

Hank Snow

"Dangerous Dan McGrew"

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A bunch of the boys were whooping it up
In the Malamute saloon
The kid that handles the music-box
Was hitting a jag-time tune.

Back at the bar in a solo game
Sat Dangerous Dan McGrew
And watching his luck was his light of love
The lady that's known as Lou.

When out of the night which was fifty below
And into the din and the glare
There stumbled a miner fresh from the creeks
Dog dirty and loaded for bear.

He looked like a man with a foot in the grave
And scarcely the strength of a louse
Yet he tilted a poke of dust on the bar
And he called for drinks on the house.

There was none could place the stranger's face
Though we searched ourselves for a clue
But we drank his health and the last to drink
Was Dangerous Dan McGrew.

There's men that somehow just grip your eyes
And hold them hard like a spell
And such was he and he looked to me
Like a man who had lived in hell.

With a face most hair and the dreary stare
Of a dog whose day is done
As he watered the green stuff in his glass
And the drops fell one by one.

Then I got to figgering who he was
And wondering what he'd do
And I turned my head and there watching him
Was the lady that's known as Lou.

His eyes went rubbering round the room
And he seemed in a kind of daze

Till at last that old piano fell in the way
Of his wondering gaze.

The rag-time kid was having a drink
There was no one else on the stool
So the stranger stumbles across the room
And flops down there like a fool.

In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt
He sat and I saw him sway
Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands
My God but that man could play.

Were you ever out in the great alone
When the moon was awful clear
And the icy mountains hemmed you in
With a silence you most could hear.

With only the howl of a timber wolf
And you camped there in the cold
A half-dead thing in the stark dead world
Clean mad for the muck called gold.

While high overhead green, yellow and red
The North Lights swept in bars
Then you've got a hunch what the music meant
Hunger and night and the stars.

And hunger not of the belly kind
That's banished with bacon and beans
But the gnawing hunger of lonely men
For a home and all that it means.

For a fireside far from the cares that are
Four walls and a roof above
But oh! so cramful of cosy joy
And crowned with a woman's love.

A woman dearer than all the world
And true as Heaven is true
God how ghastly she looks through her rouge
The lady that's known as Lou.

Then all of a sudden the music changed
So soft that you scarce could hear
But you felt that your life had been looted clean
Of all that it once held dear.

That someone had stolen the woman you loved
That her love was a devil's lie
That your guts were gone and the best of you

Was to crawl away and die.

Twas the crowning cry of a heart's despair
And it thrilled you through and through
I guess I'll make it a spread misere
Said Dangerous Dan McGrew.

The music almost died away
Then it burst like a pent-up flood
And it seemed to say, repay, repay
And my eyes were blind with blood.

The thought came back of an ancient wrong
And it stung like a frozen lash
And the lust awoke to kill, to kill
Then the music stopped with a crash.

And the stranger turned and his eyes they burned
In a most peculiar way
In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt
He sat and I saw him sway.

Then his lips went in, in a kind of a grin
And he spoke and his voice was calm
And boys says he, you don't know me
And none of you care a damn.

But I want to state and my words are straight
And I'll bet my poke they're true
That one of you is a hound of hell
And that one is Dan McGrew.

Then I ducked my head and the lights went out
And two guns blazed in the dark
And a woman screamed and the lights went up
And two men lay stiff and stark.

Pitched on his head and pumped full of lead
Was Dangerous Dan McGrew
While the man from the creeks lay clutched
To the breast of the Lady that's known as Lou.

These are the simple facts of the case
And I guess I ought to know
They say that the stranger was crazed with hooch
And I'm not denying it's so.

I'm not so wise as the lawyer guys
But strictly between us two
The woman that kissed him and pinched his poke
Was the lady that's known as Lou...

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