CHAPTER IV.

The Yukon Surrenders.

THERE was a long minute of silence. Shorty was the first to speak.

"Come on," he said. "We might as well tackle it. My feet 'll get cold if I stay here any longer."

Shorty and Kit tramped back through a foot of snow to the head of the rapids and cast off the boat.

"You've sure got to keep the top of the ridge," Shorty shouted at him as the boat quickened in the quickening current and took the head of the rapids.

Kit nodded, swayed his strength and weight tentatively on the steering gear and headed the boat for the plunge.

Several minutes later, half swamped and lying against the bank in the eddy below the White Horse, Shorty spat out a mouthful of tobacco juice and shook Kit's hand.

At the top of the bank they met Breck. His wife stood at a little distance. Kit shook his hand.

"I'm afraid your boat can't make it," he said. "It is smaller than ours and a bit cranky."

The man pulled out a roll of bills. "I'll give you each a hundred if you run it through."

Kit looked out and up the tossing mane of the White Horse. A long, gray twilight was falling, it was turning colder, and the landscape seemed taking on a savage bleakness.

"It ain't that," Shorty was saying. "We don't want your money. But my pardner is the real meat with boats, an' when he says yourn ain't safe I reckon he knows what he's talkin' about."

Kit nodded affirmation and chanced to glance at Mrs. Breck. Her eyes were fixed upon him, and he knew that if ever he had seen prayer in a woman's eyes he was seeing it then. Shorty followed his gaze and saw what he saw. They looked at each other in confusion and did not speak. Moved by the common impulse, they nodded to each other and turned to the trail that led to the head of the rapids.

Barely had they shoved Breck's boat out from the bank and caught the first rough water when the waves began to lap aboard. They were small waves, but it was an earnest of what was to come.

The rapids grew stiffer, and the spray began to fly. In the gathering darkness Kit glimpsed the mane and the crooked fling of the current into it. He worked into this crooked current and felt a glow of satisfaction as the boat hit the head of the mane squarely in the middle. After that, in the smother, leaping and burying and swamping, he had no clear impression of anything save that he swung his weight on the steering oar.

They emerged breathless, wet through, the boat filled with water almost to the gunwale. Lighter pieces of baggage and outfit were floating inside the boat. A few careful strokes on Shorty's part worked the boat into the draw of the eddy, and the eddy did the rest till the boat softly touched the bank.

Looking down from above was Mrs Breck. Her prayer had been answered, and the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"You boys have simply got to take the money," Breck called down to them.

Shorty stood up, slipped and sat down in the water, while the boat dipped one gunwale under and righted again.

"Dern the money," said Shorty. "Fetch out that whisky. Now that it's over I'm gettin' cold feet, an' I'm sure likely to have a chill."

The trail by water crossed Lake Labarge. Here was no fast current, but a tideless stretch of forty miles which must be rowed unless a fair wind blew. But the time for fair wind was past, and an icy gale blew in their teeth out of the north. This made a rough sea, against which it was almost impossible to pull the boat. Added to their troubles was driving snow; also the freezing of the water on their oar blades kept one man occupied in chopping it off with a hatchet. Compelled to take their turn at the oars, Sprague and Stine patiently loafed.

At the end of three hours Sprague pulled his oar in and said they would run back into the mouth of the river for shelter. Stine seconded him, and the several hard won miles were lost. A second day, and a third, the same fruitless attempt was made. The freezeup was very imminent.

"We could make it if they had the souls of clams," Kit told Shorty as they dried their moccasins by the fire on the evening of the third day. "We could have made it today if they hadn't turned back. Another hour's work would have fetched that west shore. They're they're pales in the woods."

Shorty debated a moment. "Look here, Smoke. It's hundreds of miles to Dawson. If we don't want to freeze in here we've got to do somethin'. If we're goin' to Dawson we got to take charge of this here outfit."

They looked at each other.

"It's a go," said Kit as his hand went out in ratification.

"I'll give you each a hundred if you run it through."

In the morning, long before daylight, Shorty issued his call. "Come on," he roared, "tumble out, you sleepers! Here's your coffee! Kick into it! We're goin' to make a start!"

Grumbling and complaining, Stine and Sprague were forced to get under way two hours earlier than ever before. If anything, the gale was stiffer, and in a short time every man's face was iced up, while the oars were heavy with ice.

Three hours they struggled, and four, one man steering, one chopping ice, two toiling at the oars and each taking his various turns. The northwest shore loomed nearer and nearer. The gale blew ever harder, and at last Sprague pulled in his oar in token of surrender. Shorty sprang to it, though his relief had only begun.

"Chop ice," he said, handing Sprague the hatchet.

"But what's the use?" the other whined. "We can't make it. We're going to turn back."

"We're goin' on," said Shorty. "Chop ice. An' when you feel better you can spell me."

It was heartbreaking toil, but they gained the shore, only to find it composed of surge beaten rocks and cliffs, with no place to land.

Nobody spoke, and Kit held the boat into the seas as they skirted the forbidding shore. Sometimes they gained no more than a foot to the stroke, and there were times when two or three strokes no more than enabled them to hold their own. Another hour they labored and a second.

A few minutes later Sprague drew in his oar again. "I'm finished," he said, and there were tears in his voice.

Stine had ceased rowing, and the boat was drifting backward.

"Turn around, Smoke," Sprague ordered.

And Kit, who never in his life had cursed any man, astonished himself. "I'll see you in h— first," he replied. "Take hold of that oar and pull."

Sprague jerked off a mitten, drew his revolver and turned it on his steersman. This was a new experience to Kit. He had never had a gun presented at him in his life. And now, to his surprise, it seemed to mean nothing at all.

"If you don't put that gun up," he said, "I'll take it away and rap you over the knuckles with it."

"If you don't turn the boat around I'll shoot you," Sprague threatened.

Then Shorty took a hand. He ceased chopping ice and stood up behind Sprague. "Go on an' shoot," said Shorty, wiggling the hatchet. "I'm just achin' for a chance to brain you. Go on an' start the festivities."

"Sprague," Kit said, "I'll give you just thirty seconds to put away that gun and get that oar out."

Sprague hesitated, gave a short hysterical laugh, put the revolver away and bent his back to the work.

For two hours more, inch by inch, they fought their way along the edge of the foaming rocks until Kit feared he had made a mistake. And then, when on the verge of himself turning back, they came abreast of a narrow opening not twenty feet wide, which led into a landlocked inclosure where the fiercest gusts scarcely flawed the surface. It was the haven gained by the boats of previous days. They landed on a shelving beach, and the two employers lay in collapse in the boat, while Kit and Shorty pitched the tent, built a fire and started the cooking.

A cup of coffee, set aside to cool and forgotten, a few minutes later was found coated with half an inch of ice. At 8 o'clock, when Sprague and Stine, already rolled in their blankets, were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Kit came back from a look at the boat.

"It's the freezeup, Shorty," he announced. "There's a skin of ice over the whole pond already. The rapid current of the river may keep it open for days. This time tomorrow any boat caught in Lake Labarge remains there until next year."

"You mean we got to get out tonight? Now?"

Kit nodded.

"Tumble out, you sleepers," was Shorty's answer, couched in a roar, as he began casting off the guy ropes of the tent.

They broke their way through the thin ice in the little harbor and came out on the lake, where the water, heavy and glassy, froze on their oars with every stroke. The water soon became like mush, clogging the stroke of the oars and freezing in the air even as it dripped. Later the surface began to form a skin, and the boat proceeded slower and slower.

Often afterward, when Kit tried to remember that night and failed to bring up aught but nightmare recollections, he wondered what must have been the sufferings of Stine and Sprague. His one impression of himself was that he struggled through biting frost and intolerable exertion for a thousand years, more or less.

Morning found them stationary. Stine complained of frosted fingers, and Sprague of his nose, while the pain in Kit's cheeks and nose told him that he, too, had been touched. With each accretion of daylight they could see farther, and as far as they could see was icy surface. The water of the lake was gone.

A hundred yards away was the shore of the north end. Shorty insisted that it was the opening of the river and that he could see water. He and Kit alone were able to work, and with their oars they broke the ice and forced the boat along. And at the last gasp of their strength they made the suck of the rapid river. One look back showed them several boats which had fought through the night and were hopelessly frozen in; then they whirled around a bend in a current running six miles an hour.

Day by day they floated down the swift river, and day by day the shore ice extended farther out. When they made camp at nightfall they chopped a space in the ice in which to lay the boat and carried the camp outfit hundreds of feet to shore. In the morning they chopped the boat out through the new ice and caught the current. Shorty set up the sheet iron stove in the boat, and over this Stine and Sprague hung through the long drifting hours. They had surrendered, no longer gave orders, and their one desire was to gain Dawson.

The last night ashore was spent between the mouths of the White river and the Stewart. At daylight they found the Yukon, half a mile wide, running white from ice rimmed bank to ice rimmed bank.

"We'll be the last boat this year to make Dawson," Kit said.

"But they ain't no water, Smoke."

"Then we'll ride the ice down. Come on."

Futilely protesting, Sprague and Stine were bundled on board. For half an hour with axes Kit and Shorty struggled to cut a way into the swift but solid stream. When they did succeed in clearing the shore ice the floating ice forced the boat along the edge for a hundred yards, tearing away half of one gunwale and making a partial wreck of it. Then at the lower end of the bend they caught the current that flung off shore.

They proceeded to work farther toward the middle. The stream was no longer composed of mush ice, but of hard cakes. In between the cakes only was mush ice that froze solidly as they looked at it. Shoving with the oars against the cakes, sometimes climbing out on the cakes in order to force the boat along, after an hour they gained the middle.

Five minutes after they ceased their exertions the boat was frozen in. The whole river was coagulating as it ran. Cake froze to cake until at last the boat was the center of a cake seventy-five feet in diameter. Sometimes they floated sidewise, sometimes stern first, while gravity tore asunder the forming fetters in the moving mass, only to be manacled by faster forming ones.

Night came, and after many efforts they gave up the attempt to force the boat to shore, and through the darkness they swept helplessly onward.

Their speed began to diminish and cakes of ice to upend and crash and smash about them. The river was jamming. One cake, forced upward, slid across their cake and carried one side of the boat away. It did not sink, for its own cake still upbore it, but in a whirl they saw dark water show for an instant within a foot of them. Then all movement ceased.

At the end of half an hour the whole river picked itself up and began to move. This continued for an hour, when again it was brought to rest by a jam. Once again it started, running swiftly and savagely, with a great grinding. Then they saw lights ashore, and when abreast gravity and the Yukon surrendered, and the river ceased for six months.

For three days Kit and Shorty labored carrying the ton and a half outfit from the middle of the river to the log cabin Stine and Sprague had bought on the hill overlooking Dawson. This work finished, in the warm cabin as twilight was falling Sprague motioned Kit to him. Outside the thermometer registered 65 below zero.

"Your full month isn't up, Smoke," Sprague said. "But here it is in full. I wish you luck."

"How about the agreement?" Kit asked. "You know there's a famine here. You agreed"—

"I know of no agreement," Sprague interrupted. "Do you, Stine? We engaged you by the month. There's your pay. Will you sign the receipt?"

Kit's hands clinched, and for the moment he saw red. Both men shrank away from him. Shorty saw his trouble and interposed.

"Look here, Smoke. I ain't travelin' no more with a onery outfit like this. Right here's where I sure jump it. You an' me stick together. Savvy? Now, you take your blankets and hike down to the Elkhorn. Wait for me. I'll settle up, collect what's comin' an give them what's comin'. I ain't no good on the water, but my feet's on terra firma now, an' I'm goin' to make smoke."

Half an hour afterward Shorty appeared at the Elkhorn. From his bleeding knuckles and the skin off one cheek it was evident that he had given Stine and Sprague what was coming.

"You ought to see that cabin," he chuckled as they stood at the bar "Roughhouse ain't no name for it. Dollars to doughnuts nary one of 'em shows up on the street for a week.

"An' now it's all niggered out for you an' me. Grub's a dollar an' a half a pound. They ain't no work for wages without you have your own grub. Moose meat's sellin' for $2 a pound, an they ain't none. We got enough money for a month's grub an' ammunition, an' we hike up the Klondike to the back country. If they ain't no moose we go an' live with the Indians. But if we ain't got 5,000 pounds of meat six weeks from now I'll—I'll sure go back an' apologize to our bosses. Is it a go?"

Kit's hand went out, and they shook. Then he faltered. "I don't know any thing about hunting," he said.

Shorty lifted his glass. "But you're a sure meat eater, an' I'll learn you."

(To Be Continued.)

MURDOCK.

(Special Correspondence.)

G. Bauer was an Ithaca visitor one day last week.

Lewis Hornbeck was a Lincoln visitor Tuesday.

Miss Louisa Bauer was an Omaha visitor Monday.

John Freese left Wednesday for his home in Colorado.

I. G. Hornbeck was an Omaha visitor Monday between trains.

John Swine was an Omaha visitor the fore part of the week.

Miss Tillie Bornemier left Monday for her school in Des Moines.

John Swine shipped a carload of cattle to South Omaha Monday.

G. G. Williamson was home Saturday and Sunday visiting his family.

Born—To Mr. and Mrs. Oscar McDonald, January 6, a ten-pound baby boy.

John Gustin left Monday evening for Rippia, Iowa, to attend a horse sale.

Joe Joehansen purchased a 6-year-old roan horse from John Kruger last Tuesday.

Don't forget that Dr. Russel Hornbeck's office is the first door south of the State bank.

Leona Rush received the gold watch at the Booster store last Tuesday for handing in the largest number of coupons.

Miss Rose Schale received the set of breakfast dishes given away last week for having the largest number of words made from "Booster Store."

Art Wehlman and Jessie Skiles were united in marriage by Rev. Harris on January 6. The people of this vicinity extend joy and happiness to them.

Local News

From Tuesday's Daily.

Ed Barker of Louisville was here today for a few hours visiting with his many friends in this city.

Charles Gerlach of Manley was in the city for a few hours today looking after some matters at the court house.

John Kaffenberger was among the farmer visitors in the metropolis today for a few hours to look after some matters on the stock market.

W. G. Meisinger drove in today from his farm home to spend a few hours here looking after some matters of business with the merchants.

Will Rummell and W. D. Wheeler were among the passengers this morning for South Omaha to look after some sales on the live stock exchange today.

John F. Wehrbein was among the passengers this morning for Omaha, where he was called to look after some matters of business there for the day.

P. A. Hild, from the vicinity of Murray, was in the city yesterday afternoon for a few hours transacting some business matters with the merchants.

Miss Barbara Gering and her guest, Miss Pauline Pfeiffer, were passengers this morning for Omaha, where they go to spend the day with H. R. Gering in that city.

G. P. Meisinger of Cedar Creek was in the city today for a few hours looking after some matters of business and visiting with his friends, who are without number here.

James Terryberry, one of the leading farmers of Eight Mile Grove precinct, was in the city today for a few hours visiting with friends and looking after some matters at the court house.

George Ackers and wife of Minatare, Neb., who are here visiting at the home of relatives in this city, departed this morning on the early Burlington train for Omaha to spend a few days before returning home.

Mrs. Dr. G. R. Davis, who has been visiting with her many relatives and friends in the vicinity of Guthrie Center, Iowa, for the past two weeks, returned home last evening, Dr. Davis meeting her at Omaha. She was accompanied home by her sister, Mrs. Wayne Harrington, who will make an extended visit at the Davis home.

From Wednesday's Daily.

C. E. Metzger was a passenger this morning for South Omaha, where he was called on some matters of business.

Charles Troop was a visitor at the South Omaha stock market today for a few hours looking after some matters of business.

Fred Chautka of Lindsay, Neb., who has been here visiting at the Joseph Jelinek home, departed this afternoon for his home.

Attorney C. E. Tefft of Weeping Water was in the city yesterday for a few hours looking after some matters in county court.

C. M. Seybert returned this morning to his home at Louisville, after being here in attendance at the I. O. O. F. meeting last evening.

Ed Brantner arrived in the city this afternoon on No. 24 for a short visit here with relatives and friends and to look after some matters of business.

Martin Houk came in this afternoon from Omaha to spend a few hours here visiting with his old friends and renewing their acquaintance.

Harry Hinton came in this morning from his home near Mynard and was a passenger this afternoon for Omaha to look after some matters of business.

George P. Meisinger, jr., and wife were here yesterday for a few hours visiting at the Jacob Meisinger home and looking after some trading with the merchants.

"Uncle" Ben Beckman of near Murray was here today for a few hours looking after some trading and taking the opportunity to visit here with his friends.

J. M. Meisinger and wife were among those going to Omaha this morning, where they will visit for the day attending to some matters of business in that city.

James Stander of Louisville was here for a few hours today en route home from Craig, Missouri, where he has been for the past few days looking after some matters of business.

Mrs. George Perry was among those going to Omaha this morning, where she will visit for the day with friends and look after some business matters of importance in that city.

For regular action of the bowels; easy, natural movements, relief of constipation, try Doan's Regulets. 25c at all stores.

R. E. Noyes and George Reihart of Louisville, who were her in attendance at the meeting of the I. O. O. F. lodge last evening, departed this morning for Omaha, from where they return home.

Rev. Father M. A. Shine was among the passengers this morning for Lincoln, where he goes to attend the meeting of the Nebraska State Historical society that is meeting in that city this week.

From Thursday's Daily.

J. D. Shrader and three daughters of Murray were here last evening to attend the performance at the Parmele theater.

M. G. Churchill of Murray was among the visitors here today to attend the trial of the dog shooting case in justice court.

Mrs. M. Baumeister was among those going to Omaha this morning, where she will spend the day looking after some matters of business in that city.

Jack Patterson and wife of Union were here last evening in attendance at the offering of "September Morn" at the Parmele theater and visiting at the homes of relatives.

Colonel J. B. Seybolt of Murray came up this morning from his home and was a passenger on the early Burlington train for Omaha to spend the day looking after some matters of business.

Mrs. Will Sackett and children of Smithfield, Neb., who have been here visiting at the home of John Nemetz and family, departed this afternoon for their home.

C. E. Noyes of Louisville was in the city today for a few hours looking after some legal matters, and while here was a pleasant caller at the Journal office for a chat with Colonel Bates, with whom he served in the legislature in 1909.

IN PLATTSMOUTH FORTY YEARS AGO.

An Exciting Transaction.

The week has been prolific of local excitement. Among the most prominent, and bidding fair at one time to cause trouble, was the removal of the superintendent's office and the head of the freight department to Omaha. The quiet and good-natured citizens of Plattsmouth awoke on Friday morning and found that Mr. Irving, superintendent, with his clerks, and Mr. Cowles, with his clerks, had silently folded their tents the afternoon before and as quietly pulled out of the town limits for Omaha.

On Friday morning, when the information became well known, there was a grand whirl of excitement and much strong talk indulged in. The people crowded around the county offices, and began examining the records and the so-called bonds and agreement, by which the B. & M. were supposed to be bound to maintain headquarters in Plattsmouth. In so doing it was found that the county commissioners had surrendered the bond entered into by Mr. Strong, attorney for the B. & M. in Iowa, at the time the original bonds were delivered to the R. R. Co. This caused excitement No. 2, and for a while absorbed the interest in the R. R. removal, and changed the course of indignation somewhat from the railroad officials to county officers and their legal advisers. If words could annihilate, both R. R.'s and Co. "Coms." would have fared hard on that day. A few of the quiet, determined, and better posted of our citizens began to hunt out every scrap of information bearing on the original transactions between Strong and the county, and had not the B. & M. moved as quietly as they did, it is probable they would have needed a longer train and heavier engine to move them when they did go. The merchants and all the smaller business men felt exceedingly blue, charging that they had been sold out and defrauded of their rights somehow, and threatening dire vengeance on the true parties whenever it should be sifted to the bottom. The report of the "investigating committee" now in session sets forth very fairly the people's side of the question, and we recommend its careful reading.

Desiring to give all parties a fair hearing in this matter, the Herald has obtained the views of the railroad men, and herewith presents their side of the question direct from Mr. Irving himself:

In the first place they emphatically assert that the county first broke faith with them in refusing to pay the interest on the original bonds, and after a wearisome and expensive litigation forcing them into a compromise, by which they surrendered $160,000 of bonds and interest, for the sake of getting the other $100,000 hereafter in peace and quietness. They deny the validity of the Strong bond, claiming that he had no authority to enter into such an agreement, was never authorized to by the stockholders at Boston, and moreover, never was the attorney or agent of the B. & M. in Nebraska. That the bond was so much waste paper in fact, but causing innumerable questions and annoyance to the company, in constantly explaining it to their factors and moneyed men east.

This view was agreed to by all the attorneys present at the settlement, and it was surrendered in open and fair daylight. That, as far as they were concerned, they had nothing to conceal and no favors to ask; they simply stood on their plain, square, legal rights, and were willing the whole world should have known of the terms of the settlement.

They consider that, by the breach of faith, in not paying the original bonds, and by the further successful attempt to force them into a ruinous compromise, they would be morally and legally released from all obligations on that bond. But as a matter of fact and justice, they want it distinctly understood that they do not intend to remove any more shops, persons or equipments from Plattsmouth, and that the present removal was not made in a spirit of retaliation, nor to suit the whims of certain officers of the company, but was an absolute business necessity, brought about by this state of affairs. The great freight lines on other roads center there also, and the B. & M. found it impossible to compete with other roads and hold their own unless their superintendent and freight department were placed where they could see and know this class of men, which could not be accomplished at Plattsmouth.

The wholesale trade of Omaha, shipping west, is considerable, and the shippers wanted to see the railroad men, and not be obliged to telegraph to Plattsmouth for rates. Officers of other roads with whom the B. & M. often have business always pass through and stop at Omaha. In short, they were losing money by staying at Plattsmouth, and as a plain business proposition removed to Omaha for the present. The railroad company desires the good will and kindly feeling of the people of Plattsmouth and along the whole line; they realize that their interests and success are identical with those of the people they do business amongst; especially do they hope the people of Plattsmouth will accept this earnest protest of good will and fair dealing and rest assured that no removal or changes are to be made, or ever will be on account of, or in consequence of past differences of opinions.

Want Column

FOR SALE—Good milk cow cheap. Telephone or inquire of Adam Kaffenberger, Tel. No. 3320.

1-9-d&w

FOR SALE—I have 20 or 30 pure bred S. C. Rhode Island Red Cockerels for sale. Prices from $1.00 up. W. B. Porter, Mynard, Neb.