

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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The Young Treasure Hunter or, Fred Stanley's Trip to Alaska

Frank V. Webster

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[1]

The Young Treasure Hunter

CHAPTER I

IN NEEDY CIRCUMSTANCES

"How are you feeling this morning, father?" asked Fred Stanley as his parent came slowly into the dining-room, leaning heavily on a crutch.

"Not so well, Fred. My leg pained me considerable last night, and I did not sleep much. You are up early, aren't you?"

"Yes. I am going over to the new diggings and see if I can't get a job, so I want to start soon."

"Where are the new diggings, Fred? I hadn't heard of any. But that is not surprising, as I don't hear news as I used to before the accident, when I could get around among the miners."

"Why, there is a rumor that several prospectors have struck it rich near Cartersville. They've formed a settlement and called it New Strike. I [2] heard they wanted boys to drive the ore carts, and I thought I'd go over and try for a place."

"It's too bad you have had to stop school, Fred, and go to work. If I wasn't crippled I could make lots of money at mining."

"Never mind, father. When you get well again you'll make more than ever. And I don't mind giving up school—very much."

The last words Fred added in a lower tone of voice, for the truth was, he greatly liked his studies, and it had been quite a sacrifice for him to stop going to school. But when his services were needed at home he did not complain.

Norman Stanley, Fred's father, had been injured in a mining accident about six months before this story opens, and, though he was now somewhat improved, he could not walk without the aid of a crutch. The physician said he would eventually get entirely well, but the process seemed very slow, and at times Mr. Stanley was almost discouraged.

The Stanley family, of which Fred was the only child, lived in the town of Piddock, California. It was not far from a mining region, and within a short distance of the coast. Mr. Stanley had been in good circumstances when he was able to work, but since his accident, having a large doctor bill to pay, his savings had been used up. As he could not earn any more, the family was in needy [3] circumstances, though, occasionally, Fred was able to make small sums by doing odd jobs here and there. Mrs. Stanley took in sewing, and they just managed to get along, paying a small rent, and eating only the most common food, though the doctor had said Mr. Stanley would recover more quickly if he could have a special diet.

"Well, Fred," went on Mr. Stanley, "I hope some day I can send you back to school, and perhaps to college. If only my leg would get better," and he uttered a sigh.

"Don't worry, father. We'll get along somehow. But where is mother? I would like to get my breakfast and hurry over to New Strike. All the best jobs may be taken, and I'll only get a chance to be superintendent, or something like that," and he laughed at his joke, for Fred was not a gloomy-spirited boy.

"Your mother is not up yet, Fred," said Mr. Stanley. "She was sewing quite late last night, and I told her to take a rest this morning. She needed it. I thought maybe you and I could get our own breakfast."

"Of course we can, dad. It won't be the first time I have done it, for when I went camping with the fellows I used to be cook part of the time."

"And I haven't forgotten the time when I was prospecting in the mountains and used to have to get my own flapjacks and coffee," added the former [4] miner. "I guess we can make out all right, and then you can go see if you can strike a job. If they insist on making you part owner, or manager of a good mine, I suppose you will have to take it."

He smiled at his son in spite of his rather gloomy feelings. But he was sad at the thought of how hard his wife had to work to earn a little money, while he, a strong man, save for his injured leg, could do next to nothing.

"Oh, I guess I can stand it to take half shares in a new lead," replied Fred. "Now if you'll set the table, dad, I'll put the kettle on, make coffee and fry some eggs."

Mr. Stanley could manage to move slowly about the room with the aid of his crutch, and by degrees he had the table set. Meanwhile Fred had made a fire in the kitchen stove, and the kettle was soon humming, while he ground the coffee, cut some slices of bacon, and got the fresh eggs from the cupboard.

In the midst of these operations Mrs. Stanley, a little woman with slightly gray hair, but a sweet face and kindly, laughing blue eyes, came downstairs.

"Well!" she exclaimed. "You're ahead of me this morning, aren't you?"

"I thought you would like to rest a bit," said her husband. "That is why I did not call you." [5]

"Oh, I'm not so tired. I slept well, and I wanted to be up early and get Fred's breakfast, for he has quite a journey ahead of him."

"I wish he didn't have to take it," murmured Mr. Stanley to his wife when Fred was out of the room. "If I only could get back to work myself."

"Now, Norman, I thought you promised me you wouldn't worry."

"I'm not, but — —"

"Yes, you are. Now please don't do it any more. We are getting on very nicely, and I think Mrs. Robinson will pay me well for the sewing I did for her last night. She is very much pleased with my work."

"I wish you didn't have to work."

"Oh, my! I don't! What a queer world it would be if no one had to work. I just love to be busy," and she laughed joyously, though, to tell the truth, she was still weary from her toil of the night before. Fred heard his mother's voice and looked in from the kitchen.

"Breakfast will soon be ready, Mrs. Stanley," he said in imitation of a servant girl they had had when they were in better circum-

stances. "The water is jest comin' on to a bile, ma'am, an' the eggs am almost done, ma'am."

"That's just what Sarah used to say," remarked Mrs. Stanley. "It sounds quite natural. Now, [6] Fred, you come in and sit down and I'll finish getting the meal."

"No, indeed, mother, let me do it. Pretend you are a visitor, and I'll bring the eggs and toast in, piping hot for you."

"No, Fred. I'll do it."

The boy was so much in earnest that his mother gave in, and with a laugh seated herself by her husband's side, while Fred rattled away among the dishes out in the kitchen as if he was a regular Chinese cook, which many families in California keep in preference to a woman.

"Do you feel any better this morning, Norman?" asked Mrs. Stanley.

"Not much. Perhaps a little. It is very slow."

In spite of herself tears came into the eyes of Mrs. Stanley at her husband's misfortune, but she turned her head away so he would not see them.

"Here we are!" cried Fred suddenly, as he came in with a platter of bacon and eggs in one hand, and some nicely browned toast, on a plate, in the other.

"Grub call!" he added, in imitation of the camp cry.

"Well, you did get up a nice breakfast," complimented his mother.

"I'll bring the coffee in a minute," added the boy as he went back to the kitchen. "You dish out, mother." [7]

The little family gathered around the table, and soon Mr. Stanley had temporarily forgotten about the pain in his leg, while he told Fred something of how to drive an ore cart.

"Perhaps I'll not get a chance at one, dad."

"Oh, yes, you will. If you see any old miners there, at the new diggings, just mention my name, and they'll help you. They all

know me, for I've prospected with a number of them, and grub-staked lots of 'em. Yes, and some of them have grub-staked me."

Grub-staked, it may be explained, means that a man with money provides a poor miner with food or "grub" and an outfit to hunt and dig for gold. If the miner finds a good lead, or mine, a large share of it goes to the man who grub-staked him.

Mrs. Stanley placed two eggs and some toast on her husband's plate, and was about to help Fred to the same quantity, when she noticed that her son was engaged on a big dish of oatmeal.

"Don't you want some eggs?" she asked.

"Don't care for 'em," replied Fred quickly. "I'd rather have oatmeal. It will stick by me longer, if I get a job to-day."

The truth was there were only four eggs in the house, and no money to send out and buy more. And Fred wanted his mother to have the remaining two. So he took oatmeal, though he did not like it. [8]

"Why, Fred!" exclaimed his mother. "You always used to like eggs. Why don't you take them? I don't feel very hungry."

"Those eggs were cooked especially for you, mother," said the boy. "If you don't eat them I'll think you don't like my way, and I'll leave."

His mother laughed, but, once more, there came a mist of tears to her eyes. Slyly she tried to put one of the eggs on Fred's plate, but he would not let her.

"This toast is fine, if I did make it myself," said Fred, "and the bacon isn't half bad," he added as he took several slices, for there was plenty of that. "Guess I'll take some along for my dinner, as I'll not come back until night — if I get a job."

"That's so, Fred, I must see if there is anything in the house for your lunch. I—I don't believe I'll have any money until Mrs. Robinson pays me. I'll take her work home right after breakfast."

"A light lunch will do for me, mother. I can get some grub from one of the miners, if I run short."

This was true enough, for the gold-diggers would share their last crust with a hungry traveler.

The meal was soon over, and, with a small package of bread and bacon, and a piece of pie, saved from the day before, Fred Stanley started off to look for work. [9]

CHAPTER II

SEEKING A JOB

From Piddock, where Fred lived, to New Strike was about eight miles, over the mountains. It was a hard journey, but the boy set off on it with a light heart, whistling merrily, for he was hopeful of getting a job, and he knew that if he did, there would be more happiness at home, since there was a dire shortage of money.

"I ought to get at least five dollars a week and my board," thought Fred. "If I do, I can save nearly four and send it home, and that will help out a lot. Poor dad, it's hard for him to be crippled the way he is. And I wish mother didn't have to work so hard. She is getting more gray than she ought to. I wish there was some work in Piddock. If I get a job over here I'll have to stay all the week, and can only go home Saturday night. But there's not much doing in Piddock."

This was true. The town had once been quite an important one, but the diggings near it had been exhausted, and the mining population had, in a [10] large part, moved away. There were some mines in the vicinity, that were still worked, but they did not pay very well.

Shortly after Mr. Stanley's accident Fred had secured a place in the general store in Piddock, but, when the population diminished there was hardly enough work for the proprietor himself, and he had to discharge Fred, though he regretted it, for the boy was bright and quick, and a great help to him.

After that Fred tried in vain to get a steady position. He worked for a few days driving a team for a man, and occasionally did odd

jobs for one of the merchants in town, or for some of the residents, but the pay was poor, and he seldom had three full days' work a week.

He had heard of the unexpected prosperity that had come to New Strike, and, knowing that there is usually plenty of work in a new mining camp, he determined to go there and see what he could find.

As Fred reached the mountain trail, leading to New Strike, he saw that it had been well traveled. On both sides of the narrow road were evidences that many teams had passed that way recently, for the refuse of camp stuff, broken boxes and barrels, and things that the miners had thrown away as useless, littered the ground.

As Fred made a turn in the road, he saw, just [11] ahead of him, an old man, mounted on a small donkey. The man's legs were so long, and the donkey so little, that the rider's shoes nearly touched the ground.

Either the animal was lazy, or it was unable to carry the load on its back,—for the man had a big bundle on the saddle before him,—and the donkey went at a very slow pace. So slow, in fact, that Fred soon caught up to the rider.

"Good-morning," the boy said.

"Ah, stranger, good-morning," was the man's answer. "I see you are headed for the same place I am."

"I don't know whether it's the same place or not, but I'm going to New Strike," said Fred.

"So am I, if this donkey lasts the trip out. He's awful slow, stranger. What might your name be?"

"Fred Stanley."

"Where you from?"

"Piddock."

"Hum. Well I'm Bill Gardner. Old Bill Gardner, they mostly calls me."

"And where are you from?" asked Fred, thinking it only polite to manifest some interest in the rider.

"Me? Oh, I ain't from nowhere in particular. I make my home wherever I happen to drop my pick and shovel. I'm a prospector," and Fred no [12] ticed that, in addition to his bundle, the old man had a set of mining tools.

"Are you going to locate at New Strike?" asked Fred.

"That's what I am. I heard there was some rich pockets there, and I want to get my share. G'lang there, you jack rabbit!" and the man jerked the donkey's reins.

"That's a queer name for a donkey," commented Fred.

"Well, this is a queer donkey. I call him a jack rabbit because he's so different. He wouldn't jump if you fired a cannon off right under him."

"Did you ever try it?"

"No, but he stood right near a blast one day, when it went off before I was ready for it, and all he done was to wiggle one ear a bit, as though a fly had bit him. Oh, he's the slowest donkey I ever saw, and I've seen some pretty lazy ones. But do you expect to do any prospecting in New Strike? Where's your outfit?"

"I haven't any."

"Guess you'll find it pretty hard to pick up one in the camps. Every man'll want his own."

"Oh, I don't expect to look for gold."

"What are you going to look for then?"

"A job. I heard they wanted drivers for the ore carts at the stamp mills, and I thought I might fill the bill." [13]

"I guess you could, if the places aren't all taken. But, why don't you try mining?"

"I don't believe I'm old enough."

"Oh, yes, you are. I came to California, 'way back in '49, when I was only a boy, and I've been mining ever since."

"My father was a miner," said Fred.

"Was he? What's his name?"

"Norman Stanley."

"What! Norman Stanley, who used to work in the Eagle's Claw mine?"

"Yes," replied the boy, who had often heard his father speak of the mine mentioned.

"Well, well! I know him like a brother. Just tell him you met old Bill Gardner, and he'll remember me all right."

"I will."

"And I'll speak a good word for you when we get to the new diggings," went on the old man. "I know every miner in these parts worth knowing. G'lang there, Kangaroo."

"I thought you said the donkey's name was Jack Rabbit."

"No, that's not his name. You see I call him something different every time."

"Why?" inquired Fred.

"Well, I think one name gets sort of tiresome for an animal. And then I think, if I call him a [14] different name every time, he'll think maybe I'm somebody else, and he'll go faster. He knows me so well he won't pay any attention to me, and he knows I won't hit him. But if I call him a different name, he may think there's a different man on his back, and he may run a bit."

"He doesn't seem to be going to."

"No, I guess not. G'lang there, Hippopotamus!"

That name seemed to have no effect, either, and, with an exclamation of disgust, the old miner settled back in the saddle and let the donkey take its own time.

Fred found he could easily keep up with the small animal, and the miner chatted pleasantly until they came to New Strike. Then, at the suggestion of Mr. Gardner, the boy went to the superintendent of the stamp mills, to apply for a job.

"Let me know how you make out," said the miner, as he was about to part from the boy.

"Where will I find you?"

"Oh, I'm going to put up at the hotel. There's only one, so you won't have much trouble finding me. Just ask for Old Bill Gardner, and anybody'll point me out. Well, good luck."

"Thank you," answered Fred, as he started toward the stamping mills, the thundering noise of which could be heard for a long distance. [15]

"Well, what can I do for you?" asked the superintendent sharply, as Fred entered the office.

"Do you want any boys to drive ore carts? I heard you did."

"We did, but we filled the last place about an hour ago."

Fred's heart sank. If he had been a little earlier, or if he had started sooner, he might now have had a good job.

"Is there anything else to do around here?" he asked. "I would be glad to get work of any kind."

"I'm afraid I haven't anything for any one as young as you."

"I am quite strong, though I am only seventeen years old."

"Yes, I must admit you seem a sturdy lad, but, I am sorry to say, I can't give you any work. If you leave your name and address I'll send for you, when there is anything."

"Thank you," replied Fred, and he wrote them on a piece of paper the manager gave him.

"If you were a man now, I could give you work in the mine. But I can't put boys in there. Have you had any experience in mining?"

"No, but I know something about it from hearing my father tell about it. He is a miner."

"What is his name?"

Fred told him, and found that, while the manager did not know Mr. Stanley, he had heard of him.

"I wish, for your father's sake, I could give you work," he said. "I'll keep you in mind, and you shall have the first job that is open."

"Thank you. I shall try some other places here."

"I would, if I were you, and you can refer to me."

"That is very kind of you."

Fred bade the manager good-morning, and started off to see if there was not work elsewhere for him. But he found that either all the places were filled, or that, when there was work, it was of such a nature that he could not do it.

Somewhat discouraged, he sat down in a shady place to eat his simple lunch, and, after a drink from a spring, he felt refreshed.

Early that afternoon he had exhausted the possibilities of work in New Strike.

"I think I'll start back home," he said. "There's no use bothering to look up Mr. Gardner."

The truth was he disliked to tell the old miner he had not succeeded in getting work. So Fred started off on his long tramp back to Piddock.

But, as he was passing along the main, and, in truth, the only street of the town, a voice hailed him.

"Hold on there, Fred," was the cry, and he [17] turned to see the old miner beckoning to him, from in front of the "Imperial Hotel," as a sign in front of the one-storied building indicated it to be. "Wait a minute. I want to speak to you!" [18]

CHAPTER III

THE BURIED TREASURE STORY

Fred turned and walked toward the hotel, the old miner advancing to meet him.

"Well," asked Mr. Gardner, "how'd you make out?"

"I didn't make out at all."

"Pshaw! That's too bad. What are you going to do now?"

"Go back home."

"I wish I could help you. Do you need work very much?"

"Well, I have to help support the house since my father met with that accident."

"That's so. Shucks! Why ain't I rich? Then I could help my old friend."

"I don't think my father would take money that he or I did not earn."

"No, that's right, he wouldn't. But if I was rich I could give you a job. As it is I can't do any more than offer to grub-stake you, or let you come prospecting with me." [19]

"Thank you very much for the offer, but I don't believe I could do it. We need money right away, and I must earn it—somehow."

"But how are you going to?"

"That's what I don't know," and Fred spoke a little discouragedly. "I must try some other camp, I suppose."

"Yes, I guess that's the only way. But say, won't you come in and have some lunch with me? I'm just going to sit down."

"No, thank you. I must be getting home. I have quite a long walk."

"Oh, come on. It won't take long, and you'll feel all the better for having eaten something. They don't set a very good table here. Everyone is too busy thinking about gold mines, to care much about grub. I'd lend you my elephant to get home on, only you can walk faster than he'll carry you."

"Your elephant?"

"Yes, that's my latest name for the donkey."

"Oh, I understand."

"Come on in and have lunch," insisted the old miner again.

Fred did not need much urging. The truth was he was quite hungry, for he had not eaten a hearty breakfast, and his lunch was not very substantial. So he followed Mr. Gardner into the hotel, or what answered for one, and soon they were seated [20] at a rough table, where the food, if not very dainty, was good, and there was enough of it.

"So your folks need money, do they?" asked Mr. Gardner when they were drinking their coffee.

"Well, I fancy it would come in handy in 'most any family," answered Fred with a smile.

"That's what it would. I could use a bit more myself. But I may strike it rich here. If I don't, I may have a try for the Stults treasure. I sure would, without stopping here, if I wasn't so old and stiff, and wasn't afraid of the cold."

"The Stults treasure?" asked Fred. "What's that, and where is it? Is there any chance of me getting a share?"

"I don't know. There might be," replied the miner, more seriously than Fred thought he would answer, for, at first, the boy thought his companion was joking.

"Is there really a treasure hidden around here, Mr. Gardner."

"Around here? No, only the gold in the mines, and that is hard to get out. The Stults treasure, that I referred to, is many miles away."

"Where is it?"

"In Alaska."

"Alaska?"

"Yes, and the coldest part, too. I'll tell you what I know of it, but don't hold me responsible."

"I'll not." [21]

"Very well then. The story is more or less known, but I can't say as much for the location of the treasure. Several have tried their hand at locating it, but had to give it up.

"It appears that an old miner, named Max Stults, went to Alaska, in the early days of the gold discoveries there, with a few companions. They made their way up the Yukon river as far as where Circle City now is. Then they went off into the mountains, for, it seems, the old man had a curious dream that he would find gold in a certain place.

"His companions laughed at him, for it was outside the gold-bearing region, and, finally, they all deserted him. Nothing more

was heard of Stults for a long time. One day, so the story goes, a man, half dead from exposure, staggered into the camp, which was the beginning of what is now Circle City.

"This man, who turned out to be Stults, told a strange story. He said he had discovered a wonderful treasure of gold, in the bed of a river that had changed its course. There were many big nuggets of the pure metal he had picked up, he said."

"Why didn't he bring it with him?" asked Fred.

"He tried to, but he was attacked by a band of savage Alaskan Indians, who tried to get the gold away from him. He had it in the mountains, and managed to escape, coming to the camp for help."
[22]

"Did they give it to him?"

"They would have, but, unfortunately, just as they were setting out to find the buried treasure, Stults died."

"And they never found the gold?"

"They never found it. Stults had a sort of map, showing the location of it, but no one could make head or tail of that map after he was dead. Several parties made the attempt, but they all failed. Some were frozen to death, and others were driven from the country by the savage Indians. So, up to the present time, no one has found the Stults treasure, as far as I know."

"What became of the map?"

"Oh, that, and a few personal belongings of the old German gold hunter, were sent to his widow. I heard that she raised money and sent out an expedition after the gold, for she was familiar with her husband's handwriting and understood what certain words on the map meant, which was more than those who first saw it knew. But it fared no better than the others. So the treasure must be there still. Now if you only had a share of that, you and your folks wouldn't have to worry."

"No, indeed, but I guess the chances are very small for me finding that gold, even if I could go to Alaska, which is impossible."