

Wolfville Stories

By Alfred Henry Lewis

Toad Allen's Elopement

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OUR days after that pinfeather person," remarked the Old Cat-tleman, while refilling his pipe, with a look of sage reflection, "four days after that pinfeather person gains Old Man Enright's consent to make use of Wolfville as a private 'pint in an elopement, him an' his loved one comes bulgin' into camp. They floats over in one of these yere mountain wagons, what some folks calls a 'buckboard'. The pinfeather person's drivin'. Between him an' his intended—all three settin' on the one seat—perches a preacher gent who, it's plain from the look in his eyes, is held in a sort o' captivity that a-way. What nacherally bolsters up this yere theory is that the maiden's got a six-shooter in her lap.

"Which if that's a wearied hector gent in Arizona," observes the pinfeather party, as he descends outen the buckboard at the corral, an' tosses the reins to a boss-hustler, 'you-all can come weavin' up an' bet a yellow stack that I'm shore that gent."

"The preacher sharp, who's about as young an' new as the pinfeather party, looks like he yoonites with him in them views. As they unload themse'fs, the pinfeather person waves his hand to where we-all's gathered to welcome 'em, an' says by way of introduction:

"Gents, this yere's Abby—or as this Bible sport will say later in the ceremony, Abigail Glegg."

"Of course, we, who represents the Wolfville public, comports ourse'fs as becomes gents of serious dignity, an' after 'akin' off our sombreros, plump plite, Enright suggests the O. K. Restauraw as a base of operations.

"Don't you-all reckon," says Enright to the pinfeather party, 'that pendin' hostilities, Abby had better go over to Missis Rucker's? That she gets combs an' brushes, an' goes over her make-up some an' straightens out her game."

"The pinfeather party allows this yere is an excellent notion, only him an' Abby don't seem c'lar as to what oughter be done about the preacher sharp.

"You see, he don't want to come," explains the pinfeather party, 'an' it's cost me an' Abby a heap of trouble to round him up. I ain't none shore but he seizes on the first chance to go stampedin'; an' without him, nacherally, these rites we-all is bankin' on would bog down a whole lot."

"No, friends," says the preacher sharp; 'I will promise to abide by you an' embrace no openin' to escape. Since I'm here, I will yoonite you-all as you wish; the more readily because I trust that as man an' wife, you'll prove a mutual restraint one upon the other; an' also for that I deems you both in your single-footed capacity as a menace to the community. Fear not, prepare yourse'fs, an' I'll bring you together in the happy bonds of matrimony at the drop of the hat."

"You notes, Dan," says Texas Thompson, who's off to one side with Dan Boggs, 'you notes he says that, like his heart's resentful. Them culprits has r'lied him up some; an' now he allows that the short cut to play even is to marry 'em as they femanda. Which if you-all knows that former wife of mine who gets divorced, Dan, you appreciate what I says."

"Even after the preacher sharp gives his p'role, Abby sets plenty doubtfuls. She ain't shore she's wise to throw him loose. It's Doc Peets who reassures her.

"My dear young lady," says Peets, at the same time bowin' to the ground, 'you may trust this maverick to me. I'll pledge my word to produce him at the crucial moment when he's called for to make these nuptials win."

"Which I'm a heap obliged to you, Mister," says Abby to Peets, 'sizin' him up approv'in'; 'and now that I'm convinced that's no chance of my future sufferin' from an absenteeism on the part of this pastor, I reckon I better go over, like you hints, an' take a look or two in the glass. It ain't goin' to consome a moment, however,—this yere titivation I plans; an' followin' said improvements, we-all better pull off this play some prompt. My paw—old Ben Glegg—is on our trail not five miles behind; he'll land yere in half a hour, an' I ain't none convinced he won't land shootin'." An' with this bluff, an' sort o' confidin', the preacher sharp to Peets, Abby goes curv'in' over to the O. K. Restauraw.

"However does this yere virgin look? Son, I hesitates to describe a lady unless the facts flows favorable for her. Which I'll take chances an' lie a lot to say that any lady's beautiful that a-way, if you-all will only give me so much as one good feacher to go on. But I'm plumb powerless in the instance of Abby. That's a blizzard effect to her face, an' the best you can say is that if she don't look lovely, at least she looks convincin'. The gnarliest pine knot burns frequent the hottest, an' you can take my word for it, this Abby girl has sperit. Speakin' of her appearance, personal, Missis Rucker—who's a fair judge—allows later to Enright that if Abby's a kyard in a fare game, she'd play her to lose.

"Which she looks like a sick cat in the face, an' a greyhoun in the waist," says Missis Rucker; 'an' I ain't got any mortal use for no sech spindlin' trollops as this yere Abby girl is, nohow."

"I don't know," says Enright, shakin' his head; 'I ain't got much practical experience with women to guide by; but I reckon now it's love that does it. Whoever is that gent, Peets, who says "Love is blind?" He knows his business, that sport does, an' just about calls the turn."

"I ain't none so shore neither," says Peets. 'Love may be blind, but somehow, I don't sign up the play that way. That's plenty of people, same as this pinfeather party, who discerns beauties in their sweethearts that's veiled to you an' me."

"Of course, these yere discussions concernin' Abby's charms takes place weeks later. On the weddin' day Wolfville's too busy trackin' 'round an' 'backin' Abby's an' the pinfeather party's game to go makin' remarks. In this yere connection, however, it's only justice to Abby to say that her pinfeather beau don't share Missis Rucker's views. Although Abby done threatens him with a gun-play to make him lead her to the altar that time her old paw creases him, an' he begins to wax low-spirited about wedlock—like he relates to Enright former—still, the pinfeather party's enamored at Abby an' plump wropped up in her.

"Shore!" says this pinfeather party to Texas Thompson, who, outen pure sympathy for him, takes the bridegroom over to the Red Light to be refreshed. 'Shore! While that's no one that egregerious to go claimin' that my Abby's do to grade as "cornted," all the same she's one of the most fascinatin' ladies—that is, an' give her a gun—in all the len'th an' breadth of Arizona. I know; for I've seen my Abby shoot."

"Excuse me, pard," says Texas, after surveyin' the pinfeather party plenty sympathetic; 'pardon my seemin' roodness, if I confers with barkeep aside. On the level! Now, goes on Texas to Black Jack as he pulls him off to a corner an' whispers so the pinfeather party don't hear, 'on the level, Jack! Ain't it my dooty—me who saves what he's ag'instant—to go warn this yere victim touchin' of matrimony in all its horrors?"

"Don't you do it!" remonstrates Black Jack, an' his voice trembles with the emphasis he feels; 'don't you do it none!—ou-all stand paw off! Which you don't know when you'll be answerable for: If this yere marriage gets broke off, who knows what new line of conduct this Abby maiden will put out. She may rope onto Boggs or Peets or meby even you. As long as Abby ain't marryin' none of us, Wolfville's attitooode oughter be one of dignified reserve."

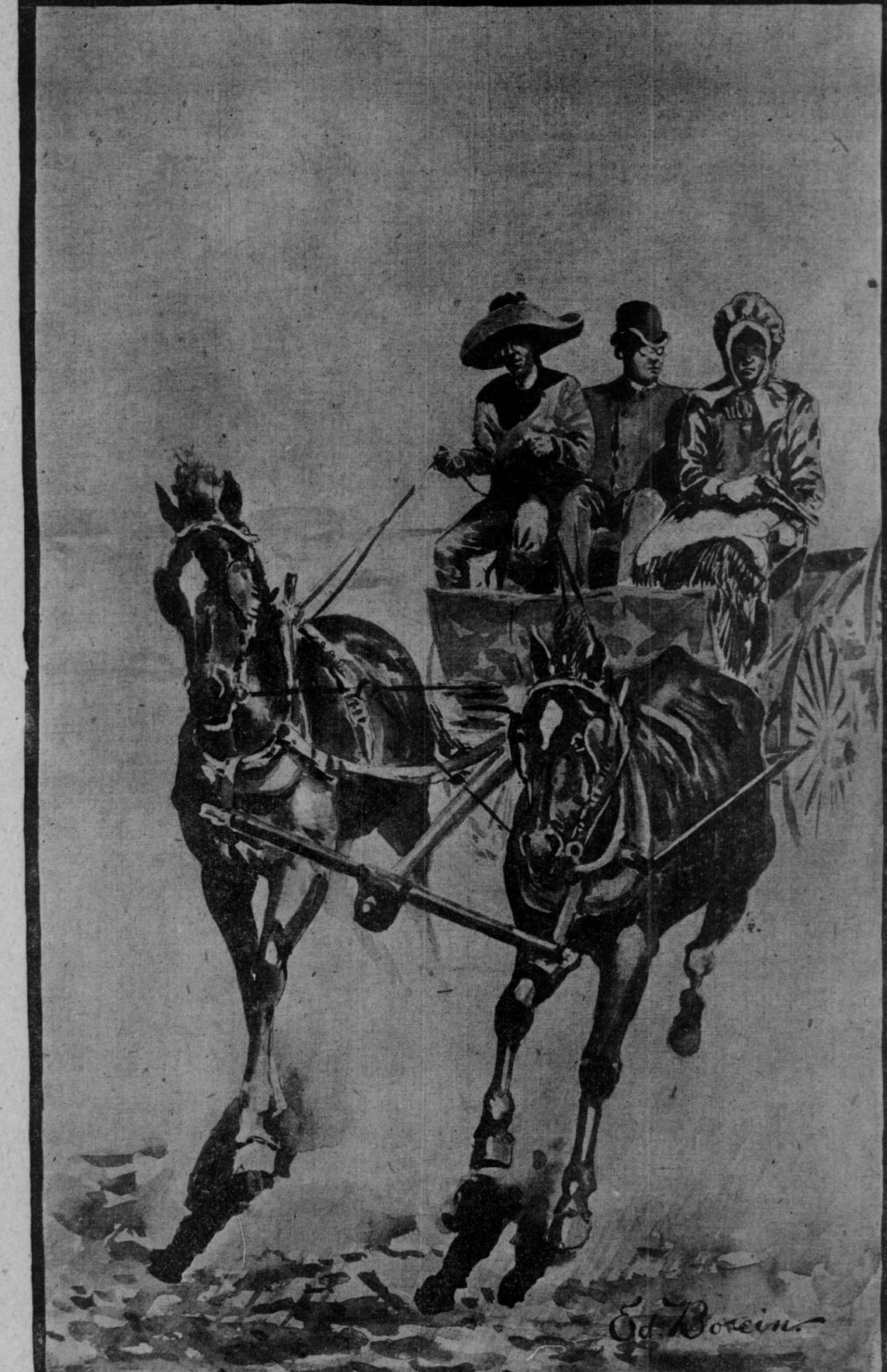
"Texas sighs deep an' sad as he turns ag'in to the pinfeather party; but he sees the force of Black Jack's arguments an' yields without an effort to combat 'em. "After all," says Texas to himse'f, 'others has suffered; wherefore then should this yere jaybird gent escape? An' with that Texas hardens his heart a whole lot an' gives up any notion of this pinfeather person's rescue.

"Which Abby now issues forth of the O. K. restauraw an' j'lines the pinfeather party when he emerges from the Red Light. "This yere sky pilot," says Dan Boggs, approachin' the happy couple, 'sends word by me that he's over in the Noo York store. In default of a shore enough sanchoary, he allows he yoonitizes that hive of trade as a headquarters; an' he's now waitin', all framed up an' ready to turn far you-all. Likewise, he's been complainin' 'round some querulous that you folks is harsh with him, an' abducts him an' threatens his skep."

"Now, see that!" ejaculates Abby, liftin' up her hands; 'Does mortal y'ears ever before listen to sech folly! I suppose he takes that gun I has as threats! I'm a unprotected young female, an' nacherally, when I embark on this yere elopement, I packs one of paw's guns. Besides, this sweetheart of mine might get cold feet an' try to jump the game, an' then I'd need said weapon some to make good my p'stion. But it's never meant for that pastor! When I'm talkin' to him, to prevail on him to come along, an' that gun in my hand at the time, I does sort o' make references to him with the muzzle. But he needn't go gettin' birdheaded an' timid over it; that's shore nothin' hostile meant!"

"Enright explains to him satisfactory," says Boggs. 'An' as you urges it don't mean nothin'. Folks on the brink of bein' married that a-way gets so exyoberated it comes mighty near the same as bein' locoed."

"Well," says the pinfeather party, who's been stackin' up a dust-cloud where some one's gallopin' along about three miles over the trail toward Tucson, 'if I'm any dab at a guess, that's your infurinated paw pirootin' along over yonder, an' we better get these matrimonial hobbles on without further onresonable delays. That old murderer would plug me; an' no more hesitatin' than if I'm a coyote. But once I'm moved up into p'stion



"BETWEEN HIM AN' HIS INTENDED—ALL THREE SETTIN' ON THE ONE SEAT—PERCHES A PREACHER GENT WHO, IT'S FLAIN FROM THE LOOK IN HIS EYES, IS HELD IN A SORT O' CAPTIVITY THAT A-WAY."

as his son-in-law, this yere feelin' of kinship might likely o'prates to stay his hand. Blood's thicker than water, an' I'm in a hurry to get reelected a whole lot to your paw."

"But Enright has his notions of what's proper. He suggests them services be delayed until old Glegg gets in. Meanwhile he dispatches Jack Moore an' Dan Boggs as a yard of honor to lead old Glegg to your trystin' place in the Noo York store. "An' the first thing you-all do, Jack," says Enright as Jack an' Dan rides away, 'you get that outcast's guns."

"It ain't no more'n time for one drink when Jack an' Dan comes surgin' up in company with this yere Glegg. He's a fierce, gray old gent with a eye like a wolf. Jest before he arrives, Enright advises the pinfeather person an' the bride Abby to go camp in the 'r room, so the sudden sight of 'em won't exasperate this parent Glegg to madness.

"Whatever's the meanin' of this yere concourse?" demands old Glegg as he comes into the Noo York store, an' p'intin' to where Peets an' Texas an' Cherokee Hall, along with Enright, is sort o' camped about; 'an' why does these outlaws' yere he indicates Dan an' Jack—'denoode me of my hardware, I'd like to know?"

"These yere gents," says Enright, 'is a quorum of that respectable body known as the Wolfville Strangers, otherwise a Vigilance Committee; an' your guns was

got so as to redooce the chances of hangin' you—the same bein' some abundant, jacheral—to a minimum. Now, who be you? Also, what's your little game?"

"My name's Benjamin Glegg," responds old Glegg. 'I owns the Sunflower brand an' ranch. As for my game: that's a member of my fam'y escapes this mornin'—comes stampedin' over yere, I onderstands—an' I'm in the saddle tryin' to round her up. Gents,' concludes old Glegg, an' he displays emotion, 'I'm simply a harassed parent on the trail of his errant offspring."

"Then Enright makes old Glegg a lonn, soft talk, an' seeks to imbue him with ca'mness. He relates how Abby an' the pinfeather sport dotes on each other; an' counsels old Glegg not to go pesterin' in with roode objections to the weddin'."

"Which I says this as your friend," remarks Enright.

"It's as the Scripser says," replies old Glegg, who's mollified a lot, 'it's as the Good Book says: A soft answer turneth away wrath. More speakly when the opp'osition's got your guns. I begin to see things different. Still, I hates to lose my Abby that a-way. Since my old woman dies, Abby, gent, has been the world an' all to me."

"Is your wife dead?" asks Enright, like he sympathizes.

"Shore!" says old Glegg. 'Been out an' gone these two years. She's with them cherubim in glory. But folks, you oughter seen her to understand my loss. Five years ago we has a ranch over back of the Tres Hermanns by the Mexico line. The Injuns used to go lopin' by our ranch, noth an' south, all the time. You-all recalls when they pays twenty-five dollars that thrifty them days, she buys all her own an' my child Abby's clothes with the Injuns she pots. Little Abby used to scout for her maw. "Yere comes another!" little Abby would cry, as she stampeded up all breathless. With that, my wife would take her hands outen the washtub, snag onto that savage with her little old Winchester, and quit winner twenty-five dollars right that."

"Which I don't marvel you-all mourns her loss," says Enright consolingly.

"She's shorely—Missis Glegg is—" says old Glegg, shaking his grizzly head; 'she's shore the most meteoric married lady of which hist'ry says a word. My girl Abby's like her."

"But whatever's your objection," argues Enright, 'to this young an' trusty sport who's so eager to wed Abby?"

"I objects to him because he gambles," says old Glegg. 'I can tell he gambles by him pickin' up the salt cellar between his thumb an' middle finger, with the forefinger over the top, like it's a stack of chips even when he stays to supper an' I asks him to "pass the salt." Then ag'in, he don't drink; he tells me so himse'f one time when I invites him to libate. I ain't goin' to have no teetotal son-in-law around, overpowerin' me in a moral way. I'd feel criticized an' I couldn't stand it, gents. Lastly, I don't like this yere felon's name none."

"Whatever is his name, then?" asks Enright. 'So far, he don't confide no title to us."

"Which I don't wonder none," says Old Glegg. 'It shows he's decent enough to be ashamed. That's hopes of him yet. Gents, his name's Toad Allen. "Allen" goes, but, gents, I bars "Toad." Do you-all blame me? I asks you, as onbaised sports, would you set cam'ly down while a party named "Toad" puts himse'f in nomination to be your son-in-law?"

"None whatever!" says Jack Moore; 'an' Dan an' Cherokee an' Texas echoes the remark.

"You-all camp down yere with a tumbler of Valley Tan," says Enright, 'an' make yourse'f comfortable with my colleagues, while I goes an' confers with our Greta Green outfit in the 'r room."

"Enright returns after a bit, an' his face has that air of self-satisfaction that goes with a gent who's playin' on velvet.

"Your comin' son-in-law," says Enright to old Glegg, 'defends himse'f from them charges as follows: He agrees to quit gamblin'; he says he lies a whole lot when he tells you-all he don't drink none; an' lastly, Sepiorin' "Toad" as a cognomen, an' explainin' that he don't assume it of choice, but sort o' has it forced on him in his he'less infancy, he offers—you consentin' to the weddin'—to reorganize his play under the name of "Benjamin Glegg Allen."

"Son, this yere last proposal nacherally wins over old Glegg in a body. He not only withdraws all objections to them nuptials, but allows he'll make the pinfeather sport an' Abby full partners in the Sunflower brand. At this p'int, Enright notifies the preacher sharp that all depends on him; an' that excellent gent at once acquits himse'f so that in two minutes Wolfville adds another successful weddin' to its list of triumphs.

"It 'ustrates, too," says Enright, when two days later that weddin' party has returned to Tucson, an' Wolfville ag'in sinks to its normal state of slumberous case, "it sort o' 'ustrates how open to arguments a gent is when once he's lost his guns. Which is he isn't disarmed that time, my eloquence wouldn't have no more softenin' effect on old Glegg than throuwin' water on a drowned rat."

Assumed for a time by the traders. And then transferred to our backs. We had some hard knocks on the Klondike. From the cut-lion's unpadding paw. And suffered some shocks from high license. And other immutable laws. But they rolled us by regular schedule. So we knew just what to expect. While at Nome we're scheduled to struggle. Until we're financially wrecked. I'm sick at the scream of the Eagle. And laws of dishonest design. And I'm going in quest of a country. Where a miner can locate a mine. So when I have rustled an outfit. These places will know me no more. For I'll try my luck with the Russians. On the bleak Siberian shore.

Mr. Dunham's most ambitious attempt at verse is embodied in the poem from which the book takes its name, "The Goldsmith of Nome." Lack of space forbids the quotations of more than one stanza.

I am resting by my anvil, And my forge is growin' cold; I have ceased my anvil-labors, I have heeded not my god. I have scattered wide my treasures, And the superficial sands, Where they lie unworked and waiting, For the work of human hands.

THE Goldsmith of Nome" is a little book of verse by Sam C. Dunham, who was sent to the Yukon in August, 1897, by the Department of Labor at Washington, as a statistical expert to make a report on the opportunities for capital and labor in the new gold fields, and in 1899 was commissioned by the director of the census as a special agent to supervise the enumeration of the population of Northern Alaska. These verses are the result of the author's observations and experiences during the four years that mark his connection with the northland.

At Circle City, in October, 1897, the author met Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras, who had been "frozen in" at that point and had composed a poem entitled "Comrades of the Klondike," the first stanza of which is as follows:

Have you, too, banged at the Chilkoot; That storm-locked gate to the golden door? Those thunder-built steeps have words built to suit, And whether you prayed or whether you swore, There one, where it seemed that an oath

A Book of Verse From the Land of the Midnight Sun.

were a prayer—
Said that God couldn't care,
Remembered that God wasn't there!

Mr. Dunham was inspired by his association with the great Western poet and the reading of his poem to make his first attempt at verse. The result was "A Reply," written in a semi-humorous vein. We give the first stanza:

I, too, have banged at the Chilkoot;
I have scaled her storm-torn height
And slid down her trail with dizzy shout
That produced a northern light;
And I uttered a curse-laden prayer—
Of course God didn't care,
For only the devil was there.

"The Men Who Blaze the Trail" is the author's second attempt at verse and is in a much more serious vein:

Let others sing of those who've won
Full glory of virgin gold;
I strike the lyre for those who've none,
But yet are strong and bold—
Who've blazed the trails through a pathless waste
And on the world's new chart have traced
The lines which lead where the treasures'

placed,
And all their secrets told.

They search the streams and hillside rend
The hidden truth to learn;
They trudge where land and sky line blend,
And gaze till eyeballs burn;
They scale bleak heights whence vast plains
Sweep,
And saw for those who come to reap,
While wives and sweethearts in homelands weep
And pray for their return.

This poem, of which only stanzas are here printed, was so well received in Alaska and so favorably mentioned by several Eastern papers that the author was encouraged to continue, and he next wrote a series of three poems entitled "Just Back From Dawson" and "I'm Goin' Back to Dawson," which first appeared in the New York Sun in the fall of 1898. They have been widely copied and read throughout Alaska and the States, and are perhaps more popular than any of the others. Mr. Dunham continued to contribute poems to the Nome newspapers. "Alaska to Uncle Sam" appeared in S.p.

tember, 1898.

Next came "The Lament of the Old Sour Dough," which took like wildfire among the old-timers, and won for the author the sobriquet in the north of "The Poet of Alaska."

I've truedged and I've starved and I've frozen
All over this white barren land—
Where the sea stretches straight, white and
silent,
Where the timberless white mountains stand—
From the white peaks that gleam in the moon-
light.

Like a garment that graces a soul,
To the last white sweep of the prairies,
Where the black shadows brood round the
pole.

(Now, pray don't presume from this prelude
That a flame of poetical fire
Is to burst from my brain like a beacon,
For I've only been tuning my lyre
To the low, sad voice of a singer
Who's inspired to sing you some facts
About the improvements in staking.
And the men who mine with an ax.)

I've panned from Peru to Point Barrow,
But I never located a claim

THI I'd fully persuaded my conscience
That pay dirt pervaded the same;
And this is the source of my sorrow,
As you will be forced to agree
When you learn how relentless Misfortune
Has dumped all her tallings on me.

I worked with my partner all summer,
Cross-cutting a cursed cold creek,
Which we never once thought of locating
Unless we located the streak;
And when at the close of the season
We discovered the creek was a fake
We also discovered the region
Had nothing left in it to stake.

We traversed the toe-twisting tundras,
Where reindeer round for their feed,
And the hungry Laplanders who herd them
Devour them before they can breed.
Here it seemed that good claims might be
plenty,
And we thought we would stake one—per-
haps;
But we found to our grief that the gulches
Were staked in the name of the Leaps.

A hundred long leagues to the northward,
O'er the untrodden, sun-burnished snow,
We struggled, half blind and half famished,

To the sea where the stanch whalers go,
We found there broad beaches of ruby
And mountains with placers and leads,
But all save the sailors was pre-empted
By salt-water skiffs and Swedes.

Then we climbed the cold creeks near a mission
That is run by the agents of God,
Who locate by power of attorney
For ivory, sealskins and cod.
At last we were sure we had struck it,
But, alas! for our hope of reward—
The landscape from sea beach to sky line
Was staked in the name of the Lord!

We're too slow for the new breed of miners,
Embracing all classes of men,
Who locate by power of attorney
And prospect their claims with a pen—
Who do all of their fine work through agents
And loaf around town with the sports,
On intimate terms with the lawyers,
On similar terms with the courts.

We're scared to submission and silence
By the men the Government sends
To force us to keep law and order,
While they keep claims for their friends,
And collect in an indirect manner
An exceedingly burdensome tax.