

The background image is a halftone-style photograph of a mountain valley. A winding road or path is visible on the right side of the valley, leading towards a distant blue lake or reservoir. The mountains are covered in green vegetation, and the sky is overcast. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

**Rex Beach**

*The Looting  
Of Alaska*



**Rex Beach**

# **The Looting Of Alaska**



Published by Good Press, 2022

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EAN 4066338067265

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# **Chapter 1**

## **The Golden Opportunity**

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\*This is the first of a series of articles, which will run through five or six numbers. The author was on the ground during the occurrences of which he writes, a fact which gives peculiar force to the narrative.—The Editor.

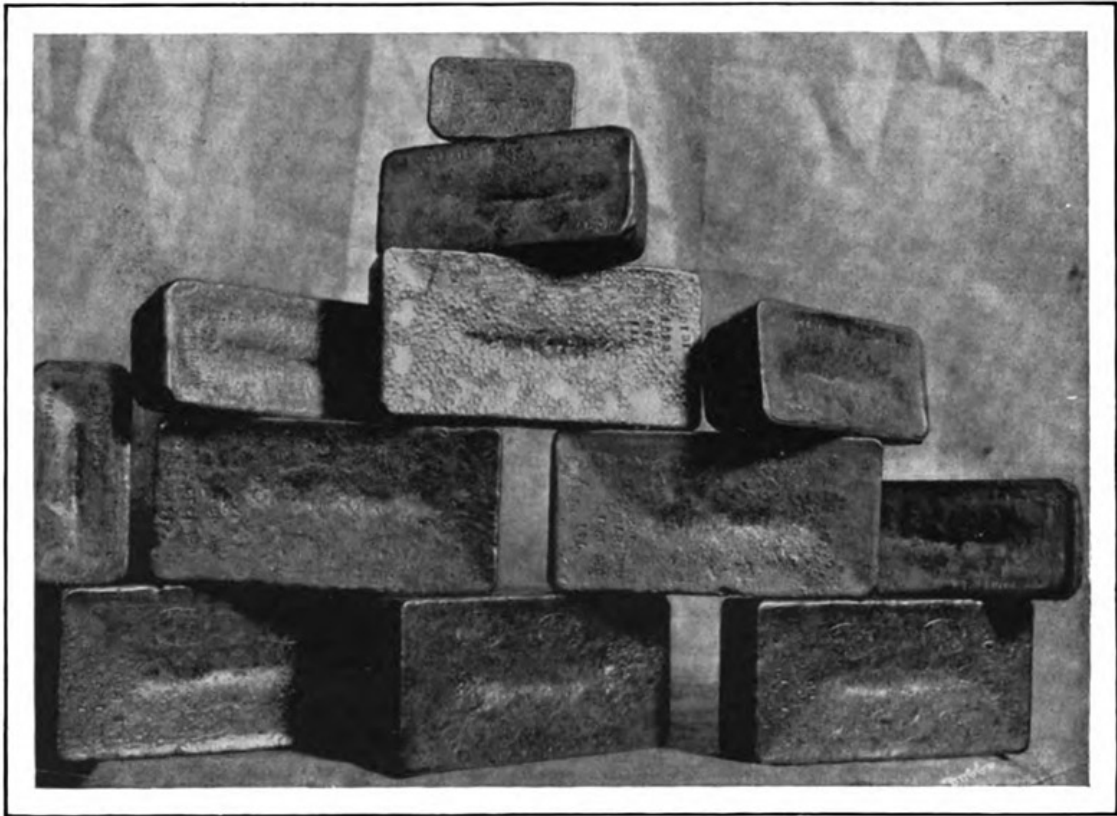
ALASKA is the galley slave of the Union. Her chains were forged by some very vile politics. She has been ruined, rifled, and degraded by such practices as have seldom blackened the pages of American corruption.

To accomplish her debauch, our judiciary has been capitalized, and American courts of law exploited as a commercial investment. She writhes to-day under the same conditions at which our forefathers rebelled in King George's time, being our only possession—State, territorial, or foreign—to suffer taxation without representation.

She has been licensed directly from Washington as a mistress for the politically unclean, has presented the unique spectacle of her court officials in jail yet drawing salaries through the bars, of high government servants retained in office long after conviction in their own court of heinous offenses, of others defiled yet protected in their defilement, and she will show for years the print of the boldest political steal ever consummated in this country. Such an unbroken catalogue of disreputable officeholders has been saddled upon her that she now feels, when a man accepts a position in her government, he is, by virtue of his acceptance, a blackleg.

What are we to think of the conspiracy of 1900 wherein a coterie of exalted political pets stole the resources of a realm

as large as Great Britain, France, and Germany, set up their marionettes in control, and took the richest gold mines since '49?



**MORE THAN \$200,000 WORTH OF LOOT**

A thousand pounds of gold bullion at The Alaska Banking and Safe Deposit Co., Nome, October, 1904.

We haven't heard about it! Of course not. When the scandal came out, it was smothered and the public kept in ignorance. Criminals were pardoned, records expunged, thieves exalted to new honors. Your Alaskan remembers it, though—remembers when he was bound, gagged, and gone through by the basest officials that ever disgraced an appointment. He remembers how at headquarters the wheels of justice were mysteriously clogged, and how, when judgment of a feeble kind overtook the gang, they squirmed out of punishment. When he sees these men higher in office and more powerful

now than then, with Russian fatalism he shrugs his shoulders and says:

“God is far off, and it’s a long way to Washington.”

The tale is worth the telling if for no other reason than to show what abuses are possible under our much-touted systems where we are supposedly equal in the eye of God and the law. What was done here to Americans close at home can be done more easily to those distant foreigners we are coming to rule, and to whom our doctrines are as darkness.

The outsider who knows Alaska not as a glacier-riven barren but as the greatest mineral possession we have, with centuries of undeveloped resource before it, will be interested in the story of its shame. It is a recital of intrigue and pillage originating in the fertile brains of statesmen beneath the shadow of Washington Monument, stretching out to the westward and ending among the gold-bottomed placers of Nome. There is in it the contrast of the extra old and the ultra new, the foyer and the frontier, the white vest and the blue shirt. It has a backing of long toms and gold pans, writs and riots.

In order properly to understand what led to and aroused the lusts of the titled conspirators, it is necessary to go back through the early romance of a great gold strike and sketch the history of its development; to show how, out of a forbidding and unknown land peopled by Lap deer-drivers and shanghaied sailors, was wrought a wonderful country; how these aliens and a wandering crew of penniless adventurers solved the mystery of a rock-girt coast and gave to the world such tidings that in a night there sprang up a city of twenty thousand, with hotels, theaters, brass bands, and *tables d’hôte*; how a sick man dug into the beach sands where he lay

and found such treasure that his fellow-argonauts swarmed out of the hills, tore down their houses, ripped up their streets, and burrowed under the city of their making; how, when they had done this, a crew of political pirates made them walk the plank.

In 1865-66, before the Atlantic cable was completed and when Alaska was but a blank space upon the map, the Western Union Telegraph Company conceived the notion of establishing overland telegraphic communication with Europe, and sent expeditions to Siberia and Alaska to determine the feasibility of two transcontinental lines connected at Bering Strait by a short cable.

These labors were interrupted by news of the perfect success of the Atlantic cable, and both expeditions were recalled. In 1897, when the Klondike discovery electrified the world, a member of this forgotten expedition—one Libby—remembered that he had found gold in Alaska while surveying near Bering Strait thirty years before, and although this spot was many hundreds of miles west of Dawson City, he determined to return on a hunt for the stream. He took with him three others—Mordaunt, Melsing, and Blake, of whom only the last was a miner.

Libby and his friends landed about eighty miles east of the present Nome district, or a full two thousand miles from Dawson, being the first prospectors to invade the great Seward gold fields. At this point was a crippled trader and squaw man by the name of Dexter, as strong hearted a pioneer as ever blazed a trail; also two Swedes, one a missionary named Hultberg, the other a schoolteacher, Anderson.

Some distance west, close under Bering Straits, is the harbor of Port Clarence where in summer the whaling fleets used to refit, ship their catch, and make ready to disappear again into the Arctics. When the Yukon steamers brought down the first gold-burdened Klondikers, their marvelous stories fired these whalers, as they had fired Libby, the surveyor, and, although distant two thousand miles from the Klondike mines, all, from master to galley boy, were for deserting on the spot. Many did, among whom was a Swedish tailor by the name of Lindbloom, who, while drunk in 'Frisco, had been shanghaied and carried north as a deck hand.

In addition to Libby's party and the whalers, there were also near here certain Laplanders imported from the old country and employed by the United States Government. The presence of a number of them is explained as follows:

During the first days of the Klondike, 1897, the cry of famine horrified the country and a certain missionary convinced our Government that American miners were famishing in Dawson. He conceived the scheme of driving a herd of reindeer into the Yukon valley for succor, these being the only beasts which could live and find forage on the journey. Accordingly, a herd was imported from Lapland and with it were brought native herders. At great expense the outfit was rushed across the continent, but not until its arrival at the Pacific coast was it learned that the starving Yukoners had enough to eat and indigestion besides.

This is a tender spot in official circles, and although the reindeer is a melancholy creature, wanting in humor as befits a beast reared in darkness, yet his dewlap shakes and quivers to this day at sight of a missionary.



It became necessary to put these deer somewhere, and, as others had been introduced into Alaska to benefit the Eskimos, these were sent there also, and the herder went along.

From such strange quarters did Destiny draw the men she had chosen, and by token of her paradoxical whims it was not the palsied trader whose years had been spent in hardship, the observant surveyor whose quick eye had seen the Sign, the hard-handed miner, nor any of their kind to whom the goddess bared her treasures—but to the runaway tailor with a thirst, the missionary consecrated to an unselfish life, and the Lapland deer herder.



THE GOLDEN SANDS OF NOME

Dredges, pumping plants, and devices stretching along the Arctic coast, where vast fortunes were dug from the beach.

During the summer of '98, Blake, the American miner, and Hultberg, the preacher, together with two Laps, went prospecting along the coast of Bering Sea out toward the straits. A storm arose, driving their sailboat into a strange river. This is the town site of Nome. It was a desolate outlook. A bleak, open shore, pounded by surf and backed by sodden

miles of tundra, rising to low rolling hills barren of all but the ever-present moss, with here and there gnarled willows groveling in the creek bottoms. It was nearing fall and the nights were chill, hinting of the long winter close at hand. Although the summers are hot at this latitude, reaching a temperature of 110° F. in the sun, they are short—barely four months long. In June it is daylight always, the sun dipping shallowly below the southern sea for a brief hour, its heat during the rest of the day causing vegetation to grow riotously. Perpetual daylight is quickly succeeded by lengthening nights of inky blackness, however, and when September comes the frosts are back again, the creeks are clogging, and the prospector lays aside his pan and shovel.

Taking their tools they went back to the hills, testing the gravel of the stream beds. The first creek wound past a mountain upon whose crest a great rock was balanced in the shape of an anvil, but Blake, the “experienced,” noted how the willows grew, the quarter of the wind, and other things as essential, then stated that no gold was here and they should go on. Hultberg wished to stay, so, the others refusing to listen, he quit them and went back to his station, eighty miles. Taking Lindbloom, the ex-tailor, and a Norwegian deer herder, Linderberg—names to conjure with in the North now—these three returned to the creek with the anvil rock above it.

It seems strange that this man of God who had never seen a placer mine should choose this spot so stubbornly, and it is said in explanation that while digging with the first party, he found such prospects that he modestly refrained from divulging them, preferring to share his discovery with his own countrymen. No one knows this, of course, except Hultberg. At any rate, the three hurried back with two Indian boys as