

THE OCALA BANNER.

The paper "Of the People, for the People and by the People."

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DOLLAR A YEAR.

A KLONDIKE CHRISTMAS

BY RODNEY LINHOLM

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"Pay dirt, and five hundred to the pan, or I'm a liar!"
"Oh, Bob, do you mean it? Seems too good to be true!"
"Sure, Tom. Guess I know 'color' when I see it. There's fifty thousand to the box length when we come to wash out in the spring. Reckon that up, and see if you can make us out worth less than half a million apiece."
"Bob Burley, you're off your base. I can't believe it."
"Believe it or not, Tom Herrick; but even you can tell what a nugget looks like after it's washed out, eh?"
Burley scooped out a handful of clean, yellow nuggets varying in size from a cucumber seed to a hazelnut from the pan in which he was testing the dirt and held them for his chum to examine. These two had been two months on the El Dorado branch of the Klondike, having come up here from Circle City on receipt of first news of a "strike" in this region. They had built themselves a hut, staked out a claim of 500 feet each along the creek and then set to work "burning out" the earth.
Herrick and Burley had burned and drifted, drifted and burned, until at last they had an open shaft sunk quite fifteen feet, and, as Bob had declared, they had at last struck "pay dirt," and had struck it rich.
Tom took the handful of glistening nuggets from his partner, but said not a word. There was no doubt of the fact—at last gold had been found.
"Well, old man," said Bob, "what's the matter with you? Don't you know what those nuggets mean to us?"
"Don't I just! Bob, if the claim turns out half as good's you think we can both go home, can't we, at the end of the summer?"
"Right you are, Tommy, every time. If you hear me say it, it's so! But there's one thing I feel compelled to say and which you won't be so happy to



"GOODBY, TOM, AND GOOD LUCK!"

bear, and that is we haven't got five pounds of flour nor an ounce of meat in the shack. And the deuce of it is this is the day before Christmas, and tomorrow we ought to celebrate."
"To be sure. Christmas doesn't seem like Christmas without turkey."
"It doesn't, hey? Well, what did we have last Christmas a year ago?"
"Bear meat and blubber, and mighty glad to get it too. But, all the same, it didn't seem like Christmas, and I'll stick to it!"
"No, Tommy, it didn't. A Christmas dinner always should have a bird in it of some sort."
"Well, Bob, you're a better miner than I am, but you can't beat me at hunting. The thermometer is down to twenty-six below, and the wind is howling great guns, but I don't see any other way than to take my gun and try for a rabbit or a partridge."
"That's the talk, Tommy. One of us has got to attend to the fire, and you are the better hunter of the two. I don't envy you the contract, though. It may be down to fifty below before night, so get back before the sun goes down, won't you?"
"I'll try," said Tom as he slid out into the cold, clad from throat to toe in furs. He carried a double barrel shotgun in the hollow of his arm and a revolver in the belt, the latter in case he should encounter anything larger than the shotgun could bring down. "I'm going up to the mountain for ptarmigan," were his last words to Bob, "so have a good pastry ready for ptarmigan pie some time early in the evening. Goodby."
"Goodby, Tom, and good luck," chattered Bob as he closed the door.
Tom swung sturdily along through the fine, dry snow, which came about up to his knees, and derived exhilaration from the keen air and the prospect of sport. He crossed the creek, climbed the farther bank and came upon the level plateau, where the wind had wider sweep and the cold was more intense than in the sheltered ravine.
It was a long stretch, and no object intervened to break the monotony, so he plodded ahead for over an hour and arrived at the summer snow line, where the ptarmigans dwell. The graceful ptarmigan, though brown of plumage in the summer when the snow is melted and the scant vegetation can protect it, was now pure white and hard to distinguish from the snow itself, into which it dove and from which it darted out like flying fish on the surface of the sea.
He was a good hunter, having carried a gun ever since he had been able to lift one, first practicing at the woodchucks and squirrels on the old farm, then extending his range to the moose and deer down in the woods of Maine. So when, all of a sudden, a white, spiritlike thing broke out of the snow and made off straight to windward he threw up his gun and toppled it over instantly.
Several got away from Tom's shots, their movements were so erratic, and there was little to distinguish between snow white bird and bird white snow. At last, however, marking down where a flock entered a snowdrift, he made for it and stirred them up with his feet, and when they sailed out dropped three of them on the wing. In this manner, by pursuing the birds closely and keeping them on the move, he secured fourteen and then thought it about time to start for camp. But in all his windings and doublings while in pursuit of the ptarmigans he had so confused himself that he couldn't find the trail back to the creek. The sun had long since set, and but a faint twilight remained, while the cold air was getting colder, though the cutting wind had died away.
Hours later, tired to exhaustion, tempted to yield to the intolerable drowsiness that was stealing over him, and to succumb to which he knew meant only death, he was staggering toward the bank of the creek. But it was far away, and he was not sure of his bearings, when he heard the report of a firearm. He answered by discharging his gun, and not long after Bob hove in sight, dragging after him a sled thickly piled with skins.
"Zounds, old man, but I got scared for you! Here, tumble on to this sled. Bundle up in the furs and let me drag you back home. Not a word. Do as I tell you. I'm boss of this expedition, my boy. Another hour and you'd have lain down to sleep, I J W, wouldn't you?"
"I'm afraid I should," drowsily muttered Tom. "I'm just about done up, Bob. But, say, I got the birds, didn't I?"
"Yes, you did; but if you'd have gone to sleep they'd have come rather high."
But Tom heard nothing. He slept until the cabin was reached and long after he had been bundled into his bunk. When he awoke next morning, refreshed and recuperated, the first thing he saw through the curling smoke of the pit fire was his industrious partner packing the fourteen ptarmigans into a pie. He had a dish as big as a milk pan and twice as deep well lined with dough and garnished with all the ingredients. As he dexterously trimmed the top crust and set the dish down for one last admiring look he saw that the sleeper had awakened.
"Hello, Tom, how d'you feel? Look at that! How's that for a pie, eh? Big enough to last a week, ain't it? Where'd I get the dish? Oh, Sam Reynolds and his brother Dave were here after you left, and they're coming over to the feed. By the way, Tom, wish you merry Christmas! Same to me? Oh, that's all right! I'm a millionaire, you know, and, as for that matter, so are you! Pretty business for a millionaire, hey—picking ptarmigans and making a scullion of himself generally? But never mind. There's a good time a-coming by and by. Next year this time we'll have our horses and servants, sure's you're born, Tommy, my son."
Thus Bob rambled on, the while setting the great pie carefully in a corner of the pit which had been heated redhot with stones taken from the creek bed. At there it simmered and sizzled and in the end turned a delicious brown just as Sam and Dave came over from their cabin, farther up the creek.
The pie was served from a stump which stuck up in the center of the hut. It was a pronounced success, and Dave declared that it "beat turkey all boiler," in which opinion he was supported by his brother Sam. Bob was heard to declare—in fact, Tom said the same thing—that even if he went out with twice a hundred thousand ounces next season he would contrive to locate in a section where he could have ptarmigan pie for his Christmas dinner.

The Mysterious Sunday Disease.

Many people are seemingly well during the week, but afflicted with all manner of ailments when Sunday comes around, and on Monday they are all well again. I really dread the approach of the Lord's day, for with the day there come to many of my flock colds, sick headaches, pain in the side and nausea, while numbers complain of "that languid feeling."

Sunday before last I spent really an anxious day, for there happened to be absent from the services quite a number, for the best of reasons, of course—a rushing in the head, a touch of sciatica, cramps, toothache, hardness of hearing, catarrh, torpid liver, inflammation of the membranes, lumbago and, worse than all, "that tired feeling."

Then, what greatly distressed me the next day was that Mrs. Henry Van Blarsoom had issued invitations to an "at home" for that evening, and the fear well nigh paralyzed me that but few would respond, seeing many of her invited guests had been absent from the Sabbath services. Imagine, then, if you can, my profound surprise to see on that Monday evening so wholly unexpected, so general and complete a recovery, and when I made inquiry concerning the Sabbath ailments only two were able to recall what had really been the matter with them the day before.—A Minister in Christian Intelligencer.

Playing For Keeps.

I have observed in the larger game of marbles which we call "making a living" that most of the boys are "playing for keeps" and only a few for fun and that those who are playing for keeps are the boys with the most influence and standing in the community. I know a whole lot of boys, some of them living in Massachusetts today, who are playing for keeps, but instead of marbles they are using wheat or corn or railroad stocks. No one of them knows just whom he is playing against, but each knows that for each dollar he wins a dollar is lost by some one else.

Nevertheless I am old fogey enough to say that for myself I do not regret my early training, nor am I ready to leave behind its principles, but as long as the majority of parents wish their boys to be successful it seems to me you ought to make it clear that playing marbles for keeps is an excellent way of drilling boys in that acquisitiveness which will make it possible for them in after years to provide their wives and daughters with silk dresses, opera cloaks and automobiles.—Springfield Republican.

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A Telltale Boast.

Nell—She used to boast that she was one of the charter members of the Woman's Suffrage club. She doesn't appear to be as proud of it now.

Belle—Oh, she's just as proud, but you know, the club was organized 15 years ago, and she must have been at least 20 when she joined.—Philadelphia Record.

The geographical divisions of the United States are the north Atlantic group, the south Atlantic group, the north central group, the south central group and the western group.

There are so many poor grammarians that we wonder grammar is not more unpopular.—Atchison Globe.

Every one ought to have a motto of his own. Mr. Ruskin's was a good one—"Today."

J. W. Bryan, of Lowander, Ill. writes: "My son was very low with pneumonia. Unknown to the doctor we gave him Foley's Honey and Tar. The result was magical and puzzled the doctor, as it immediately stopped the racking cough and he quickly recovered." Anti-Monopoly Drug Store.

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