

HUNDREDS MAY STARVE.

Gold Is Plentiful, Food Is Scarce, in the Klondike.

"Stop the Crazy Rush to the Gold Fields," is the Cry of Returning Miners—A Dishwasher's Lucky Strike.

The treasure ship Portland which arrived at Seattle, Wash., recently brought not only \$850,000 in gold nuggets, but also a crowd of hardy miners who were unanimous in advising gold-seekers to stay away from Alaska until next season. One of them went so far as to say:

"Warn people to stay out of Yukon this year! Tell them it means starvation! Telegraph to every paper in the country that people will starve there if more people go in!"

These warnings were repeated time and time again by each and every one of the Yukon miners who returned on the Portland. More than this, several

river before the last rush, will require every pound that can possibly be taken in.

It is doubtful if 5,000 pounds will be taken up the river this season. That does not mean 5,000 pounds of food by any means. Perhaps the large half will be food, but furniture, hardware, stoves, liquors, clothing, blankets, etc., will figure up nearly one-half.

Regarding the situation over the trails or the various passes the correspondent is not informed, but these same miners, each and every one of whom has gone in over the trails, say that it is an utter impossibility to transport enough supplies over that route at this season of the year.

In warning people to wait until spring the writer simply acts for the miners who speak in the name of humanity. There is gold in the Yukon country—plenty of it—but to seek it this season under these circumstances is no less than sheer madness. It is even more. It is criminal to those who already are in the country.

Living is proportionately high, board

these earnest and sincere warnings will carry any weight with the gold-seeking multitude now on the way to the Klondike. In spite of all protest, official and private, hundreds of men, and women too, are willing to brave the dangers of an Arctic winter for the sake of being the first on the field next spring. They are possessed by the greed for gold—a disease for which the medical fraternity, from Hippocrates down, has not yet discovered a cure.

The stories of lucky strikes are more potent than sober admonitions; and one of the most romantic of these stories was told the other day by Clara Wilson, of Denver, Col., who went to a little mining camp south of Circle City, Alaska, a year and a half ago to serve as cook for a number of miners.

Miss Wilson does not have to wash dishes for a living now, neither is she one of the deserted ones in the presence of other women. She is not a handsome young woman as personal appearance goes, but she is now the possessor of that which makes her the loadstone where eligible young men are present and would afford her an opportunity of taking her pick in ordinary company. In other words, the dishwasher, Clara Wilson, returns to the United States the multi-millionaire, Miss Wilson, and all through her own efforts.

Miss Wilson was educated in the public schools at Scranton, Pa., but her parents moved to the western country before she had an opportunity to get above the grammar grades. At that time her father had considerable means, but he exhausted it in an endeavor to locate gold in Colorado and California. Miss Wilson was 16 years old when her father died and at once determined to make her own way in the world. She went to Seattle and found employment as a domestic on a steamer bound for Alaska. She found her way to Circle City and became the cook and general housemaid for a number of miners.

Miss Wilson was not satisfied with this kind of a life. She had had some experience in mining while accompanying her father on his pilgrimages and she "crossed lots" in Alaska on her own account. The result was that she located a copper mine which is now being worked and which is said to be panning out as prolifically as any of the gold mines that are making the Klondike fields famous. Miss Wilson had no sooner staked her claim than her possession was disputed by a number of men, but besides mining she had learned from her father how to use rifle and revolver and for days she sat the sole guardian of her claim.

Her possession was finally recognized and several of the men who disputed her right of occupancy are now working with or for her, and it is estimated that she is not worth less than \$2,000,000. The young woman said recently:

"I was in Chicago five years ago after my father died. Then I was a commonplace restaurant waiter or dishwasher and no one cared for me. Now I am worth perhaps \$2,000,000 in money, and am being constantly followed by young men of good families who would be glad to take a wife. I might as well say now that I am not marrying at this time. I do not know when I shall go back to Alaska. I may never go back, for I don't mind saying that I have had an abundance of the kind of living they have in that country. My mother and I can live now wherever we see fit, and I want to tell you that we shall not have our rooms facing in alleys, as we have been compelled to since father died.

"The copper mine in which I am the principal owner was all my own find. The funniest part is that I found it less than a quarter of a mile from where we were making our headquarters. There were indications that others had discovered the presence of copper ahead of me, but the gold fever must have had full possession of them because they passed it over. I secretly prospected my find for a month before anyone else found it, and then three men claimed prior ownership. Then I had to make a personal defense, and this I did. I never had to fire a shot, but I would have done so without hesitancy.

"No; I would not advise any young woman to go to that country who has not had some experience with miners or who is not prepared to defend herself and undergo the severest hardships. In that country self-preservation is truly the first law of nature. Men forget all their chivalry and although women are scarce they are not curiosities and do not seem to awaken any special interest among men. Alaska miners are not sentimental. They are looking for riches and they do not care how they get them."

The first letter mail to be dispatched from this country to the Klondike region under the new reciprocal arrangement with Canada, effected by establishing an international exchange between Dyea, Alaska, and Dawson City, will be forwarded from Seattle by a steamer leaving there September 11. From that time forward letter mail will go over the new service regularly once a month. The last opportunity to send newspapers and reading material generally into the gold region until next spring was afforded by the "paper mail," the last of the season, which was forwarded by steamer leaving San Francisco September 5.

A bit of good news for the miners has just been bulletined by the North American Trading and Transportation company. It is to the effect that a full quartz mill sent by them into the Klondike country had arrived at its destination in excellent condition.

MONUMENTAL CHURCH.

History, Romance and Mystery Cluster Around It.

The Most Interesting Building in Richmond, Va.—A Picture That Recalls the Doubts About Booth's Death.

[Special Richmond (Va.) Letter.]

The Monumental church at Richmond, has not only a wonderful history, but there is a romance concerning one of its priests which will live forever in local history. Writers in the future will undoubtedly weave a web of weird doubt concerning the identity of the priest, and probably the legend will form the foundation for myths; out of which the unbridled fancy of poets may develop stanzas as peculiar and wonderful as those which trickled from the gifted pen of Edgar Allen Poe. One thing is certain, and that is that the picture of Rev. Dr. Armstrong and the picture of John Wilkes Booth are so much alike that every observer will declare that they are not resemblances, nor likenesses, but counterparts.

The Monumental church manifests many strange vagaries of construction. It stands in a quiet old churchyard fronting on Broad street, upon the slope of a hill which was at one time the center and circumference of official and fashionable life in the capital city of the Old Dominion. The church itself is a part of the history of the city, and even the ground whereon it stands is held in reverence by the people here, because it constitutes a part of a block of ground bought by Thomas Jefferson, and by him dedicated as the site of an institution of science and belles letters after the fashion of the French academy.

There were people in Richmond who shook their heads with doubt and depreciation when the academy building was converted into a theater. They were not croakers, without cause, because the theater was destroyed by fire a few years afterwards. The historic block was then divided, and the new Richmond theater was erected upon one corner of it. The second the-



MONUMENTAL CHURCH, RICHMOND.

ater followed the fate of the first. The new theater was a short-lived enterprise, but it became famous rapidly because the actors who appeared upon its stage were the greatest of that day and generation; and the Richmond theater was regarded as the cradle of the dramatic art, which was then in its American infancy.

E. Placide was well known in the dramatic annals of the early years of this century, and the performance given in the Richmond theater on December 26, 1811, was for his benefit. It was looked forward to as a great event, and the social life of the Old Dominion was enlivened with expectation. It was announced that the English custom of presenting pantomimes at Yuletide would be followed by the presentation of a new piece called "Raymond and Agnes; or, the Bleeding Nun." It was further announced on the bills that it would be "the last performance of the season."

There was a grand throng in the Richmond theater when the curtain went up that evening. The governor of Virginia was there, with his official staff. There were old-time gentlemen from the prosperous plantations of the state, statesmen, members of the bench and bar, family parties, of husbands, wives and children, bevy of maidens, the loveliest of girls, and the most stately of matrons, silked, satined and bejeweled. There were successful tradesmen, merchants, seafaring men and importers. In the rear section, reserved for them, were "poor whites" and negroes, also present to enjoy the play. The audience filled the theater to overflowing, and there were very nearly 900 people in the assembly. For that time and place it was a great audience; the greatest that had ever assembled in any city in the south.

In those days chandeliers were made with lamps, instead of gas or electricity, as we have them now. At the beginning of the second act a boy on the stage pulled up into the flies overhead, a chandelier, one lamp in which was still burning. The flame ignited one of the strips of painted canvas. That was the beginning of the awful ending of that gay evening.

There was a cry of "Fire" when the little flame was first seen, and the people rushed for the single exit. One of the actors rushed forward, and assured

the audience that the fire would be put out without trouble. There was no pause for a moment; but the flames grew stronger. They crackled and roared. Wider and wider, and larger and larger grew the fiery serpent. It devoured the tinsel coverings of the ceiling of the stage. Screen after screen went away in puffs of flame, each adding heat to heat, and doom to disaster.

Within ten minutes—think of it—within ten minutes the theater was a mass of flames. The tragedy was as speedy as it was complete. The tongues of flame swept from the stage, hastened forward by the air from rear doors and windows, and like demons rushed after and upon the struggling, suffering crowd. It singed the hair of men and women, and ignited their clothing, so that soon the people themselves became a part of the holocaust, their bodies burning while they yet lived.

It was all over in ten minutes; but during that brief time the governor of Virginia and 72 others of high rank in the social and official ranks of the old dominion, lost their lives, and the city was in mourning; yes, the entire state was shodowed and darkened with woe.

Early in the spring of 1812 it was suggested that a great memorial should be erected by public subscription, and Chief Justice Marshall, of the United States supreme court, assumed charge of the movement. A building fund was raised. Then the remains of the lost were gathered together and placed in a vault beneath the center of the ruins, and around this tomb the people built the Monumental church.

Having said that there is history, mystery and romance connected with this building, and having viewed the history of its wonderful and pathetic origin, let us look into the mystery and romance of Monumental church. Let us go into the vestry room. There, in that dark corner, hangs upon the wall a picture of John Wilkes Booth, in long clerical garments. The sexton says that it is a picture of Rev. John G. Armstrong, who was pastor of Monumental church from 1878 to 1884.

The photograph plainly shows, in every line and curve, the broad high forehead and long straight hair, the handsome chin and exquisite profile of John Wilkes Booth. The man is in the prime of life, standing beside a table, with a serious mien. He is undoubtedly a clergyman, but that is the face of John Wilkes Booth. Every picture extant shows the semblance, and people who saw Booth on the stage, when he was a well-known actor, say that the photograph of Rev. John G. Armstrong is a perfect picture of Booth.

There is the mystery, but there is romance also connected with the story, for nobody ever knew where the reverend gentleman came from. It was said that he had been ordained in Ireland. An investigation of his past did not produce satisfactory results. He came to Richmond a comparative stranger. Everybody wondered at the likeness of the man to John Wilkes Booth, and some accused him of being that man. Finally the clergyman was accused of irregularities in his habits, and this started afresh the story that he was not what he claimed to be. At last, in despair, he left the ministry, lived in private and died in obscurity. The doubt of his identity hung over him like a pall. On his deathbed, his last words were a denial, an earnest, tearful denial, that he was John Wilkes Booth.

There were many men in Richmond who had heard Booth on the stage, and who heard Dr. Armstrong in the pulpit, who declared that two men could not be so much alike; in face, form, voice, gesture, everything; for the preacher was a man of such dramatic manners, that it would have been almost impossible for any man to have acquired them anywhere except upon the stage. Moreover, it was remarked that he was slightly lame, as Wilkes Booth would undoubtedly have been, after sustaining the injury which befell him as he jumped from the box to the stage of the theater on the night of the commission of his awful crime.

It is well known that there were doubts expressed by many people in Washington, in 1865, as to whether or not the assassin, Booth, had really been killed. These doubts were often expressed in public prints. When Rev. Dr. Armstrong appeared in Richmond, all of those rumors were revived; and there was such a general dissemination of gossip and rumor that the preacher found himself surrounded by mystery. When an attempt was made to investigate his antecedents, he gave no assistance.

It is known that he had a daughter whom he trained in elocution, and she went upon the stage, after her father had died. It is said that whatever the secret of his life may have been, before he appeared in Richmond, he told it to his child; for she often said that she alone knew her father, and only her could he trust.

But the mysterious priest of the Monumental church has gone to his grave; and there is no stone to mark his last resting place. Just before he left the ministry, he had two photographs taken; one for his daughter, the other for the church. And there, in that dark corner, in the shadows that surround it, as the shadows of mystery surrounded his life, in the vestry room, the photograph shows the features of John Wilkes Booth. Whoever he was, poor fellow, his was an unhappy life; his was a pathetic death.

SMITH D. FRY.



SCOW LOAD OF KLONDIKERS AT DYEA.

of these have frankly stated that had they not realized there would not be sufficient supplies in there for the coming winter they would not have come out.

These men are in earnest. They know what they are talking about. These warnings, too, they asked the correspondent to write before they knew half the story of the insane rush to Dawson City.

When they reached Dutch Harbor on their return and secured a few scattering papers of late dates, the latest August 5, the one topic of conversation was what the situation would be at Dawson and in the Yukon this winter. When the Excelsior arrived at St. Michael's with her load of one hundred and thirty-odd people and the miners heard that the Cleveland would bring 150 more they talked strongly then. They said that many people were going in and that supplies could not possibly hold out during the winter.

After leaving Dutch Harbor the par-

at restaurants averaging six dollars a day, the lowest price being \$1.50 a day. Lodging can only be had by putting up one's tent. Two hotels are being built and will be ready by winter, but they will not begin to accommodate the people requiring lodgings.

William Oler, who left Dawson City July 14, says that there was not at that time enough supplies at Dawson to last the people there over three months.

"I don't believe," he said, "that there can be got enough supplies there this season to last half the people until the river opens next spring. I saw old-timers paying for their supplies in advance when I left. A friend of mine paid one of the stores \$1,000 in dust for goods that had not left St. Michael's. Numbers of men have done the same. I don't think there will be a pound of food left in any of the stores by December 1. Firewood will be at least \$15 a cord this winter and perhaps more."

One of the latest additions to Dawson is Jack Smith's variety theater. This



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE TENTED CITY OF SKAGUAY, WHICH HAS RISEN IN A FORTNIGHT.

tial extent of the rush dawned upon them.

"My God," said one man to the correspondent, "what are they thinking of? Are people crazy? There will be terrible, horrible times on the Yukon next winter. Starvation will stare them in the face long before spring."

From his own personal investigation at St. Michael's the New York World's special emissary is convinced that miners do not speak too strongly. The company is doing its utmost to get supplies up the river, and, were it possible to do so, would have food for all. But it labors under disadvantages which cannot be appreciated until seen.

A serious mistake was made by the Alaska Commercial company in carrying up too much liquor on the last trip or two of the boats. The miners want food—not liquor. Last year, with 1,500 persons on the river and facilities for transporting very little under those of this season, there was a serious shortage. This year these same 1,500 people must have supplies, and they with those who went in last spring, making a total of probably 5,000 persons on the

was opened July 12, and the opening night was a hummer. Every inch of standing room was taken, and the miners were perched on every rafter. The sole performance was a "whirlwind" dance. The audience crowded the place so that the dancer had but a space less than ten feet square to dance in. The price of admission was one dollar.

The saloons are doing a brisk business. Drinks are 50 cents for straight whisky; fancy drinks are \$1.50. Cigarettes are 50 cents a box of ten. Cigars are 50 cents each, and everything else proportionately high.

Dogs, which are valuable, are sold by weight. The holding price is one dollar a pound up to 75 pounds. For anything over 75 pounds the price rises to \$1.50 a pound. These were the prevailing prices for live dogs for freighting purposes last winter. There is no telling what dogs, dead or alive, will be worth next winter.

The nearest diggings to Dawson are eight miles distant on Bear creek. All the other diggings are within 30 miles of the town.

But it is more than doubtful whether