

February 1900

Gray Goose

GRAY GOOSE.

rang the changes upon her heart—  
why does he not speak?"  
all's chivalry, muttered to himself:—  
year of untrammelled girlhood; so  
and lest his heart grow weak in its sore  
that year.  
young heart had been made old by  
when he was gone it wondered, grieving

was proudly erect, and the sweet lips  
as weeping.

by.  
with words of softest wooing, and the  
wfully her pride had been hurt—and  
inner voice striving vainly to be  
nory crushed, until—she thought it

hat other had no patience for longer

ne, the first lover was preparing to  
rt singing in its passionate joy:—  
youth has had its fullness of girl-  
claim my own."

t. He was calm, even to coldness,  
his grave features.

mpse the olden power—only slum-  
ner in its resistless grasp. Alas,  
ire with its days of relentless, end-  
before her.

face crushed despairingly amidst  
she lay whilst the hours ticked

of a few words spoken in time—a  
om sight forever.

A WHISPER FROM THE KLONDIKE.

BY J. OLIVIER CURWOOD.

**T**HIS claim is mine! Beware! Yon yellow patch of  
moonlight marks the dead-line, and the man who  
dares to cast his shadow across it dies!"

The only reply to the stern voice of the girl with  
the Winchester was a disdainful laugh echoing down the slope  
from the contiguous mountain bush.

A spiteful tongue of vivid fire flashed athwart the blackness  
under the hill, and a bullet flattened itself aimlessly against the  
fissured rocks.

"Once again I warn you—the claim is mine, Bud Dawson!  
I have taken not a foot above the limit of the law, nor have I  
stinted an inch."

The oppressive silence was anything but reassuring. With  
trembling, beating heart Lolo sought the dark threshold of her  
cabin door, watching with ready Winchester the golden path of  
the moonlight till it extended far across the glimmering Klondike,  
and the cold, gray light of another dreary dawn broke in  
the south-eastern skies.

Soon the first faint straggling beams of the rising sun be-  
gan to thread themselves through the frosty solitude of the  
early morn, precursing the advent of another sultry period of  
twenty-one hours—continuous sunshine, toil and home-sick-  
ness.

Lolo stood in the open door-way a moment and breathed  
another mute prayer to Heaven, a beautiful contrast to the  
wildness of the verdure-clad mountain and the untamed pano-  
rama of river, rock and gulch that environed her. A wealth of  
dark, rippling hair was wreathed in queenly taste high on her  
head and parted in silken waves low over a brow that vied in  
beauty with the soft, brown eyes beneath. Her well built form  
was clad in a buckskin skirt and

waist was clasped a narrow belt of the same material in which was stuck a short, silver-mounted dirk and big red bandanna.

With a half suppressed sob the girl bowed her dark head and walked slowly to the edge of the cabin exposed to the rising sun. Kneeling beside a long, grass-grown mound she laid her weeping eyes at the foot of a rough board slab and wrung her hands in agony.

"O Ned! Ned! Can I ever tear myself away from this desolation and leave your poor, dead body lying here? O that my father had never forced you to battle for riches to claim his daughter's hand! They told us you were foully murdered for the paltry sack of yellow gold you had grasped from the frozen gravel, and I fled—fled hither, Ned, leaving behind friends and—nay, not friends, Ned—my father was no friend of mine! Who drove the cursed steel home, loved one? O God, tell me, and I will avenge him with all a woman's love and hatred!"

The pathetic voice of the broken-hearted girl died away in a low moan of inconsolable anguish, and rising from the sunlit grave she re-entered the cabin.

Lolo knew but little of the terrible hardships to be encountered in the Arctic gold-fields, for she had been there scarcely two months, and only now came the low whisperings of a fearful winter on the northern Klondike. The ravenous pests of early Spring had unconsciously been avoided by the strange, beautiful being who had so bravely sought her lover's body thousands of miles from the sunny South; and now no one gave her warning of the insidious approach of Death's skeleton arm, ready to clasp her within its clinging embrace ere another month passed by. Ho! What cared the rough, eager men of Dawson City?

The hot sun shone fervidly down upon a typical placer claim on the brink of the Klondike, out, sluiceways and tailings, the heap of gravelly pay dirt, and the piles of worthless drippings at every joint of the sluice. The primitive rifles were clogged with yesterday's weighted lumps, and the yellow metal gleamed as it lay where last brought down by the mingled earth and water. A few more pails of the Klondike's water and the golden harvest would be ready for the treasured buckskin sack.

Lolo appeared at last. The richness of the white-worn rifles held but little interest to her to-day, and yet—why were they so white and worn?

"They will come again to-night," she sobbed, "and to-morrow I will be laid to rest beside poor Ned."

The sun beat down unremittingly through the long, hard day, a reeking atmosphere beginning to rise for the first time from off the dank earth. Toward noon the malarial fog had dried away, but Lolo had smelled and tasted it, and a strange, chilling sensation crept through her limbs. Involuntarily her footsteps led her to the summit of the neighboring peak, and with tired, tear-dimmed eyes she gazed longingly upon the distant Dawson City.

At last the tedious siege of daylight drew toward a close. About eleven o'clock—an hour of midnight—the coppery orb began to sink below the hill tops. A cold wind sprang up in the north, fresh from the ice-bound polar regions, moaning dlamally as it came, as though chanting the funeral hymn of fools who had sought a deathly winter in the new Eldorado of ice and snow. Lolo shuddered, and barred the frail door of her cabin.

Pale darkness crept rapidly over the mountain peaks. Lolo turned up the greasy wick of the little tin lamp on the mantle-piece, and lit it half reproachfully. She watched it as the tiny flame flared up, watched it burn—the last drop of oil she had, and no more in the Klondike!

"O God, I cannot live without light,—without food? But why not to-night, and to-morrow—die! Hark! I fancied I heard footsteps, or was it only a stone loosened by the rising wind rattling down the sluice?"

A moment's awful silence followed, broken only by the sputter of the dimly burning lamp on the mantle-piece. Then a sharp, emphatic knock sounded on the door.

The girl started, and clutched a white, trembling hand to her bosom. Suddenly her aspect changed, and a wicked fire glowed threateningly in her dark eyes.

"Who's there!" she cried.

"It's me, leddy, Bud Dawson," answered a deep voice through the latch-hole. "I've come to buy the claim."

Lolo quelled the defiant retort upon her lips for an instant. It was the first time her tormentor had ever mentioned the purchase of the rich placer.

"To buy the claim?" she echoed,

"Yes leddy," repeated the voice. "A legal gentleman of

Dawson is with me, an' we kin sign the papers to-night. I opine it's rather an unnatural hour to call upon you, but you'll excuse us, leddy, for it's been a rock-bottom day wi' we-uns up the erick."

"But the price!" demanded Lola, bending eagerly toward the door.

"I reckoned as haow about a couple hundréd o' gold-dust—sixteed dollars to the ounce—would about foot the bill, seein' as haow the claim 's been putty much worked."

"That will *never* do! O if you have a heart retain your gold, and carry my poor Ned to the coast!"

"Let us in out of the wind and gold, Miss, an' we'll talk business."

With steady hands Lola shot the hardwood bolt, and the door swung slowly open.

A cold gust of mountain air swept in, instantly followed by the tall, powerful form of a miner. Close in his wake came another individual, whose hoary-bearded countenance was almost entirely hidden beneath a heavy, broad-brimmed felt hat. Dawson motioned his aged companion to a seat beside the table, and then bowed awkwardly to the beautiful girl in whose presence he stood.

"Juneau is a long ways off, my dear Miss, and your request is really too absurd to bear consideration. Think of the prize we offer you, an' of the terrible winter so close at hand."

"Bud Dawson, you *shall not* have the claim unless you carry my Ned's body to the coast!"

Lolo's ringing voice echoed through the cabin and out into the frosty air. She stood erect in an attitude of defiance in the face of the miner, her eyes flashing back determination far better than words.

From the lips of the bearded stranger at the table fell a few muttered sentences, and a hand beneath the tattered great coat nervously fingered the cold tube of a revolver.

"Hist!" The miner raised a warning hand. "I hear voices, Graydon, the witnesses have arrived. Admit them."

The aged stranger rose with a whispered imprecation, and grasping a heavy cane shuffled to the door. Dawson's back was toward him, but the girl's bright eyes marked his every movement. Then, in an instant, occurred such a marvelous trans-

formation that Lolo caught her breath with a quick cry of amazement.

"What is it?" demanded the miner wheeling about. "What! A cursed Chinaman?"

The door had opened and three men entered.

"My s-a-rrr-v-a-n-t, if you please, sir, with pen and ink!" snarled the lawyer retreating to his corner, closely pursued by the yellow-faced Oriental.

Dawson conversed apart with his men for a minute, and meanwhile the old lawyer whispered a few hurried instructions in the ear of his servant, who drew back into an obscure corner of the room.

The trio then separated, and Dawson approached the girl, who still remained standing with one arm thrown carelessly over the mantle-piece.

"Come," he said roughly, former courtesy falling from him like a contaminated drapery of disguise. "Sign those papers—here is the gold!" He tossed a soiled buckskin sack upon the table.

Lolo laughed, sweetly insinuating, disdainful. She pucker her pretty lips into a rosebud, and glanced sidewise at the miner's two companions. In the act the Chinaman attracted her attention, his loose sack fluttering in the shadowy corner as he gesticulated excitedly. A gleaming knife was raised aloft, the fluctuating light of the oil lamp scintillating in a thousand points upon its polished steel, and then slowly lowered till it rested across the yellow throat of the Mongolian. The old lawyer's servant concluded his mysterious pantomime by deliberately turning in his chair and pointing directly toward the wall that separated him from Ned Ransom's grave!

"He makee 'Melican man velly much damn dead!"

Dawson turned like a flash, and his two confederates leaped to their feet with muttered oaths.

"What's that?" he thundered, taking a furious step forward and reaching into his shirt bosom for some weapon concealed there.

"Killipi Ki-Yi, 'Melican John, kille lices gal—no selle!"

"Yes I'll kill her, you thievish rat-eater! Sign that paper or you die!"

Dawson turned like an infuriated tiger, and snatching a knife from his belt, strode menacingly toward the heroic girl.

Quicker than thought Lolo drew a pistol from her bosom, a scornful smile curling her lips.

"You murderer!" she hissed. "You murderer! You killed my Ned—I see it written upon your cursed brow! Your life shall atone for the dastardly deed!"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Dawson, staggering backward, his face turning the color of gray chalk in the pallid lamplight.

"Which is true, though unknown to you, villain, murderer, thief!"

Every eye turned in the direction of the old lawyer, and the two confederates drew their pistols.

"My God!" cried the miner. "Men—"

A shot echoed through the room, and a sulphurous, vapory wreath of smoke floated over the table.

"Savee!" whooped the Chinaman. "Bang! Bang! Makee hold-up man velly much damn sick!"

Another shot left the Chinaman's unerring revolver and a rasping cry for mercy followed, a hollow groan—a deadened thud.

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The sickening smell of gun-powder was quickly dissipated by a cold, shivering blast from the open cabin door. It rustled the loose robes of "Melican John" as he stood guard over his victims in the center of the floor. For a moment Lola raised her lovely head from the stalwart breast upon which it rested, and sought the eyes of her loved one.

"O Ned, did you rise from your grave to-night, or—or—was that all some terrible mistake?"

He bent down and kissed her.



## THIS THY FATHER.

HOWARD MARCUS STRONG.

THE committee of awards spent much time before Morrell's picture, "The Rag-Gatherer." It was a life-size figure of an old man leaning wearily against a barrow. The surroundings were wretchedly squalid. A starving dog lay stretched in the gutter. One sickly ray of light struggled down between the tenements and illuminated the noble face of the old man. In drawing and coloring the work was technically perfect.

"If we award it the gold metal," one of the committee observed, "the public will declare our judgment warped by the fame of the artist. But as a matter of fact I can find no fault in it."

"There is one, nevertheless," said Herr Crantz. "To me it tells no story. It must ever call for a number and a catalogue. What then?—'The Rag-Gatherer.' That is art without depth, without feeling. The conception is commonplace, but the execution is superb."

"Furthermore, it is inconsistent," suggested a third. "The face is noble—one of beauty and refinement. Why should it be introduced into such a setting? In my opinion a rag-gatherer should not be depicted with a head denoting the first order of intelligence."

"I believe I can throw a little light on the subject, gentlemen," said Dinoux, who was Morrell's avowed enemy, and his only rival. "This knowledge has so far prejudiced me that I can see very little in the picture worthy of commendation. The face of the rag-gatherer is a striking portrait of Morrell's sainted father. An estrangement existed between father and son for many years, and the artist never overlooked an opportunity for reviling his parent. The old man was very rich; and in painting him as a scavenger, Morrell doubtless had a deeper meaning