

# BURNING DAYLIGHT

## By JACK LONDON

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### SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

**BURNING DAYLIGHT.** Blam 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 wiles 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 down all the giants 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 "broke."

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 peddled 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 Tivoli, winning his victory and the acclaim of the crowd that had seen him depart on his heart-breaking 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 scoring stumbers or any recuperation, start 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 almighty big pile he had sworn to lay 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 XV. (Continued).

HEY will never dream you are with us," Hammersmith interjected, as the outlining of the matter drew to a close. "They'll think you are raiding on your own in proper buccaneer style."

"Of course, you understand, Mr. Harnish, the absolute need for keeping our alliance in the dark," Nathaniel Letton warned gravely.

Daylight nodded his head.

"And you also understand," Letton went on, "that the result can only be productive of good. The thing is legitimate and right, and the only ones who may be hurt are the stock gamblers themselves. It is not an attempt to smash the market. As you see yourself, you are to bid the market. The honest investor will be the gainer."

"Yes, that's the very thing," Dowsett said. "The commercial need for copper is continually increasing. Ward Valley Copper, and all that it stands for—practically one-quarter of the world's supply, as I have shown you—is a big thing, how big even we can scarcely estimate. Our arrangements are made. We have plenty of capital ourselves, and yet we want more. Also, there is too much Ward Valley out to suit our present plans. Thus we kill both birds with one stone."

"And I am the stone," Daylight broke in with a snarl.

"Yes, just that. Not only will you bid Ward Valley, but you will at the same time gather Ward Valley in. This will be of inestimable advantage to us, while you and all of us will profit by it as well. And as Mr. Letton has pointed out, the thing is legitimate and square. On the eighteenth the directors meet, and, instead of the customary dividend, a double dividend will be declared."

"And where will the shorts be then?" Hammersmith cried excitedly.

"The shorts will be the speculators," Nathaniel Letton explained, "the gamblers, the froth of Wall street, you understand. The genuine investors will not be hurt. Furthermore, they will have learned for the thousandth time to have confidence in Ward Valley. And with their confidence we can carry through the large developments we have outlined to you."

"There will be all sorts of rumors on the street," Dowsett warned Daylight, "but do not let them frighten you. These rumors may even originate with us. You can see how and why, clearly. But rumors are to be no concern of yours. You are on the inside. All you have to do is buy, buy, buy, and keep on buying to the last stroke, when the directors declare the double dividend. Ward Valley will jump so that it won't be feasible to buy after that."

"What we want," Letton took up the strain, pausing significantly to sip his mineral water, "what we want is to take large blocks of Ward Valley off the hands of the public. We could do this easily enough by depressing the market and frightening the holders. And we could do it more cheaply in such fashion. But we are absolute masters of the situation and we are fair enough to buy Ward Valley on a rising market. Not that we are philanthropists, but that we need the investors in our big development scheme. Nor do we lose directly by the transaction. The instant the action of the directors becomes known Ward Valley will rush heavenward. In addition, and outside the legitimate field of the transaction, we will pinch the shorts for a very large sum. But that is only incidental, you understand, and, in that way, unavoidable. On the other hand, we will not turn up our noses at that phase of it. The shorts will be the

voracious gamblers, of course, and they will get no more than they deserve."

And one other thing, Mr. Harnish," Hammersmith said. "If you exceed your available cash, of the amount you care to invest in the venture, don't fail immediately to call on us. Remember, we are behind you."

"Yes, we are behind you," Dowsett repeated.

Nathaniel Letton nodded his head in affirmation.

"Now about that double dividend on the eighteenth," John Dowsett drew a slip of paper from his notebook and adjusted his glasses. "Let me show you the figures. Here, you see"—

Daylight's car was the last, and, peering out, he caught a glimpse of the unlighted house that loomed lugubly through the darkness like a mountain. Whose was it? he wondered. How came they to use it for their secret conference? Would the lucky talk? How about the chauffeurs? Were they trusted men like "our" Mr. Howison? Mystery? The affair was alive with it. And hand in hand with mystery walked power. He leaned back and inhaled his cigarette. Big things were afoot. The cards were shuffled even then for a mighty deal, and he was in on it. He remembered back to his poker games with Jack Keatus and laughed aloud. He had played for thousands in those

days all this time? Daylight appreciated the interviews with them that appeared—interviews delightfully placid and non-committal. John Hammersmith even hazarded the opinion that this Northland Croesus might possibly be making a mistake. But not that they cared, John Dowsett explained. Nor did they object. While in the dark regarding his intentions, of one thing they were certain; namely, that they were buying Ward Valley. And they did not mind this. No matter what happened to him and his spectacular operations, Ward Valley was all right and would remain all right, as firm as the rock of Gibraltar. No, they had no Ward Valley to sell, thank you. This purely fictitious state of the market was bound shortly to pass, and Ward Valley was not to be in any insane Stock Exchange flurry. "It is purely Letton's words," and we refuse to have anything to do with it or to take notice of it in any way."

During this time Daylight had several secret meetings with his partners, one with John Hammersmith, one with John Dowsett and two with Mr. Howison. Beyond congratulations, they really amounted to nothing; for, as he was informed, everything was going satisfactorily.

But on Tuesday morning a rumor that was disseminated in the Wall Street Express and it was to the effect, on apparently straight inside information, that on Thursday, when the directors of Ward Valley met, instead of the customary dividend being declared, an assessment would be levied. It was the first check Daylight had received. It came to him with a shock that if the thing was so he was a broken man. And it also came to him that all this money, Dowsett, Hammersmith, and Letton were risking nothing. It was a panic, short-lived it was true, but sharp enough while it lasted to make him remember Holdsworth and the brickyard and to rush to a telephone.

"Nothing in it—only a rumor," came John Hammersmith's throaty voice in the receiver. "As you know," said Nathaniel Letton, "I am one of the directors, and I should certainly be aware of it were such a thing contemplated. And John Dowsett—I warned you against just such rumors. There is not an iota of truth in it—certainly not. I tell you on my honor as a gentleman."

Heartily ashamed of himself for his temporary loss of nerve, Daylight returned to his task. The cessation of buying had turned the Stock Exchange into a bedlam, and down all the line of stocks the bears were smashing. Ward Valley, as the apex, received the brunt of the shock and was already beginning to tumble. Daylight calmly doubled his buying orders. And all through Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday morning he went on buying, while Ward Valley rose triumphantly higher. Still he sold and still he bought, exceeding his power to buy many times over, when delivery was taken into account. What of that? On this day the double dividend would be declared, he assured himself. The pinch of delivery would be on the shorts. They would be making terms with him.

And then the thunderbolt struck. True to the rumor, Ward Valley levied the assessment. Daylight threw up his arms. He verified the report and quit. Not alone Ward Valley, but all securities were being hammered down by the triumphant bears. As for Ward Valley, Daylight did not even trouble to learn if it had fetched bottom or was still tumbling. Not stunned, not even bewildered, while Wall Street was mad, Daylight withdrew from the field to think it over. After a short conference with his brokers, he proceeded to his hotel, on the way picking up the evening papers and glancing at the headlines. "Burning Daylight Cleaned Out," he read. "Daylight Gets His. Another Western Falls to Find Easy Money." As he entered his hotel a later edition announced the suicide of a young man, a lamb, who had followed Daylight's play. "What in hell did he want to kill himself for?" was Daylight's muttered comment.

He passed up to his rooms, ordered a Martini cocktail, took off his shoes and sat down to think. After half an hour he roused himself to take the drink, and as he felt the liquor pass warningly through his body his features relaxed into a slow, deliberate, yet genuine grin. He was laughing at himself.

"Banned, by gosh!" he muttered.

Then the grin died away and his face grew bleak and serious. Leaving out his interests in the several Western reclamation projects which were still assessing heavily he was a ruined man. But harder hit than this was his pride. He had been so easy. They had gold-brikked him and he had nothing to show for it. The simplest farmer would have had documents, while he had nothing but a gentlemen's agreement, and a verbal one at that. Gentlemen's agreement! He snorted over it. John Dowsett's voice, just as he had heard it in the telephone receiver, sounded in his ears. "On my honor as a gentleman." They were sneaky thieves and swindlers, that was what they were, and they had given him the double cross. The newspapers were right. He had come to New York to be trimmed, and Messrs. Dowsett, Letton and Hammersmith had done it. He was a little fish and had been played for his money. He had followed Daylight's play, and now they were buying Ward Valley back for a song ere the market righted itself. Most probably out of his share of the swag Nathaniel Letton would erect a couple of new mansions and John Hammersmith would buy new engines for that yacht, or a whole fleet of yachts. But what the devil Dowsett would do with his whack was beyond him—most likely start another string of banks.

And Daylight sat and consumed cocktails and saw back in his life to Alaska, and lived over the grim details of the murder at his heart, and wild ideas and sketchy plans of killing his betrayers flashed through his mind. That was what that young man should have done, instead of killing himself. He should have gone gunning. Daylight unlocked his grip and took out his automatic pistol—a big Cole's .44. He released the safety catch with his thumb, and, operating the sliding outer barrel, ran the cartridges sid on into the chamber. He reloaded the clip, threw a cartridge into the chamber, and, with the trigger at full cock, thrust up the safety ratchet. He shoved the weapon into the side pocket of his coat, ordered another Martini and resumed his seat.

He thought steadily for an hour, but he grinned more. Lines formed in his face, and in those lines were the travail of the North, the bite of the frost, all that he had achieved and suffered—the long, unending weeks of trail, the bleak tundra shore of Point Barrow, the smashing ice jams of the Yukon, the battles with animals and men, the lean dragged days of famine, the long months of stinging hell among the mosquitoes of the Koyukuk, the toil of pick and shovel, the scars and mares of packstrap and tumpline, the straight march west with the dogs, and all the long procession of twenty full years of toll and sweat and endeavor.

At ten o'clock he arose and pored over the city directory. Then he put on his shoes, took a cab and departed in the night. Twice he changed cabs, and finally fetched up at the night office of a detective agency. He superintended the thing himself, selected the men he needed, and gave them their instructions. Never, for so simple a task, had they been so he gave a five hundred dollar bill, with office charges, and for to each, in addition to the price of the agency, if he succeeded. Some time next day, he was convinced, if not sooner, his three silent partners' lives were to be attached. Time and place was all he wanted to learn.

"Stop at nothing, boys," were his final instructions. "I must have this information. Whatever you do, whatever happens, I'll see you through."

Returning to his hotel, he changed cabs as before, went up to his room, and, with one more cocktail for a nightcap, went to bed and to sleep. In the morning he dressed and shaved, ordered breakfast and the

newspapers sent up, and waited. But he did not drink. By nine o'clock his telephone began to ring, and the reports to come in. Nathaniel Letton was taking the train at Taylortown. John Hammersmith was coming down by the subway. John Dowsett was had not stirred out yet, though he was assuredly spread out before him, Daylight followed the movements of his three men as they drew together. Nathaniel Letton was at his office in the Mutual-Solander Building. Next arrived Hammersmith. Dowsett was still in his own offices. But at seven came the word Daylight was in a hired motor car and speeding for the Mutual-Solander Building.

### CHAPTER XVII.

NATHANIEL LETTON was talking when the door opened. He ceased and with his two companions gazed with controlled perturbation at Burning Daylight striding into the room. The free swinging movements of the trail traveler were unconsciously exaggerated in that stride of his. In truth it seemed to him that he felt the trail beneath his feet.

"Howdy, gentlemen; bowdy," he remarked, ignoring the unnatural calm with which they greeted his entrance. He shook hands with them in turn, striding from one to another and gripping their hands so heartily that Nathaniel Letton could not forbear to wince. Daylight flung himself into a massive chair and sprawled lazily, with an appearance of fatigue. The leather grip he had brought into the room he dropped carelessly beside him on the floor.

"Goddie mighty, but I've sure been going some," he sighed. "We sure trimmed them beautiful. It was real slick. And the beauty of the play never dawned on me till the very end. It was pure and simple knock down and drag out. And the way they fell for it was amazin'."

The geniality of his lazy Western drawl reassured them. He was not so formidable after all. Despite Letton's instructions to the outer office, he showed no indication of making a scene or playing rough.

"Well," Daylight demanded good humoredly, "ain't you-all got a good word for your pardner? Or has his sure enough brilliance plumb dazzled you-all?"

Letton made a dry sound in his throat. Dowsett sat quietly and waited. While John Hammersmith struggled into articulation.

"You certainly have raised Cain," he said. "Daylight's black eyes flashed in a pensive way. 'Didn't I, though?' he proclaimed, jubilantly. 'And didn't we fool 'em? I was tee-totally surprised. I never dreamed they would be that easy.'"

"And now," he went on, "not permitting the pause to grow awkward, 'we-all might as well have an accounting. I'm pullin' West this afternoon on the 'Centennial Century.' He tugged at his grip. 'But don't forget, boys, when you-all want me to have to do is whisper the other. I'll sure be right His hands emerged, clutching a great mass of stubs, checkbooks and broker's receipts. These he deposited in a heap on the big table, and dipped into his pocket. He counted out a slip of paper, drawn from his coat pocket, and read aloud:

"Ten million, twenty-seven thousand and forty-two dollars and sixty-eight cents is my figure on my account. Of course that-all's taken from the winnings before we-all get to figurin' on the whack-up. Where's your figures? I get to be a mighty big clean-up."

The three men looked at each other. Daylight had had another. The man was a bigger fool than they had imagined, or else he was playing a game which they could not divine.

Nathaniel Letton moistened his lips and spoke up. "I'll take some time yet, Mr. Harnish, before the full accounting can be made. Mr. Howison is at work figurin' clean-up. Suppose we have lunch together and talk it over. I'll have the clerks work through the noon hour so that you will have ample time to catch your train."

Dowsett and Hammersmith manifested a relief that was almost obvious. The situation was clearing. It was in the same room with this heavy muscled, Indianlike man whom they had rolled into it, they remembered pleasantly the many stories of his strength and recklessness. If Letton could only put him off long enough for them to escape into the police world outside the office door all would be well, and Daylight snorted all the signs of being put off.

"I'm real glad to hear that," he said. "I don't want to miss that train and you-all have done me proud, gentlemen, letting me in on this deal. I just do appreciate it without being able to express my feelings. But I am sure ain't your curious and I'd like terrible to know, Mr. Letton, what your figures of our winning is. Can you-all give me a rough estimate?"

Nathaniel Letton did not look appealingly at his two friends, but in the brief pause they felt that appeal the others, began to roll. Dowsett, of sterner mould than playing. But the other two were still under the banishment of his childlike innocence.

"It is extremely—difficult," John Hammersmith began. "You see, Ward Valley has fluctuated so."

"That no estimate can possibly be made in advance," Letton supplemented.

"Approximate it; approximate it," Daylight countered cheerfully. "It don't hurt if you-all are a million or so out one side or the other. The figures'll straighten that up. What d'ye say?"

"Why continue to play at cross purposes?" Dowsett demanded abruptly and coldly. "Let us have the explanation here and now. Mr. Harnish is laboring under a false impression and he should be set straight in this deal."

But Daylight interrupted. He had played too much poker to be unaware or unappreciative of the psychology of the present game in his own way.

"Speaking of deals," he said, "reminds me of a poker game I once seen in Reno, Nevada. It wasn't what you-all would call a square game. They-all was fixers that sat in. But they was a tenderfoot—short the dealer and sees that same dealer give hisself four aces often the bottom of the deck. The tenderfoot is the dealer across the table."

"Say, he whippers, I seen the dealer deal hisself four aces."

"Well, an' what of it?" says the player.

"I'm tryin' to tell you-all because I thought you-all ought to know," says the tenderfoot. "I tell you-all I seen him deal hisself four aces."

"Say, mister," says the player, "you-all'd better get onta here. You-all don't understand the game. It's the dealer that greeted his story was hollow and perfunctory, but Daylight appeared not to notice it.

"Your story has some meaning, I suppose," Dowsett said pointedly.

Daylight looked at him innocently and did not reply. He turned jovially to Nathaniel Letton.

"Fire away," he said. "Give us an approximation of our winning. As I said before, a million out one way or the other won't matter. It's bound to be such an almighty big winning."

By this time Letton was stiffened by the attitude Dowsett had taken and his answer was prompt and definite.

"I fear you are under a misapprehension, Mr. Harnish. There are no winnings to be divided with you. Now don't get excited, I beg of you. I have pressed this button"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



Daylight unlocked his grip and took out his automatic pistol.

And thereupon he entered into a long technical and historical explanation of the earnings and dividends of Ward Valley from the day of its organization.

The whole conference lasted not more than an hour, during which time Daylight lived at the topmost of the highest peak of life that he had ever scaled. These men were big players. They were powers. True, as he knew himself, they were not the real inner circle. They did not rank with the biggest financiers. And yet they were in touch with those giants and were themselves lesser giants. He was pleased, too, with their attitude toward him. They met him deferentially, but not patronizingly. It was the deference of equality, and Daylight could not escape the subtle flattery of it, for he was fully aware that in experience as well as wealth they were far and away beyond him.

"We'll shake up the speculating crowd," John Hammersmith proclaimed jubilantly as they rose to go. "And you are the man to do it, Mr. Harnish. They are bound to think you are on your own and their shears are all sharpened for the trimming of newcomers like you."

"They will certainly be misled," Letton agreed, his eerie gray eyes blazing out from the voluminous folds of the huge muffler with which he was swathing his neck to the ears. "Their minds run in ruts. It is the unexpected that upsets their stereotyped calculations—any new combination, any strange factor, any fresh variant. And you will be all that to them, Mr. Harnish. And I repeat, they are gamblers and they will deserve all that befalls them. They clog and cumber all legitimate enterprise. You have no idea of the trouble they cause men like us—sometimes by even overturning the stables institutions."

Dowsett and young Hammersmith went away in one motor car and Letton by himself in another. Daylight, with still in the forefront of his consciousness all that had occurred in the preceding hour, was deeply impressed by the scene at the moment of departure. The three machines stood like weird night monsters at the gravelled foot of the wide stairway under the unlighted porte cochere. It was a dark night, and the blackness as knives would cut through solid substance. The obsequious lackey—the automatic genie of the house which belonged to none of the three men—stood like a graven statue after having helped them in. The fur coated chauffeurs bulked dimly in their seats. One after the other, like spurred steeds, the cars leaped into the blackness, took the curve of the driveway and were gone.

days on the turn of a card, but now he was playing for millions. And on the eighteenth, when that dividend was declared—he chuckled at the confusion that would inevitably descend upon the men with the sharpened shears waiting to trim him—him, Burning Daylight!

### CHAPTER XVI.

BACK at his hotel, though nearly two in the morning, he found the reporters waiting to interview him. Next morning there were more. And thus, with blare of paper trumpet, was he received by New York. Once more, with beating of tom-toms and wild hullahalloo, his picturesque figure strode across the printed sheet. The King of the Klondike, the hero of the Arctic, the thirty million dollar millionaire of the north, had come to New York. What had he come for? To trim the New Yorkers as he had trimmed the Tonopah crowd in Nevada? Wall street had best watch out, for the wild man of Klondike had just come to town. Or, perchance, would Wall street trim him? Wall street had trimmed many wild men; would this be Burning Daylight's fate? Daylight grinned to himself and gave out ambiguous interviews. It helped the game, and he grinned as he meditated that Wall street would sure have to go some before it trimmed him.

They were prepared for him to play and when heavy buying of Ward Valley began it was quickly decided that he was the operator. Financial gossip buzzed and hummed. He was after the Hammersmiths once more. The story of Ophir was told over again and sensationalized until even Daylight scarcely recognized it. Still, it was all grist to his mill. The stock gamblers were clearly berooled. Each day he increased his buying, and so eager were the sellers that Ward Valley rose but slowly. "It sure beats poker," Daylight whispered gleefully to himself, as he noted the perturbation he was causing. The newspapers hazarded countless guesses and surmises and Daylight was constantly dogged by a small battalion of reporters. His own interviews were gems. Discovering the delight the newspapers took in his vernacular, in his "you-alls" and "sure" and "urge-ups," he even exaggerated these peculiarities of speech, exploiting the phrases he had heard other frontiersmen use and inventing occasionally a new one of his own.

A wildly exciting time was his during the week preceding Thursday the eighteenth. Not only was he gambling as he had never gambled before, but he was gambling at the biggest table in the world and for stakes so large that even the case hardened habits of that table were compelled to sit up. In spite of the unlimited selling, his persistent buying compelled Ward Valley steadily to rise, and as Thursday approached the situation became acute. Something had to smash. How much Ward Valley was this Klondike gambler going to buy? How much could he buy? What was the Ward Valley crowd

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