

YOUNG KLONDIKE

STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER

Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office by Frank Tousey.

No. 1.

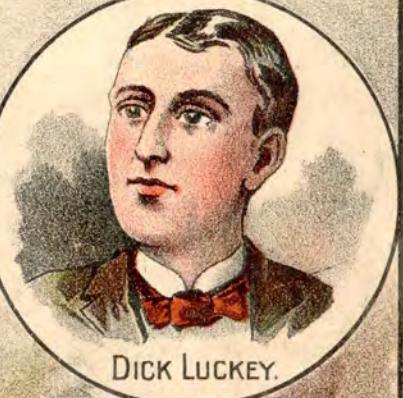
NEW YORK, March 16, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.



"YOUNG KLONDIKE"

YOUNG KLONDIKE —OR— OFF FOR THE LAND OF GOLD. BY AN OLD MINER.



DICK LUCKEY.



EDITH.



"THE UNKNOWN."

An early party of miners is shown making their way up the mountain to the summit of Chilkoot Pass. Ned and Dick, and Edith walking beside it with the Unknown.

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YOUNG KLONDIKE: OR, OFF FOR THE LAND OF GOLD.

BY AN OLD MINER.

CHAPTER I.

"GO TO THE KLONDIKE FOR GOLD."

"EVERYBODY is going to the Klondike. I wish I am going, too."

"Pshaw! What could a fellow like you do in a country like that? They say it's cold enough to freeze e ears off a brass monkey."

"That's all right, Dick Luckey, I shouldn't care a nt about the cold if I could only get the gold. If I d a name like yours I'd go blame quick."

"Tain't any better than your own, Ned Golden."

"What, what! Luckey, the miner. What do you y?"

"Yes, but Golden, the gold-hunter! What do you y?"

"That we'd make a famous team. Golden & Luckey!"

"No; Luckey & Golden."

"Shouldn't care a rap whether I was the head of e firm or the tail, so long as we got the dust."

"By gracious, Ned, if I had to go to the Klondike, don't know any fellow in New York I'd rather have r a partner than you."

"Same here, Dick."

"You get there every time."

"Whatever you undertake usually goes."

"Well, I've got to be going, or the boss will be in y wool when I get back. So long, Ned. There's bout as much chance of our going to the Klondike, as here is of our going to the moon."

The boys parted, Ned Golden going up Broadway and Dick Luckey going down.

Neither had any serious intention of going to the laska gold fields, the fame of which is now in everybody's mouth, but was beginning to be talked about in the pat.

Yet these two boys were singularly well calculated for just such a venture, if they had but known it.

Ned Golden was a tall, stalwart young fellow of eighteen, big in frame, broad shoulders, with muscles of iron and perfect health. One had only to look at his high forehead and large gray eyes to see that unless fate or circumstances turned him from his natural course, the boy was bound to make his mark in the world.

Moreover, Ned was an orphan without kith or kin, and had never had any one to look out for him since his old grandaunt, who brought him up, went the way of all flesh, now four years ago.

Dick Luckey was only a half orphan, but as he did not know where his father was, it amounted to the same thing as being a whole one.

Dick's mother died when he was quite a lad, and his father clapped the boy into a country poor-house and left for parts unknown.

Dick ran away from the poor-house when he was under ten, and came to New York, since which time he had always supported himself, and instead of wasting his evenings had spent them in study, doing his best to improve his mind.

Result: Dick was now a little gentleman and a very well educated fellow. So much for not wasting one's time; there are few boys who have had less opportunities than Dick.

Dick was just the age of his chum, Ned Golden, but his direct opposite in appearance, being short and slim, and as dark as Ned was fair.

Circumstances had thrown these two boys together now for some years, but neither of them dreamed how closely they were to be associated in the future, or that the chance conversation held on Broadway the autumn afternoon would come to have a deeper me loing.

None of us can know our future, and it probably would do us little good if we did.

Leaving Dick, Ned Golden hurried on to White street, and, turning there, kept on toward West Broadway, entering the big wholesale notion house of Schlambacher & Schlim, where he was employed.

It was Ned's first year with these gentlemen, the old house for which he had worked as a boy having been crowded out of business by this firm.

Things were very different from what they used to be in the days of kind-hearted Mr. Leslie.

Ned detested Schlambacher, and he hated Schlim, but fate decreed that he should run up against the latter now.

He met that gentleman just coming out of the office, fat, sleek and pompous.

"Vell, so you vas pack at last!" Schlim growled. "Does it dake you a year to go to Duane street—huh?"

Ned flushed up to his eyebrows.

"I went as quick as I could, sir," he retorted. "You don't expect me to run as though I was going to a fire, I hope."

"Vat's dat? None of your sass, poy! Did you see Mr. Marks?"

"No, I didn't."

"Vat! Vat! S'help me grashus, you vas a fine fellow to send on an important errand. Vy you no see him, huh?"

"Because he wasn't in!" flared Ned. "That's why."

"Den vy you no vait? What for you come pack?"

"Because you told me to come right back, and I obeyed."

"Bah! You vas a fool!"

"I obey orders, Mr. Schlim, if I break owners—that's my style."

"I nefer gave you no such orders."

"I say you did."

"I say you vas a liar!"

Things were getting hot.

All the clerks and salesmen had their eyes fixed on Ned.

With the exception of a few, who were creatures of the junior partner's, it is safe to say that they would have enjoyed nothing better than to see Ned Golden "punch" Mr. Schlim.

It had almost reached that point.

It was bad enough to be cut down from ten dollars a week to six dollars, without being called a liar.

Ned's hands twitched nervously. It was all he could do to restrain himself, as he replied:

"I don't allow any man to call me a liar, Mr. Schlim. You take that back."

"I take notings back," growled the notion dealer, starting for the door.

"You take it back!" shouted Ned, springing in front of him. "Quick! Take it back! You hear!"

Unquestionably Mr. Schlim heard, but what his rev was the clerks did not hear.

For did they care whether they heard or not; what

they saw was quite enough for them, and they in general untarily broke out with a faint cheer.

It was Schlim's tall hat flying off on the floor (And way, and Schlim's gold-rimmed eye-glasses flying t' I'm other, and Schlim himself going down among ade cases on to the floor.

"There! That settles it!" cried Ned, setting lips firmly. "Don't you call me a liar again!"

"Help! Murder! Bolice!" roared Schlim, picking himself up with no worse damage than a bump on his head. "You vas discharged! Put dot i THE owit! Put him owit! Somebody put him ov He quick!"

Nobody moved.

Schlim glared at Ned, and picking up his hat a As eye-glasses hastily left the store, for he saw his pa herne hurrying out of the office, and Ned's services w' Y valuable, as he well knew.

"What is all dis?" asked Mr. Schlambacher, an s his usual wheedling tone. "Ned Golden, I am s'c'prised. I tought you vas von of de quiet kind." O

"So I am," flashed Ned, "but I won't be called Th liar, and I'm tired of this everlasting faultfinding t I'm discharged, Mr. Schlambacher. Give me n, W money and I'll go." A

"Go! No, no! I do not vant you to go. Come and by my office. Ve vill talk it over. Dis vill not do sou all." N

"It will have to do, for I'm going," replied Nejen "It's no use to talk, Mr. Schlambacher, I'm done." A

Now, when Ned Golden said a thing, he meant scal This encounter was but the natural end of a long seies of petty insults to which he had been subjected. "w

Ten minutes later Ned found himself on Whi street, with his money in his pocket. Everybody spiti the store, Schlambacher included, was sorry to sa him go.

"Out of a job, by thunder," muttered the boy, wheplie he reached Broadway. "Well, I've known for a lon time that it would come to this sooner or later. I'm not sorry, and I don't believe I ever shall be."

He walked on down Broadway, thinking.

Times were dull, jobs were scarce. Ned knew this for he had been trying for six months to get another and had failed.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself, as he walkin along. "I'm sick of the notion business, anyhow. It the same everywhere, and—why not? By gracious, will!"

"GO TO THE KLONDIKE FOR GOLD!"

That was the sign.

It was displayed on a bulletin board in front of Broadway ticket office.

Ned's eyes chanced to rest upon it, and it seemed to come in direct answer to his question.

"I'll do it!" he muttered. "Why not I, as well as another? If I was to stick to the notion business for twenty years, what could I expect, the way business stands now? Nothing, probably all gone, the busi ness is all cut to

erally makes money. Go to the Klondike—yes, I l."

And Ned turned and entered the ticket office.

"I'm going to the Klondike," he said to the bald-headed man behind the counter; "can you tell me w to get there and what it will cost?"

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

THE bald-headed man stared.

He had only put out the bulletin that morning, hoping to draw attention to his ticket scalping office hereby.

As a matter of fact he had but a very dim notion where the Klondike actually was.

"You are going to the Klondike," he said. "Well, I was you—ticket for Chicago—yes, sir. Got one I n sell you for fourteen dollars and a half over the ickel Plate."

Others had crowded into the little office.

The bald-headed scalper had no sort of idea of wasting time on this would-be Klondiker, when there was Western ticket to be sold.

After the Chicago man there was a Cincinnati man, and after him one for Oshkosh and another for the outh.

Ned appreciated the situation and waited patiently.

At last the office was clear, and the bald-headed calper turned to him again.

"Well, Young Klondike," he said, half sneeringly, what is it you want to know?"

It was the first time Ned Golden ever had this pitiful applied to him, but it was not to be the last, by good deal, as he was soon to learn.

"I want to know how to get to the Klondike," replied Ned. "I saw your sign and I came in."

"Just so," replied the scalper. "You go by way f Frisco or Portland or Seattle; either you like."

"I know all that. Of course I've got to go to Alaska before I can reach the Klondike, but after that where does this wonderful gold region lie?"

"Now, I'll be blest if I know," laughed the scalper. "Fact is, I haven't any map of Alaska, but you come n to-morrow and I'll try and fix you out."

"But your sign?"

"Pshaw! That's business."

"You really know nothing about the Klondike, then?"

"Nothing at all, except that it's colder than the North Pole itself there. It's no place for a boy like you."

Now, this was a good deal for the scalper to say, for he would have sold a ticket for the interior of Africa to an Esquimau, if he had been put to it, but there was something about Ned that took his fancy.

"Say, I'd give up that idea if I was you," he said, confidentially. "The Klondike is certainly no place for a boy, but if yo ^{the} det ained to go, come to me and I'll use you s

"I guess you haven't sold many tickets to the Klondike yet," laughed Ned.

"Not one."

"I thought not. I'm going, though. Good-day."

"By gracious, I believe that boy will get there," muttered the bald-headed scalper, as he turned to enter the sales he had just made in his book.

Ned thought of Klondike all the afternoon, and, of course, managed to get all the information there was going at that time.

Later in the day he tried to find Dick, but his friend was not in when he called at the Wall street broker's office where he was employed, and Ned saw nothing of him until half-past nine that evening, when they chanced to run into each other in Madison Square.

It was "Hello, Dick," and "Hello, Ned," and then it all came out.

"Well, Dick, I'm off for the Klondike. Don't faint. I'm going—actually going, just as soon as ever I can get away."

To Ned's surprise Dick said nothing except to remark thoughtfully :

"Is that so?"

"It is," replied Ned; and then they walked down East Twenty-third street together, Ned waiting for Dick to speak, and Dick never saying a word.

"You don't seem to be half as much surprised as I thought you would be, Dick," said Ned at last.

"I ain't," replied Dick. "I made up my mind this morning that you would go to the Klondike sooner or later."

"But I didn't mean it then."

"Didn't you?"

"No. I was only fooling. Now I'm in earnest. Don't you want to know how I came to make up my mind?"

"Of course."

"I've been bounced."

"So have I."

"Dick! You don't mean it"

"Oh, it's a fact. I've left Ketchum & Skinner just as surely as you've left Schlambacher & Schlim."

"I was fired out."

"So was I."

"What for?"

"No business; not wanted."

"I punched Schlim's head and had to leave—you know I always said it would come to that."

"I know; I wouldn't want you to punch mine, Ned, but about this Klondike business, I—"

"You are going, too, Dick."

"Wish I could."

"And why not?"

"Haven't got the dust."

"We are going for the dust."

"You talk as though it was all settled about me."

"So it is."

"Pshaw! My capital amounts to less than fifty dollars. Any idea what it costs to get to the Klondike, Ned?"

"Yes, I've been working on that problem ever since two o'clock."

"And I've been at it since half-past three."

"Thunder! So you are really thinking of it, Dick Luckey?"

"No. I'm not thinking of it at all. I've given it up."

"Nonsense!"

"I have."

"You haven't; you're going."

"Can't be done, Ned."

"I say it can."

"What do you make the cost?"

"A thousand dollars would send me off in fine shape."

"I figured six hundred to do it."

"Too low."

"Too high, you mean. I've got fifty dollars in the Bleecker Street Savings Bank. Not a toothful on a Klondike trip. I guess I'll stay home."

By this time the boys had reached Third avenue; there was the usual evening crowd, the cable cars were clattering up and down; it was hard to hear each other speak.

Ned took Dick's arm and drew him over against the corner saloon out of the way of the crowd.

"Dick Luckey, you are going to the Klondike and that's all there is about it," he said. "I've got a thousand dollars in the Bowery Savings Bank and that's enough for us both."

"Whew!" whistled Dick. "Where did you strike it?"

"Mr. Leslie gave it to me, Dick. I did him many favors and just before his death he sent for me and gave me this money in cash."

"You don't mean it! Leslie was a good man."

"He was. No fellow could ask for a better boss, but I've had enough of Schlambacher & Schlim. I'd rather shovel dirt on the streets than work for them another day, so that's why I'm going to the Klondike, Dick Luckey, and you are going, too."

"Ned, I can't take your money, old man. You're awfully kind, but I'd only be a drag on you."

"Why?"

"There ain't enough for both of us according to your own figures."

"We'll take the chances. We can go second class, steerage, or some other old way, but we'll get there if we put our heads to it, you bet."

Dick's eyes sparkled.

"I believe we would," he said, "and of course I could pay you back, Ned, if I had any luck."

"Of course. It's settled. Luckey & Golden is the firm."

"No, no! Golden & Luckey!"

"This decides it. Heads I win, tails you lose."

Ned flipped up a cent, and as it struck the sidewalk a man suddenly sprang out from behind the pillar of the elevated railroad, and collared Ned before he could see whether it had come down heads or tails.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got you at last!"

he hissed. "Ha! Ha! Hold out your hands while I put the bracelets on. Ye gods and little fishes! wrong again! beg pardon, young feller. I thought you were my man!"

It is a wonder that Ned did not serve him worse than he had served Schlim.

Probably he might have done so if the man had not released him as promptly as he did.

Pulling away he took off his shiny plug hat and made Ned a profound bow.

He was a little man of forty or thereabouts, with a squinting left eye, which winked furiously now, for it was quite evident that he expected to have trouble with Ned.

"Don't you catch me that way again unless you want to get hurt," flashed Ned.

"What's the matter with you, anyhow?" demanded Dick. "Are you off your trolley, or what?"

The squinting eye winked the faster. The shiny plug went to its old place on the back of the little man's head.

"My trolley is all right, boys," he said, confidently. "It's my eye that's wrong. The left one, and the right ain't any better than it ought to be. In fact, I may be said to look six ways for Sunday. It's my little affliction, but I try to bear it gracefully. I've got me into trouble before now."

"And it's likely to again if you go for strangers as you did for me," laughed Ned. "Suppose I had been your man—what then?"

"What then? Why, I should have arrested you. I'm a detective—probably you are not on to me yet."

"A detective?"

"Yes."

"Who is your man? What's he wanted for?"

"Leading questions, my dear boy, leading questions, and I don't answer them," said the stranger, shaking his finger at Ned. "So long! See you later. Sorry you ain't my man."

"By gracious, then, I ain't," laughed Ned. "Would it be a leading question to ask the name of this great detective who shook me up till my back teeth rattled?"

The eye winked at the rate of six vibrations to the second; the stranger placed his finger against his nose.

"Decidedly a leading question, dear boy!" he drawled; "and if I was to answer it I should say as God I do now. I am the Great Unknown!"

Whereupon the little man trotted off up the avenue, leaving Ned and Dick laughing heartily on the corner.

"There goes a lunatic, sure," said Dick, "and probably he'd say he left two behind him if he only knew."

"That we were going to the Klondike?"

"Yes."

"So be it. Let those laugh who win. Dick!"

"What is it, Ned?"

"I told you I had a thousand dollars."

"Yes."

'Hear me ! I swear that by this day twelve months at thousand dollars shall be a million ! Laugh as you like, Dick Luckey, and let others laugh as they can, but I'm off for the land of gold."

CHAPTER III.

OFF FOR THE LAND OF GOLD.

THE boom of a cannon announced the departure of the little steamer, Sarah B. Hyde, from Seattle, Washington, and the five thousand persons, more or less, who had collected on the wharf to see the Klondikers sail, set up a rousing cheer.

It was responded to by those on the deck of the steamer.

Men shouted back to their friends on shore from the deck ; men shouted to those on the deck from the shore ; women screamed and cried and some fainted. "Three cheers for the Klondike !" yelled a leather-junged individual at the end of the wharf, who had climbed to the top of a spile.

How they shouted !

Such enthusiasm was never seen since the days '49.

But it was soon over.

The Sarah B. Hyde swung around and headed up the sound.

Smaller and smaller grew the figures on the wharf, fainter and fainter came their cheers.

And it is safe to say that everybody on the Hyde was glad when it was all over, for leave-takings are anything but pleasant.

When the last handkerchief had waved, the passengers distributed themselves about the steamer as best they could, and there was a general air of relief.

"Nobody to waste sentiment on us, Ned," remarked a slim young fellow, who stood with a friend, looking back at the town over the stern rail. "After all, it's just as well."

"I don't know, Dick," was the reply. "It gives a fellow a kind of a lonely feeling. Do you know what was thinking when that chap remarked in the boarding house last night that if I ate that piece of mince pie I'd see my grandmother?"

"No ; what ?"

"That I'd eat the whole pie if I could see my dear old grandaunt—she's the only woman who really cared for me."

"Pshaw ! You won't have to say that always, Ned Golden ! Wait till we come back from the Klondike loaded down with golden nuggets. Won't the dear girls be ready to make friends, then ? Oh, no ! I guess not ! Not at all."

"Wait till we get 'em, Dick. There's many a hard day between us and the Klondike yet."

"Don't borrow trouble."

"I don't. It ain't my style. I think we've done first rate. Here we are with our outfit all snug in the hold, and our passage paid to Juneau and four hundred dollars left in our pouch. Could any one ask for anything better than that ?"

"I should say not, considering the amount of stuff we had to lay in."

"And we shall want every bit of it, and don't you forget it."

"If all the stories we hear of the Klondike country are true, I suppose we shall, but I'm not worrying. We ain't the only ones. In New York everybody is talking Klondike, and out here everybody is going."

"Wait till next year. New York will catch the fever."

"Just what I'm waiting for—next year. I expect to be worth a million dollars then."

And so our two young Klondikers chatted on as the Hyde steamed on among the islands, heading for the broad Pacific.

They were now fairly off for the land of gold.

And yet only two weeks had elapsed since that little affair at Schlambacher & Schlim's.

Ned Golden was not the sort of fellow to let grass grow under his feet.

Having persuaded Dick to join him in his perilous undertaking, Ned went right to work.

First, he procured copies of San Francisco and Seattle papers and carefully studied them.

These, of course, contained very full accounts of the Klondike gold discoveries and of the country, its resources and its dangers, giving details which the New York papers did not go into at all.

Having decided that their best starting point would be Seattle, the boys on the third day paid a visit to the bald-headed ticket scalper, and bought two cut-rate tickets for that city, going west over the Northern Pacific railroad.

These tickets came as low as emigrant tickets would have done, and enabled them to ride in the regular cars on the Pacific express.

Berths in the Pullman were promptly ruled off as unnecessary luxuries, which they certainly were, for the boys arrived at Seattle in splendid shape and not a bit the worse for sitting up a few nights on the train.

Here there was a delay, as the General Powell, the steamer which they had counted upon taking for Alaska, had every square inch of berth room engaged, so nothing remained but to engage on the Sarah B. Hyde.

Nor were they a moment too soon in this.

Within ten minutes after they were booked on the Hyde, the steamer was declared full, and a line of over three hundred people turned away from the office.

In fact, Ned Golden and Dick Luckey were the last names to go down on the sailing list.

And so they started, and as the sun went down, they still stood there by the stern rail, looking back at the receding shore and discussing their prospects, when a flashily-dressed young man, with a banjo in a green bag swung over his shoulder, came suddenly up behind them, and slapping Ned familiarly on the back, exclaimed :

"Well, Young Klondike, what do you think of it ? Great, ain't it ? By jove, we're going to make the

crack run of the season. My name's Ralph Dawley. I'm going to the Klondike, or I'm going to blazes, one of the two. Have a drink?"

"Thank you, I don't use the stuff," answered Ned, making no move to accept the offered flask.

"Don't, eh? How the blazes do you expect to get along in Alaska without a nip of whisky once in a while? It sells for a dollar a drink in Dawson, and I've got five barrels aboard I'm taking out on spec."

"I've got along so far, and I guess I can manage it just as well in Alaska as I have in the States."

"Don't you flatter yourself. It's colder than blazes up there, and a man must warm up once in a while or freeze."

"Colder than blazes is good. Better stuff it and hang it up in your stateroom."

"Oh, I had, eh? Now you are laughing at me, Young Klondike. Well, I'm half shot, I'll admit!"

"You look it!"

"Do I? Thought I never gave myself away. I'll give you a tune, though. Here goes."

Thus saying, Mr. Ralph Dawley unslung his banjo, and after thumbing the strings a few moments, started on "A New Coon Come to Town," which he sang with great gusto.

If he had been the only one at it on the deck that pleasant September night, he might have drawn a crowd, but there were several other banjos going, and the boys and their new companion attracted no special attention.

Several other songs followed.

Dawley played well, and his voice was deep and musical.

Ned began to think that perhaps he was not such a bad fellow after all, so when, at last, he laid aside the banjo, they began to talk, and Ned told his own name and introduced Dick.

Dawley announced that he was from Chicago, and expressed the hope that they might all three become good friends.

"By the way, what kind of an outfit have you fellers got?" he asked.

"Oh, I guess it's all right," replied Ned.

"Got a list?"

"Yes."

"Let's look at it."

Ned produced the list which Dawley read aloud.

As there was not an unnecessary article in it, Ned having taken the advice of a returned Klondiker before making his purchases, we may as well give it in detail as it may serve as a guide to some adventurous Klondiker, following in the footsteps of our hero.

Remember, after leaving Juneau and starting on the long journey inland, the Klondike gold fields lie six hundred miles distant, through an utterly desolate region, and even after arriving at Dawson City, the nearest inhabited town to the Klondike, little or nothing can be purchased by outsiders, as matters now stand, for what provisions the people have, sell at fabulous prices, and are not to be had by strangers, especially Americans, at any price.

Here is the list which Ralph Dawley read aloud nan's
the deck of the Hyde that night:

Flour.....	400 pounds	Onions, evaporated.....	5 po
Cornmeal.....	20 "	Potatoes.....	25
Oatmeal.....	40 "	Coffee.....	25
Rice.....	25 "	Tea.....	10
Beans.....	100 "	Condensed Milk.....	2 doz
Candies.....	40 "	Soap.....	.5 bar
Salt Pork.....	25 "	Matches.....	60 p'k
Sugar.....	75 "	Butter.....	.50 po
Baking Powder.....	.8	Stove.....	1
Bacon.....	150 "	Gold Pans.....	2
Smoked Beef.....	25 "	Buckets.....	2
Soda.....	2 "	Cups.....	2
Salt.....	20 "	Tin Plates.....	3
Pepper.....	1 "	Knives and Forks.....	2 ead
Mustard.....	1 "	Spoons; 6 table, 6 tea.....	
Ginger.....	1 "	Whetstone.....	1
Dried Apples.....	20	Coffee Pots.....	2
" Peaches.....	20 "	Nails.....	.20 pou
" Apricots.....	20 "	Picks and Handles.....	.2 each
" Plums.....	10 "	Saw.....	1
Raisins.....	5 "	Hatchets.....	2
Shovels.....	2	Box of Medicines.....	
Files.....	3	Pitch.....	3 pou
Jackknives.....	2	Oakum.....	3
Axes and Handles.....	2 each	Frying Pans.....	2
Chisels.....	3 sizes	Woolen Clothes.....	.2 ex.
Butcher Knife.....	1	Boots.....	.4 ex pa
Compass.....	1	Snow Goggles.....	.2 pair
Rope, 1-2 inch.....	100 foot	Iron Pot.....	1

This was the list, but there were some things down on it.

Be very sure the boys had not forgotten to provide themselves with a fine revolver each and a rifle apiece and the necessary cartridges to match.

The list embraces only the actual necessities of Klondiker for one year.

In some instances the number of articles had been doubled, but not in respect to provisions.

Ralph Dawley, who was now apparently sobering up a bit, observed this at once.

"Why, there ain't more than a six months' supply for both of you fellows here," he remarked.

"I know that very well," replied Ned, "but it's all our means would allow."

"Got any money left?" asked Dawley, suddenly.

"No," replied Ned, looking him steadily in the eye,

"but I've got a splendid banjo down in my bunk, an'

I can play just as well as you can. First money I ge I'll frame it and hang it round my neck, so that yo won't be put to the trouble of asking about it."

Dawley laughed and started up "As I walk tha levee round-round-round."

"You're fly!" he chuckled. "You'll do, Yorker even if you didn't happen to come from Chicago."

"Do you claim that Chicago has a first mortgage on all the common sense there is in the world?" replied Ned, and while he was saying it his eyes opened wide.

Dick saw what he saw, but Dawley didn't, for he was too busy with his banjo.

A man was stealing toward him over the deck.

He was an odd-looking person, short and rather stout, with big cavalry boots coming up over his knees and a shiny tall hat set on the back of his head.

There was a squint to his left eye, which kept winking violently.

He held up his finger to the boys to keep silent.

"The Great Unknown!" thought Ned, and then

man's hand came down with a thump upon Dawley's shoulder with force enough to send the banjo flying to the deck.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! I've got you at last!" exclaimed. "Hold up your hands while I put the clets on!"

Dawley sprang to his feet and tearing himself free, seized the "Great Unknown" by the throat. "The blazes you have!" he cried. "Who's got me? What you got me for? Who the blazes are you any—say?"

"Ye gods and little fishes! Wrong again!" gasped Unknown. "I beg your pardon, my good friend. I made a mistake."

"I should say you had," growled Dawley. "You don't have to say it. I admit it. I'm always making these mistakes."

"Well, you'd better not make it again with me. I've a good mind to break my banjo over your blasted head!"

Which would bust your banjo and damage my lap hat all to no purpose. Far better break the neck of a bottle and settle it with a drink."

"Not much! Yes, I will, though, if you'll pay for

"Pay for it! Ha, ha! That's good! Here am I likely to jump into Puget Sound and drown myself in sorrow for my blunder. It is I who should be stoned, not you. Why, I'm entirely ready to forgive and take a drink at your expense."

Here the Unknown winked at the boys with such a cynical expression, that they could not help laughing right. Indeed, they had had all they could do to stop from laughing before.

"Well, I don't mind; we'll have a drink," said Dawley, joining in the laugh.

Out came the flask.

The Unknown took a long pull. "Drop it! Drop it!" cried Dawley. "And whisky is dearer than a dollar a drink at Dawson. Drop it, I say!"

"Ah, dear boy, I never drop a good thing until I've to," chuckled the Unknown, handing back the flask.

"It's the last drink you'll ever have on me," growled Dawley. "What's your name? Who are you, how?"

"I'm a private detective and my name is Smith," lied the Unknown, winking at Ned. "Say, young fellow, haven't I seen you before?"

"You bet," laughed Ned.

"I was sure of it. Mistook you for my man once or I was dead wrong. Let's see, Louisville, Kentucky, isn't it?"

"No."

"No! Oh, I remember! It was in New Orleans, Gravier street."

"No, sir! Never was in New Orleans in my life." "Bother! My memory is getting as bad as my eyesight. But I remember now. It was Rio Janeiro, a year ago. I met you at the Mountain House."

"Nonsense! I never was in Rio Janeiro any more than New Orleans."

"Then really you'll have to jog my memory, dear boy. Stay, though! I have it. It was Jerusalem! Hotel Oriental. I arrested you—"

"Not in Jerusalem, old man."

"Hit him again! Paris? On the steps of the Bourse in '90? Now, I'm right."

"As wrong as ever. Give it up."

"Wait! I did arrest you?"

"You tried it."

"Of course. I never forget a face. Mistook you for my man, I s'pose."

"Seems to me you've been looking for that man of yours a long time."

"For ten years, dear boy, and in every part of the world."

"What did he do?" drawled Dawley.

"Stole a pair of boots from Cohen's second hand shoe store in Baxter street," chuckled the Unknown.

"There was a million dollar bill hidden in the toe of the left. That's why I want him. Let's see, I have it now. It was on the corner of Third Avenue and Twenty-Third street, New York, a couple of weeks ago."

"Right, you've hit it at last," said Ned.

"Knew it was either there or in the Transvaal last summer. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I merit a reward for this mighty exercise of memory. Boys, let's have a drink."

"Not out of my bottle," said Dawley, drawing back.

"So? Well, I must learn to bear privation. I shall have to get used to it. On the Klondike drinks come high, so I may as well begin to school myself now."

"Are you going to the Klondike?" asked Dick.

"You bet."

"To dig gold?"

"Dig nothing. I cannot dig and to beg I am ashamed, as the Scripture says. No; I have reason to believe I may strike my man on the Klondike, and that's why I'm going there."

"Good!" said Ned. "You've heard of his being there, I suppose?"

"Not at all. I've heard nothing—don't expect to; I've searched every other corner of the world from Greenland to Cape Horn; from Frisco to Hong Kong; from New York to Timbuctoo, including all the leading cities of Asia, America, Africa, Europe and Australia."

"Ever been to the moon?" drawled Dawley.

"No, young man, nor to the Klondike, and that's why I'm going there now. You see I'm bound to meet my man sometime if I only keep on the go long enough, for the world is small and, by the way, as the Governor of North Carolina remarked to the Governor of South Carolina, it's a long time between drinks."

"It will be longer before you get a pull at my bottle again," Dawley growled, and he picked up his banjo and walked away.

The unknown took his seat and turned to Ned.

"Look out for that fellow," he said. "He's no good. But you two are straight. I can see that."

"Thank you for nothing," said Ned. "I can take care of myself."

"Perhaps. It's more than I can always do. Do you drink?"

"No."

"Don't."

"I don't intend to."

"Stick to it. Look out for the man who does."

"You, for instance."

"Yes; if you like, but I'll never do dirt to you, Young Klondike. I like your face too well, and as for your partner, I'll bet he's a brick."

"Thank you; if it wasn't so cold I'd take off my hat and make a bow."

"Not necessary. You'll live without it and so shall I. Going to the Klondike, eh? Well, well, well! I wonder if you have any idea where the Klondike really is."

"I think I have, but tell me one thing."

"No leading questions. I won't answer them, as sure as my name is Brown."

"Brown! Thought you said it was Smith?"

"You're mistaken. I did mention Robinson, but that was only to throw that lush off the track. What's your question? Fire away."

"Why did you call me Young Klondike?"

"Give it up. The notion took me—that's all."

"The notion seems to take everybody."

"So? You've been called so before?"

"Yes."

"Ha! Ha! Then the name will stick to you. What's the real one?"

"Ferguson."

"Just so; and as sure as mine is Jones, that's the truth."

"You're getting kind of mixed up, ain't you?"

"Not at all, young man—not at all. It's you that are mixed up. I think I ought to know my own name, but I'll guarantee you don't know how far Dawson City is from Juneau."

"About six hundred miles."

"Yes, and the longest six hundred miles you ever traveled. Let me tell you the distances. They are correct. Official! You can bank on them every time."

And the Unknown rattled off the following table. As it is strictly correct, according to the official reports from Alaska, we may as well give it here.

"It's eight hundred and eighty-four miles from Seattle to Dyea, boys," he began. "We go from Juneau up there, you know, and then the tough part of the journey begins. Here's the table of distances from Dyea:

- "Six miles to head of canoe navigation.
- 16 3-4 " summit of Chilkoot Pass.
- 26 1-2 " head of Lake Linderman.
- 34 1 2 " foot of Lake Linderman.
- 35 1-2 " head of Lake Bennett.
- 61 3-4 " foot of Lake Bennett.

64 1-2	" foot of Cariboo Crossing.
81 1-4	" foot of Tagish Lake.
86 1-4	" head of Lake Marsh.
106 1-4	" foot of Lake Marsh.
123	" head of canyon.
123 3-4	" foot of canyon.
125 1-4	" head of White Horse Rapids.
140	" Tahkeenah river.
153	" head of Lake Le Barge.
187	" foot of Lake Le Barge.
216	" Hootalinqua river.
242	" Cassiar Bar.
249	" Big Salmon river.
285 1-2	" Little Salmon river.
344	" Five Finger rapids.
350	" Rink rapids.
403 1-2	" Pelly river.
499 1-2	" White river.
500	" Stewart river.
529	" Sixty Mile Post.
549	" Dawson City."

"Good Heavens," cried Ned. "How in thunder can you remember all that?"

"Why, it's nothing. My memory has failed it much of late, but you see I'm getting old. So I can't be blamed, boys. Meet you on the Klondike or somewhere else. You needn't be afraid of me, Ned Golden. I never mistake a fellow twice for my man."

Thus saying, the Unknown thrust his hands into his pockets and walked away, his big boots clattering noiselessly over the deck.

"Is he a lunatic, or what?" said Ned. "By gosh, I never saw such a man."

"Oh, he's no lunatic," laughed Dick. "He knows your name all right, Ned."

"So it seems. Got it from the sailing list, I suppose. I reckon we can get his there, too."

But they did not meet with much satisfaction in respect.

The gong now rang for supper, and after the night was over, the boys took a look at the sailing list hanging in the purser's office.

It was impossible to identify the Unknown amid the long string of names, and the purser either did not remember the man, or did not want to.

So the Hyde steamed on among the islands and windings of Puget Sound.

At nine o'clock the boys started to turn in.

"Wonder who's got the top berth in our stateroom?" remarked Ned, as they were about to enter.

"I hope it ain't that fellow Dawley," replied Diggs. Ned opened the door and they entered.

As they did so a head popped over the edge of the upper berth.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! It's Young Klondike!" cried the well known voice. "Good enough! Fellow travelers to the land of gold!"

The man in the top berth was the Great Unknown.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT OF THE BIG STORM.

NED GOLDEN thought he was quite a sailor till night.

It was not until after the Sarah B. Hyde had passed out of the straits of San Juan de Fuca, onto the broad

waters of the Pacific, that he knew what being a good sailor actually implied.

When the Hyde first entered upon the Pacific, the ocean was like a mill pond, as smooth as glass, with a long, steady swell, which gave to the little steamer a motion rather agreeable than otherwise.

All hands turned up at the breakfast table except such as had "hit the bottle" too hard on the previous night, among whom was Mr. Ralph Dawley.

Ned and Dick were on hand, of course, and so was the Unknown.

The boys were willing to admit that the man was all that could be desired as a room-mate.

No rattling on there in the stateroom. He slept quietly through the night, and was up and on deck before they awoke, where he met them with a cheerful "good-morning."

It was not until they sat down at the breakfast table, that he showed his peculiarity again.

"Say, do you see that fellow with the big nose opposite?" he whispered to Ned.

"Yes; I do."

"Well, I'm watching him. I suspicion him of being my man."

"Did your man have a big nose?"

"Perhaps."

"Don't you know?"

"Disguises, my dear boy, disguises."

"Could anybody disguise a bugle like that?"

"Ah, but my man is a shrewd one! He must be, since he's been dodging me these ten years. Pass me them buckwheat cakes, dear boy, before they get cold."

The boys made many acquaintances among the passengers that day.

They seemed to be a jolly set of fellows in the main, of all ages, nationalities and previous condition.

Among them were old miners, doctors, lawyers, store-keepers, laborers and actors. Ned discovered one undertaker who had just failed in business in San Francisco, which was out-balanced by Dick's discovery that a large, coarse-looking fellow with a big beard, and a face like a pirate, was going out as a missionary to the Indians, and had no intention of digging gold.

The talk was Klondike and gold—gold and Klondike.

It was, "when we get there," and what we shall do after we get there, all day long.

Very few spoke of the terrible hardships they were likely to encounter.

The subject of the intense cold of Alaska, and the possibilities of starvation were avoided by common consent.

That evening the sun went down beneath the glassy waters in a blaze of glory.

Ned and Dick were watching it when Ralph Dawley came up behind them looking very glum.

"It's an outrage!" he growled. "By Heavens, I won't submit to it! Would you, Ned?"

"What's the matter now?" asked Ned.

"Why, the captain has ordered the steward not to sell me any more whisky."

"So?"

"Yes."

"That's hard lines."

"Ain't it? I can't live without the stuff, and mine's all gone."

"Thought you had a dozen barrels more or less in the cellar—I mean the hold."

"Who said so?"

"You said so."

"Nonsense."

"But you did last night. You said you were going to retail it in Dawson City for a dollar a drink."

"Oh, I was full last night. I'd give a dollar for a drink just about now."

"You'll get all the fun you want before morning without any drink, my lad," remarked the mate, who chanced to be passing.

"What's he mean?" asked Dick.

"That there's going to be a storm," said Dawley. "Everybody is talking about it. They say it's going to be a hummer. If I only had a flask of good old rye to keep me company, I shouldn't mind."

"That fellow is a regular lush, and I don't want anything to do with him," remarked Ned, as they were undressing that night.

"I strongly suspect that he ain't got any money to pay for the stuff, and that's why he don't get it," replied Dick. "Everybody else seems to get all they want at the bar, as far as I can see."

It was hard to believe in the storm, when Ned went to sleep.

His was the lower bunk and Dick was above him. The Unknown, who had been very quiet all day, was snoring when they turned in.

The last Ned remembered was counting the intervals between his snores, and then all at once there was a terrific bang, and he sprang up just in time to see a dark form go plunging out into the cabin, the door slamming behind him.

He had been asleep for hours.

The steamer was rolling and pitching at a fearful rate.

"Your money, Ned Golden! Your money! Is it safe?" the Unknown called down from the top bunk.

Ned clapped his hand to the money-belt about his waist.

It was there. The four hundred dollars was intact.

"My money is all right, what there is of it," he cried, springing up. "Was someone in the room, Mister—?"

"Brown. Call me Brown. The name is as good as any other. Yes, Ned Golden, there was someone in the room, and that someone was bending over you when he got my boot against his head."

"Who was it?"

"Blamed if I know. There, now, don't you think of going out after him. Let it drop, but to-morrow night don't you forget to bolt the stateroom door."

"But this ought to be reported to the captain. I ——"

Ned never finished that sentence.

Next he knew he was thrown violently against the washstand and then went sprawling on the floor.

"Get back to bed! You can't keep your pins in this gale," growled the Unknown. "We're right in it now and this is only the beginning. Can you manage to bolt the door?"

It was all that Ned could do, and he was glad enough to crawl back into his bunk.

"I want to know more about this business," he called.

"Don't know no more than that the thief was there, and I shayed my boot at him," growled the Unknown. "I'm going to sleep again, so don't bother me."

In a moment he was snoring as usual, but Ned never closed his eyes again that night, though Dick slept through it all, and only heard the story at the breakfast table, for Ned was on deck early, where the Unknown soon joined him.

They were the only passengers out.

"Great sight, ain't it?" shouted the detective, coming up behind Ned. "Good Lord, how the wind does blow! Look at them waves! Ain't they wonderful? It would scare me, if I hadn't seen worse many a time; but this is bad enough."

"You gents better go below!" shouted the mate, hurrying past them. "The deck is no place for passengers now!"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'm thinking we shall all go below if it don't let up soon," chuckled the Unknown. "You stand it well, Ned Golden! Don't look a bit white about the gills!"

"I ain't seasick, if you mean that."

"Of course I mean it; I—er—hold on! By the Jumping Jeremiah! The feller with the big nose! My man as sure as fate! Watch me! I'm going to take him now!"

The big-nosed Klondiker had come on deck hastily—very hastily, in fact.

He shot one wild look about him and then rushed to the rail, and then—well, no matter!

There was a contribution to Father Neptune, but the Unknown came back to Ned with a long face after the Klondiker had staggered back through the cabin door.

"No; it ain't my man," he said. "I was just going to clap the bracelets on when I saw my mistake! What's that? The breakfast gong? I'll bet you and I will be the only ones at the table, young Klondike, and I'll gamble that the fishes don't get an ounce of my meal or yours, either. Ever been to sea before?"

"Never."

"Well, you stand it well—come on."

Dick and six others constituted the breakfast party.

The long table was deserted, but the Chinese waiters did not seem to mind the storm a bit and ran back and forth from the kichen as lively as ever.

"Them Chinks wouldn't turn a hair of their pig

tails if the bottom was to drop out of the ocean," remarked the Unknown. "No, Dick Luckey, we don't know who the thief was, if I did, I—ha! What's that?"

Suddenly a hoarse shout rang out on deck.

"Ahoy there! Ahoy! On board the wreck!" came the cry.

Everybody ran on deck of course.

The sailors were crowding at the rail.

At no great distance ahead the boys could see a small steamer battling with the storm.

It was easy to do this for let it be understood the sky was clear; in fact, but for the terrific gale the day was a perfect one. These terrible windstorms are unusual on the Pacific, but when they do come, no others can match them, unless indeed, we except the simoon of the Indian ocean.

Evidently the steamer had broken down during the night and having sprung a leak as well, was now on the verge of sinking.

Her deck, swept clear of everything movable, was now almost on a level with the water; she was laboring heavily, every wave sweeping clear over her. Any-one could see that it was only a question of a little time.

There was no living thing to be seen on the deck, except a big black Newfoundland dog, who was running about barking wildly.

"There's no one aboard," called Captain Forest. "We don't want to muss with her. Get back to your places, boys, and go to work."

Were Ned Golden's eyes sharper and further reaching than the captain's, aided by his glass?

Was he dreaming, or did he really see a thin, white hand waving out of the window of the little deck house, which covered the cabin stairway?

"Dick! Dick! Do you see?" he cried, pointing. "There is someone there!"

"I don't see any one, Ned."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I do, then!" cried the Unknown, winking violently.

"Hey! Hello! Captain! Say! There's a woman on that steamer, as sure as my name is Green!" he cried.

"Where? What do you see?" called the captain.

"There, at the window!" shouted Ned. "Captain, you must try to save her!"

"Bust my breeches buttons, but there is a hen in that coop, and that's what's the matter with the dog!" shouted the captain. "Can't do nothing for her, though. I can't send my men off in a sea like this."

"You must!" cried Ned. "In the name of humanity!"

"Don't tell me what I must do, or I'll put you in irons," snarled the captain, but just the same he shouted an order which sent the Hyde nearer to the wreck.

Those on deck watched earnestly.

There seemed to be little hope that they would

reach the sinking steamer in time to be of the slightest use.

The hand had now disappeared, but the dog continued to run up and down and bark.

Captain Forest kept his glass fixed upon the wreck, but he had answered Ned so savagely that no one dared to speak to him again.

Soon they came near enough to the floating hulk to see everything with perfect distinctness, and just then the hand was again projected from the window and slightly waved.

"Mr. Rogers, man the starboard boat and pull over there and see what it means!" roared the captain. "That is, if you can get any one to go with you! I don't order it! I only request."

"Who'll go, boys?" shouted the mate.

Two men sprang forward.

"We want at least six!" cried Rogers. "I won't stir a peg with less!"

No one spoke or moved.

The captain had said his say and was silent.

"Are you all cowards?" shouted the mate. "Will you leave that poor soul to go down with the hulk? A woman, too! Bah! There are no sailors now-a-days!"

"I'll go!" cried Ned, springing to the side of the mate. "I can pull an oar!"

"Here's another!" shouted Dick.

"Three of a kind," chuckled the Unknown, jamming his plug hat firmly on the back of his head.

"And three and three make six!" cried the mate. "These gents have shamed you, lads; the least you can do is to help us cast off."

There were willing hands enough for this, but the work was executed in silence.

Indeed, it was very difficult to make one's voice heard above the howling of the wind.

When Ned felt himself going down with the boat, his heart was in his mouth, but he took up his oar bravely. Dick was quiet and determined, the Unknown as cool as a cucumber.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah?" he bawled in Ned's ear, "who knows but what I shall find my man on board!"

"Don't talk," said Mr. Rogers, "you'll need all the wind you've got, boys. Now, then, let her go! We'll save that life if the old tub only keeps afloat long enough for us to get there."

Then they pulled away with a will.

Tough work! Hard pulling! Death staring them in the face every instant!

That was the sort of job the boys had undertaken.

But they made steady progress, and the Hyde hovered as near as she dared, for there was great danger that the swash of her screw would swamp both steamer and boat.

"Ahoy, there! On board the wreck!" bawled the mate, as they came alongside.

"Bow-wow-wow!" barked the dog, running up and down wildly, but the hand did not come out of the cabin window again.

"Dead, like enough, poor thing," said the mate. "This here steamer is going to Davy Jones in just about two shakes, and we'll be lucky if we don't get pulled down with her. Blast my eyes, I don't want to go aboard!"

"I'll go!" cried Ned.

"No, let me go," interfered Dick.

"There's a law against kids risking their lives," shouted the Unknown. "Pull close, Rogers, I'm the man for the job."

"Not while I'm here," said Ned. "A little nearer, Mr. Rogers. That's it! So!"

They were close to the sinking hulk now.

Ned caught a rope which was dangling from one of the davits, and swung himself on deck with all the skill of an old sailor.

The men in the boat broke into a hearty cheer, as he ran toward the deck house and flung open the door.

CHAPTER V.

DICK LUCKEY'S LUCK.

THE sight which met Ned Golden's gaze inside the deck house, was enough to move a heart of stone.

There, stretched upon the floor, lay a sweet-faced girl of about his own age.

Her golden hair was unfastened, and lay trailing in the water which had collected on the floor of the deck house, her hands were clasped together; to all appearance she was dead.

Ned spoke to her, but she did not answer.

He bent down and examined more closely; she was still breathing, and in spite of the deathly whiteness of her face, he saw that she still lived.

"If I can save her I'll do well," thought Ned, as he raised the girl in his strong arms.

Dick met him at the door of the deck house. They had tried to hold him back, but Dick would do it and he swung himself up on to the wreck after Ned.

"Is she dead?" he demanded. "By gracious, isn't she a stunner!"

"Hustle round and see if there's any one else on board, Dick!" cried Ned. "I've got all I can do to get her on to the boat."

"Need any help?"

"No. I can manage."

It was hard work though.

"Let her come, lad!" cried Rogers. "I can catch her! Is she dead?"

"Don't know. Are you sure you can hold her?"

"Yes, yes! Confound that dog! Chuck him down first!"

The dog was barking furiously and jumping about Ned for joy.

"Throw down the dog, Dick!" cried Ned.

But Dick was gone. The dog, however, seemed to comprehend what was wanted, and with a sudden spring leaped down into the boat of his own accord, barking louder than ever when he got there and looking up at Ned.

"That's her dog, I'll bet a hat!" cried the Un-

known. "Watch your chance, Ned. Don't move too quick."

Now the boat was down, and now it was up again; now crashing against the side of the steamer, and now at the end of the rope to which the two sailors were holding on for dear life.

It was difficult to know when to act, for a false movement might plunge the poor girl into the water.

"Now!" cried Rogers suddenly, as the boat rose with the wave.

Ned tossed the light form forward, and the mate caught the girl in his arms.

The shock nearly swamped the boat.

Just then a furious blast swept over them and a mountainous wave sent the boat almost to the level of the deck, over which it swept, sending torrents of water down into the cabin into which Dick had ventured.

It is a wonder the boy ever came up alive, but there he was at the head of the stairs, dripping from head to foot, when Ned rushed back in search of him.

He held a small black leather grip in his hand.

"Great goodness! This is terrific!" he sputtered. "We want to get off as quick as we can, Ned. The cabin is half full of water now. Is the girl safe?"

"Yes. What did you find?"

"Not a living soul. I found this, though. It was in a stateroom—mebbe it belongs to her."

They lost no time in getting back into the boat.

"Pull away!" shouted the mate, "and pull astern, boys. I want to get sight of the name of this craft, if I can."

They pulled with a will, but it was awkward work with the girl lying there in the bottom of the boat, her head pillow'd on the Unknown's coat, which he had immediately stripped off for the purpose, and the dog crouching at her feet.

"She'll come to, never you fear," said Rogers. "I've seen 'em worse'n that, many a time. Purty, ain't she? You're sure there was nobody else aboard, young man?"

"Dead sure," replied Dick; "I called again and again, but no one answered."

"See any dead ones floating around?"

"No."

"It would have made your har riz if you had, but Lord, I've seen 'em many's the time. General Swan, San Francisco! Well, well! The old Swan! Thought I knew her. If Captain Healey is still a running her I understand it. He's a cowardly hound and would think nothing of going off and deserting that gal, and that's just what they've done."

They were astern now, and the name of the steamer caught the mate's eye as the wave receded.

Just then a hoarse whistle from the Hyde warned them to return.

As they pulled away from the water-logged steamer, the Unknown asked more about her.

"She belongs to the Alaska Commercial Company," said the mate. "No Klondikers on board of

her, you can bet, nor any other passengers neither. I can't understand who this gal can be."

"Look!" cried Dick. "Look, look!"

"Yes, she's a-going," said Mr. Rogers, quietly. "I've seen many of 'em go. Lucky for us we got away when we did, or—there, she's gone!"

Suddenly the stern of the Swan seemed to rise out of the water.

There was one convulsive movement, and the little steamer vanished from their sight. Silence came over all as they pulled back to the Hyde.

Not so hard a struggle now, for the wind was dying down, and Captain Forest, whose bark was decidedly worse than his bite, brought the steamer as close to them as he dared.

As Ned looked down upon that fair, young face, he thought that never in all his life had he seen one so lovely.

"Don't you fret, lad," said Mr. Rogers, "she'll come out all right, and if nobody else tells her that she owes her life to you this day, I will. I give it to you straight, I should have called off on this business if you hadn't volunteered just as you did."

Cheer after cheer went up from the Klondikers as the boat approached the Hyde.

Willing hands to help them there were in plenty, and the girl was tenderly lifted from the boat when it swung up on the davits, and she was consigned to the care of the stewardess, while Ned and Dick went below to change their clothes.

When the boys came on deck they were immediately surrounded by the Klondikers and warmly congratulated on what they had done.

Suddenly they found themselves heroes.

Even Captain Forest came and shook hands with Ned, but he did not say anything or attempt any apology for his rough speech.

"Three cheers for Young Klondike, the bravest boy on the Hyde!" shouted the Unknown, after the captain moved on.

The Klondikers cheered with a will.

Then someone started a round for Dick.

No one seemed to think of the Unknown.

"Three cheers for Mr. Brown!" shouted Ned, determined that he should not be left out, for all through the perilous trip he had displayed the greatest courage and coolness.

But the detective would not have the cheers.

"Hold on, boys!" he broke in, before any one could respond. "My name's not Brown—it's Black! I don't want any cheers! Hooray for the dog!"

Everybody laughed, for everybody was "onto" the Unknown's peculiarities by this time.

"You told me it was Snyder last night!" cried the undertaker. "How's that?"

"So it was yesterday! Gentlemen, I'm a modest man, and—"

"You told me your name was Duffy before we left Seattle!" shouted another.

"Never!" replied the Unknown. "Impossible! I draw the line at Duffy!" Gentlemen, three cheers for

the dog ! We don't know his name, but we can give him a rouser just the same !"

And they did, and the big dog barked as they shouted.

"I don't see what's the use of making so much fuss about these fellows," growled Dawley. "I was just going to offer to go myself when Young Klondike put in his oar, and the mate wouldn't take any more than six."

But nobody paid any attention to this spiteful remark, and from that time forward Ned was called Young Klondike by everybody on the Hyde.

Inside of half an hour, the girl taken from the sinking steamer was reported out of danger.

Later in the day came the report that her name was Edith Welton, and that her home was in San Francisco.

She had been abandoned by the captain and crew of the Swan, the rumor went, but they had been justly punished for their hard-heartedness.

"She saw all three boats swamped before they had gone a hundred yards from the steamer," said Mr. Rogers, who brought the story to Ned. "Served 'em right ! Captain Healey thought a woman aboard would be a nuisance, and so he left her. I never knew a case like that which didn't bring bad luck."

So the day wore on, but Ned got no chance to see Miss Welton, as he had hoped.

Meanwhile, Dick put the black leather grip in the stateroom, intending to show it to the girl when they should meet, later on.

The chance came just after supper, the stewardess bringing the message that Miss Welton would like to see the two young gentlemen who had saved her life.

Ned and Dick spruced themselves up the best they could and went forward into the stewardess' cabin, finding Edith Welton reclining in a big easy chair.

The boys bowed politely ; Ned introduced himself, and then presented Dick.

In a few well chosen words the girl thanked them for the part they had played, her face lighting up with great animation while she spoke.

Ned inwardly voted her the most charming girl he had ever met, for there was nothing bashful about Edith Welton and no display of sickly sentiment. She spoke with entire freedom—directly and to the point.

"I'm sure I should have gone down with the steamer if it had not been for you, Mr. Golden," she said. "Captain Forest has told me all about it. I owe my life to you and I shall never forget it, but I'm only a poor girl and I don't know how I can ever repay you for your brave act."

"The best way is by never mentioning it again," replied Ned. "I only did my duty, and—"

"You did more. I know very well that but for you the boat would never have left this steamer. We'll drcep it though, since you want to have it so. Now, I suppose you would like to know who I am and how I came to be on board the Swan ?"

"If it is not prying into your affairs, naturally we would."

"Well," said Edith, "I'm a Klondiker, like yourselves ; my father is living somewhere in the mining regions of Alaska. I haven't heard from him for a year, and, as my mother is dead, and my means were getting low, I thought it would be a good thing to go and search for my father. If I don't find him, I suppose I shall be able to support myself somehow in Dawson City. It was more than I could do in San Francisco, anyhow."

"I'm afraid Dawson ain't much of a place for a lady, from all I've heard about it," replied Ned, doubtfully.

"One place is as good as another. It all depends upon the lady, Mr. Golden."

"That's true enough," said Dick ; "but how came you on the Swan, Miss Welton ?"

"Oh, my friends persuaded the captain to take me. They thought it would be a pleasanter way for me to go than on the regular steamer. You see, my father was in the employ of the Alaska Commercial Company, who owned the Swan, and they gave me a free passage to Juneau on that account ; but it was a mistake. Captain Healey was a brute and a tyrant. Wasn't he, Rover ? Didn't he kick you about and half starve you, poor fellow ? Then, after the accident, he deserted us just because I insisted upon Rover going in the boat—of course, I couldn't leave him behind—my only friend—ain't you, Rove ?"

She hugged the big dog, tears coming into her eyes.

"Don't say that. We are your friends now," exclaimed Ned. "Perhaps we shall get better acquainted. We are bound for the Klondike, too, and I hope we may be in the same party when we leave Dyea. If I can do anything to help you, miss, you may be sure, I will."

They chatted on. Ned seemed to forget all about the flight of time, for Edith Welton proved to be splendid company.

At last the stewardess who had been in and out hinted that it was time for them to be going.

This called to Dick's mind something that he had totally forgotten—the black grip.

"By the way !" he exclaimed, "I think I've got something that belongs to you, Miss Welton."

"If either of you call me anything but Edith after this, we shall quarrel !" laughed the girl. "I'm not formal—don't know how to be. I'm going to call you Dick."

"I suppose I come in on that deal ?" inquired Ned.

"Of course you do. Now, then, Dick, what is it ? Something you found on the Swan ?"

"Yes ; a black leather grip !"

"Not mine. I didn't have any. All my belongings were in a little trunk—it went down with the steamer, I suppose, and here I am with only the clothes on my back and not a cent to my name."

"Is that a fact ?" inquired Ned, earnestly.

"Yes ; now don't you offer to lend me any money. I won't take it ! I'm going into service in Juneau until I earn enough to pay my way to the Klondike ! My mind is made up !"

"A brave girl, Ned," remarked Dick, after they left the stewardess' room.

"She is; but I won't have it."

"You're stuck, Ned!"

"Nonsense! As though I couldn't look at a pretty face without falling in love."

"That's all right! What are you going to do?"

"This girl is in my charge to a certain extent; I can't see it any other way!"

"Someone ought to help her; we might start a subscription, I suppose."

"No; I'll see Captain Forest and fix it with him. I ain't got much, as you know, Dick, but I think I ought to give up a little in a case like this."

As the wind still continued to blow, though with less violence, and it was cold and disagreeable on deck, the boys decided to turn in.

They found the Unknown already in his bunk, but not asleep.

"Hello, Young Klondike! How's the girl?" he asked.

"She's all right," replied Ned.

"As pretty as a picture, ain't she? Well, she ought to be thankful to you this night."

"I didn't let her forget your share, Mr. Black."

"That's right, always call me by my last name—I mean the last one I give you. By the way, was that her grip, Dick? I mean the one you found in the cabin of the Swan?"

"No," replied Dick.

"Lucky fellow! Then it's yours, for everybody on the Swan is dead except that girl."

"Who says I ain't lucky?" laughed Dick. "If my name is a little out of the usual, at least, I don't change it more than once a week."

"That's right. Have your fling at the old man. My gizzard is tough. I don't mind. Now, then, Dick Luckey, what's your luck? Open the grip and see."

"That's what," said Ned. "I'm anxious to know myself."

"Bolt the stateroom door," said the Unknown. "Don't forget last night."

"Any idea who that fellow was?" asked Ned. "You're a detective, you ought to know a thief when you see one."

"There's many thieves on board this steamer and don't you forget it, boys; but let me tell you something. A detective is no sharper than any other man. No; I have no suspicions, but I've got my eye open; I'll get on to that scoundrel yet."

"Perhaps it's your man?" laughed Dick; "this bag is locked. I can't open it."

"Try your knife," said Ned. "You can break the lock, I guess."

Dick managed to pry the grip open after a few moments.

There were shirts and collars inside, and a suit of clothes much the worse for wear.

"Nothing of any value," he said, as he pulled the

articles out; "these clothes are too big for me and—by gracious, what's this?"

It was an old pocket-book tucked away in one corner of the grip, and wrapped up in a dirty handkerchief.

Dick hastily opened it, Ned drew closer, and the Unknown craned his neck over the edge of the top bunk to see.

"Money here, sure enough, but not much," said Dick, taking out a thin roll of bills.

Suddenly Ned gave a great cry.

"A thousand dollar bill, Dick! Hooray!"

"Five of them!" gasped Dick. "Oh, Ned!"

"Who's the richest now?" cried Ned. "Hooray for you, Dick Luckey!"

There they were, only five bills, but each represented what to the boys seemed a princely fortune.

And this was Dick Luckey's luck!

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT HAPPENED AT DYEA.

Of all the steamers that left the Pacific ports for Alaska at the outbreak of the great Klondike excitement, none made a quicker or more successful trip than the Sarah B. Hyde.

In due time the boys had the satisfaction of seeing the town of Juneau rise out of the sea before them.

To their amazement they saw that it was quite a considerable place and they found it a hive of activity when they went ashore.

Crowds flocked down to the wharf to witness the arrival of the Klondikers, but there was to be no long stop here. It was at Dyea further up the inlet that the first stage of the long journey came to an end.

Compared with Juneau, Dyea is as nothing.

In fact, Juneau may be called the metropolis of Alaska, having far outstripped Sitka, the capital.

Ned and Dick managed to get an hour or two on shore.

Edith accompanied them, and of course the Unknown was with the party.

They found the streets of Juneau narrow, crooked and muddy, with stumps scattered right and left.

There were three or four churches, three school houses and two theaters, with saloons enough for a population of five thousand, although Juneau can boast of only three thousand souls.

But the principal point of attraction was the great Treadwell gold mill, the largest plant of its kind in the world.

Here night and day six hundred and forty stamps are running, crushing six hundred tons of ore in the twenty-four hours, of an average value of from three to seven dollars per ton.

This ore is mined like stone in a quarry, and the supply is inexhaustible. There is nothing like it anywhere else.

The foreman who showed the party around the mill explained that no such ore would begin to pay the individual miner, but could only be worked by the capitalist on a large scale.

That was a pleasant day in Juneau, and the boys looked back upon it regretfully when they found themselves in the stuffy, little room in the boarding-house at Dyea.

Upon the disembarkation of the Klondikers at Dyea, Edith went with the stewardess, and the Unknown likewise disappeared, no one seemed to know where.

To their disgust, the boys found that they had for a room-mate, Mr. Ralph Dawley.

There were seven others in the room besides, and the cots were ranged along in rows like the ward of a hospital, but as there was no other place where sleeping accommodations could possibly be had, as Ned truly remarked, it was "no use to kick."

The next move was the start on the long journey to the Klondike.

"For Heaven's sake keep that money close, Dick," said Ned, on the night of their arrival. "If any of these fellows suspect you have it there'll be trouble. Some of them would think no more of sticking a knife into us for a ten dollar note than they would of sticking a pig."

"You take it Ned. It's yours by right."

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, but it is. If it hadn't been for you would I be here now? Of course not. You be the treasurer of the firm."

"I won't do it," replied Ned. "I'd rather have a lucky treasurer than a golden one, now that it's only bills. Wait till we get the nuggets, then talk."

"But we'll have to get these bills changed. They'll be no earthly use to us as they are."

"Captain Forest will attend to that to-morrow just before we start; but come, let's go up and call on Edith. I am curious to hear what she has to say."

They found Edith's room a pleasant one, located over the office of the steamboat company, on the wharf.

"Why, Ned! I thought you had deserted me!" cried the girl, in a lively way, as the boys presented themselves. "Do you know I'm going right on to the Klondike? It's all arranged."

"So are we," replied Ned. "We start with the scow at daylight to-morrow; but I thought you were going to stay in Juneau until you could earn money enough to go on?"

"Captain Forest wouldn't hear to it. He has paid my way through to Dawson City, Ned. I hope to find my father there."

"That's great, Edith! Good for Captain Forest! I'd have done the same, but you wouldn't let me."

"Certainly not. It's different with Captain Forest. He knows my father and says he is sure he'll get his money back."

Ned and Dick had a good laugh when they were returning to the boarding-house after one of the pleasantest evenings they had ever spent, for Ned had made no idle boast when he said he could play the banjo better than Ralph Dawley, and of course, he took the instrument along with him.

Edith sang beautifully, too; it was really delightful to hear her sweet voice accompany Ned's playing; but it is safe to say she never dreamed that the boys were laughing at her as soon as she closed the door after bidding them good-night.

"She has no idea that the money came from us, Dick," said Ned.

"Not the least in the world," replied Dick, "and don't you tell her. In fact, don't you tell anybody what we've got."

"Do you suppose I would? Not much. But say, Dick, we must be up bright and early and get those bills changed, for the scow leaves at five o'clock."

"How far do we go in her?"

"Six miles."

"And then?"

"Oh, that brings us to the foot of the mountains, and we have to climb over the famous Chilkoot Pass."

"We'll strike snow there, sure."

"Looks like it. Hush; here comes Dawley, and he's staving drunk!"

"Hello, Young Klondike!" cried the Chicagoan, reeling up. "Plenty of whisky now! Whoop! Let her go! By time, I've laid in enough to keep me full all the way to the Klondike! Come on! What's the use of turning in? Open that pouch of yours, and we'll paint the town red!"

"I've got no money to buy the paint with," laughed Ned. "We're going to bed, Dawley, and you better do the same."

"Not on your life! I've only just begun. No money, eh? I wish I had your stocking. I know a blame sight better! Who took five thousand dollars off the Swan."

"What do you mean?" demanded Dick, amazed.

"Who told you that lie, Dawley?" cried Ned.

"Oh, a little bird told me, and it's no lie," chuckled Dawley. "By-bye, Young Klondike! I'm off for a good time. You hold tight on to your cash."

And thus saying, Ralph Dawley staggered away.

"The Unknown has betrayed us," said Ned. "By gracious, I wouldn't have thought it."

"It can't be anybody else, for no one else knew," said Dick.

And the thought preyed heavily on the minds of both the boys as they turned in to sleep that night.

Ned was awake promptly at four and no alarm clock to help him either.

Calling Dick, they hurriedly dressed and left the house, leaving their room-mates still sound asleep, although the scow was to start in an hour's time.

"We'll get right down to the office and attend to the money, Dick," said Ned. "I think then we'd better call for Edith. I don't like the idea of her going on board the scow alone."

"She's got to get used to it, Ned."

"I know it. She's going to adopt the regular dress of women travelers in Alaska, and that's half a man's, you know. Still, somebody has got to stand by her. Edith has no idea what this journey means."

"You're thinking of that fellow Dawley."

"I am, and others of his kind. By the way, Dawley didn't come in last night."

"No; I saw that his cot was unoccupied. Are we going right?"

"I think so; it's so confoundedly dark I can't see a step ahead."

"You've got to get used to that. Pretty soon it will be all night and no day up here."

"Stop! We ain't right. There's the water over there."

Ned turned to look.

As he did so he heard a faint cry coming from behind a big frame building, which seemed to be a sort of warehouse.

"What's that?" he breathed.

"A woman's voice sure," whispered Dick.

"Ned! Ned Golden! Help me, Ned!" came the cry again.

"Edith!" gasped Ned. "Oh, Dick!"

They started on a run and were around the corner of the building in a moment.

Suddenly two dark figures leaped out from the shadows.

Whack!

Whack!

Ned got one blow, and Dick the other.

Heavy clubs they were, too, and wielded by no gentle hand. It was a wonder the boys were not killed outright.

As it was, they went down like two stones.

There they lay, while the two men who had attacked them hastily searched their pockets.

"Dead?" growled one.

"I reckon so, but I take no chances," was the answer. "Ha! Ha! Here it is!"

It was the old pocket-book which he held up, and it contained the five one thousand dollar bills.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM IN THE CHILKOOT PASS.

"WHERE'S Young Klondike, I wonder? By the Jumping Jeremiah, I ain't going without that boy!"

So said the Unknown just as the scow was starting, and he meant just what he said.

It was dark—very dark, and as the men crowded upon the bags of provisions with which the scow was loaded down to its utmost capacity, it was not at all easy to see who was who.

The Unknown was one of the last to arrive, but Ned had been some time on the scow, and was greatly worried at the non-appearance of Ned and Dick.

"Keep still, there! Don't move or you'll shift my load," cried the captain of the scow. "We're off, now!"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, but I will, though! I ain't off without Young Klondike!" cried the Unknown, and he sprang ashore.

"Let me go ashore, too!" exclaimed Edith, springing up.

"Sit down there and keep quiet!" growled Ralph Dawley, who was next to her on the bags.

He flung his arm about the girl's waist and pulled her back.

"There's just as good fellows here as Young Klondike! What's the matter with you?" he whispered, in her ear.

"Let me alone! Take your hand off! If Ned Golden was here you wouldn't dare to insult me!" cried Edith, tearing herself free.

Dawley laughed coarsely, and began bawling out a popular song, strumming on his banjo as the scow pulled by, and the tug moved away from the shore.

It was too late now!

The shore was rapidly receding.

"Oh, I thought they were here, or I never would have come on board," groaned Edith, sinking down on the bags.

Poor girl!

She was the only woman among that scow load of sixty rough men of all ages and nationalities.

No very pleasant situation it must be owned.

The non-appearance of Ned and Dick has been in part explained.

Ned was the first to recover from the knock-out which had been complete in the case of both the boys.

He raised up with his head throbbing.

It was pitch dark. He could not imagine where he was.

"Dick, Dick!" he called, staggering to his feet.

"Oh, oh! Oh, my head!" groaned poor Dick, somewhere in the darkness.

Ned fumbled for his matches and struck a light.

He found he was inside of a large building like a warehouse.

There were furs piled up in great heaps, deer skins, bear skins, otter skins and muskrat skins. He had never seen so many furs in his life.

Dick was sitting with his head leaning against one of the piles.

"Oh, Ned, I believe I'm done for!" he groaned. "My head is all cut! How in the world did we come here?"

Ned ran to his assistance and got him on his feet.

"You ain't so bad off, Dick, don't you fret," he cried. "The scoundrels! It must have been some of our passengers, for the fellow who pretended to call for help imitated Edith's voice, and what's more, he knew my name."

"Dawley, I'll bet! Oh, my head!"

"Did you catch a glimpse of his face, Dick?"

"No, I didn't, but how came we in here?"

"They must have brought us in. I wish I could have seen him, but I was knocked clean out!"

"So was I, and—oh, Ned! The pocket-book is gone!"

Strange neither of them ever thought of the five thousand dollars before.

"Great Heavens! You don't mean it!" gasped Ned.

"Yes, it's gone," said Dick, disconsolately. "They were laying for us, Ned!"

"It was Dawley! I'll bet it was Dawley!"

"Is your money all right?"

Ned clapped his hand to his waist.

"Yes," he exclaimed; "my money's here!"

"Huh! Den gib Haida John money," growled a deep voice out of the darkness. "Gib money, Klondika boy, or Haida John kill!"

Ned's blood fairly ran cold.

He expected to feel a shot or a knife next.

Suddenly a light was flashed upon him.

There stood two gigantic Indians of the Haida tribe—the boys had seen many of them around town the day before.

They were clothed in long, fur robes, which came down to their feet.

One carried a lantern and the other an ax.

Their faces looked dark and forbidding. It was anything but a pleasant situation to say the least.

"Huh! Why you no gib money Klondika boy?" grunted the man with the ax. "Haida John find you outside, he bring you in fur house. Klondika man kill you only for Haida John."

"Show us the way out," said Ned, boldly. "I'll pay you outside."

"What you pay—huh?"

The proposition evidently was not definite enough to suit Haida John.

"Five dollars a piece," said Ned.

Both Indians broke out with a hoarse laugh.

"No, no! You gib Haida John all," said the Indian, with the ax. "You no gib Haida John money—Haida John kill!"

Ned looked round desperately for the door.

He could not see it, but there was a little window right behind them about six feet up from the floor.

This offered no chance of escape, of course.

The situation was certainly desperate.

Ned scarcely knew what to do.

"Quick! Gib money, quick!" grunted the Indian, raising the ax, threateningly.

At the same instant a shot rang out through the fur house.

"Skip, you scoundrels! Skip!" cried a well-known voice.

There was another shot, and the Unknown, with his tall hat jammed tightly on the back of his head, and a revolver in each hand, jumped down from the window, landing close beside the boys.

The Indians ran for their lives, Haida John's companion dropping the lantern in his flight.

The Unknown fired two shots after them, but both must have gone very wide of the mark, for the Indians could still be heard running; then a door slammed, and all was still.

"Saved your lives that time!" cried the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah! I seem to have come just in time. Why didn't you use your own revolver on them skunks?"

Ned was the first to recover his wits, and some explanations followed.

The Unknown picked up the lantern and led the way out of the fur house by the door.

"So the scow has gone without us, and Edith with it," growled Ned, when they had gained the open air.

"That's what," replied the Unknown. "I'd have been with them, too, but when I missed you fellows, I jumped off and came to look you up."

"I ought to thank you better than I have," said Ned, with some hesitation. "You have certainly saved my life."

"Why didn't you save your own life?"

"How do you mean?"

"You've got a revolver."

"No."

"You had one?"

"It has been stolen."

"Stolen! You haven't told me all the story yet, Young Klondike. Tell it now."

"We may as well own up," said Dick. "We were waylaid and robbed."

"What! What! You don't mean to say you've lost that money?"

"Yes, the five thousand dollars is gone."

"Just as I expected! I saw the blood on the ground outside the fur house. That's what made me listen, and when I heard your voices inside, I climbed in by the window. Well, well! I want to hear it all."

Then the whole story came out.

"You're lucky to escape as you have," said the detective. "Unquestionably those Haida Indians found you lying there unconscious and carried you inside; for the life of me I can't see why they didn't rob you while they had the chance, but they are stupid fellows and cowards to boot. Now, then, Young Klondike, I suppose you blame me for this?"

"Who says so?" asked Ned, moodily, as they walked along.

"I say so. Oh, I can read your mind like a book. The Unknown was the only one besides ourselves who knew Dick had the money," says you, 'consequently the Unknown must have given us away; but let me tell you one thing! The Unknown did nothing of the sort, but if you're cleaned out the Unknown will see you both through to the Klondike, and buy you each a claim to boot."

Ned stopped short.

"You're a true friend!" he exclaimed. "I did doubt you, but I never will again."

"I knew it! Young Klondike, I never opened my lips about that money to a living soul."

"And I believe it," said Dick. "I shall never forget this."

"Nor I," said Ned, feelingly, "but I ain't cleaned out. My revolver is all that was taken. We've got just as much money as we had before Dick struck his streak of luck."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. Look here, boys,

someone was listening at the stateroom door that night."

"Then it was Ralph Dawley!" cried Ned, and he repeated Dawley's words.

"It won't do to jump at conclusions," said the Unknown; "it may just as well have been one of Dawley's friends as Dawley himself; but we must hurry. The second scow starts at noon and we go on her. I don't like the idea of Edith being alone with that gang, but we are certain to overtake them in the Chilkoot Pass."

"If Ralph Dawley says one insulting word to that girl he'll have to settle with me," cried Ned.

"Say nothing and saw wood," replied the Unknown. "Don't you pick quarrels with Ralph Dawley if you want to get your money back."

"At least," said Dick, "tell us your real name. From this day on we are friends."

The moment Dick said this the Unknown took on his old manner again.

"My name, dear boy, is Grey," he chuckled. "Now, let's get up to the house where I was stopping and clean up. Ha! What do I see? By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's my man at last!"

He made a dive for a respectable citizen of Dyea, who was hurrying along, and then drew back again.

"Wrong again!" he laughed. "Shall I ever find him? Yes, if I only look long enough. But here we are at the house. The boss will be surprised to see me back again; I have a way of surprising everybody, it seems."

"You never will find out his real name, Dick," whispered Ned, "so you'd better drop it, but one thing is sure, the fellow is a true friend to us."

And, as they had reason to know afterward, Ned Golden never spoke a truer word.

Dick's injury proved to be nothing worse than a scalp wound, and Ned's was confined to a huge lump on his forehead.

Their first thought was to report the affair to the authorities, but the detective advised them strongly to say nothing about it.

So they hung around Dyea until noon, when the second scow load of Klondikers made their start.

Ned saw their traps safely on board, and exactly at twelve the scow pulled out, carrying with it eighty men.

There was no such thing as seats; the passengers distributed themselves over the load as best they could.

The run from this point to where the tug could go no further was something over a mile, and then the scow had to be poled along through the shallows of the Lome Canal to the foot of the mountains.

It was slow work and everybody was expected to lend a hand.

Five miles brought them to the end of this stage of the journey.

Here there was a little hut and a wharf, near which the other scow was lying.

The place was deserted except for the agent of the scow owners, whose business it was to see the arriving parties started on those terrible twenty miles over the mountains through the Chilkoot Pass.

Ned was terribly disappointed to find the other party was at least three hours ahead of them. Edith, with Rover to keep her company, had gone on with the rest.

"That's a bad dog and he ought to be shot," said the agent. "Why, he sprang upon one of them fellers and had him down in an instant. He'd have torn him to pieces if I hadn't interfered."

"Who was the man?" asked Ned.

"Name of Dawley," they told me.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the Unknown. "Say, Young Klondike, you needn't worry about Edith. Rover will look after her all right. We are sure to overtake her at Lake Linderman and we may do it in the Pass, for I'll bet anything it's going to snow."

It certainly looked very much that way.

Dark threatening clouds were gathering over the lofty snow-clad peaks which towered above them. The old hands among the party, and there were several who had traveled the road before, were unanimously of the opinion that a storm was at hand.

Some talked of waiting, but the old-timers wouldn't hear to it.

The season was advancing rapidly and every moment was precious.

There were mules to drag the load of freight up to the snow line in rude wagons, and here the goods were loaded on to the sleds which were to be pulled by the Klondikers themselves, every man looking after his own.

Ned and Dick had provided themselves with a sled at Dyea, and they found it waiting for them with their other effects on leaving the scow.

As the Unknown had no baggage, he turned in and helped load up. Everybody now dressed themselves in their warmest clothing, for the wind was piercing cold and blowing furiously, but as yet there was no snow.

To the surprise of the boys, the Unknown made no preparations for the journey, but just pulled his plug hat tighter on the back of his head, and tying a red muffler around his neck, put on a pair of mittens and "winked the other eye."

"You don't mean to go that way?" demanded Ned, just as they were about to start.

"Just what I do, dear boy. How else would you have me go?"

"Have you no fur cap, nothing else to put on your head?"

"Don't want anything else. I've been twice around the world with this hat. It did well enough in Kamtchatka last year when I thought I'd located my man at Petropolovsky, guess it will do here."

"Is there any part of the world you haven't been in?" asked Dick.

"Certainly. Two places I have never been and never shall go, for my man is surely not in either."

"What are they?"

"The North and South Pole, dear boy! Tra-la-la! Don't say any more. I see they are going to start."

The ascent of the mountain then began; a wearisome tramp of an hour brought them to the snow-line.

Here it was easier pulling the sleds, but the temperature had dropped below freezing and the wind beat pitilessly against them, but the crust was hard and it was easy walking for the first mile or two.

But the short day was now advancing, and darkness set in as they started on the second mile.

All at once the dogs, which were drawing some of the freight sleds, set up a furious barking.

"Look ahead!" cried the Unknown. "There she comes."

It was a thick mass of snow flakes sweeping down between the frowning rocks, which rose to a tremendous height on either side of them.

"The storm at last," cried Ned, and he had scarcely spoken when it came whirling down the canyon.

All in an instant they were enveloped in it.

And such a storm!

No Western blizzard could begin to be compared with it.

In an instant those ahead seemed to vanish. It was all Ned could do to see Dick alongside of him; as for

the Unknown, who walked behind the sled, he had disappeared.

"Keep her a-going, boys!" he shouted. "We'll make the Relay House inside of twenty minutes! If this sort of thing keeps up I stop there, no matter what any one says."

No one spoke after that; it was impossible to make oneself heard.

As the moments passed, it grew worse and worse. Ned bent his head low and pushed bravely on.

Their sled happened to be the last in the little procession.

Ned had no more idea what those ahead of him were about, than if they had been at the other end of the world.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed, and still they toiled on.

Ned saw no signs of the hut known as the Relay House—a mere shelter where Klondikers thus overtaken by storms, sometimes tied up for the night.

Ned began to wonder if they could have passed it.

Still he knew that this could scarcely be, as the Pass was narrow and they were certain to come up with the others if a halt had been made.

The snow was now rapidly getting deep, and the sled harder and harder to pull.

"How are you standing it, Dick?" shouted Ned.

He could not see Dick at all.

There was no answer from Dick, but the voice of the Unknown was faintly heard, saying:

"I'm pushing for all I'm worth, dear boy. Why in thunder don't you pull?"

Pull! Ned was pulling for all he knew and he now began to realize how hard it had grown in the last moment or so.

He put out his hand and felt for Dick.

To his horror he found that there was nobody beside him.

Dick had vanished in the storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT ATTACK ON THE RELAY HOUSE.

NED's wild shout brought the Unknown to the front in an instant.

"What's the matter?" he bellowed. "Where's Dick?"

"Don't know! He dropped out and I never knew," roared Ned, having all he could do to make himself heard even then.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I ought to be cow-hid! I knew there was something wrong when the sled began to pull so hard."

"Dick! Dick!" shouted Ned, starting to plow his way back down the Pass.

But the Unknown caught him by the arm and pulled him back.

"Now, don't you make an idiot of yourself or we shall all three of us be lost!" roared the detective. "Just you keep quiet; this thing ain't going to last. I've got a dark lantern somewhere. Let me get it lighted, and we'll soon find Dick. I ought to have known when the poor fellow was so silent that there was something wrong."

He fumbled inside his coat and produced a small dark lantern, and proceeded to light it with a flamer.

He had scarcely succeeded in this, when to Ned's utter amazement, it suddenly stopped snowing, and the wind died away as though there had never been any, and out came the stars twinkling like so many diamonds in the sky.

After all, it was nothing but a squall, and it had blown itself out.

"Huh! What did I tell you?" chuckled the Unknown. "No sign of the fellows ahead. We've been

dead slow about this business. Come on, Young Klondike. We're going to find Dick."

It is easier to imagine Ned's feelings than to describe them.

To his unutterable joy they found poor Dick lying half buried in the snow before they had gone back a dozen yards.

It is hard to believe that such an accident could occur; only those who have made the passage of those terrible mountain passes in Alaska can realize its truth.

Ned had Dick in his arms in a moment. He seemed drowsy and only half conscious of his surroundings.

"That you, Ned? Let me sleep a couple of minutes. I'll be all right," he muttered, with his eyes half closed.

"Stand on your feet, boy!" cried the Unknown, seizing him roughly and shaking him till his teeth chattered.

"Let me alone! What you doing?" growled Dick, and he struck out at him. "Confound you! What do you mean?" he roared, as the detective continued to shake.

"That's what's the matter! Hit me again," cried the Unknown. "Do you know where you are now? Can you stand on your pins? Ye gods and little fishes! There'd been a dead Klondiker in the Chilkoot if we had let you stay there many minutes longer, that's sure."

Ned was talking, too, and urging Dick to brace up.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," growled Dick. "It seemed as though I went to pieces all at once."

They put him on the sled and moved forward as rapidly as possible, coming in a few moments to the Relay House, a mere hut, standing under the shelter of an overhanging ledge near the summit of the Pass.

Here they found a few of the party halted, but by far the greater number had begun the descent.

To Ned's unspeakable relief, Rover came rushing out of the hut, barking wildly as they approached, and there stood Edith in the doorway, waving her handkerchief.

"Oh, Ned! I thought you had deserted me!" she exclaimed; "but what's the matter? Is there anything wrong with Dick? We've got a good fire here—bring him right in."

That ended the journey for the night.

Others had given out besides Dick, and were already in the hut.

One of the guides was with the party which had halted.

He informed Ned that two of the canoes which were to take them down Lake Linderman would wait for them at the foot of the mountains, so there was no thought of moving further that night.

They put Dick into one of the bunks, and he was soon fast asleep.

The Unknown rolled himself up in his blanket and lay on the floor, as did most of the others, for there were only six bunks in the hut.

One of these was reserved for Edith, but she seemed to be in no haste to take possession of it.

Long after the others were asleep, she and Ned sat together on the floor, in front of the crackling wood fire, talking over their affairs.

"It seems to me that there is very little doubt that Ralph Dawley knows who stole your money, even if he isn't the actual thief," said Edith. "He's a thoroughly bad fellow, Ned; do you know that he kept pestering me with his attentions all the way up the canal, and actually had the impudence to ask me to marry him after we made the landing?"

"The scoundrel!" cried Ned. "I only wish I'd been there; I——"

"No you wouldn't, for I wouldn't have let you," said Edith. "Besides, I had all the protection I needed from Rover; it's strange, but he seemed to know what was going on; he flew at Ralph Dawley's throat almost as the words were spoken. It's a wonder he didn't kill him. Dawley let me alone after that."

"Good Rove! Good dog!" said Ned, patting his head. "Edith, there is one thing certain; you must put yourself in my charge until we reach Dawson City."

"I'll do it gladly, Ned; but you needn't worry. Rover is my protector. He and I understand each other perfectly, and—what's that?"

"What?"

"Don't you hear? There's someone moving about outside the hut."

"You must be mistaken."

"No, I ain't. I heard someone at the door—I'm sure I did."

"It's only the wind, Edith, but to satisfy you I'll look. No, there is no one there."

Ned threw the door open and peered out into the night.

"I thought I heard someone," said Edith, "but probably I was mistaken."

"I'll just take a turn around the hut to make sure," said Ned, stepping outside.

A sharp cry reached Edith's ears before she could get to the door. To her horror she saw a giant Indian peering in at her.

"Help! Help! Indians!" she screamed, slamming the door in his face.

Her cry brought every man to his feet, even to Dick.

"Where's Ned?" he called, springing out of the bunk.

"Oh, they've got him! The Indians have got him!" screamed Edith.

Bang—bang—bang! A furious knocking began on the door.

The Klondikers grasped their rifles and prepared to defend the hut.

It was a serious case for Ned.

Two Indians seized him the moment he showed himself outside the door.

He saw as many as twenty others spring up out of the snow.

Ned fought like a tiger, but the big bucks were too much for him.

They twisted his arms behind him and bent his head until his neck cracked.

"How! How! White boy!" they grunted. "How! How!"

All this time they were dragging him up the slope of the Pass.

They had not gone more than a hundred yards, when two white men in Klondiker's dress sprang out from behind the rocks.

Their faces were so concealed with fur caps and mufflers that Ned, although he knew that in all probability they belonged to his party, could not make out who they were.

"That's the fellow," growled one. "Hand him over to us, bucks. We'll do the rest. You get your share."

"No hand him over—no—no!" growled the buck on Ned's right. "You pay money now! Den me gib up white boy! You pay money now."

"Take that, you fraud!" hissed the Klondiker, aiming a blow at the buck with the stock of his rifle.

The bucks let go of Ned who improved the opportunity to double between them and run for his life down the slope, shouting as he went.

His cries were drowned by the crack of rifles and the wild yells of the Indians.

Short, sharp and decisive had been the battle.

Instead of waiting for the Indians to break into the hut, the Klondikers boldly flung open the door and rushed out firing.

The result was a stampede and Ned ran right into the arms of Dick.

"Gosh blame them fellers! They're Copper Mine Injuns!" growled the guide. "Someone has put 'em up to this."

"There! Up there! Two white men!" panted Ned, who was all out of breath.

He led the rush and everybody followed including Edith, but they had their labor for their pains, for both the two Klondikers and the Indians had vanished.

A moment later and they saw the two Klondikers come into view bounding down the mountain, but the Indians were not seen again.

There was no more sleep for any one that night.

Ned had to tell his story over and over again.

"The whole thing was a fake," declared the Unknown, speaking privately to Ned and Dick. "It was you they wanted, Young Klondike. It's the same old thief."

"You think so?"

"I'm sure of it."

"But his motive?"

"Heavens, boys! Can you ask it? Robbery, of course. They got Dick's money, but they didn't get yours, did they? No! They've been laying for you and they bribed the Indians to make a fake attack on the Relay House. You saw what cowards they were for yourself."

"And you may be sure that Ralph Dawley is at the bottom of it," declared Edith. "Ned, I believe it was he who robbed Dick."

"I wish I actually knew."

"So do I," said Dick. "It wouldn't take me long to settle with Dawley, you bet!"

"Neither of those fellows looked like Dawley," mused Ned, "but I shall be on my guard."

"Leave it to me. I'm going to find out," said Edith, setting her lips firmly. "Dick, I'm going to get your money back."

"How?" asked Dick.

"Don't you do anything rash, Edith," said Ned.

But Edith only laughed, and she refused to talk any more about the matter.

So the night wore on, and an early start was made up the mountain to the summit of the Pass.

Ned and Dick pulled the sled, Edith walking beside it and the Unknown, with his plug hat jammed on the back of his head, plodding on after them.

Ned carried his rifle now. He determined never to be without it until he could provide himself with another revolver.

The journey to the summit of Chilkoot Pass was performed in safety; it was a splendid day for traveling on the snow, for the wind had swept the old crust clean and it bore the sled well, and as a rule, the travelers, too.

The thermometer stood at about zero when they started out, but as they began to descend on the other side, the temperature rose rapidly.

It was wonderful to stand there surrounded by snow and ice, and look down upon the valley and Lake Linderman and see the scrub oaks and tundra grass in all the beauty of their autumnal colorings.

The long narrow lake was as clear as crystal. Great flocks of ducks were flying above it now, dropping upon the water and skimming over its glossy surface, now rising again and fluttering on.

They could see the camp of the Klondikers, too, and

the smoke of their fires rising heavenward in one straight column, for there was not a breath of wind.

"Beautiful!" cried Edith. "Ned, isn't it glorious!"

"There's Dawley!" said Dick, who was looking through his opera glass. "I can see him as plain as day."

Ned had a look. Dawley was sitting on a rock near the camp, picking the banjo and evidently singing, although of course no sound reached their ears.

"He looks harmless enough," said Ned. "I can't believe that he really led the attack last night."

"Humph! Don't do to go by looks, dear boy," said the Unknown. The mildest looking man I ever knew was five times a murderer, and I lived to see him hung. If you will believe it he actually thanked the hangman when he dropped the noose about his neck. Get up, there, boys, or we'll be down too late for the canoes."

They saw the first canoe load of Klondikers start down the lake before they were half way down the mountain.

Another and another followed until six had started.

These canoes were made of birch bark, bent over strong oak ribs and thoroughly pitched.

Each held about ten men and each carried its proportion of the freight.

Our little party now pushed on more rapidly, for they well knew that there would be no waiting for them.

They reached the camp in good time, however, the second canoe party not starting for fully half an hour.

This was a busy time, for every man was expected to attend to the shipment of his own goods.

The sled had to be taken apart and the bags and hampers loaded on to the big canoe.

It was warm work, for the thermometer had now risen up into the eighties. It was impossible to realize that the cold and storm of the night before had been anything but a dream.

The boys worked straight ahead and wasted no time talking about the adventures of the night, leaving it to the guide to do that.

His story created great excitement. The Haida Indians, who had been engaged to paddle the canoes down the lake were carefully questioned by the captain of the second party—the one to which our friends were now attached.

They declared most positively that they knew nothing of the affair.

As Dawley had departed he could not be questioned, but there were several who had been there all night, and the detective quietly questioned them.

All assured him that Dawley had never left the camp.

CHAPTER IX.

SHOOTING THE RAPIDS.

AT ten o'clock the canoes sailed.

Wild cheering went up from the Klondikers on the different boats as they pushed off from the shore.

The six mile run down the lake had now begun.

"Knocks traveling in the Chilkoot Pass silly, don't it?" exclaimed the Unknown, after they were well out on the lake. "Come! I like this. It's jolly, or it ought to be. Edith, sing something, can't you? We want to enjoy ourselves while we can."

"I'll sing if Ned will play," replied Edith.

Ned got out his banjo, tuned it and struck up a popular air, Edith joining in with her sweet voice.

The Klondikers in the canoe were charmed, and came in the chorus, and even the Haidas grunted their approval.

Song after song was sung, and then Ned did some fancy instrumental work on the banjo.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you're a splendid player!" cried the Unknown. "Hit it again, Young Klondike. I like that!"

Before Ned could comply, one of the Haidas gave a shout and pointed off at the shore.

A large moose stood on a point of land right ahead of them.

"Me kill him!" cried the Haida. "Den you buy him? Huh! Good eat. Plenty meat!"

"Get in range! We are too far," said old Joe Torry, the captain of the party. "We'll get him somehow, you bet!"

The Haidas paddled vigorously.

As yet the moose did not seem to be aware of the approach of the boat.

All eyes were strained ahead, and one of the Haidas had his hand on his rifle, when Edith, who had been quietly watching the moose, suddenly stood up, clapped Ned's Winchester to her shoulder, and let fly.

The big animal sprang into the air with a wild snort, and running through the tundra, the high grass which grows everywhere on the lowlands of Alaska, plunged into the little bay separating the point from the mainland.

"Good for you, girl!" cried old Joe. "I didn't believe it could be done, but you've spoiled our pie, just the same."

"Wait," said Edith, quietly. "Fetch him, Rover! Fetch him, boy!"

Rover sprang into the water and made for the moose, the Haidas, with disgusted grunts, turning the canoe toward the bay.

"Splendid shot, Edith," said Ned, admiringly.

"I told you I could do it, but I wish I'd killed him."

"Rover will do that."

"You can be sure of it. Look! He's almost there."

In a moment more Rover was up with the moose, whose strength was almost exhausted.

They saw him spring at the throat of the wounded moose.

Twice it shook him off, and succeeded in landing on the opposite shore of the bay.

But Rover stuck to him.

Then the moose tossed him.

But Edith was ready.

As the dog went flying into the air, she fired again. The moose dropped on its knees and fell over dead.

Rover stood triumphantly by when the canoe came up.

"Huh! Huh! White girl big shot!" grunted the Haidas.

They took it good-naturedly, although they lost the chance of selling the moose to the party, and they helped to cut it up and skin it.

Edith claimed the horns as her trophy, and when the meat was packed away in the canoe, they started again.

The best part of an hour had been lost, and their companions were now out of sight.

"Paddle, boys! Paddle!" cried Joe Torry. "We've got the rapids ahead of us, and we've got to do that job before dark."

The Haidas worked their paddles with a will, and just as the sun was beginning to sink below the horizon, they came in sight of the foot of the lake.

Several of the canoes were there, waiting their turn to descend the rapids between Lakes Linderman and Bennett.

As they drew nearer, a large canoe paddled by four Indians separated itself from the rest and moved toward them up the lake.

"Hello! What's that mean?" demanded Ned.

The Unknown clapped his glass to his eye.

"None of our crowd," he declared.

"Returning Klondikers, perhaps," said Dick.

"That's what they are," added old Joe. "They're from Dawson, sure."

"Good enough!" cried the Unknown. "Ten to one my man is among them."

The boys laughed, but the detective seemed to be perfectly serious and kept his glass fixed on the approaching canoe.

"Yes, there he is!" he cried, suddenly. "I'm right this time. See that old fellow with the long beard in the stern?"

"First, your man is young and then he's old," laughed Dick. "Do you mean to say that granddaddy looks anything like Ned, and didn't you mistake Ned for your man?"

"Disguises, dear boy, disguises," chuckled the Unknown. "Allow me to know my business. I may as well get the bracelets ready. That's surely my man."

"Boat ahoy!" shouted old Joe Torry.

"Hello, hello!" came back across the lake.

"Where you from? Where you bound?"

"Dawson City to Dyea! We are going home!"

"With their pile, you can bet," cried Dick.

"Perhaps they know something of my father," murmured Edith. "I hope they come up to us. It would be such a relief if I only knew that I was going to meet him at my journey's end."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! Watch me take him, boys!" said the Unknown.

The canoe load of returning Klondikers was soon alongside.

"Wrong again!" exclaimed the Unknown, with a gesture of despair. "That ain't my man."

"Who you talking about?" demanded Joe Torry.

"The old fellow in the stern. I thought he was a friend of mine."

Just then the man in question called out:

"Gentlemen, I'm Dan Farley of Dawson City! These here are all friends of mine!"

He rattled off their names, and old Joe introduced his party in the same way.

"How's things at Dawson?" he called back.

"Bully for mining, bad for grub. There's going to be trouble this winter if many more go in."

"Had any luck, Mr. Farley?" asked Ned.

"So, so!"

"I trust my good friend, you've not dug all the gold there is in the Klondike?" asked the Unknown.

"Dug it all! Ha! Ha! Ha! It would take a hundred years to do that, boss. There's millions in the Klondike, but I've got my share, and don't you forget it. We're all satisfied, ain't we, boys?"

They ought to have been.

Long afterward Ned learned that this very party had shipped down over a million in gold dust on the last steamer to leave Dawson before navigation closed, which was in excess of what they had with them in the canoe, and any one could see that there was a big extra weight there, for the frail craft was down almost to the water line.

"Can you tell me anything of my father, Mr. Farley?" asked Edith, when she found a chance to put in a word.

"Who is your father, miss?" asked the old miner.

"His name is Henry Welton, sir. He is supposed to have been at work on the Klondike now for about a year."

"Welton! I know him. He's struck it rich. Owns half a dozen claims."

Edith's eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"And do you think I shall find him at Dawson, sir?" she asked.

"You ought to," replied the miner; "he was there when I left."

But there was something about his way of speaking which Ned did not like.

It worried him while Edith kept talking of her father after the canoes separated.

"There's something wrong," he thought; "but whatever it is Edith mustn't suffer. I'll stand by her to the last."

But Ned was wise enough to keep his thoughts to himself.

Soon they were at the head of the lake.

Most of the canoes had gone down the river, and our friends watched the last two start into the rapids, while waiting their turn. It was a startling sight.

The narrow channel was filled with great boulders and sunken rocks, over which the water swept furiously.

It was all the Indians could do to keep the canoes in the channel.

Now they were tossed to this side, and now swept to the other.

At one moment it seemed as if they must be dashed to pieces against some big boulder; then they would come in sight again and go whirling on, until at last both swept around a bend in the river and disappeared.

"Now, then, gents!" cried old Joe Torry. "Time's up! It's our turn! Don't anybody shift their position, unless they want to go to blazes themselves and take all hands with them. Boys, let her go!"

The Haidas worked the canoe around into the channel.

Suddenly drawing in their paddles, they uttered a wild shout, and the canoe went whirling down the stream, guided by one Indian in the stern, while those in the bows stood ready to fend off in case they came too near the rocks.

As the canoe flew on, the Haidas set up a wild chant.

Edith drew closer to Ned, who involuntarily flung his arm about the girl.

It was a fearful moment.

With lightning speed the canoe shot down the rapids.

Rock after rock was passed in safety; Lake Bennett was actually in view when all at once the canoe struck some hidden obstruction, and was over like a flash.

Down upon the stony bottom the Klondikers tumbled all in a heap.

"Oh, Ned! Ned!" gasped Edith.

Ned held on for all he was worth, striving to gain a footing, but both went down under the water then.

It was not above his armpits when they rose, but the force of the current was so great that many were swept away with it.

Wild shouts and cries for help rang out on all sides. Ned saw Dick climbing up on a big boulder.

The Unknown had vanished.

His plug hat was whirling down the stream.

"Keep perfectly cool, Edith!" cried Ned, as the girl flung her arms about his neck. "Don't take me so! Let go! I've got you! We must go with the current! We'll make for that big rock ahead!"

Edith let go immediately, and Ned, holding her tight around the waist, managed to lift her up upon the rock.

"Safe!" he cried. "Don't worry. All right, Dick?"

"All right!" shouted Dick. "I'm here! How the mischief we are going to get off, though, I don't see."

"And everything lost," groaned Edith. "Oh, Ned, this will ruin you!"

"Your life ain't lost anyhow, Edith. Don't worry. It will all come out right."

"Here I come all right!" cried a voice under the rock. And up bobbed the Unknown, dripping wet, but as cheerful as ever.

He held something in his hand which Ned took to be a stone as he climbed up on the rock.

"Gold!" he shouted. "Look! Dick Luckey, you ain't in it! I've struck the first color. Hooray! It's gold!"

The Unknown, in fishing himself out of the water, had fished up a nugget weighing half a pound.

CHAPTER X.

RALPH DAWLEY RUNS UP AGAINST A SNAG.

"Is it really gold?" cried Ned, staring at the nugget.

"That's what it is," chuckled the Unknown. "I saw it when I was down there under the water, and you needn't think I was any such fool as to leave it behind!"

"Lot's of good it will do us, if we are left behind," sighed Ned. "Here we are, all wet through and everything lost, and night upon us. What's to be done?"

"Have patience, dear boy. It will all come out right. See, the Haidas have worked the canoe ashore and are righting it. I don't believe there'll be a life lost, and as for our goods, we'll have to do the best we can."

It proved to be very much as the Unknown said.

The situation was not nearly as bad as it seemed.

In fact, these upsets were of quite common occurrence in the rapids; the worst was the damage to the goods and the delay.

In this instance everyone managed to get on the rocks, and, after the Haidas got the canoe righted, they showed what they could do with their paddles.

Ned hardly supposed that they could pull up stream, but they did it, and one after another was taken on board.

When the last Klondiker had been rescued, the run down the rapids began again, and they reached Lake Bennett safely.

Here the whole party had tied up for the night, and the camp fires were already started.

To the surprise of the boys, many of the goods in the overturned canoe were already on shore, and there was Rover, who had swam through to the lake, ready to greet them with his joyful bark.

"Where in the world did these traps come from?" demanded the Unknown, looking at the dripping pile. "Hang me if here ain't my plug hat, too!" He caught it and clapped it on his head.

The explanation was simple.

A log boom had been fixed across the mouth of the river for this very purpose.

Everything that could be washed down had been stopped by the boom, and most of what was missing was gathered up by the Haidas next morning.

These Indians are as much at home in the water as on land.

They worked the canoe up the rapids, and went in after the bales, boxes and bags that had lodged against the rocks.

So as it turned out the actual loss was trivial, and as everything had been wrapped in waterproof paper before packing, the damage was not great.

"I don't want any more of that on my plate, though," remarked the Unknown, when they were about ready for the start up Lake Bennett. "By the way, Ned, where's Edith? I don't see her around."

Ned had been very busy getting his stuff together, and Dick had gone up to the boom to bring down the last of their bags.

"Why, she was here a few moments ago," he replied, looking around.

"And the dog is gone, too. Strange! Ha! There goes another boat."

A shout rang out over the lake and they saw a canoe load of Klondikers pushing off. Their own canoe was now the only one which remained.

As the canoe came into view on the other side of the point, Ned saw that Edith was in it.

"What in thunder does that mean? Has the girl given us the shake?" exclaimed the Unknown. "There's your friend Dawley beside her in the boat. Don't look so glum, Young Klondike. Hark! She's calling."

"Good-bye, Ned!" cried Edith, shaking her handkerchief. "You are too slow! I can't wait for you."

"By-bye, Young Klondike!" bawled Dawley, taking off his hat and waving it above his head. "Meet you at Dawson! Tra-la-la!"

This was cool, seeing that Ned had scarcely spoken to the fellow since they met at the camp.

Then they saw Dawley pull his banjo out of the green case and begin to play, and Edith's voice came back to them over the water, as the canoe swept on down the lake with Rover at the stern barking back at the shore.

"The cold shake, as sure as shooting," chuckled the Unknown. "When I was in Valparaiso, I knew a girl who shook a young fellow like that, and—don't look so black, Young Klondike. If Edith prefers Dawley to you, who's to hinder? She ain't in your charge."

To the Unknown it seemed a good joke, but Ned just turned away and went to meet Dick, who came staggering toward them with a big bag on his back.

"Did you see that, Ned?" he broke out.

"Don't say a word, Dick."

"She insisted upon being allowed to go in that canoe. She was talking to Dawley ten minutes before they started."

"Stop!" cried Ned. "Dick Luckey, don't you say another word."

"Phew!" whistled Dick. "Well, it's none of my doings. Drop it, Ned. You were getting stuck on Edith, anyhow. We want to make our fortune before we think of falling in love."

Ned made no answer.

For an hour after the canoe started he never opened his mouth, but when he did speak he was the same old Ned again, bright and lively as ever.

Days passed and Edith's name was not mentioned.

Nor did the boys see her. Joe Torry's canoe had been delayed an hour, and as the travel was now night and day they did not come up with the rest of their party.

The twenty-four mile journey down Lake Bennett was successfully performed; that night the party passed over Cariboo crossing and entered Lake Tagish, running nineteen miles to the river, and then six miles down the river to Marsh lake.

Here was another paddle of nineteen miles, and then a twenty-five mile journey down the river to the portage where the canoe and its load had to be carried on land, around the famous White Horse rapids.

Next came the sixteen mile run down the Tahkeenah river to the head of lake Le Barge.

Here they fully expected to come up with the other canoes, but they were disappointed.

The last of them had just gone.

They could see their white sails out on the lake.

There is no paddling on Le Barge, the thirty-one miles is always performed under sail.

"There they go!" cried the Unknown, as they came out upon the lake in the early morning. "I can see Edith in that last canoe."

Ned turned away and made no reply, but Dick took the glass from the detective and fixed it on the boat.

Edith was there and Dawley, too.

Dick saw them both distinctly; they were seated in the stern, side by side.

"She's waving to us, Ned!" he cried, presently.

"Let her wave," growled Ned, and he pulled out his banjo, and began to play.

Dick said no more and all through the day the canoes kept on up the lake.

But Joe Torry's boat did not keep up with the rest, and before long they were alone again.

In fact, night overtook them while still on the lake, which ought not to have been the case, for the journey to Thirty Mile river is usually performed between daylight and darkness even at that season, being only thirty-one miles.

As the sun went down a cold north wind sprang up and the temperature fell away below freezing.

Out came the blankets, great coats and mufflers, then.

"This is a bad job!" growled the Unknown. "This will interfere with my plans."

"Your plans—all our plans," said Joe Torry. "If we find Thirty Mile river frozen as we are likely to do, it means halt till spring; for we can never reach Dawson on foot."

"Is there no chance of its opening again once it freezes?" asked Dick.

"Blamed little. Still it might."

"It's got to open if I open it," said the Unknown. "When I was on the Arctic expedition in '68, I blew open a channel which let our boat out of the pack, and we got back to the steamer all right. If we hadn't we'd have been frozen to death, sure!"

"Thought you said you never were at the North Pole?" laughed Dick.

"Never was, dear boy. We didn't get there. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What steamer were you on?" asked Dick.

"Let's see. I disremember her name now. Was it the Albatross? No, I think not. Mebbe it was—there's the other canoes, cap!"

There they were, sure enough. They had come up with their friends again.

This time they joined the remainder of the party, who, in fact, had determined to wait for them, and all together they finished the journey to the mouth of Thirty Mile river.

By the time they reached it a snowstorm set in, and further progress was stopped.

The canoes were hauled up on the bank, and the Klondikers pitched their camp under the shadow of a great over-hanging ledge of rocks.

Here roaring fires were built, for there was plenty of dry wood about, and after supper the miners lay around playing cards, talking and singing. Ralph Dawley worked his banjo for all it was worth, and Edith sang sweetly.

But Ned kept his banjo in the case and lay away from the fire, talking to Dick and taking no part in these proceedings.

He had not even looked at Dawley when they met on the shore.

Edith came up and spoke to Dick and the Unknown, but when she approached Ned he merely nodded to her and drew away.

Toward ten o'clock the camp quieted down, and most of the Klondikers were asleep, Dick among the rest.

But Ned couldn't sleep, and about that time he got up and, taking his rifle, walked out from under the rocks, leaving Dick and the Unknown sleeping with the rest.

At least he thought so, but he was mistaken.

No sooner had he passed out of sight than the Unknown was on his feet.

He walked over to the fire, where Edith was sitting.

Ralph Dawley had been there a little while before chatting with the girl, but he had now disappeared.

Edith started up at his approach.

"What do you want?" she whispered. "Don't you come near me or you'll spoil it all."

"Hush! I must say a word. When is it to be?"

"To-night!"

"Good enough! You'd better bring matters to a head, if you want to make your peace with Ned Gold-en."

"I don't care whether I do or not, I was going to say," whispered Edith, "but that wouldn't be true. Can't Ned trust me? He ought to, and—"

"Hush! Here he comes!" breathed the Unknown and he glided away following the direction taken by Ned.

What was all this? A plot?

It looked so. Meanwhile Ned walked on.

The storm was about over; it was only a squall. Considering the lateness of the season, the Klondikers had been favored with most remarkable weather, but they had a long journey ahead of them yet.

Further down the shore, near the mouth of Thirty Mile river, was a log hut which had been built in former years by fur traders.

Ned passed the open door, glancing in at the dark interior.

If it had been half big enough, the Klondikers might have taken possession of it, but it was only a small affair with one room, and the chimney was down so no one thought of making use of it that night.

Ned kept on to the mouth of the river, and stood there looking at the rushing water for a long time.

Although the wind had died down it was cold standing still, and at length he started to return.

As he drew near the hut he saw a light inside and heard voices talking.

"Who in the world has gone in there?" muttered Ned. "I thought everybody was asleep."

He drew nearer, listening to the voices.

Suddenly he stopped short.

"Good heavens! It's Edith!" he gasped. "And Ralph Dawley!"

Ned's hand closed on his rifle. It began to look as though there was likely to be a row.

He stole up to the door and stood listening.

Edith was talking.

"It's no use, Ralph," she said. "I won't promise to marry you unless you can prove to me that you have actually got money. I've come up here for money and I mean to make it. I don't care a pin about getting married, anyway. I'm one of the independent kind, and don't care about any man, but I'd just as soon marry you as any one else if you are rich."

Pleasant listening this for Ned if he was in love with Edith, and he had been trying to persuade himself that he was ever since they left Dyea.

"Say, Edith, you're keepin' me on the string," drawled Dawley, who seemed sober enough, which was the case, for the very excellent reason that he had long ago drank up all the whisky he had bought in Dyea.

"No string about it," replied Edith, smartly. "You claim to be worth five thousand dollars. Show your money if you want me to believe it."

"Well, I've got it all right, Edith. Can't you trust me? I'm dead in love with you and I'll marry you as soon as we touch Dawson."

"You won't unless you show me your money. You know you promised to prove to me that you were

actually rich when I consented to leave Ned Golden's boat and go into the other one. You've had several days to do it in, but you haven't kept your word."

"I can do it, Edith. I can do it if I choose."

"I don't believe you. Where would you get money?"

"Brought it from the States with me, of course. Earned it. Oh, I'm a hustler, I am."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Edith. "I see it's only the old story. I'm going back to camp."

"Not without giving me your promise, you don't go, Edith."

Ned's hand closed tighter on his rifle, for he heard Dawley move closer to the girl.

"You'll get my promise when I see the money," said Edith, calmly. "Don't you lay your hand on me, Ralph Dawley. If you do you'll find you've run up against a snag!"

"Have I really got to show you the money to prove that I ain't lying?" asked Dawley, in an aggrieved tone.

"You have."

"Then I suppose I may as well do it first as last." Ned drew nearer, listening intently.

"It's Dick's money, if he's got any," he thought. "What is Edith about?"

He began to wish about that time that he had been a little more courteous to the girl when they met on the shore.

He peered through the chinks between the logs, and saw Dawley fumble in the inside pocket of his coat.

Out came the old pocket-book, sure enough.

"The thief!" thought Ned.

He was about to jump in, then, but something seemed to tell him to wait.

"Here it is, Edith," drawled Dawley. "It's all in here."

"I want to see it," said Edith, holding out her hand. Dawley drew back.

"Well, now, do I have to open the pocket-book and prove that I ain't a liar?" he whined.

"You do!"

"Well, then, I won't."

"Then I'll do it for you, Ralph Dawley," cried Edith, and she suddenly snatched away the pocket-book, at the same time pulling a revolver from under her wrap and pointing it at Dawley's head.

"Get out of here," she cried. "You thief! You scoundrel! This is Dick Luckey's money! I've got what I want now!"

Ralph Dawley cringed before the brave girl like the coward that he was.

"Don't shoot, Edith! Don't shoot!" he whined. "You are entirely mistaken about that money; I can explain!"

"Explain to me," cried a voice in the rear of the room.

There was the Unknown looking in the window; his rifle covered Dawley, too.

"And to me," said another voice in the doorway.

It was Ned, and his rifle was up and ready.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! Young Klondike himself!" chuckled the detective, springing in through the window. "Ain't you ashamed of yourself, Ned Golden, for the way you have snubbed this brave girl?"

Dawley showed what sort of stuff he was made of then.

He dropped on his knees before Edith, whining like a whipped cur:

"Don't let them kill me! Don't let them kill me! I own up! I did steal the money! Don't tell the boys or they'll lynch me!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SKELETON IN THE HUT.

BEFORE any one could say a word in answer, Rover came bounding into the hut.

The dog had been asleep by the fire when Edith stole away. He was so closely attached to the girl that it was a wonder he had not followed her before.

Somehow Rover seemed to comprehend the situation, for he sprang upon Ralph Dawley, and seizing him by the throat, had the wretch on his back before he knew it.

"Take him off! Take him off!" yelled the thief.

"Down, Rover! Down!" cried Edith, sternly.

It was all she could do to make him let go of his victim.

Ned and the Unknown lent their aid.

They got Dawley up, and tied his hands behind him.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got a man at last, even if he isn't my man!" chuckled the Unknown. "Ned, you haven't apologized to Edith for your boorish behavior yet."

"I'm sure I don't know what to say," stammered Ned, very red in the face. "Edith, can you forgive me?"

"For what, Ned?"

When Edith fixed her big blue eyes upon him, Ned was more confused than ever. In fact, he did not know what to say.

"I was so rude to you," he stammered.

"I've forgotten it, Ned. Here's Dick's money. This case must be reported to Captain Torry at once."

"No, no, no!" cried Dawley. "Don't do it. Let me go! The boys will lynch me. I've given back the money! Let me go!"

"Given back nothing," said the Unknown. "You deserve to be lynched. Edith, the safety of every man in our party depends upon the honesty of each one of us. We must not let this fellow go."

"Where would you go? You'd starve to death in this wilderness," said Edith, looking pityingly at the cringing wretch.

"His fate must be decided by a general vote," said the Unknown, decidedly. "I am an officer of the law, Edith. I will not let him go. Besides, he hasn't given up the money yet."

"I have! I've given up everything!" whined Dawley.

"Ned, open the pocket-book!" said the Unknown.

Now, as Ned had taken it for granted that the money was in the pocket-book, he had not opened it.

He did it now.

"Empty, by gracious!" he exclaimed. "There is nothing here."

Ralph Dawley gave a howl.

He thought his fate was sealed then.

But the Unknown broke out with one of his chuckling laughs:

"Don't throw your coat down, if you want to keep your steals next time!" he cried.

Then he pulled a little roll of bills out of his pocket.

"Five thousand dollars, property of Dick Luckey, until the rightful owner comes along!" he cried. "Ralph Dawley, I picked your pocket within half an hour after we went into camp."

There was a tremendous excitement among the Klondikers when the Unknown marched Ralph Dawley into camp, arousing everybody with his loud shout.

"What's the row? Indians?" cried old Joe Torry.

All hands grasped their rifles and were on their feet like a flash.

"No; only a thief," said the Unknown. "Gentlemen, listen to me."

Then he told the story of Dawley's capture, taking care not to mention the amount which had been stolen from Dick.

"Lynch him! Lynch the scoundrel!" cried the Klondikers.

"Is the money all here—the whole five thousand?" whispered Dick, as Ned slipped the roll of bills into his hand.

"Every bill," answered Ned, "and you may thank Edith and the Unknown for it, but don't you tell how much it is."

There was no need for Dick to say a word, for nobody asked the question.

The matter was very serious for the Klondikers. All had more or less money about them, and nobody wanted his neighbor to know the amount.

Pale and trembling Ralph Dawley stood among his companions, begging piteously for his life.

Old Joe Torry stepped upon a big rock.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "this is a serious matter. If we can't trust each other we'd better separate and go on to the Klondike each man alone."

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" they shouted.

Tears were streaming down Dawley's cheeks; his face was as white as a corpse.

Ned was moved—so was Dick, but Edith never said a word.

"Let him off, Mr. Torry," called out Dick. "I'm satisfied now that I've got my money back."

"Can't be done," said the old pioneer. "Boys, I've been through this sort of thing many a time in the old days of '49; we must act, and act promptly. Ralph Dawley, are you guilty or are you not?"

"It wasn't me; it was a feller I met in Dyea," groaned the coward.

"That won't do."

"It's true."

"Then how did you come by the money?"

"The feller got drunk. I took it out of his pocket."

"Then you are twice a thief. You were the wretch who went into the stateroom occupied by Ned Golden and Dick Luckey on the Hyde, were you not?"

"No, no!"

"You lie! Your face shows it. Tell the truth, or I'll shoot you where you stand."

Old Joe drew his revolver and covered the crying wretch.

"Put it up! Don't shoot me!" groaned Dawley. "I did go into the stateroom. I confess it all."

"Lynch him! String him up! Shoot him, Joe!" shouted the Klondikers.

And there is no doubt that they would have done it, if it had not been for Edith.

"Boys!" she cried. "Was it I who worked up the case against this man?"

"You did! You did! Hear! Hear!" cried the Unknown.

"Then I ask for his life," continued Edith. "Give him the small canoe and let him go ahead of us. If he shows himself again I haven't a word to say."

"And you?" asked old Joe, looking at Dick.

"I agree," said Dick.

"Put it to vote!" cried the Unknown.

It was done, and there was a majority of one in favor of letting Dawley go free.

So the small canoe was prepared—it was a worthless, leaky affair—and a small supply of provisions placed in it.

The moon had now come out and was shining brightly, when, with Ralph Dawley on board, the Klondikers pushed the frail craft off from the shore.

Not a word was spoken.

With white face and staring eyes Ralph Dawley sat in the canoe, and never even attempted to take up the paddle.

In a moment the canoe was caught in the current and went shooting out of Lake Le Barge into Thirty Mile river, passing in between the wooded hills to be seen no more.

"He ought to have been shot, Miss Edith," said old Joe Torry, "and in my opinion we shall live to regret that we didn't shoot him before we strike Dawson. But there's no use talking, a woman will have her way."

Morning dawned clear and cool.

Dick was the happiest fellow in the camp, unless we except Ned Golden.

There had been no sleep for either of the boys after Dawley's departure, but the Unknown finished out the night by the side of the fire, while Edith remained talking with Ned and Dick.

"I was sure Dawley had the money, and I knew I could make him tell me," she said; "but don't you get jealous again, Ned. I'm going to the Klondike to look for my father, and that's all there is about it."

Ned took the hint and said nothing, and after that all three were as good friends as ever.

In fact, Edith showed so plainly that she was entirely able to take care of herself during the days that followed, that they found it hard to realize that she was not a boy like themselves.

She had already shown that she was a splendid shot, and she repeated that lesson again and again.

Many was the brace of ducks she brought down, and before the moose meat was used up, Edith had killed another, and this before any one else caught sight of it.

Besides this she could handle the paddle as well as any man of the party.

This was a very necessary accomplishment, for the Indians now left them; everyone had to take their turn.

The fine weather continued, and the water courses remained unfrozen, although the thermometer seldom rose much above the freezing point.

There was liable to be a big drop any day, and old Joe Torry pressed forward with all possible speed.

Thirty Mile river was soon left behind.

Then they ran into Lewis river, at its junction with the Hootalinqua.

Ninety-two miles to Five Fingers, and then a dangerous run among the islands to Rink Rapids.

Dawson City was daily drawing nearer.

The run through the rapids was safely accomplished this time by every canoe but one, which happened to be one of the largest, and carried valuable freight.

This struck a sunken rock and was badly shattered, although nobody was drowned and most of the goods were saved.

"We're tied up here for a day while they repair that infernal canoe," remarked the Unknown, on the morning after the accident, "and it's too bad, for in my humble judgment there's going to be a storm."

"It will be snow if it comes," said Ned. "It's colder than it was yesterday. We can't expect rain if the wind begins to blow."

"Breakfast! Breakfast!" called Edith, who had constituted herself cook for our little party, and then they all went up under a big overhanging rock where there was as fine a cup of coffee ready for them as could be had in the best hotel in the States.

"Ned, let's you and I go up on those hills and see what we can shoot if we've got to tie up here," said Edith, after breakfast was over.

"I'm with you," said Ned. "What do you say, Dick?"

"No objection, if we ain't wanted to help repair the canoe."

"I'm detailed for that," said the Unknown. "Go on and have your hunt."

"That's all nonsense," said Ned. "You are always trying to make it easy for us. If I knew your name I'd say thank you. We'd better ask Joe Torry, Dick. Of course, we've got to do our share."

"So, that's the way. My word is doubted," laughed the Unknown. "If you knew my name, indeed! Don't you know it? Haven't I told it times enough?"

"Everybody is calling you Snyder just now; is that your name?" asked Ned.

But the Unknown only laughed again.

It was true that the Klondikers had dubbed him Snyder, and he always answered to it.

The fact was everybody had grown tired of trying to find out the detective's name.

"Look here, I'll give you a name, boys, and it is really one of my names—my middle one; straight goods this time. We're going to stick together for a while, anyhow, and you've got to have a handle for me—I see that."

"What is it?" asked Ned.

"Zedekiah! A good old scripture name; my grandmother is responsible for it—rest her soul!"

"Zed it is, then," laughed Ned. "What a relief to be able to call you something. I'm going down to ask Joe Torry if we can be spared."

Ned found that others had already been detailed to look after the repairs on the canoe, and he was soon back again.

"Nothing to hinder us all from going on the hunt," he declared. "Come along, Edith. We'll bag something sure. Get your rifle, Zed."

"No, I ain't going," said the Unknown. "I've got other fish to fry."

"Why, there's nothing for you to do."

"Dear boy, I differ with you. I may find my man if I look along the shore, and by the shore I stay. Good-bye and good luck. No need to wish you that with Edith going along."

"He's up to something," said Ned, when they had climbed to the top of the first hill.

They could now look down upon the river. The Unknown had taken one of the smaller canoes and was paddling along close to the bank.

"Prospecting," said Dick.

"Perhaps. He's a strange man," replied Ned.

"He told me last night that he was sure Ralph Dawley was still alive and not very far ahead of us," said Edith. "I wonder how he knew?"

Before any one could reply a flock of ducks suddenly came in sight. They were moving south over the brow of the hill.

Edith threw up her rifle and had fired twice before either of the boys could get in a shot.

Three ducks fell, and Rover bounded forward to fetch them.

"A splendid shot, Edith! Two of those ducks are yours, and I know it," declared Ned. "I missed."

"Oh, I'm all right on ducks," laughed Edith. "I've had lots of practice, but what's that down there on the shore of that little pond?"

The pond in question lay in a hollow among the hill-tops, about forty feet down. The shores were wooded, and among the stunted trees some large animal could be seen moving about.

"Looks like a moose," said Dick.

"It's a cariboo!" cried Edith. "Watch me take him, boys."

She leveled her rifle, and a moment of suspense followed. The cariboo came out from among the trees and approached the pond.

Suddenly Edith's rifle spoke, and Ned saw the cariboo leap into the air. Then, with a curious cry, it ran forward a few yards and went down on the grass on its knees.

"A shot! A shot!" cried Ned. "Edith, you do it every time."

"You can do the same after a little practice, Ned."

"Don't believe I ever can. There's fresh meat for us, though, and we want it."

They all hurried down the hill to the pond, but Rover was beside the wounded beast before them, barking furiously and jumping about to keep out of the reach of the cariboo's horns.

A shot from Ned's rifle soon settled the fate of the poor brute, and the boys went to work to skin the cariboo and cut it up, while Edith shot a few more ducks, for while the work was going on several flocks settled on the lake.

"I'll pack some of this meat back to camp, and you two stay here and get a few more ducks," said Ned. "I know you don't want to leave yet, Edith."

"Would you mind, Ned?"

"Not a bit. I'm no shot, and you are having such luck that it's a shame to spoil it."

"I might just as well go as you," said Dick. "It will be a long day before I can handle a rifle the way Edith does."

"No, no! We can't both go. I'll do it."

So they loaded Ned down, and leaving his rifle with Dick, he started back to the camp, less than a mile away.

When he got on top of the hill, a cold wind struck his face, and he could not fail to notice that the sky was entirely overcast.

"The snow is coming," he thought, and he lost no time getting back to camp.

"Hello, Young Klondike! What you got there?" exclaimed Joe Torry, as he came down on the shore.

"Cariboo this time," said Ned.

"Miss Edith's work, I'll bet. Where's the rest of your party?"

"Edith and Dick are up among the hills shooting ducks. Of course, this is her game. I ain't up on cariboo hunting yet."

"Well, get them back as quick as you possibly can. It's going to snow inside of twenty minutes. Where's that man Snyder? Has he decamped with our best canoe?"

"I saw him paddling down the river a while ago. Hasn't he come in yet?"

"No, he hasn't, and he wants to come or there'll be trouble. We want to be moving out of this mighty quick, or we stand a fair chance of being snowed in. He'll never strike Ralph Dawley, even if he is hanging round here."

"Dawley! What do you mean?" demanded Ned, amazed.

"What, didn't you hear that Snyder found his canoe hidden among the rocks early this morning before you were awake?"

"No, indeed!"

"Fact! The fellow has been here, and from the traces Snyder found there were others with him. I tell you that detective is as smart as a whip, even if he does stick to his plug hat and hasn't got any name."

"Then that's what the Unknown was looking for?" thought Ned, as he hurried back up the hill.

He had lost more time than he meant and more than was safe, if he had but known it, for up in Alaska, storms come suddenly and when it snows it usually "means business."

Ned had a taste of it before he reached the top of the hill.

All at once a blast struck him, which might have come from the North Pole.

It brought the snow with it.

One who has never been in Alaska can hardly realize how rapidly these storms come.

In less than three minutes after Ned struck the storm, he found himself enveloped in a blinding whirl of snow flakes.

He could scarcely keep his feet, and to see his way was quite impossible, and yet he knew that he was but a few moments away from Edith and Dick.

Ned bent his head to the wind, and staggered on up the hill.

When he got to the top he could hear Rover barking furiously, but he could see nothing of the pond, for it had suddenly grown very dark, and the whirl of flakes fairly blinded him.

"Dick! Hey, Dick! Hello!" he shouted.

Then he heard a shot, and Rover's bark ceased.

But there was no answer to his shouts.

Locating the pond the best he could, Ned ran down the slope, feeling sure he was going right.

He went twice as far as he expected, and yet did not come to the pond.

"I've got into the next hollow," he thought. "I remember looking down into this hole; I've got to go back."

Suddenly he ran into a tree which he had not seen.

The shock nearly stunned him. As he drew back and looked, to his surprise he saw that he had come among a clump of trees, and there was a rude log hut right in front of him.

The door was open and Ned staggered inside intending to rest a moment and get his breath.

As he crossed the threshold he stumbled over something which seemed to break in many pieces with a rattling sound.

Ned drew back in horror as he looked down upon the floor.

There lay a human skeleton or the remains of one; the whitened skull with its eyeless sockets rolled along the sloping floor and struck Ned's foot.

At the same instant another shot rang out and immediately following it, Ned heard Edith's voice crying through the storm:

"This is Ralph Dawley's. Take it, you scoundrel." Then the rifle cracked again.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SKELETON'S LEGACY.

NED GOLDEN never stopped to look at the skeleton but went bounding out of the hut.

A dark shadow was hurrying toward him through the storm.

Ned whipped out his revolver—it was his own, recovered when Dawley was captured that night.

"Edith! Edith!" he shouted. "Here I am! It's Ned!"

"Lend me a hand, Ned," came the answer. "Poor Dick is almost gone."

It was Edith, sure enough, and she was supporting Dick.

His head hung over to one side, and he would have fallen if Edith, who had her arm around him, had not held him up.

"Look out, Ned," she said, coolly. "Dawley's right behind us with four Indians."

"Here, take the rifles! What's this—a hut! I get Dick inside! Shut the door, Ned! Quick! Quick! Oh! What is this?"

She had stumbled over the skeleton, but after the first exclamation it did not seem to disturb her a bit.

"Clear these bones away!" she cried. "Shut the door. Is there any fastening? Yes, here's a bar. Now, we are safe for the moment. I don't hear them. Perhaps they've lost us in the storm. Now, then, Dick Luckey, you brace up."

And all this time Ned had not been able to say a word.

"Edith! Is it really so? Is Dawley after you? Oh, don't tell me that Dick is dead."

"Not a bit of it, Ned," gasped Dick, from the floor where Edith had laid him down. "I got a crack over the head with a big club. One of those infernal Indians. It knocked me out for the moment, but I'm all right again now."

And Dick managed to scramble up without any one's help.

"They came upon us suddenly in the storm," explained Edith. "We had made our way up the hill and were trying to locate the camp. I declare, Ned, I thought I should die when they rushed at us. Poor Dick got it, but I sent a shot back and they scattered. It's all up with Rover, though."

"Dead!" gasped Ned.

"Dawley shot him. I might have known that something was wrong, he barked so. Oh, Ned, I wish I had never interfered to save that fellow's life now."

They listened in silence for a few moments, but could hear nothing above the howling of the wind.

"Perhaps they've lost us," said Edith. "Where in the world are we, anyhow? What's this skeleton mean? Dick, how are you feeling now?"

"I've got a lump on my head as big as an egg, that's all," said Dick. "Some fellow has passed in his checks here, but it must have been a long time ago."

It was getting lighter now, and they could see about the interior of the hut distinctly enough.

There was little to be discovered beside the skeleton, and an old iron pot, a rusty rifle and a few odds and ends, such as a man might carry in a knapsack, and the knapsack was there.

There were the remains of a pair of old blankets, too, lying in one corner, but they fell to dust when Ned tried to pick them up.

A folded paper dropped out from among the pieces.

Ned picked this up, and examined it by the light which stole in through the chinks between the logs.

"It's a letter!" he exclaimed, "and it's dated ten years ago. What's this it says? 'To whoever finds me.' Well, I guess that means me."

"Open it," said Edith. "We've got a moment now. I'll listen. Don't you be afraid that I won't hear them if they come."

Ned tore open the paper which was stuck together, and by the fading light read as follows:

"I'm dying. My name is Peter Proudfit. The gold is in the chimney. I've been sick here now for two months and not able to get my canoe up over the rapids. Whoever finds this may have my gold. I minded it up on Klondike river, and there is lots more where it—"

Here the writing came to an abrupt end.

"Good Heavens! The poor wretch died before he was able to finish his letter," exclaimed Dick.

"There's the chimney, Ned," said Edith, quietly. "The skeleton's legacy may be worth having. You were here first—it's yours."

Ned ran his hand up into the rude chimney which had been made of stones loosely piled together.

"There's something here sure!" he exclaimed, and he drew out a small canvas bag which was so heavy that he almost let it fall.

"Gold!" cried Dick. "Who's the lucky one now?"

"Open it! Open it!" said Edith.

Ned's hand trembled as he untied the string.

Sure enough, the bag was full of gold dust.

Time had not changed it a bit.

Just as it had been when Peter Proudfit put it in the chimney, so it was now.

"Well, well, well! If Golden & Luckey ain't striking it rich all around!" cried Edith. "I wish I was a member of that famous firm."

"If you don't count yourself a member of the firm already it will dissolve, that's all," said Ned. "This gold no more belongs to me than it does to you and Dick."

"But you found it, Ned. You discovered the skeleton—you know how his legacy reads."

"It's firm property," declared Ned, "and you are a member sure; but how much is there here?"

"How much do you think it weighs?"

"Give it up. What do you say, Dick?"

Dick balanced the bag in his hand.

"I should say at least ten pounds, Ned."

"All of that."

"Call it twenty dollars an ounce, troy, which is a little more than it's actually worth."

"And sixteen ounces to the pound! Phew! A fortune!"

"You're off on your tables," Dick laughed. "Twelve ounces goes for a pound troy weight."

"So? Well, that cuts it down. Twelve times ten is—"

"One hundred and twenty ounces at twenty dollars," broke in Edith. "Not so much of a fortune, Ned. I'd give my share to have poor Rover here now."

"It's twenty-four hundred dollars all the same," said Ned. "I'm satisfied it will give us a bully good start on the Klondike, if we ever get there. I only wish the skeleton had mentioned the particular spot where it was dug."

"Out of respect to the departed, we ought at least to bury his bones," said Dick. "I'm serious about it. I should hate to leave them here."

"We'll collect them together and put them in the chimney," said Ned. "The old thing will tumble down of its own weight soon, and then he'll have a sort of a tomb."

They listened carefully before they began to work, but could hear nothing of the enemy.

In the chimney was a broad, projecting stone, upon which the bag had rested, and on this Ned and Dick piled the dead man's bones.

By the time they had finished the gruesome task, it became evident that Dawley and his Indians either had no intention of attacking the hut, or had missed their way in the storm.

"I'll go out and see how the land lies," said Dick.

"You won't do anything of the sort, you stay with Edith and look after your sore head," said Ned, and seizing his rifle he cautiously opened the door.

It was still snowing hard, but the wind was nothing like as fierce as it had been.

"I don't think they are anywhere around here," Ned declared, after making the circuit of the hut. "I think we might venture to start for the camp now."

"Let's wait a little longer and make sure," said Edith.

"It ain't safe. Joe Torry may start without us."

"He wouldn't do such a thing."

"I don't know. There are others in the party besides us, and he has to consider the general good. I think we'd better be on the move."

"But can you find your way, Ned?"

"I'm sure I can."

"You lost it before."

"And a mighty lucky thing I did, the way it has all turned out."

"It may not be so lucky the next time."

"We've got to leave, Edith, if there is any show for it, and I think there is."

"I accept the decision of the head of the firm. I'm ready."

"I'll go first," said Ned, "and, Dick, you carry the gold; we'll walk single file and Edith shall be between us."

Ned stopped for a moment to take a look at his surroundings and then they started up the hill.

Already the snow had begun to drift in places and it was hard climbing.

When they got to the top of the hill they could see but little, and the wind had such a sweep that it was all they could do to keep their feet.

"This is tremendous!" panted Ned, "but I suppose it's nothing to what we shall strike on the Klondike before the winter is out."

As he spoke a horn sounded in the distance.

Again and again it was blown.

"They are signaling us! I'll answer!" cried Edith. She fired three shots.

Then the horn was heard again, and they hurried down the slope in the direction of the sound.

"It would be something terrible if we were to be left here," remarked Dick.

"With no settlement within hundreds of miles; don't mention it," shuddered Edith. "Ned, you are sure you are going right?"

"We are going down, anyhow. The river must lie below us. I wish they'd blow the horn again."

But the horn did not sound again, and as it turned out, it was very unfortunate that it didn't.

They were not going right in spite of Ned's confident assertion to the contrary. They were descending directly on to the river instead of following the northwest slope of the hill up which they had come.

Within a few moments Ned discovered his blunder, for the snow began to fall in larger flakes, and the wind dying down, the rush and whirl ceased, and they were able to see ahead.

"Heavens! Here's the river right below us," cried Ned, suddenly.

He drew back, and it was well he did so, for another step would have sent him over the edge of the rocks, and perhaps into the river which ran some thirty feet below them.

"Step back, Edith!" he cried. "There's danger here!"

Edith sprang back as Ned sounded the warning.

But Dick was not so fortunate.

Perhaps it was a misstep; perhaps the bag of gold helped to carry him down.

Ned and Edith were startled by a sharp cry, and looking back they saw to their horror, Dick whirling down over the rocks.

"Oh, Ned, Ned!" gasped Edith, covering her face with her hands.

Poor Ned!

If it had not been for Edith, he would have leaped down after Dick over the rocks.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK LUCKEY'S LUCK.

If ever there was a boy fairly entitled to his name, Dick Luckey was that boy.

At just one point under the ledge the snow had drifted.

Dick fell in the drift, and everywhere else was ragged rocks.

"Dick, Dick!" yelled Ned, "are you there? Are you alive?"

"All right!" shouted Dick, scrambling out of the drift. "Ain't hurt a bit! Get down to the camp, Ned, and send the canoe along to pick me up."

"Is the gold all right?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Can't see any way to get down to you, Dick! I guess it will have to be as you say."

"Do it, Ned. I can stay here a month, but I can't get out of this place unless I jump into the river. I'm all hemmed in by the rocks."

Just then the horn sounded again, several quick blasts being blown.

Evidently old Joe Torry was growing impatient.

"We are going, Dick!" cried Ned. "It won't be but a few minutes before we get you off. I know just where I am now."

And Ned and Edith hurried away down the hill.

So much for Dick Luckey's luck; but the adventure was not concluded yet.

There is good luck and bad for us all, and especially for gold miners.

Some get it one way, and some the other.

Dick Luckey got it both ways that night.

Ned and Edith had scarcely departed, when Dick heard the sound of paddles, and became aware that a canoe was approaching through the gloom.

Hemmed in as he was by the rocks on either side, he could see neither up nor down the river for any great distance, and so it was perfectly natural for him to suppose that the approaching canoe was one belonging to the party.

He at once jumped at the conclusion that Joe Torry had started without them, and he shouted for all he was worth.

"Hello, there! Hello! Hello, on board the canoe!"

"Hello!" came the answer, around the rocks. "Who's there?"

"Dick Luckey! That you, Joe?"

There was a pause.

"Yes," answered a voice, after a moment. "Is Ned with you?"

"No, I fell over the rocks! Take me on board. Ned and Edith have gone down the hill. Don't leave them behind, Joe."

"All right; the other canoes are waiting for them. We'll be with you in a moment, Dick," called the voice.

If Dick had been a little less excited he might have recognized that voice, but he never dreamed of its being Ralph Dawley until the canoe suddenly came around the rocks.

There was the renegade Klondiker and his four Indians in the canoe.

Dawley flung up a rifle and covered Dick.

"If you move a peg, Dick Luckey, I'll shoot you dead!" he cried.

Now, Ned had Dick's rifle, and a bag of gold dust, although a very fine thing in its way, is of little use as a defensive weapon against a scoundrel with a cocked rifle in his hands.

Nor was there any chance to retreat.

Dick was surrounded by rocks on all sides but one, and on that side was the canoe and the rifle.

"Cornered, by thunder!" cried Dawley, as he leaped ashore.

Three of the Indians followed him.

They were a renegade lot whom Dawley had fallen in with on Thirty Mile river. He had held out big promises to them if they would help him capture the Klondikers.

They had not expected to make the attempt so soon, and it was by pure accident that they fell in with Dick and Edith on the hill, and now by accident again they were here, and Dick fell into their hands.

He fought bravely, though.

Paying no attention to Dawley's threat, Dick jumped forward and actually seized the rifle.

Dawley fired, the bullet striking the rocks and bounding back.

But the three Indians got hold of Dick and down he went in the snow.

"This is the one we want!" cried Dawley. "He's

got the money. What's this? A bag of gold, by time! Gold!"

The hoarse grunts of the Indians showed that they appreciated the discovery.

They tumbled poor Dick about roughly, holding him while Dawley searched his pockets.

"Ha! Ha! You little snoozer! I've got what I want now!" cried Dawley, pulling out the pocket-book. "Pitch him into the river! We're fixed now!"

It was rather a relief to Dick when he found himself flying through the air and splashing down into the icy water of Lewis river, for he had fully expected to be scalped.

Dawley sprang into the canoe and Indians followed.

"Anodder canoe come—more white man," grunted one. "We go."

They seized the paddles and pushed out into the stream, when suddenly a rifle cracked once—twice—three times.

Dawley dodged down, one of the Indians fell over, badly wounded.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got my man at last!" shouted a voice out of the darkness.

Dawley thought he was a goner then, for, of course, he recognized the voice of the Unknown.

CHAPTER XIV.

RALPH DAWLEY'S FATE.

FORTUNATE it was for Dick Luckey that at this eventful moment the storm passed and the moon shone out in all her glory.

Dick sprang to his feet.

"Hello! Hello!" he shouted to the Unknown.

"Dick! You there!" replied the detective.

"Yes, yes! After that scoundrel; he's got my money again and thousands of dollars' worth of dust beside."

Dawley's canoe meanwhile was making off down the river at full speed.

This was the beginning of the chase. The Unknown brought his canoe up to the rocks and took Dick in.

"Quick! Lose no time. We may overhaul him yet," said Dick, and they were just starting when he heard Ned's voice calling.

Another canoe was approaching.

In it were Ned and Edith.

"Found this where we came down the hill!" shouted Ned. "On! On! We have seen all. We may yet succeed in overhauling them."

Then the chase began in earnest.

With the moon to guide them, they were soon able to see the other canoe.

As it struck into the rapids, Dawley's Indians made a bad break.

They allowed themselves to get caught in the eddy, or "backset," as it is called.

"Our game!" cried the Unknown. "Get ashore, boys! Get ashore!"

"What for?" demanded Ned, not comprehending.

"Obey, Young Klondike. Don't stop to argue! Ashore, if you want to win!"

They ran the canoe ashore and climbed out on the rocks.

By this time Ned understood it all.

Caught in the eddy, Dawley's canoe was being swept back toward them.

Ned saw that it must surely pass very close to the place where they stood.

"Ready!" said the Unknown. "If anybody can shoot that scoundrel, we've got him now."

"I can do better than that," replied Edith, coolly.

"How—what do you mean?" asked the Unknown.

"I can capture him alive."

"Can't be done. Dawley's day is over. If you fellows won't shoot him, I'll do it myself."

"Wait," said Edith, springing up on top of a rock.

Ralph Dawley was as thorough a scoundrel as ever went unhung.

More than that he was a convict, having done five years in Joliet, where he was sentenced for highway robbery, and from which institution he managed to escape.

A more revengeful nor a shrewder fellow never lived.

He was a bad friend and a dangerous enemy, but his eyesight was as sharp as the next man's, and he was the first to perceive Edith on the rock—he had already seen Ned Golden and his friends.

He sprang up in the canoe and fired three shots at Ned, Dick and the Unknown.

"Get ashore, boys! Leave the girl to me! Kill the rest of them! Let 'em have it! Now! Now!"

Two or three of the Indians who happened to have guns fired. Dawley's piece spoke again, but not a shot told.

Then Dick and the Unknown blazed away, but they were in equally bad luck.

They ran as they fired, coming up with Edith on the rock.

"Down, Edith! Down out of sight!" cried Ned, as a shot from Dawley's rifle whistled between them.

But instead of obeying, Edith sprang up upon a higher boulder, where she was a mark for every man in the canoe.

"Look out for Dawley! Remember the money!" she cried.

Then, quick as thought, the brave girl sent four shots flying at the canoe.

The first took the canoe just above the water line astern, the second did the same amidships, the third put a hole below the water in the bow.

Immediately the canoe began to fill; every movement Dawley and his Indians made helped on the work.

And through it all the shots were flying around Edith on the rock.

"Blazes! We are sinking!" yelled Dawley.

Ned and Dick and the Unknown were blazing away at the Indians about that time—perhaps this is to what Dawley's remark referred.

Two keeled over wounded, and they happened to be the very ones who had the rifles.

Meanwhile, Edith kept up a steady fire, always aiming at the canoe, and sending a hole through the side of the frail craft every time.

Alarmed at the outlook, the rest of the Indians sprang into the water and swam for the opposite shore, while Dawley, who could not swim, rained imprecations on his enemies, and vainly tried to save his sinking craft.

"Come ashore and surrender!" shouted Ned. "Look out for yourself! You'll be on the rocks next!"

"Go to blazes!" bawled Dawley, and as he said it the canoe struck a rock and sank.

As it went down, Dawley made a mad dive overboard.

"Heavens, there's only four feet of water there, and it's all rocks!" gasped Ned.

They hurried to the spot as nearly as they could approach it.

The drowning wretch rose to the surface, his head was hanging limply on one side.

"He's broken his neck," cried the Unknown, "and his skull, too! He went head down on the rocks!"

Ned and the Unknown dragged him out, and as they laid him down on the shore, Dawley gasped a few times and died.

"It's all up with him," said the Unknown. "Don't look so white, Edith. Likely he'd have done us up if you hadn't come. Dead or alive, I'm going for his pockets just the same."

Then the old pocket-book came to light, and Dick's five thousand dollars was in it. Scattered all over the dead man's person, in little parcels, was the gold dust.

The skeleton's legacy was evidently not intended for Ralph Dawley.

"Ye gods and little fishes! This is business!" cried the Unknown. "Edith, you're a brick. Young Klondike, you're another, and as for you, Dick Luckey, you're the luckiest fellow in Alaska to get your money back again, but I'm left! I've got everything I want except my man."

* * * * *

As the Unknown has so neatly wound up our story, we may as well follow suit and call the account closed, for that mysterious individual did not find his man that trip, and as Joe Torry and the whole party did arrive safely at Dawson City a few days later, there is really nothing more to tell, except to mention that after being satisfied that Ralph Dawley was really dead, the Klondikers tied a stone around his waist, and sunk all that remained of the disturber of their peace in the deepest part of the river.

It was with wildly beating hearts that Ned and Dick saw the metropolis of the Yukon rising out of the morning mists, as the frail canoes were paddled up that mighty river, claimed by some to be the longest in the world.

A scattered mass of rude frame buildings, intermingled with tents here and there, a levee with a few small steamers and clumsy wood boats tied up, and a crowd of Klondikers on the shore to greet them.

This was Dawson City, and as each man landed, the pompous Canadian, representing the Northwestern Police, asked his name and business and the place from whence he came.

Edith Welton, San Francisco, Ned Golden and Dick Luckey, New York City, were duly recorded in the officer's book.

"And what's your name—where are you from?" he asked, as the Unknown stepped ashore.

"Mr. Nobody, from Nowhere!" replied the detective, gravely.

Then, as the officer stared, he corrected himself by saying :

"Oh, my name is McKinley. I'm from Washington. No; you needn't stare. I ain't the President of the United States."

After that all hands marched up the levee to the hotel.

It was all over at last, and Young Klondike and his friends had reached the land of gold!

And we advise all those who have followed him on his long journey, and who naturally desire to know what he did there to read the next story of this series, YOUNG KLONDIKE'S CLAIM; or, NINE GOLDEN NUGGETS. It is full of exciting adventures and interest from the first page to the last.

[THE END.]

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