony was put in as far as it related to the loss and damage to his business. The plaintiff claimed that he was a retail meat dealer in Holyoke last summer and did considerable business with the Polish church, which was largely attended by his customers. He further claimed that certain words spoken in a sermon by the defendant one Sunday in July resulted in a great falling off in trade and finally the abandonment of his business. He testified that on Mondays before the sermon was preached he would have as many as 100 customers, but the Monday following it he had only 15. The following day he had still less custom and the third day his store was attacked, eggs were thrown at his customers, his clerk was frightened away and he was forced to close his store. He placed the amount he had made from sales previous to the difficulty at about \$40 a week.—Springfield Republican.

Wife Charged With Murder.

New Haven, Conn., Jan. 2.—The report of the coroner's inquest in the Rathbun poisoning mystery was made public yesterday. It was found that the death of William Rathbun was caused by poison put into the coffee of a boarder, John F. Hart, by Maria Ann Rathbun, wife of William. The intention of Mrs. Rathbun, according to the coroner's finding, was to secure the death of Hart. Jealousy because of Hart's neglect of her and his attention during the last few months to another woman is ascribed in the coroner's report as the motive for Mrs. Rathbun's alleged act.

Mrs. Rathbun has been arrested on a warrant charging her with murder. John F. Hart was also formally arrested on a warrant charging him with intimacy with Mrs. Rathbun.

To Blow Up a Tunnel.

Chicago, Jan. 2.—The Record says: On information from a source which he declined to make public Detective Sergeant McLaughlin located a gas pipe bomb in one of the niches of the La Salle street tunnel shortly before midnight. The bomb was taken by the policemen to the Central station and thence carried to the lake front and exploded.

Detective McLaughlin said he received a hint to the effect that an effort would be made to blow up the tunnel used for the passage of the North Side cars. He hastened to the scene and found a piece of three-inch gas pipe, about 15 inches long, in one of the small arched openings in the dividing wall of the tunnel. A half-burned fuse protruded from one end. When touched off the bomb is said by the policemen to have exploded with a loud report.

Earlier in the night one of the sweepers employed in the tunnel saw a man about 25 years old and shabbily dressed loitering in the tunnel. He was asked what he was doing there, and replied:

"Nothing."

The stranger left the tunnel hurriedly.

The police suspect the bomb was placed there by a discharged employe of the company.

THE DAWSON CURLING CLUB

And What It Is Doing to Get the N. Y. Life Trophy.

Something of the Game's Antiquity and How They Play It—Lawyers vs. Doctors.

If you ask a Scotchman how long it has been since his countrymen began curling, he will probably refer you to someone older than himself for the information. The fact being that the origin of the game was long since lost in antiquity, the encyclopedias stating that it is known to have been in vogue as a Scottish pastime during the past three centuries, and how much longer is not known.

It is a game in which some of the characteristics of both quoits and billiards are noticeable, and it is surprising to what proficiency some of the players attain.

The stretch of ice along which the stones, weighing about 40 pounds, are cast is some 132 feet in length, and the target, or bulls-eye lined out upon the ice at either end, consists of four circles, surrounding the center, or tee. Back of these circles at either end of the rink, are notches cut in the ice, called hacks. These are for the players to put their toes in for a foothold when starting a stone for its mark at the other end. In front of the "ice," as the target is technically termed, some ten or twelve feet is a line known to players as the "hog line." All stones stopping before crossing this line are "dead,"—that is they cannot be counted.

Through the center of the "ice" at right angles to the rink, is another line which signifies much to the enthusiast. The "skip" (or as he would be called in other games, the captain) of each side is provided with a broom with which he sweeps the ice before an approaching stone if its speed is not thought to be sufficient to carry it to its mark. As the players are four on a side, this leaves two at each end, and the "skip" sweeps for the stones cast by members of his team from the other end, or lets them alone according to his judgment, but he cannot sweep before the stones of the opposing team till after they have crossed the line drawn through the center of the "ice."

Many fine points are observable to the practiced player little dreamed of by the somewhat mystified onlooker who has never seen the game.

Two stones are allotted to each player to be cast at a time—that is, he slides them to the opposite end of the rink and his partner slides them back in turn. This is termed an end. The length of the game is a matter of agreement, but here 16 ends are usually played. The number of stones lying nearest the "tee," cast there by a side, can be counted the same as in quoits.

Last fall the New York Life Insurance Company promised a trophy for the most successful team in Dawson this winter and when curling commenced ten "skips" were chosen, and the game being played now are to decide who is to be the future custodian of this trophy.

The doctors who are members of the curling club posted in the rink last week a challenge to the members of any other profession, "the legal preferred," to try conclusions with them at the warin game. This bluff was promptly called by the lawyers. On Saturday night the game was played. At the conclusion W. McFarlane's appearance was such as he might have presented if he had that night vaccinated the entire populace of the territory. Dr. Wills looked as we might imagine the genial mining magnate looks if the pay streak on Gold Run had pinched out, while Dr. Norquay and Dr. Richardson were as dejected as if all their patients had suddenly recovered. The lawyers on the other hand wore that air of calm triumph which is always noticeable on the face of an advocate when a decision in an important case has just been handed down in his favor. The names of the players and the result of the game are given below:

Lawyers—W. M. MacKay, F. G. Crisp, W. L. Walsh, H. G. Wilson "skip," 21.

Doctors—McFarlane, Norquay, Wills, Richardson "skip," 8.

Mail Arrived.

A consignment of some 15 sacks of American mail arrived yesterday afternoon, seven days from Whitehorse. Four passengers came through with the shipment—L. B. Burrarb, W. R. Hamilton, O. S. Finnie and Miss Edith Robinson. It is understood that a large shipment of mail is following the present consignment.