

Susannah
of the Yukon

Muriel Denison
1937

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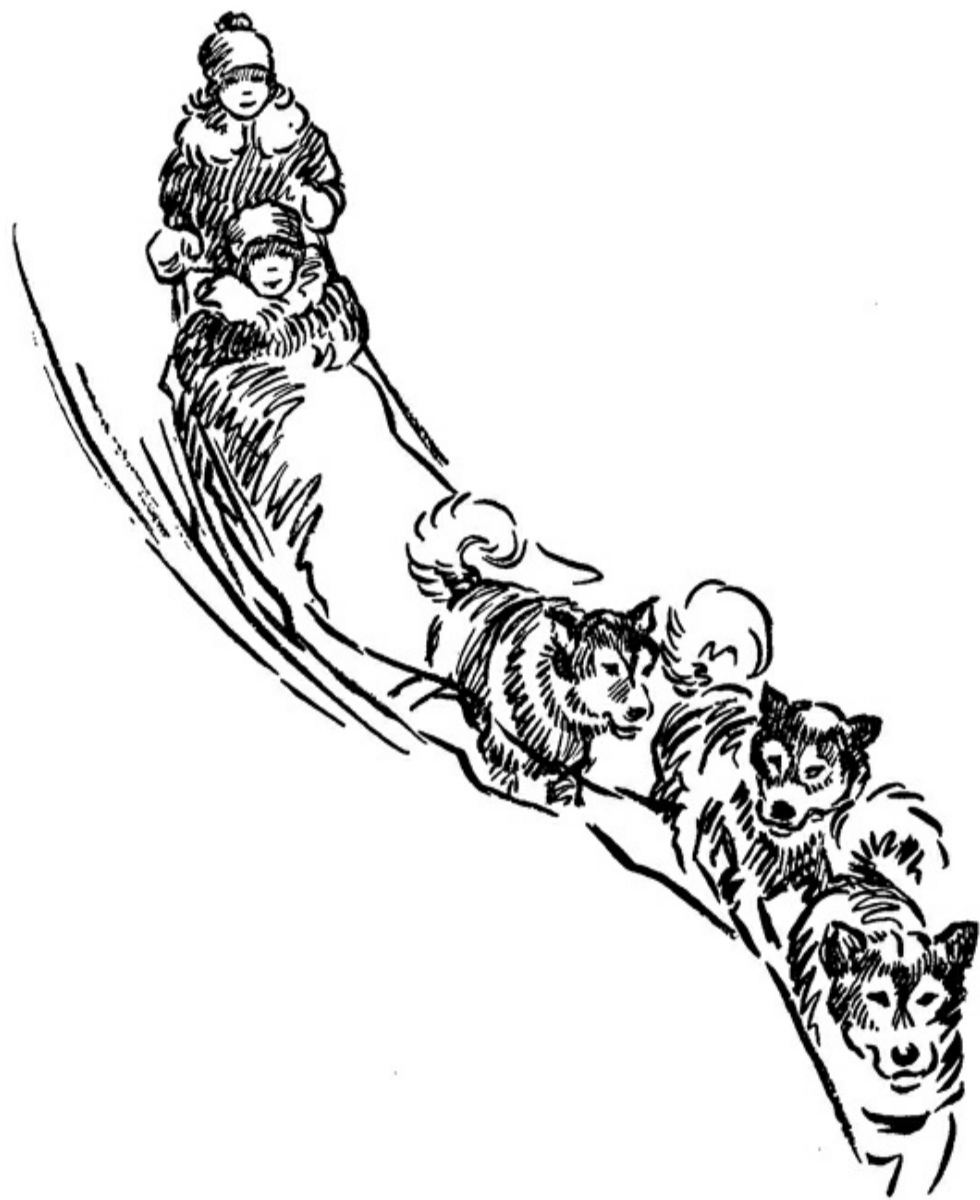
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SUSANNAH

OF THE YUKON



SUSANNAH
OF THE YUKON

By

MURIEL DENISON

AUTHOR OF "SUSANNAH, A LITTLE
GIRL WITH THE MOUNTIES"

Illustrated by

MARGUERITE BRYAN



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To

AILEEN DENNIS

WHO SHARED THE LAUGHTER

OF THE PRAIRIE YEARS

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CHAPTER I THE RETURN

Sue sniffed rapturously. The stables were all just as she remembered. Cool and damp and shadowy, with the faint perfume of sweet grass in the hay and the pungent smell of saddle soap and polish.

From where she stood, she could see the shining flank of Ginger, the Commissioner's horse. There was a soft snuffle of a pony in a stall near by. Through the stable door beyond, her old friend, Smith the orderly, was busily at work polishing a bit, just as he had been doing three long exciting months before, when Sue had left for England with her beloved Mounties to see Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

And now she was back in Regina once again, and not a little surprised to find that everything was exactly as she had left it—the Mounted Police Headquarters with its rows of neat white buildings, the Union Jack flying bravely in the prairie breeze, the bright scarlet and blue of Mounties' uniforms crossing the Barracks Square; even Uncle Dennis's house was the same, except that this time Sue had her parents with her.

All the same and all as perfect.

Sue sniffed again, this time with contentment. Placing the parcels she held on a near-by shelf, she tiptoed toward the stable door.

Smith was seated on a keg with his back toward her. If she could only blindfold him before he saw her. Wouldn't he be surprised?

Cautiously she moved from stall to stall. Scottie, the young collie, pricked up his ears and pattered busily toward her, all wags and snuffles. She caught his collar. "Hush, Scottie," she whispered. "I know it's me back again, but be quiet. I want to surprise Smith."

Holding Scottie close, Sue crept nearer. Smith was whistling now and leaning forward for a brush.

“The Army and Navy forever,
Three cheers for the red, white and blue,”

he sang in a queer, cracked voice. Sue’s hands closed over his eyes.

“My stars and garters!” he cried. “Whoever in the world can this be?”

Sue held her breath.

“Is it you, Miss Jane?”

Sue never made a sound.

“Looks like I’d better guess again,” said Smith. “It’s not Miss Jane, and I don’t think it’s Sergeant Whiteside.”

Sue could hardly keep from laughing out loud. The idea of Sergeant Whiteside playing “Guess Who’s Here” was too funny. He was always so military and dignified.



“And it can’t be my Missus, for she’s in Winnipeg,” Smith continued. “And I’m sure it’s

not the Captain. . . . I wish I knew but I don't. I give up!" he exclaimed. "Whoever is it?"

Sue took a long breath. "Susannah!"

"Susannah? . . . Susannah, who?" Smith demanded. Sue felt a little catch in her throat. Could it be possible that Smith had forgotten her; Smith whose tunic she had borrowed to lead the band at the Gymkana?

"Why, it's me . . . Susannah Elizabeth Fairfield Winston."

Surely Smith would recognize her now. But the small orderly shook his head disapprovingly. "The only Sue I ever knew had a better name than that," he said.

In a flash Sue knew what he meant. "It's me—Susannah of the Mounties!" she cried triumphantly, taking her hands away.

Smith jumped up, dropping his brushes and whirled around to face her. "Why, bless my soul, so it is!" he cried, his leathery face all wrinkled with familiar smiles.

"And you're welcome back, Miss Sue. The Barracks haven't been the same without you. Tell me, how did you like London town and did you see the Queen and how's Miss Vicky and Monty and when did you come and how long are you going to stay?"

"What a lot of questions," laughed Sue. It was all very exciting: Smith shaking her by both hands and Scottie leaping and barking and the horses trembling just as if they all knew she was back and were glad of it.

"And, Smith," said Sue, as soon as she could be heard, "in all the Jubilee procession no one could beat the Mounties."

"That's the way to talk," said Smith, proudly, "but now, Miss Sue, you sit right down here"—he pulled forward another keg—"and tell me all about it, while I go on with my polishing. First, how did the Queen look?"

"Very grand," said Sue, impressively. "Do you know, Smith, she had six cream-colored horses to drive her carriage?"

Smith whistled with surprise.

"Six, Miss Sue?"

"Six," answered Sue, "and not one of them as good as Beppo!"

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Smith.

Sue nodded. "I do."

"Now, now," said Smith, "you are bringing us back good news."

"And, Smith, do you know that when the Mounties rode past everyone cried out loud like this." Sue jumped down.

"It's the Mounties, the Canadian Mounties!" she cried. "IT'S THE MOUNTIES, THE CANADIAN MOUNTIES!" she cried louder.

"Hooray!" cried Smith. "Hooray!" cried Sue. Scottie barked and the horses tramped and whinnied; a bugle blew in the distance and out in the Square there was a clatter of hoofs.

Smith and Sue raced forward just in time to see a company of Mounties ride by, their lances carried high, pennants fluttering in the breeze.

"Why are they carrying lances?" asked Sue.

"They are rehearsing for this year's Gymkana," answered Smith, with a twinkle, and he and Sue looked at each other and laughed. They both felt they could never forget her first Gymkana and its exciting finish. Turning back into the stable, Sue saw her parcels lying on the shelf.

Picking them up, she handed one to Smith. "For you," she said. Smith held it in his hand.

"What a pretty ribbon," he said. "Red, white, and blue—Her Majesty's colors."

"Ribbons like that were round everything everywhere in London," Sue explained, wishing

that Smith would open his parcel; but he turned it over and over in his hand, admiring the gay blue paper, and then untied each single knot so carefully that Sue thought he would never get it opened. She never untied knots. She was always too anxious to see what lay inside.

But finally Smith loosened the last knot and opened the box. He folded back the tissue paper carefully and there at last lay a most elegant tie of blue corded silk, patterned with red and white horseshoes.

“For me?” asked Smith. Sue nodded. Smith was delighted. “This is the most splendiferous tie I’ve ever seen,” he said. “I’ll bet the Prince of Wales never had a better one.”

“I don’t think so myself,” said Sue, looking at the tie held out at arms’ length by Smith. “Don’t you think it’s very dashing?” Sue asked.

Sue wished she could give presents every day to Smith. He was so appreciative.

“I’ve got another box here,” she said, “only it’s for Sergeant Whiteside, but I can let you have a peek.”

She lifted the cover of the box and poked a bit of the covering tissue paper aside. She and Smith peeked, but that was so unsatisfactory a method that Sue opened it. There inside the box was a pair of braces with rich green and purple checks. They were called “Britain’s Strength.”

“See,” said Sue, “it’s written on the box.”

Smith looked. “Right you are, Miss Sue,” he said, and snapped the elastic, “and just won’t the Sergeant Major be a proud man.”



"Don't you think it's very dashing?" Sue asked

"I think they're pretty nice myself," said Sue.

"Yes, but not as nice as my tie," boasted Smith, as he patted it. "But you shouldn't have

spent your pocket money on us, Miss Sue,” he continued, reproachfully. “It was enough that you came back to us.”

Sue shook her head. “I never had so much fun in my life as I did the day Lady Charlotte took me shopping.” She explained, “You see, she gave me a whole sovereign to buy presents with to take home. Smith, did you know that a sovereign is twenty shillings and a shilling is almost a quarter?”

“That’s a lot of money, Miss Sue,” said Smith, admiringly.

“I bought the tie at Liberty’s,” Sue continued, “and it cost five shillings, and after that Lady Charlotte said I’d better go to Swan and Peacock’s for the rest of the presents, as my money would go further. And I bought a white silk hankie for Mrs. Walsh with her initial in pink in the corner and the loveliest tie pin for the Commissioner. It’s big,” she said, “a big golden horseshoe, and in the middle of it there is a red, red ruby.”

“You never managed all that out of a sovereign,” said Smith in astonishment.

“Yes,” said Sue, “and I got Hawkins gold cuff links with foxes’ heads on them. The Commissioner and Hawkins were very pleased,” she continued, “and the Commissioner is going to wear his pin when he goes hunting and Hawkins will do the same.” Sue paused. “Do you know very much about gold?” she asked.

“A little bit. Why?”

“Because Daddy bit the gold horseshoe pin and it bent a little and he said ‘Pure gold’ and everybody laughed.”

“But the Commissioner didn’t laugh, did he?” asked Smith.

Sue shook her head. “Do you know what I’ve got here?” she added. Reaching into the pocket of her skirt, she brought out a bit of pencil, a popgun, a rubber band, and then a very grubby hankie tied in fearsome knots. Untying the knots, she showed Smith a beautiful shiny gold sovereign.

“Look, Smith!” she cried. “Lady Charlotte gave me this the day we sailed.”

“My, my,” said Smith. “A gold piece all your own! That’s wonderful!” Sue nodded importantly. Smith sat silently while she tied up the precious piece and put it back in her pocket. They smiled at each other.

“There’s an awful lot of talk about gold just now,” said Smith. “Everybody’s going clean crazy about it, and they’re all going out to the Yukon to find their fortunes.”

“Where’s the Yukon?” asked Sue.

“Away up at the top of Canada,” said Smith, “where the icebergs are, and if the stories are to be believed, the gold lies around in yellow heaps. See, Miss Sue, look here.”

Smith took a folded paper off the shelf and there, right across the top of the page, she read in great black letters:

THE REGINA LEADER

August 1, 1897

A TON OF GOLD

The *Portland* Arrives at Seattle
with a Ton of Gold

“What’s a ton?” asked Sue.

“Two thousand pounds,” answered Smith. “Let me see. . . . You weigh almost seventy pounds. There’d have to be about thirty of you to weigh as much as a ton of gold.”

Sue’s eyes grew round with excitement. “Do you truly mean they just find gold in heaps?” she asked.

But Smith didn’t answer, for at that moment there were voices outside and Sue turned. Striding past the stable was the Sergeant Major.

“Wait!” called Sue. “Wait and see what I’ve brought you.”

The Sergeant Major turned and saluted smartly. “You’re welcome back, Miss Sue,” he said.

Sue held out her parcel. “For you,” she said.

The Sergeant Major opened the box and there in all their glory lay the green and purple braces, “Britain’s Strength.”

“Now, now, Miss Sue,” he said, “this is too good of you, and what a splendid color.”

The Sergeant Major looked very pleased, Sue thought. “Could you try them on right here?” she asked. “I’d like to know if they fit.” And while the Sergeant Major obligingly removed his tunic and handed it to Smith, Sue told him of how difficult it had been to get a large enough size, even in London town.

“I told the man who sold them to me that you were the biggest man in Canada.”

The Sergeant Major snapped the elastic over his shoulders and twirled his mustaches. “How do I look, Miss Sue?” he asked.

“Simply salubrious,” said Sue. “You couldn’t be better.”

Smith displayed his tie and both he and the Sergeant Major agreed that she couldn’t have brought them more perfect presents, but they both wanted to know how long she was going to stay.

“Not very long,” she answered. “Daddy’s got to paint the Rockies.”

Smith whistled with surprise. “That’s a pretty tall order, Miss Sue. He’ll need an awful lot of paint to cover the Rockies.”

“Oh, Smith,” Sue laughed back. “You know what I mean. He’s got to paint *pictures* of the Rockies. You see, while we were in London, Daddy met a gentleman called Sir Donald Smith, and he saw some of Daddy’s paintings and he asked Daddy to go straight home and paint the Rockies for the Canadian Pacific Railway.” Sue looked very proud as she pronounced these long names. “And,” she continued, “Mummy and I are going with him. We shall be traveling all winter,” she added, impressively.

“What a way to talk, Miss Sue,” said Sergeant Whiteside. “You’re just back from the Jubilee and now you’re planning to leave us so soon again.”

“I know,” answered Sue. “If I had my way I’d live here at the Barracks for ever and ever, but I’ve got to go.”

“And I’ll have to go to my luncheon now,” she added, “or Matilda’ll come after me.” All three of them laughed, just as they used to whenever Sue mentioned her nurse’s name.

“I’ll take you back to Bachelors’ Hall, Miss Sue,” said the Sergeant Major, and they started off around the Square together. It was quite exciting being with the Sergeant Major again. She took long strides to match his steps. Everyone saluted so smartly and smiled such pleasant welcomes that she had hardly begun to tell him about the Jubilee, before she was home.

No one was in for luncheon except Michael O’Dare. Her father and mother, he said, were at

Government House. Sue told him of her morning's adventures and of how Smith said it would take about thirty of her to make a ton of gold.

"Have you heard about the Yukon, Michael?" she asked. "The gold lies around in heaps."

Michael laughed. "Yes, I've heard about the Yukon. They say there's plenty of gold there, Sue, and I'll be able to tell you all about it someday. I'm going up to the Yukon with Major Bell and his party to join Superintendent Consell, who's in charge of all that territory."

"Mercy me," said Sue. "I haven't heard about this. When do you start?"

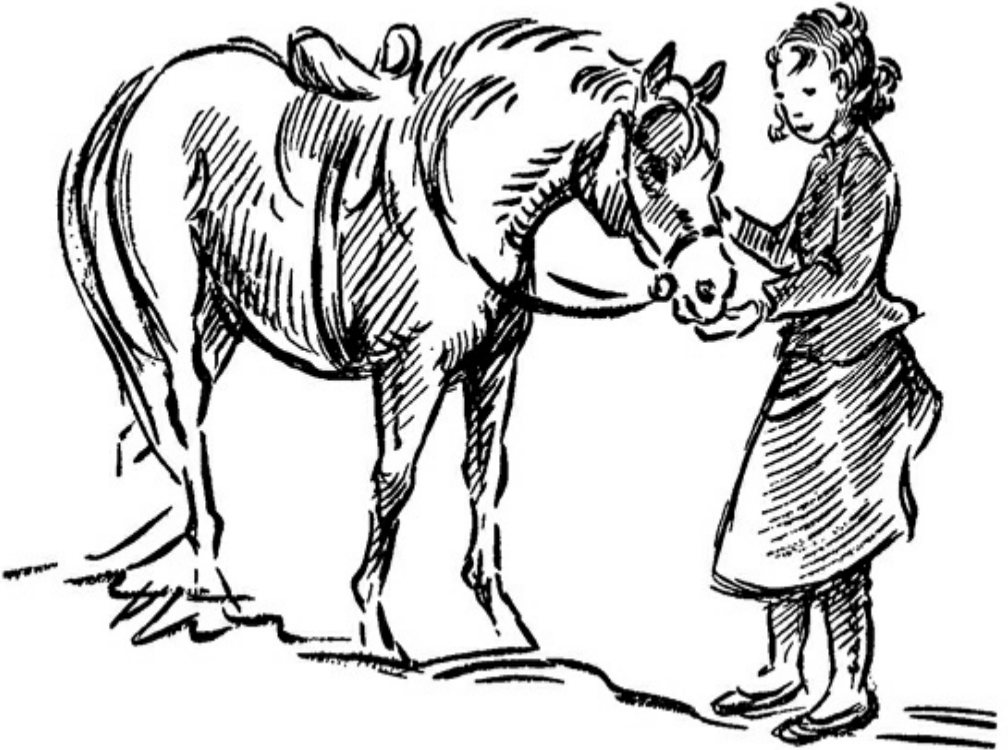
"We're leaving on the fourteenth. That's fourteen days from now."

"When do you come back?"

Michael laughed. "Ask the Commissioner," he said. "Hurry with your luncheon, Sue, and if you're in your habit by two o'clock, I'll take you out riding with me, and we'll see how pemmican is made."

It was unexpected things like this that made the Barracks so interesting, Sue felt. There were never the adventures in London that there were here.

Finishing her applesauce, she hurried upstairs and wondered what pemmican could be as she buttoned her gaiters and pulled on the little green jacket. Matilda didn't know about pemmican, and Sue was still wondering as she ran downstairs to find her pony, Beppo, outside—a Beppo who nuzzled for sugar in her pocket, just as she had taught him to do. He had grown a little fat in her absence but was very glad to see her again.



Around the Barracks Square and out through the gates to the prairies, powdered with the

gold of wild pea vines, they cantered, trampling the tall grasses and swinging at last onto a trail that led them over Pile o' Bones Creek.

"See," said Michael, pointing to where a line of tepees stood against the sky. "There's where they're making pemmican."

"What *is* pemmican?" asked Sue. In the joy of riding again, she had forgotten all about it.

"Pemmican is a kind of food you've never tasted," explained Michael. "At first it was made from buffalo meat, but now it's made from beef. The raw beef is cut free from all fat and then sliced into thin strips and dried in the sun. It is easy to carry and a very little goes a long way. Pemmican is an Indian word, but it is used now by everyone in the Northwest."

As they drew nearer to the tepees, the faint acrid odor of the campfire drifted toward them and both Beppo and Michael's mount sniffed uneasily. "Horses never like smoke," Michael reminded Sue, "and they dislike the odor of raw flesh even more."

To Sue it all seemed dreadfully untidy and unpleasant. Just beyond the camp and behind the tepees, slim birch poles were crossed to hold in place longer poles. Hanging from them were strips of thinly cut beef, browned and blackened by the sun. A young Indian took their ponies while Chief Kicking Horse advanced to give them the sign of welcome.

"Come, Sue," said Michael, when the greetings were over, and Sue followed while Michael examined the beef and talked with Kicking Horse. "Ugh," said Sue.

There were flies on the strips of beef and bits of grass and weeds where they had fallen off the bars and been replaced. An old squaw with a long, flat-bladed knife turned the strips now and then. At the door of the tepee two young squaws sat pounding a strip of the completely dried beef. Sue watched. They pounded, shredded, and beat it into a powder and turned it over and over until it was fine. But still Sue didn't like it.

She followed Michael to another tepee. Here, in a large iron kettle, an older woman was mixing the fat of beef with the shredded meat and adding pounded saskatoon berries for flavor. Michael put his hand in a basket hanging from the tent pole and drew out a round, dried berry.

"Taste it, Sue," he said. Gingerly, Sue tasted. It was acid and puckered her tongue, but it had a distinct flavor, and Michael explained that it cut the heavy fat and made the pemmican more pleasant to the white man's taste.

Chief Kicking Horse showed her a sack made of skins. Pemmican was carried ninety pounds to a sack, or as much as a man could carry, Sue learned, and then the Chief brought out a little sack and had it filled with pemmican and gave it to her. His son, a young brave who had been to the Mission School at Qu'Appelle interpreted for her.

"My father says that on this food men can travel longer in the frozen north than on any other food," he said gravely. "These small bags are good for those who go out for a few days. You carry them at your belt."

Sue took the greasy little bag and thanked Chief Kicking Horse with her hand held up, open palm, in the Indian greeting of friends. The squaws went on working but the young braves stood in a silent group until they rode away.

"Michael," confessed Sue, "I don't like pemmican at all. It's so dirty and it smells like a skunk," and Sue held her nose.

"Now, Sue, not as bad as a skunk," laughed Michael. "It isn't the pemmican that smells, it's the untidy camp and the preparation of the raw beef that you dislike." Sue shuddered. "And you mustn't make me dislike it," Michael continued. "I may have to eat it in the Yukon this winter and I don't want to be reminded of a skunk."

"Will you *have* to eat it?" asked Sue, anxiously.

“I don’t think so,” answered Michael.

“Then I wouldn’t mind going to the Yukon,” said Sue.

The fresh prairie wind of sunset was blowing against their faces. Ahead of them lay the Barracks. Riding slowly, Michael told her of how two years before Superintendent Consell had gone out to the Yukon to establish law and order in the frozen North. Now that the territory had grown with the miners in search of gold, he had sent for extra men. Michael, it seemed, was going along with Major Bell, who had come down from Duck Lake to take charge of the party.

“Why can’t I go, too?” asked Sue. “I’m a Mountie. I’ve my red coat and I’d like it better than school.”

“I’m afraid you can’t go to the Yukon,” said Michael. “It’s too rough and cold and too difficult a journey for anyone but a strong man to take. Besides, only men can mine for gold.”

“But if it lies around in the streets, I can put it in my pocket as well as a man,” Sue argued, as they rode up to the house again.

Michael smiled and lifted her off Beppo. “Run along in, Sue,” he said. “They’re having tea and I promised your mother to have you home on time.”

Sue paused a moment in the doorway of the drawing room. Everyone was talking at once, some laughing and some very earnest indeed. Sue knew them all, for they were friends of Uncle Dennis’s, asked to tea to meet Sue’s father and mother.

Uncle Dennis was looking at Sue’s tall, good-looking father. “What you propose is simply preposterous, Jimmy,” he was saying. “I tell you it just cannot be done.”

“But I like preposterous things, Dennis,” answered Sue’s father, “and I’m going to do it.”

“Sue darling,” called her mother. “Come over here beside me.”

Curtsying as she crossed the room, Sue perched on the arm of her mother’s chair. She was glad they had come back to Regina together, for she wanted everyone to see how pretty her mother was. Sue looked admiringly at her—a tiny, slender woman with masses of golden hair in a low knot at her neck and gray-green eyes, fringed with dark lashes. Aileen Winston looked up at her husband.

“Well, Jimmy,” she said, “do we look as if we’d stand the journey?”

He smiled down at them. “Certainly,” he answered, and, turning to Uncle Dennis, began again.

“I’ll admit it *sounds* preposterous,” he said, “but I don’t think it’s as bad as it sounds. Last winter we spent in the heat and color of India. This winter it’ll do us good to have a touch of Northern cold. Roughing it won’t hurt any one of us. My commission with the C.P.R. is to paint pictures of the Rockies. Well, I can make my sketches as I go through to the Yukon. In the Yukon I can make more. And next year, with my sketches finished, I can paint the pictures for the Railway. Besides, Dennis, I might find a gold mine while I’m up there.”

Uncle Dennis stood up. “How do you feel about this, Aileen?” he asked. Everyone in the room seemed awfully cross, but Sue’s mother slipped her hand into her husband’s. “I’m going wherever Jimmy goes,” she said, “and this time we’ll take Sue.”

Uncle Dennis seemed very angry. “I tell you it’s simply criminal to take that child up there,” he snapped.

“Take me where?” broke in Sue.

“Daddy’s thinking of taking us both up to the Yukon,” said her mother.

“Where the GOLD is?” Sue demanded.

Her father nodded.

“Oh, Daddy!” shrieked Sue. “How soon do we start?”

CHAPTER II

GOLD!

“My goodness,” said Sue to Hawkins the next morning, “but we did have a stormy night.” “What happened?” asked Hawkins, as he brought Sue her porridge. It was very pleasant to be having breakfast once more in Bachelors’ Hall, with Uncle Dennis’s orderly to look after her.

“The whole fuss was about me,” said Sue. “Hawkins, do you think I’m too little to go to the Yukon?”

Hawkins blinked with surprise. “*You* go to the Yukon, Miss Sue?” he exclaimed. “*You!* Oh, no, Miss Sue, that would never do.”

Sue nodded. “That’s what they all say. But, Hawkins, there’s one person that believes I can really go and that’s Michael.”

“Then what’s all the fuss about?” smiled Hawkins, for he knew that when Mr. O’Dare approved of Sue’s actions, she generally got her way.

“It’s partly me and it’s partly Matilda.” Hawkins shuddered at the mention of Matilda’s name. “You don’t like Matilda, do you, Hawkins?” asked Sue.

“I do not,” replied Hawkins, stoutly. “I like women that can stand on their own feet, not the kind that are always feeling faint or asking you to give them a hand with work that is strictly theirs.” Hawkins twirled his mustaches and looked very indignant.

“I know,” said Sue, “and that is part of the trouble. Uncle Dennis says I must have a nurse so that Mummy won’t have too much to do for me. Daddy says the sooner I learn to look after myself the better. Major Bell says I can go, but not Matilda, that if I can’t look after myself, the Yukon is no place for me.”

“The Major is always right,” agreed Hawkins, pompously.

“Yes,” Sue chuckled, “and it pleases me, for if there is anything I hate most in the world it’s having my hair brushed. Hawkins, do you know that I have to have it brushed one hundred strokes every morning and one hundred every night?”

“Whose orders?” asked Hawkins, briskly.

“Matilda’s,” said Sue. “If I go to the Yukon, there won’t be time for Mummy to brush her own hair and mine, too,” she added.

“That’s an idea,” said Hawkins, filling her glass with milk. “I think you could make it, Miss Sue. I’m going with this detachment and I’d give you a hand anytime you needed it. But tell me, what do you want to go up there for? It’s very cold and rough.”

“I want to find a gold mine,” said Sue. “Everyone says gold lies around in heaps and I like gold. Mummy and Miss Vicky have gold in their hair and gold rings and necklaces, and all the men at the Jubilee had gold on their uniforms.”

“You have to work hard to get it out of the ground,” said Hawkins.

“I wouldn’t care,” said Sue, piling marmalade on her toast and hoping no one would come down to breakfast before she had finished what was left in the dish.

Mrs. Schofield, the housekeeper, put her head in the door. “Mr. O’Dare is coming down,” she said. Hawkins drew out a chair.

Michael came in busily, kissed the top of Sue’s head, twirled the empty marmalade dish around and said, “Hawkins, *where* is the marmalade?”

“In me,” said Sue, before Hawkins could answer, and they all laughed together.

“Michael,” said Sue, leaning her elbows on the table in the way she had been taught was very bad manners indeed, “am I going to the Yukon or am I *not*?”

“If your father has anything to say about it, I think you’re going,” answered Michael, “but you mustn’t say I told you.”

“Well, what’s all the fuss about?” asked Sue. “I’m strong enough and I’m obedient, at least I am most of the time. I can ride and Mummy is good at all of these things.”

“Yes,” said Michael, “but it’s a long trip in, Sue, and over a big mountain and there’s a terrible climb over a place called Chilkoot Pass. You’d have to walk quite a bit of the way, and if you couldn’t keep up with the others, you would hold a whole party back. That’s another thing that’s worrying Major Bell.”

“If I couldn’t walk, I could run,” Sue protested.

“Yes,” said Michael, “but you couldn’t run all day. Still, I wouldn’t worry too much if I were you, Sue, for I wouldn’t be surprised if you got your way.”

Sue wasn’t so sure, as she sat before the mirror having her hair brushed. Her father and mother were discussing what everyone called “the dangers of the trip.” One moment there seemed to be no dangers at all, and the next moment there seemed to be nothing but danger. She couldn’t make it out at all. She only knew that they would have to decide very soon, for in thirteen days they would have to leave Regina for Vancouver. At Vancouver they would take a steamer to some other place, somewhere they would use sleds and toboggans and other places they would ride, and altogether it sounded like a great adventure.

But Beppo was at the door, a meadow lark was singing outside her window, and Sue set off across the prairies, full of an adventure of her own. Somewhere, just beyond Pile o’ Bones Creek, she had thrown away her little bag of pemmican. She hadn’t liked the smell, but if she was going to the Yukon, she might need her pemmican and, anyway, it would show Michael and the Major that she was ready to leave at once.

A few spikes of goldenrod were showing, gophers whisked gaily into their holes as she passed, and the blue sky dipped down to the edge of the world. Beppo’s canter dropped to a walk as they crossed the little creek, and then the search began. The leather of the bag was brownish gray, just the color of the prairie grass, Sue knew, and would be hard to find. Getting off Beppo, she hobbled him lightly and then started on her hunt.

She brushed the long grasses down, turned aside the spikes of late tiger lilies, and retraced her steps over and over again. The sun beat down upon her head and Sue loosened her jacket at the throat, but she persisted, and, close to the trail that led toward the line of tepees, she found the little bag. It was cool, lying against the dark moist earth, and Sue held it gingerly to her nose.

“It doesn’t smell,” she said. “Michael was right. It was the camp that smelled like a skunk. Perhaps it won’t be too bad to eat.”

Scrambling up on Beppo’s back and tying the bag of pemmican to her saddle, Sue trotted home, full of dreams of how she would climb snow mountains, ride toboggans, and snowshoe through a world that led to a gold mine, so full of gold that she not only filled her pockets but those of all around her.

Luncheon was a very grim meal, Sue decided. Her father and mother had little lists beside them and were jotting things down in a businesslike way; Uncle Dennis was very cold and distant; Michael put his head in the door, winked at Sue, and left.

When Sue began to tell them about the bag of pemmican, Hawkins made a warning face at her from the sideboard. Sue sighed. It was pleasanter out in the sunshine. She asked to be

excused, and, as no one answered her, slipped away quite unnoticed. That in itself, she felt, showed that things were very grim.

Matilda was in what she called a “wax.” She had heard rumors that the family were going to the Yukon. “Well, you can go without me, Miss Sue,” she said crossly. “I wouldn’t go into those wild parts for anything in the world.”

Sue chuckled as Matilda pulled her white dress over her head and tied her sash. At last she would be free of hairbrushing.

“There you are,” said Matilda, with a sniff, “but you’d better go straight to the Commissioner now, for it won’t be long before you’re mussed and untidy.”

Sue felt very happy as she went over to the Commissioner’s office. He was an old friend and she wanted to talk to him about the Yukon and gold mines, but he only smiled and shook his head.

“I know nothing about gold mines, Sue,” he said, “only how to protect the miners, and that’s why this party is going out to give further assistance to Superintendent Consell.”

“Well, who should I talk to?” asked Sue. “Uncle Dennis is so cranky about it all that I’ll need help.”

“What about your father and mother?” asked the Commissioner.

“Oh, Commissioner,” said Sue, in a shocked voice, “they know nothing at all about life on the prairies and what the Mounties have to do.”

“What do you know about the Yukon?” persisted the Commissioner.

“Not much,” said Sue, “but more than they do. Why, I’ll have to help them.”

The Commissioner laughed. “Come along over and let us talk to Mrs. Walsh,” he said. “She may be able to help us.”

Mrs. Walsh was just coming down the stairs. “Let’s go into the dining room, Sue,” she said, “and help Dawson put the salted almonds and bonbons in dishes for the party.” Mrs. Walsh was giving an afternoon tea in honor of Sue’s mother that day.

While they arranged little cakes and sweetmeats in small silver filigree baskets, Sue told Mrs. Walsh all about her hopes of going to the Yukon. Mrs. Walsh shook her head.

“You’re far too young, Sue,” she said, “and your mother is too tiny and delicate to take such a long trip.”

Sue sighed. She was tired of hearing that her mother was delicate and fragile. “You talk like Uncle Dennis,” she exclaimed. “Why, last night I heard Daddy tell Uncle Dennis that Mummy was as tough as a nut, that she could ride a camel on the desert and an elephant in India, so why couldn’t she ride a burro in the Yukon? What’s a burro, Mrs. Walsh?”

“A small donkey,” answered Mrs. Walsh, “and that is what you are, too, Sue. Stop talking now and carry these little dishes into the drawing room.”

Sue didn’t mind being called a donkey a bit, for it sounded as if there might be donkeys to ride in the Yukon. She wondered if you rode a donkey in the same way you rode a pony and decided she must speak to Sergeant Major Whiteside about it, when the party began.

It was lovely meeting all her old friends again. The Bishop was there and the Lieutenant Governor and everyone told her how “exquisite” her mother was, and they all hoped she would grow up to be like her.

“‘Exquisite’ is a hard word,” thought Sue. “I like ‘salubrious’ and ‘dashing’ better.” These were new words Sue had learned coming back on the boat from the Jubilee and Sue loved words that sounded important. “Exquisite,” she said softly to herself. “It sounds soft and pretty. But I like ‘gold’ better and ‘Yukon’ and ‘Mounties.’”

Dawson handed her another little dish of cakes. "There are more guests in the hall, Miss Sue," he said. "Will you take these out to them?"

But after a while everyone left but Major Bell, Uncle Dennis, and Sue's father and mother. They all made pretty speeches to the Commissioner and Mrs. Walsh, about how delightful the party had been and how much they had all enjoyed it. Mrs. Walsh put an arm around Sue. "We are going to miss her," she said, smiling at Uncle Dennis. "I must say ten is very young to be going to the Yukon."

"My goodness," murmured Sue, "they are at it again."

And they were. Uncle Dennis said they shouldn't and couldn't go; Daddy said Uncle Dennis was ridiculous; the Commissioner laughed; Major Bell said they could go "under certain conditions"; Mrs. Walsh said they would all be miserable at the thought of Sue and her "exquisite" mother going out to that rough country.

Everyone sat down again. Finally Major Bell said, "Well, as you've so set your heart on the trip, I'll admit it could be done, but you've only twelve days left to get your equipment and it can't be managed in that time."

Everyone looked relieved but Sue's father, and he just laughed. "I can get equipment in three days," he said. "The Hudson's Bay Company catalogue arrived this morning."

"Now see here, Jimmy," began Uncle Dennis, sharply, but Mrs. Walsh broke in, "How I wish we could have an outside opinion on this Yukon trip, someone who has not been mixed up with all this argument and could judge the whole matter calmly and coolly. If only Lady Charlotte were here."

"Let's cable her," suggested Uncle Dennis, and they wrote the cable then and there.

LADY CHARLOTTE DAWKINS
GLENTOCH CASTLE
RAVENSWOOD
SCOTLAND

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION AS TO ADVISABILITY OF SUE AND HER MOTHER ACCOMPANYING
JIMMY WINSTON TO THE YUKON FOR A YEAR

DENNIS LYONS

"How soon can we get an answer?" asked Sue, as she skipped along beside her father on the way home.

"In twenty-four hours," he answered. "And during that time, Sue, it might be best for all of us if we didn't talk about the Yukon or gold at all."

But Sue couldn't resist telling Minnie-Pooh-Pooh about it, when she undressed the little Indian doll and put her to bed. "If I go to the Yukon, you go, Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, and if I find a gold mine I'll get you a gold necklace and bracelet," Sue told her as she tucked in the blankets.

A few minutes later Matilda tucked Sue herself into bed, and she fell asleep wondering if the next day would ever come and if the gold in the mines glittered like her golden crest at the foot of her bed.

But they didn't have to wait twenty-four hours. It was only sixteen hours, in fact just after luncheon the next day, when the answer came.

CAPTAIN DENNIS LYONS
ADJUTANT NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE HEADQUARTERS
REGINA NORTH WEST TERRITORIES
CANADA

What an afternoon that had been! Everyone thought that the cable was exactly like Lady Charlotte herself. Uncle Dennis had said, “Well, that’s that, Jimmy,” and had shaken hands with her father, and then all of them sat around the dining-room table with lists and pencils and catalogues and there were fresh arguments about how much to take, and what to take.

The Northern Supply Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company had illustrated catalogues, and Sue’s mother was all for ordering a “quilted, dark red silk, hand-embroidered peignoir, guaranteed to keep out cold in the draftiest room,” but her father laughed and called her a goose, and told her she must take practical and serviceable things, such as warm flannels, that would wash.

The lists grew and grew and grew. Uncle Dennis told them they couldn’t have trunks; that small duffel bags of rainproof material were wiser; that baggage that had no hard corners could often go over a trail where a trunk couldn’t.

“You can carry a soft duffel bag on a sleigh, a horse, or a man’s back,” he explained, “but you can’t tie a brassbound trunk on a pony’s back.”

Hastily they revised their lists, so that all would be ready when Major Bell arrived for tea. “He is going to check our lists,” said Sue’s father, “so that we can post them to the Hudson’s Bay Company tonight. If you have anything you want to take with you, Sue, you had better have it ready by the time he comes.”

Up the stairs Sue ran. She knew just what she wanted to take. By the side of Minnie-Pooh-Pooh’s cradle stood a tiny nail-studded leather box. It had belonged to Miss Vicky’s grandmother, but had been given to Sue for her doll’s clothes. Sue called it her treasure box. Inside lay several extra blankets for Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, the feather headdress that Chief Laughing Cloud had given her the year before at the Gymkana, the little knitted purse her father had given her when she left Montreal, a paintbox of real oil paints, a doll’s bonnet of silk and feathers, a tiny pair of beaded moccasins, a police whistle, and a mouth organ.

She laid them out on the bed. There they lay, and all of them treasures.

What else was there she couldn’t live without? Her habit! Hastily she added it to the pile on the snowy counterpane.

Her red coat! She spread it out on the place of honor—the bolster.

Was that all? At the top of Minnie-Pooh-Pooh’s cradle hung a little bunch of soft, gray, furry tails. Little Chief had given them to her in remembrance of her first gopher hunt. She placed them beside the red coat. The shining golden crest with its motto “Maintiens le Droit” was still fixed to the bulletin board at the foot of her bed.

“I’ll wear it,” said Sue to herself, “so everyone’ll know I’m a Mountie.”

Carefully she packed the things back into the little trunk, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t get the habit in and the red coat *and* the headdress. She sat on the lid. She pushed and struggled but it did no good. The lid would not close. Putting on her headdress and wearing the red coat and the crest, she half-carried, half-dragged the trunk downstairs and into the drawing room.

“Here are all my treasures for inspection, Major Bell,” she said, “but I can’t make them all go in. Someone will have to sit on the lid.” Everyone laughed at her but the Major. He inspected her “kit” very carefully, but advised against her taking the feathered headdress.

“It would look a bit vain,” he said, “for not everyone has a headdress up there.”

He felt the same way about the doll’s bonnet and advised a whole leather suit for Minnie-

Pooh-Pooh, instead of the changes of blankets. In fact, he even promised to see that a leather suit was provided.

“Your father’s taking his paints,” he went on, “so you won’t need these and you’ll have to have a different kind of habit, so I’d hang this one up until you come home.” He lifted the red coat.

“This is too precious to take on a journey,” he said, gravely. “It might be lost and you could never replace it. Why don’t you ask the Commissioner if you may hang it with his mess jacket until your return?”

Sue hadn’t known what an understanding person the Major could be. He seemed to appreciate just how she treasured the red coat and so gave it the most important place in the Barracks while she was away.

“Is everything here?” he asked.

“Almost,” said Sue.

“What have you left?”

Hastily Sue ran out into the hall and returned with her small bag of pemmican. “Chief Kicking Horse gave it to me,” she explained. Major Bell handed it back to her with an approving nod.

“Take good care of that, Sue,” he said. “It may come in very handy.”

Sue counted her remaining treasures. Moccasins, whistle, mouth organ, the knitted purse, the gopher tails. “But, Major, they’re my littlest treasures,” she cried. “Can’t I take more?”

“Anything you can carry yourself, Sue,” he said firmly, “you can take. Nothing more. Do you understand?”

Sue nodded, but she wasn’t so sure she wasn’t going to cry. The back of her eyes felt hot. She loved her treasures so dearly and the Yukon suddenly seemed a long, long way from the things she loved best.

The Major put his hand on her shoulder. “Come along, Sue,” he said, “and help me with your mother. She is sure to have too many things on her list, too.”

He was right. Her mother wanted everything that looked pretty in the catalogues and had ordered at least fifty times more than she could carry with her, the Major said. Her father, too, had ordered artists’ supplies that would never get into the Yukon, but had been very wise about clothes. Uncle Dennis had a perfect list for them both.

Matilda gave Sue her supper on a little table in the window so that she shouldn’t miss any of the excitement. Mrs. Walsh came in and measured Sue for her coats. Michael added to the general excitement by declaring that Sue would have grown at least an inch before she reached the Yukon and that her clothes would be too small before she wore them.

“And that, Sue,” he said, “would mean you would have to wear mine or go home.”

Mrs. Walsh remeasured Sue then and added half an inch all the way around.

The lists were finished, check inclosed, and the envelope stamped, just in time for Sue to run across the Square and hand it to the constable driving the outgoing mail cart.

It was a week before the order came from Winnipeg, and when it was delivered at Bachelors’ Hall there were so many boxes that it was like Miss Vicky’s trousseau arriving. When you bought clothes to be married in, Sue found, you called it a “trousseau,” but when you bought clothes to go to a cold climate, they were called an “outfit.” Sometimes Sue wondered if you could ever learn all the words in the English language, and now Mummy was teaching her French. If it hadn’t been for the promise to herself of finding a gold mine, she would have been depressed at the thought of all the learning she had to do before another winter was past.

Sue loved her outfit. She had two bags of her own called "holdalls," made of waterproof canvas. They looked like very large sausages, she thought. She had two bottle-green duck suits, made with a loose blouse closing at the neck and wrists with narrow bands. She wore no skirt, but full, pleated bloomers that buttoned around her waist. Leather leggings were worn with this and a little round hat of the same green duck. Her brown boots had elastic sides and were put on before her gaiters. There was also a waterproof suit with a tarpaulin hat to match. Sue thought it both heavy and hot. Her winter coat was heavy blue blanket cloth lined with red quilted silk. It had a red-lined hood that pulled tightly down over her head, a red sash to tie around her waist, and with it was worn a chamois jacket. It was a hot, sticky sort of thing, Sue thought, but Uncle Dennis told her she would be glad of it when the Northern winds blew.

But this, Sue found, was really only the beginning of her outfit. There were boots, dozens of boots. Rubber boots for swamps, leather boots with thick rubber soles and studded with hobnails for mountain climbing, great soft leather boots lined with fleecy lamb's wool to sleep in on winter nights, felt boots with thin felt soles to wear in the house, canvas sneakers with rubber soles for summer weather. And there were doeskin mitts, lined with homespun flannel, fur caps that came down like hoods and that even tied across the face so as to keep out the cold. Fur gauntlets, warm woolen stockings, long woolen underwear, a little knapsack to strap on her back to hold her treasures, and finally an aluminum pail that contained plates, knives, forks, and cups, all her own.

Two things interested her most, a mosquito veil and a sleeping bag. The mosquito veil was gathered full and had an elastic that fitted around the crown of her hat. The ends were long and tucked into the collar of her blouse. The rim of her hat held the netting out from her face so that no mosquito could touch her. The sleeping bag looked like a huge bolster. It was made of canvas, lined with heavy flannel and interlined with eiderdown. It opened halfway down with buttons and ties and was roomy enough to slide into without too much difficulty. On very cold nights, Sue learned, she would have to wear a sleeping hood of the same material. She tried it on and found it left only her eyes and mouth uncovered. Last of all there was a waterproof sheet to spread upon the ground under the sleeping bag.



There were awful ructions when they started to pack

There were awful ructions, though, when they started to pack. They had been warned that

they must concentrate on warm and not becoming clothes. Sue's mother listened patiently and packed steadily. Each morning Sue's father would insist on more being taken out of her bags, and one morning before breakfast, in going through her holdall, he discovered two pairs of high-heeled satin slippers. He put them in the wastepaper basket.

"You can't take these, Aileen," he said. "You are going to rough it for a year and you won't need fripperies."

Sue's pretty mother had cried then and said she wouldn't go if she couldn't take just one feminine thing with her. "I don't want to look like a bundle of fur *all* the time," she wailed.

Just then Uncle Dennis came in. He looked more worried every day, Sue thought, and he was quite cross with her mother, and told her she should stay at home with her child and let her husband go to the Yukon alone.

Sue's mother picked up the nearest shoe and threw it at Uncle Dennis. "I'll go where I like," she said, "and I like to be with my husband." And Sue's mother had made a dreadful face at her brother.

Uncle Dennis apologized then and explained that it was his anxiety about them that made him so cranky. Sue thought they were all cranky and making a terrible fuss about things and she had a long chat with Hawkins. Hawkins comforted her.

"I'll tell you what you do," he said. "Find a pair of slippers that your mother likes and I'll take them in my bag and you can give them to her when you're out there."

It was all exciting in a queer, new way, Sue thought, not a bit like a wedding or a Jubilee, where you wanted to quiet your heart's beating, but rather as if everyone was in a hurry and anxious to push everyone else out of the way.



Two days later she watched the Canadian Pacific Railway Transcontinental Limited thunder into the Regina Station. Amid the bustle and excitement of good-bys, Sue suddenly found herself on the train, with wheels already turning beneath her.

The single line of Mounties filed through the Pullman.

“Quick, Sue,” said Michael, and running with her to the end of the last car, he opened the door. “Hold tight,” he cautioned. Sue tightened her grip on Michael’s arm as the train gathered speed and swept westward.

“Look,” said Michael.

They were passing the Barracks and close to the tracks stood two Mounties at attention. Between them was Beppo. It was Sergeant Major Whiteside and her old friend, Smith, bidding her good-by.

Sue raised her hand in a farewell salute.

The great Yukon adventure had begun.

CHAPTER III

THE *SKAGWAY QUEEN*

“Let go the lines!”

It was very exciting and a bit scary. Only a few moments before, she had heard her father slip out of bed and pull on his dressing gown. It was while he was hunting for his slippers that she had called to him. “Daddy, where are you going?”

“Hush, Sue,” he answered. “Don’t wake your mother. Here.”

He slipped a warm coat around her shoulders and pulled on her felt bedroom slippers. With a finger on his lip, he opened the door and she followed him out. One finger on his lip meant “Don’t disturb Mummy,” two fingers meant “Don’t tell Mummy.” This was one finger. Daddy was a most exciting traveler, Sue thought. He was always going places no one else ever did and always doing things that were forbidden.

There had been a dreadful row when they came on board the *Skagway Queen* the night before. A large airy stateroom had been reserved for the Winston party, but when they came aboard they found four men in it, rough-looking men. When her father had shown them his tickets they had just laughed. “Well, pardner,” one of them had drawled, “you may have paid for this stateroom, but we’re in it and we’re going to stay.”

“We’ll see,” said Sue’s father, and smiled. She and her mother followed him up on deck. “Wait here,” he said, and Sue saw him pass some bills to a couple of sailors who laughed and then disappeared.

In no time at all the four miners had appeared on deck. “*Who* said the Police would take us out of that stateroom?” they demanded loudly.

Sue never heard the answer for, before you could say Boo to a goose, her father had whisked her mother and Sue around the deck and down the stairs and into the stateroom.

The sailors had put the miners’ bundles in the corridor and their own holdalls and parcels were neatly stacked in the corner of the room. Daddy locked the door and stood there laughing. “Make your head serve your heels, Sue,” he said.

But just then there had come the most dreadful fuss outside the door. Cries of “Break the door in!” “Bring out the tenderfoot!” mingled with shouts and tramping and sounds of fighting, and then a sharp command of “Make way there!”

“That’s Michael,” said Sue, and her father opened the door promptly. Sue caught a glimpse of the crowd in the corridor. Angry, flushed miners; sailors; passengers and visitors saying good-by. Michael closed the door.

“They won’t come in while I’m here,” he said. “Major Bell sent me down to make sure everything was all right with you.” Sitting on the edge of a berth, Michael told them of how all the accommodations on the *Skagway Queen* had been sold several times over. “Our accommodation,” he said, “was reserved five months ago, but all our staterooms were occupied.”

“What did you do?” asked Sue.

“Told them to move on,” answered Michael, “and they did. The boat is crowded to the gunwales,” he added, “and everything you can think of is on board, though goodness knows where everyone is going to sleep. Sue, the Major has an extra-special surprise to show you in the morning.”

“Show me now,” implored Sue, but he shook his head. “Not until the morning. The Major’s

orders, Sue, but I can tell you one thing. Besides the horses and mules and donkeys and dogs, there are two goats on board. In the morning I'll show them to you."

All night there had been the sounds of loading and they had gone to sleep with the cries of men's voices in their ears, angry brawls above them and the thump, thump, thump of cargo dropped on deck.

And now it was cool morning, hardly sunrise, and Sue pattered along behind her father and up the companionway to the deck. There was a little knot of men on the wharf, their lanterns pale against the first streaks of morning light.

"Let go the lines!"

They flung the stout lines aboard, there was a faint cheer from the shore and the *Skagway Queen* slipped quietly out into Vancouver Harbor. An order rang out from the bridge. From above a sailor's voice answered, "Aye, aye, sir." A cool breeze sprang up and ruffled the water. Beyond Vancouver the misted mountains were turning gold with the rising sun.

"That's what I wanted to see," said her father, "the sunrise on those mountains. Look at that rose color, Sue, those violet shadows, that silvery light in the valleys."

Sue looked. It was very lovely, she thought, but she was really more interested in the colors of the miners' shirts below her. Two of them were standing looking back at Vancouver. They wore plaid shirts of yellow, green, and blue against a rich red background. She wished her Yukon clothes were as gay and bright and that she had a slouch hat and high leather boots.

They looked up and smiled, and her father waved a good morning to them.

"Are you cold, Sue?" he asked. She nodded. Her teeth were chattering. "I'll race you around the deck," he said, and around the deck they ran until Sue was rosy, warm, and hungry. A smiling young sailor brought her a mug of cocoa and Sue watched the mist rise on the water and blot out Vancouver.

"We're headed north," her father said, "and look, Sue, it's clear weather ahead."

He sat beside her while she finished her cocoa.

It was cold and clear, and, quietly, the ship awoke. First the horses moved restlessly. Sue could hear a faint whinny, the frightened pawing of the deck by an anxious pony, and men's reassuring voices. There were the short, sharp barks of dogs, sailors beginning to show on deck, and strange squeaks and creaks and whines that Sue learned belonged to ships.

"Let's go down, Daddy," Sue said. "Michael's got a surprise for me and I'm dying to know what it is."

Her father nodded absently. He was looking at the mountains again. Sue heard him telling her mother about them while she dressed. "We've hardly begun our journey," he said, "and already it's worth while. I must start sketching directly breakfast is over. Such colors you've never seen, Aileen. Different from the hot, violent colors of India. Everything is cool and lovely and the air makes you feel as if you must get to work at once."

The dining saloon was almost full when they went to breakfast, but at the Captain's table, Major Bell and Michael were waiting for them and Sue learned that the greatest honor that can happen to you on board a ship is to have your meals at the Captain's table.

Sue thought that breakfast would never end. Everyone talked and talked and talked. All about what they were going to do when they reached Dawson, which was the capital city of the Yukon, whether they would make Skagway in time before the freeze-up and whether Chilkoot was possible. . . .

Sue sat as still as she could, but, after a time, both her feet went to sleep. She confided that they were all prickly to Michael. "You see, Michael," she said, "when you've short legs that

don't reach the floor you have to keep wiggling them or they go to sleep—and if you wiggle your feet, it's bad manners, so I think the only thing to do is to get down and run around.”

“Besides,” said Michael, with a twinkle, “you want to see the extra-special surprise, don't you?”

The two of them set off on a ship's inspection. First they went up on the upper deck and Michael explained that the boxes of goods neatly stacked there were not usually carried in that fashion, but that they were racing against the cold of the Yukon and were taking all the goods with them they could carry. He pointed out the hold below, the hatches, and the lifeboats. Way down deep in the boat they saw the engines and the Chief Engineer, who was a Scotchman and had a soft burr to his voice like Monty had.

“Where's the surprise?” asked Sue.

“I'll show you,” Michael answered, and laughed. “You'll like it, Sue.”

But when Sue reached the lower deck, she forgot all about the surprise, for here were all the things in the world that she liked best. There were thirty horses, some of them strong little ponies, others larger and more like the light cavalry mounts of the Force; a dozen donkeys, pretty, fat little things with mouse-colored coats and long hair at the end of their tails; and, then, the funniest animals Sue had ever seen—mules, eighteen of them.

“They look like half a horse and half a donkey, Michael,” she said, “and they look so stupid, and did you ever see such ears? Can I pat them, Michael?”

“Try it,” said Michael.

She went forward, as she had to all the horses she had known and held out her hand steadily. The mule laid back his ears, showed his teeth, and snorted at her.

“My gracious,” said Sue, “what bad manners he has! Will he bite me?”

“Yes,” said Michael, “unless he knows you very well indeed, he bites, but look at what's here.”

Sue turned. In a tiny stall were two funny white goats. They looked so small and foolish beside the larger animals that Sue felt sorry for them until suddenly behind her broke out the fiercest barking and yelping.

“Dogs?” asked Sue.

Michael took her around behind the horses and there, on the deck, were dogs of every shape and variety she had ever known—collies, Irish setters, a coach dog with funny black markings on its white body, a huge mastiff, a St. Bernard, dogs with tails that should have been short and were long, dogs that were mixtures of every breed and all of them barking busily, while a man separated into pans their daily ration of meat and bones. Michael explained that, on the trail, dogs were considered to have greater endurance than horses and were less care to their owners.

“But look, Sue,” he said. “Here is the surprise.”

Between boxes of corned beef, piled high on either side, stood a small wooden crate. There was a wire netting nailed over the top and a rough door at one end. A scrabbling sound came from within and, as Michael opened the door, a small, red, furry body hurled itself out on deck.

“Oh, Michael!” Sue shrieked. “A puppy!”

Michael bent down and picked up the tiny thing. Its rough red coat still had traces of puppy sable about it, but the ears were cocked, the eyes bright, and the black nose shining and quivering with the excitement of being out of the captivity of the kennel.

“He's an Irish terrier, Sue,” said Michael. “A friend of the Major's brought him on board last night, as a mascot for the Force. The Major says you are to have charge of him all the way to

Dawson City.”

“Not truly?” breathed Sue.

Michael laughed. “Truly,” he said, and set the puppy down on the deck.

He put his head on one side and then, with the air of one who has important business on hand, trotted busily off in the direction of the barking. Michael and Sue followed him. Tail erect and ears cocked, he viewed the yelping dogs and then, as if to say “Too much noise,” barked sharply.



“He sounds like the Commissioner,” said Sue, delightedly.

“He does,” said Michael. “Let’s call him Field Marshal.”

“What’s a Field Marshal?” asked Sue.

“The Commander in Chief of the Army,” said Michael, “and goodness knows he looks as if he were in command of all those dogs.” He did indeed, for the barking was quieting down and the group of older dogs were looking at the Irish terrier as if he were in charge of them all.

“In Ireland, where I come from,” Michael told her, “they say that a good Irish terrier has eyes as black as a sloe and bold as an eagle.”

“Then I think Field Marshal must be a very good terrier,” said Sue, “for his eyes are just like that and I like the way he stands. He’s so . . . so dashing.”

“Dashing is the proper word,” said Michael. “But see, Sue, here’s a leash for him. Dogs are not allowed free on the deck. Now your duties are to feed and water him and to walk him every

day as much as you can. He has to learn to use his legs for the long walks over the mountains and you can help him now by giving him plenty of exercise.”

“Field Marshal’s a very long name,” complained Sue. “Let’s call him Fieldy for short.”

Fieldy was agreed on, and the three of them climbed to the upper deck where Mr. Winston already had his easel out and was sitting painting. Near him in a deck chair was her mother. Sue raced around the deck with Fieldy until she was breathless and then, with the puppy in her arms, stood watching her father’s swift fingers at work. Little groups of passengers would stop to watch, pass on, and then return to watch again.

“Why do they watch you?” Sue asked.

Her father laughed. “I expect I’m the first artist most of them have ever seen,” he answered. “I must be something of a curiosity to them.”



Sue looked around the deck. The passengers were such a mixture, she felt. Only a few of

them looked as nice as the Mounties, but most of them wore such gay shirts that Sue felt they must be nice. The red tunics of the Force were everywhere, bright, vivid notes of color. In one corner a man was playing an accordion and singing a song called “The Bowery.”

“They say such things and they do such things,
I’ll never go there any more,”

he sang.

Sue liked the tune. She liked the cool, sparkling wind, the warm sun on her back, the happy wriggings of Fieldy in her arms, the friendly smiles as she passed. She skipped a bit as she returned to her father again.

“This is going to be *quite* an adventure,” she said to Fieldy. “I can feel it in my bones.”

“Sue.” It was her mother’s voice. She turned. “Come along.” Her mother waved a book at her. If there was one thing Sue hated more than hairbrushing, it was French, and her mother was waving the dreadful French book. Sue stopped skipping and put Fieldy down on deck.

“Yes, Mummy,” she said.

“Let me hear you say ‘Le Corbeau et le Renard.’”

Sitting on the deck with Fieldy in her lap, Sue began her recitation. They were passing through blue channel waters, with mountains towering high on either side, the shores closely wooded with the tallest trees Sue had ever seen. Evergreens with spindly tops and here and there a great cedar that towered high above the rest. There was the rush of water against the steamer’s side.

Sue dropped a kiss on Fieldy’s head. In spite of the French lesson, she had never felt so happy.

“Go on, Sue,” urged her mother.

“Hé! bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau,
Que vous êtes joli! que vous me semblez beau!
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage. . . .”

Sue stopped for breath.

“Now, translate,” said her mother.

Sue sighed. “Well, it’s all about the crow and the fox, Monsieur Corbeau and Monsieur Renard.

“Old Renard, Mummy, was trying to fool old Corbeau. So Renard said, ‘My, but you’re pretty. Without telling any fibs, your singing is as beautiful as your looks.’” Sue laughed. “What a fibber. . . . As if a crow could sing!” and she cawed loudly.

“Luncheon is served,” a steward called, passing along the deck. Sue scrambled to her feet.

“I’m awfully hungry, Mummy,” she said, and the French lesson was over.

Because Fieldy was so little, he had to be fed three times a day. “When we get to Dawson, he’ll only have one meal, like the big dogs,” Michael explained, as they went down to see about his food. The man who had been feeding the dogs in the morning was a very pleasant person called Angus. From the cook’s galley he brought out a dish of cereal and milk and while Fieldy gobbled his luncheon in a rude and hasty fashion, Angus told Sue a little about the Yukon. He was surprised to find she was going there.

“It’s no place for young ones,” he said. “Where do you come from?”

Sue told him the whole story, winding up with the Jubilee and the return to the Barracks.

“And what’s your name, lassie?” asked Angus. Sue told him and added that Lady Charlotte had called her “Susannah of the Mouties.”

Angus clapped his hands together. “I ken y’r Monty,” he said. “He’s the new Earl of Falkney and Dunleith. His uncle was my master. I was a game beater on the estate. Now I’m prospecting in the Yukon and, like yourself, hunting for a gold mine.”

His full name, he said, was Angus Mackay, and he attached himself to their party and acted as batman for her father, helped Sue to train Fieldy, placed Mrs. Winston’s deck chair in sunny windless corners, adjusted her father’s easel, and held long happy conversations with Sue about Monty “when he was a little boy.”

The third day, Sue took Fieldy down on the lower deck. There was a passenger there whom she hadn’t seen before. A tall man with a different plaid shirt. Very gay and elegant, Sue thought. Yellow—very, very yellow, with large red and purple checks and a faint green stripe outlining the purple. He had a slouch hat and high boots and he walked with a swagger. Sue wasn’t sure whether she liked the look of the man or not.

Down the companionway to the open deck forward, she and Fieldy trotted. Sure enough, there by the mules the tall man was standing. He was talking about the mules, which he said were the stupidest animals alive. Sue gathered that he didn’t like them and cared even less for donkeys. She drew closer. He had a funny-looking dog at his feet. Its legs were too long for its body. Its ears drooped and its coat was a yellowish gray.

“What kind of dog is that?” she asked.

The tall man looked down at her. “Hello, young’un,” he said. “What was it you said?”

“I asked you what kind of dog you had,” said Sue.

“It’s a yellow dog,” he answered, and everyone laughed but Sue.

“It’s not very yellow,” she said, “but I didn’t mean its color, I meant its breed. Fieldy is an Irish terrier,” she added.

“Well, mine’s a yellow dog,” he said. “A yellow dog, young’un, is a dog of no particular breed.”

“Is it?” said Sue, wrinkling her nose and looking up at the tall man. “What’s your name?” she asked.

“Jocko,” he said. “Like it?”

Sue tried it. “Jocko. Yes, I like it. Are you a miner?” she continued.

“What do you want to know for?” he asked.

“Well,” said Sue, “I’m going up to the Yukon to hunt for a gold mine and I’d like to learn all I can about it before I get there.”

Jocko looked very surprised, but he sat down a safe distance from the mules and told her about the gold he’d seen in the Yukon, of the gold he’d found himself, and how he was going back to hunt for more.

Sue thought him a very interesting man, though she couldn’t understand why some of his friends around him laughed so much as he told of the rich pay streaks he’d found. He was just starting to tell her what pay streak meant when Angus came down, carrying her father’s easel. He set the easel up farther down the deck, and a few moments later her father followed in his loose painter’s smock and sat down to sketch.

“Leaping catfish,” said Jocko, “what’ve we got here?”

He strolled down the deck and stood behind her father for a few moments. Sue sat quite still. It was warm down beside the mules and the men talked about such interesting things. It was nice to know that when Jocko came back she would hear again of how charming her father

was and of how beautifully he painted.

Jocko returned, his face crinkled with laughter. “By all the gold in the Yukon,” he said, “if we haven’t a painter with us—a regular sissy, all dolled up in petticoats and painting pictures of the scenery.” Jocko slapped his boots with a little switch and he and his friends laughed loudly.

Sue listened. At first she couldn’t believe her ears. Her father called a sissy? Surely she had made a mistake, but Jocko turned, looking back at where her father’s easel stood.

“Come on, my buckos,” he said, “come on down and see this sissy work.” There was hardly a movement from the men before Sue was on her feet, blocking the passage down the deck.

“What did you call my father?” she asked, stormily.

“I didn’t know I’d called your father anything,” answered Jocko. “I called the painter fellow down there in skirts a sissy. Look at his skirts.” And all the men laughed again.

“He’s not a sissy!” screamed Sue. “He’s my father. You take back that word. He’s not a sissy!”

“Sure he is,” laughed Jocko, “and, look here, young’un, when I say a man’s a sissy, he *is* a sissy. See?”

“No, I don’t see!” yelled Sue at the top of her voice.

“Well,” said Jocko, “when a man wears petticoats and paints picture, I call him a sissy.”

“You do, do you?” cried Sue. “Well, you don’t know anything. I’ll tell you what you are. You’re a dirty old thing. You don’t wash, you don’t shave, your boots are dirty. You’ve dirty nails.” Jocko moved forward. “Don’t you dare go near my father. I’ll set my dog on you. You . . . you old mule, you!”

Jocko laughed. “I’m not going to be bullied by a kid,” he said, gently. “You move out of the way.”

Sue started to cry. “I hate you,” she cried. “You make fun of your dog. You make fun of my father. You make fun of your mules. You’re a mule yourself.”

A hand smoothed her curls. “Now, now,” said a laughing voice, “let’s be a little quieter over this matter. Hush, Sue, I’m sure this gentleman didn’t know you were my daughter when he called me a sissy. You must introduce me to your friend, Sue.”

“He’s not my friend. He’s a dirty old mule!” cried Sue.

“My name is Winston,” said her father, ignoring Sue, and “I’m called Jocko,” answered the tall man in quite a scrappy manner.

Mr. Winston held out his hand. “How do you do?” he said, smiling. Jocko put out his hand, and, for goodness’ sake, wondered Sue, what could be happening? Over Jocko’s face there was a look of surprise, alarm. His right arm was bending in a curious fashion and then he began to lean away over to one side, but her father just stood there, smiling and shaking hands so far as Sue could see.

Jocko caught his breath with a little gasp. “All right, stranger,” he said.

Mr. Winston loosened his grip and stepped back. Jocko’s hand was dirty, but it was also quite white and very limp looking. The little crowd of men closed around them.

Jocko laughed. “I take it back, pardner,” he said. “You ain’t no sissy. Not with a grip like that.”

“Shall I show you how it’s done?” said Mr. Winston. “I learned the trick during a year I spent in Japan.” Sitting on a box, among the mules and men, Sue’s father showed Jocko and the others the trick of jujitsu he had learned long ago from the Japanese.

On the way up to their cabin, Sue’s father suggested gently that she might have been more gracious in her leave-taking.

“I don’t like him,” said Sue. “I’ll never like him. He’s a dirty old mule.”

Mr. Winston shook his head. “Don’t bear grudges, Sue,” he said. “They only cramp your style.”

Sue thought about what her father said that night when she was tucked into her berth. She felt tired and hot and angry, but the wind coming in through the porthole was so fresh and clean. “I wonder why he’s so dirty,” she wondered, “when he has such a lovely shirt.”

But when morning came she couldn’t forget the row of the day before, and it was a strangely silent Sue that walked soberly around the deck. She could see Jocko below. She wanted to talk to him and yet she didn’t, and she felt very uncomfortable with herself and with her father.

After luncheon she went down to where Jocko stood. She wasn’t sorry for calling him a mule, but she didn’t want to remain bad friends.

“Good afternoon,” she said to Jocko. “Would you like me to do something for you?”

“Sure.” The man smiled at her in quite a friendly way.

“Well, you know yesterday I told you you were dirty.” Jocko nodded. “Well,” said Sue, with a gasp, “I still think you are. But I know how to make you all tidy and if you do what I tell you, I’ll take you up and let you talk to my mother.”

There was a shout of laughter from the men around. “There’s your chance, Jocko,” called one of them. “Why don’t you take it?”

Jocko moved aside. “What do I have to do?” he asked.

Sue whispered, “Shave.”

Jocko shook his head. “Can’t.”

“Haven’t you a razor?”

“Lost it,” grinned Jocko.

“If you promise to use it,” said Sue, “I’ll get you everything,” and, with Fieldy scampering after her, she ran back to their stateroom and took out one of her father’s razors—a long, ivory-handled thing with sharp blades—a leather strop, a fuzzy brush, a cake of soap, and, opening her mother’s dressing case, a nail file.

Down the stairs again, and what a time they all had. When his hat was off, Jocko showed a head covered with short, dark brown curls, newly cut. Someone brought a pail of hot water and some towels, and Jocko sat down in the midst of a laughing crowd of men, towels tucked in around the top of his shirt.

“Here’s the soap,” said Sue, “and here’s the razor and here’s the shaving brush.”

Angus reached out. “We can lather without a brush,” he said and put it in his pocket.

Sure enough they could, and Jocko’s face was soon a mass of soapy lather. “It’s no use,” exclaimed Jocko. “You haven’t brought a mirror.”

“I’ll shave you, lad,” said Angus, taking the razor, and then the real fun began.

Every time the razor was passed over his face, Jocko brayed like a mule or whinnied like a horse. Sue thought she had never met so funny a man. And when they washed his face and got soap in his eyes he kicked like a mule. Finally he stood up.

“Where’s that pail of water?” he demanded, and doused his head and face in it, and washed his hands and scrubbed until everyone around was spattered. “Well, young’un, how do you think I look?” he asked.

“Gracious,” said Sue, “you’re awfully good to look at. You musn’t hide your face again.”

“Who’ll lend me a white shirt?” cried Jocko, looking very pleased.

“Oh, don’t change your shirt,” said Sue. “Please *don’t*! It’s the nicest shirt on the boat.”

Jocko looked down at the colorful yellow and red plaid. “It sure is handsome,” he agreed. “But when do we see your lady mother?”

Sue led him happily up the stairs to where her mother sat reading.

“Mummy,” she said, “here is my great friend, Jocko.”

Sue’s mother put out her hand in the friendliest way, and Sue’s father gave her an approving wink.

“I hear you’re a miner on the way to Dawson,” said her mother. Jocko nodded and the two of them began to talk about the journey.

“Sue,” whispered her father, “what is sticking out of your pocket?”

“Your razor,” answered Sue. “I lent it to Jocko to clean him up, and your brush and soap and strop. Angus has the brush and I’ve the razor and strop.”

Sue thought her father would never stop laughing, but she didn’t try to stop him. She wondered, instead, if she wasn’t very lucky to have a father who liked fun as much as she did. She hadn’t known many fathers but most of the ones she had known had been very serious.

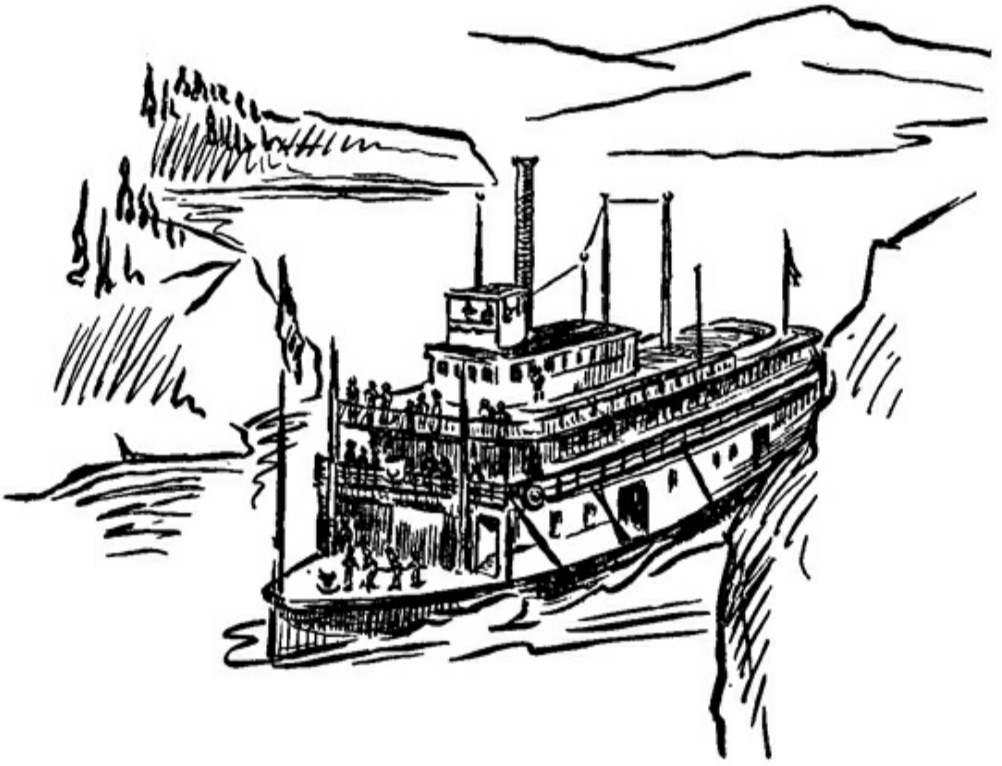
On Sunday morning there was a later breakfast, and a bugle blowing. On deck, the Mounties, in their scarlet and gold, were standing in a three-sided square. Beyond them passengers, in front of them a small table. Behind the table, Captain Blanchard with the Chief Officer on his right and Major Bell on his left.

“We will sing hymn number forty-six,” the Captain said.

“Fight the good fight
With all thy might. . . .”

From the saloon there came the notes of the piano, which were soon lost in the sound of voices as everyone joined in the hymn. Sue thought this was the most perfect church she had ever been in. No other church would have allowed Field Marshal to sit at her feet. A cool breeze blew across their faces, the sun shone high over the mountains, and there was the constant swish of the water—and there was no sermon, just Major Bell reading a lesson and the Captain saying some prayers. And afterwards Michael and Major Bell walking around the deck with her and telling her that there was to be turkey for dinner. They told her that she had better eat all she could of it, for she would be a whole year older before she saw turkey again. Sue didn’t believe that, but she had two helpings in case they were right, and then slept for a while on deck.

It had been growing a little colder each day and people worried as to whether they could get through before the freeze-up. “Getting through,” Sue found, meant arriving at Dawson City before the river froze. Each night at sunset passengers would come up and look anxiously at the skies.



“Do the shapes of the clouds really tell you which way the wind is going to blow?” asked Sue.

Her father didn’t answer. All he said was, “Look at those hills, Sue, pure violet!”

Sue looked at the hills. Against their violet shadows the tall pines stood green and black and above them were pale rose clouds, with a star twinkling in a sky that had just lost the day. The sound of a fiddle came from below, and there was the faint whinny of a tired horse. Sue and her father stood by the rail with the fresh wind on their faces.

Hawkins came up.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he said, “but I thought you’d like to know that the Captain says we are doing nicely and should reach Skagway by tomorrow morning.”

CHAPTER IV

CHILKOOT

Before noon the next day they arrived at Skagway. Sue could hardly believe her eyes. It was the queerest place she had ever seen, with the streets and houses raised high above the marshes. The whole town looked as if it were built on stilts. The shores were muddy and brown and the wharves little better than shaky sidewalks, built out on log piers into the water. Drawn up on the beach lay all kinds of shabby old boats. There were queer, untidy men upon the dock. Everything was very dirty and a disagreeable, sour smell seemed to be over everything.

Jocko came to say good-by. Sue told him that she didn't like Skagway.

"Oh, you're not off the boat yet," he said.

"But it smells," said Sue. "It isn't clean."

"Well, Miss Sue," said Jocko, laughing, "you may have been able to clean me up but it'll take more than you to clean up Skagway. It'll take the whole Force."

Sue tied a knot in her hankie to remind her to tell Michael about this and Jocko said good-by. He was getting off the boat as soon as the gangplank was down and going right through to Dawson City. There were those rumors that the freeze-up might come early.

Friends of his, he said, were waiting for him at the Sheep Camp and, being a small party, they would travel faster than the Police.

"But when will I see you again?" asked Sue, for she and Jocko were fast friends now, and he had told her tales of dogs and gold and mules and snow that made her anxious not to lose him.

Jocko smiled down at her. "I'll call on you on Christmas Day," he said, "in Dawson."

Sue thought it would be a long time to wait to see him, and watched him swing down the gangplank and across the wharf until he was lost in the crowd. The bustle and confusion grew. There were sharp commands and calls coming in every direction, bugles blowing, whistles shrieking, and everyone pushing to get off first.

Michael came down to them for a moment. "Don't hurry. Get off among the last," he said. "This crowd will melt away in a short time."

A few moments later Sue saw her Mounties march down the gangplank and ashore. "Look, Mummy!" she cried. "Look at them. See how everyone stands aside."

True enough, the crowd parted and the Force, smiling and friendly, swung along the rough plank street.

The Captain was on hand to wish them luck as they left the *Skagway Queen*, and Michael met them as they stepped ashore. With him was a smiling, cheery woman.

"I'm Mrs. McGonigle, the Minister's wife," she said. "I heard you were coming and the hotels here won't do for you at all. They're full of miners and noisy most of the night. I should be happy to have you as my guests."

Sue was glad her mother accepted the invitation, for already men on the wharf were talking about the Cheechakos. Sue learned that newcomers were called "Cheechakos" and that she was one of them. Those who had been in the gold country a year or more, were called "Sourdoughs."

"Cheechakos," repeated Sue to herself, softly, "I'm a Little Golden Hawk, I'm a Mountie, and now I'm Cheechako. What a lot of names!"

It was four days before the horses and mules and donkeys, the provisions and tents and

other equipment were taken across the Lynn Canal to Dyea on open flat-bottomed barges. Sue wanted to see the horses loaded but Major Bell shook his head.

"It's a rough business, transferring animals, Sue. You stay here with Mrs. McGonigle and Fieldy."

Sue agreed. She had a secret all her own, and that afternoon, when the house was quiet, she got her treasure bag and took out of it a bag of beans and a beautiful, brand-new catapult. Jocko had given it to her as a good-by present and cautioned her to learn to use it accurately before she went far on the trail. She fastened a bean in the sling, took careful aim, and snapped the elastic. "I'm a pretty good shooter," said Sue to herself. "I almost hit that tree," and she slipped another bean in the sling.

At the end of three days' practice, she could hit a bottle plumb in the middle, and when she stepped on board the little boat that took the party across the inlet to Dyea, it was with the feeling that she could protect Fieldy, her father and mother, and perhaps the whole Force with her shooting.

"The only trouble," she explained to Hawkins, "is that I can't load fast enough. I'd need a helper."

"I'll be there if you need one," promised Hawkins, as he helped her off at Dyea. "This is the beginning of the Chilkoot Trail, Miss Sue."

"Chilkoot," said Sue to herself. "Chilkoot. Everyone seems awfully bothered over Chilkoot."

There were ponies waiting for them and Sue watched them mount her mother *astride* like a man! Sue couldn't understand that.

"Miss Vicky told me no lady could ride astride," said Sue. "What has happened?"

"On this trip," said Hawkins, "you ride astride all the way."

"Like the Mounties," said Sue, delightedly.

"Right you are, Miss Sue," said Hawkins, and showed her how to mount. He told her that she had to ride astride for safety's sake, that the high pommel in front of the saddle was to lean against or to clutch in both hands when they went climbing up or down the trail.

Her mother rode over to her. It was the first time she had worn her Yukon outfit and Sue thought she looked pretty enough to eat. Brown drill Norfolk jacket and a skirt which was divided so that when she rode astride it hung free on either side. A little brown hat with a brim which did not hide her curls. Tan boots and leggings.

"Ready, Sue?" she said. "Michael is going to give us our trail instructions."

They rode over to Michael. Quietly he explained to them that, once they started, no one could dismount or go off the trail without orders. Whether they were tired or hungry or bored, they must stay on the trail, each horse following the other. Where the trail was narrow, they must ride carefully, giving their horses a free rein. The bugles would blow for rest or food intervals. But what he particularly impressed upon them was the fact that they were a party, that no one person could be considered more than another.

"Today," he said, "we are going to make a Hudson's Bay start."

"What's that mean?" broke in Sue.

"That means a short trip the first day," answered Michael, "so that you can find the weak points in all your equipment, and whether the people in your party can stand the trip. Then, if anything goes wrong, you're not too far away and you can return and patch up the trouble. All ready?"

"Almost," answered Sue, as Hawkins helped her adjust her belongings. First Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, elegantly clad in a complete outfit of soft, chamois leather, had to be tucked into one

saddlebag. In the other Fieldy was pushed, wriggling and protesting. It took some time to arrange Fieldy, but when soft moss was pushed into the bottom of the bag and his forepaws and head were out, he was happy.

“All ready?” called Michael.

“All ready,” they answered.

A bugle blew and up the narrow valley they started. Sometimes they went up and sometimes they went down, and one awful time they just had a narrow ledge of rock between them and a raging river. Sue’s heart almost stopped. Hawkins rode behind her.

“Are you all right, Miss Sue?” he called.

“Yes,” she answered, shakily. “At least I think I am.”

“Give your pony plenty of rein,” he called. “He knows better how to climb a mountain pass than you.” Sue gave the pony all the rein she had and, after a time, they left the narrow ledge behind.



First Minnie-Pooh-Pooh had to be tucked into one saddlebag. In the other Fieldy was pushed, wriggling and protesting

At noon the bugle blew and beside a little spring they had hard biscuits and strong, black tea and a few dried apricots to put in their pockets and nibble on the way. Sue hadn't ever been allowed tea before. She thought it very bitter, but Hawkins said she had to take it, as all good campers drank hot tea.

"It's a sort of stimulant," said Hawkins. "It braces you for another climb."

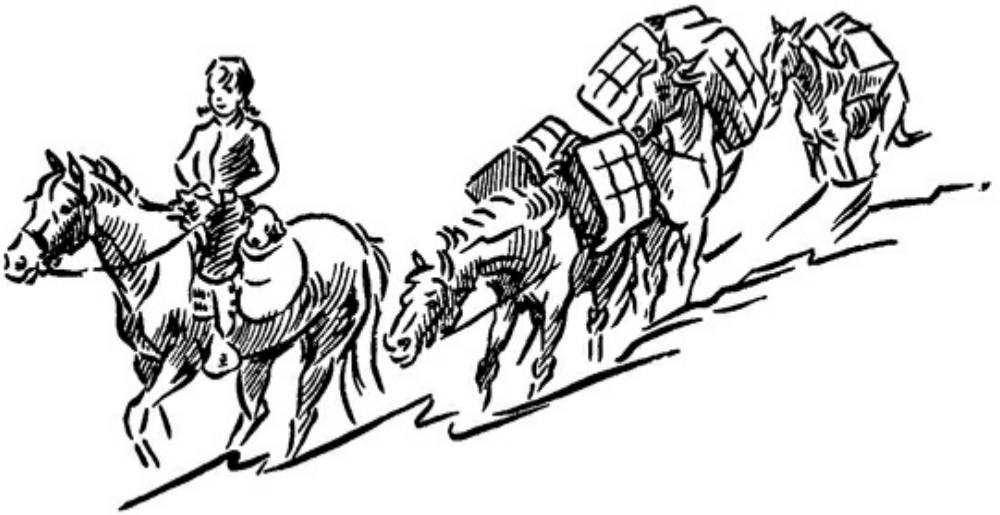
Sue found he was right. When the bugle blew for them to mount, she wasn't a bit tired, and poked Fieldy in his bag herself without any help.

On and on they moved, sometimes at a brisk walk, other times just able to crawl around a

curve of the mountain, but at last they reached a lovely valley with an easy path to follow and they closed up into pairs of riders and moved faster.

Now and then an eagle screamed from the mountainside, or a partridge whirred farther up into the trees. They were moving at an easy walk when suddenly the valley opened into a circular space which was called the Sheep Camp. This was where mountain sheep hunters had their camps and Sue thought it the most lovely place in the world. Around them, high rocky mountains climbed to the clouds, and below there were tall trees, springs, berry bushes, and vivid mosses.

They rode on at a fast clip, passing other travelers and their outfits, to where the advance party of Mounties had pitched their camp. Here, in a circle, were snowy-white bell tents, military neatness, and the delicious smell of freshly baked bannock. Sue lifted Fieldy out of his bag. "We're in camp with the Mounties," she said.



Major Bell took them to their tents.

Sue listened while he explained that the crowds in the Sheep Camp were miners, prospectors, Cheechakos—all hurrying to the land of gold. She learned that all supplies had to be carried over the high pass and that often it took three to four days of climbing up and down the trail before a man's supplies were at the top.

"You see, Sue," said the Major, "we require a man to have a year's supply of food before we let him enter the Yukon. This is not only for his own protection, but for the protection of others, who might have to share their supplies to feed him. That wouldn't be fair."

Sue nodded. She understood, for the Commissioner had given her a little knapsack to carry on her back for her treasures and in it, among other things, was her little bag of pemmican.

"Show me Chilkoot," said Sue.

"There," said the Major, and pointed upwards.

Sue looked. One of the tallest mountains she had ever seen rose in front of her, covered almost all the way with snow. Halfway up there was a string of figures, black like ants, moving slowly upwards.

"Do we climb up there?" asked Sue. The Major nodded. "And how long do we stay here?"

Sue continued.

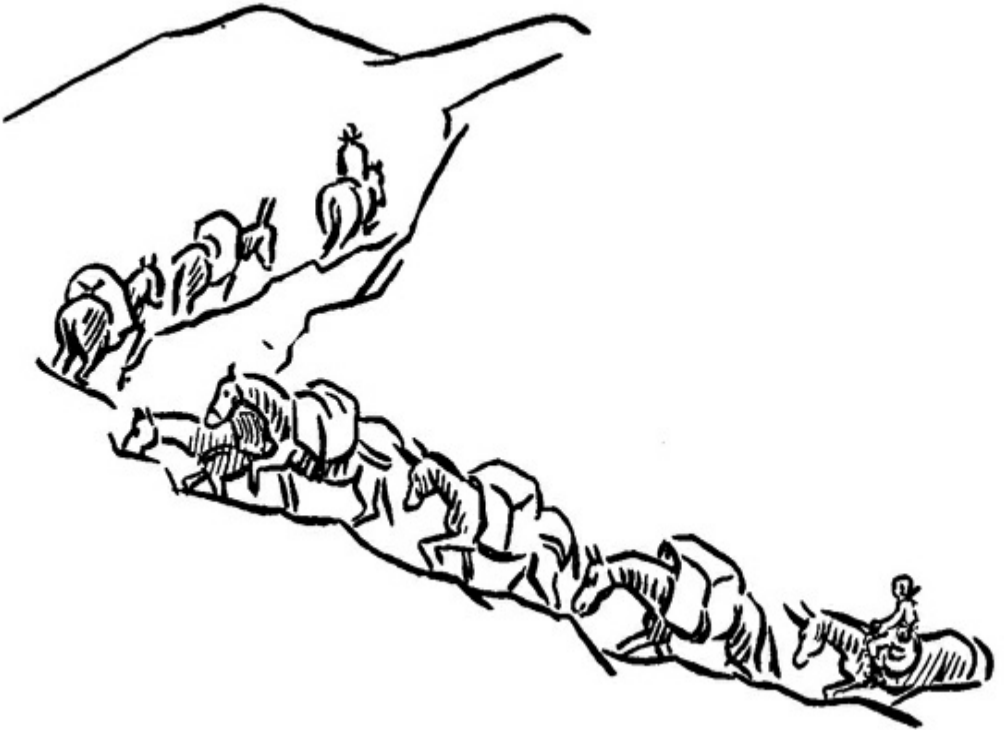
“About four days,” said the Major, “while our supplies are packed up the Pass.”

Sue thought she would never forget the next four days. It was such fun to ride a little donkey, or burro, called Softy. Donkeys, she learned, were very sure-footed, and for the carrying of passengers and packs in the high mountains, most valued animals. Mules, she thought, were the funniest. When the mules came down the mountain, the Mounties would strip them of their harness and turn them loose. Promptly they would lie down and roll and roll and roll.

They were strange, too, when it came to packing them. No one could pack them until their blinders were put on. A blinder was a piece of leather about four inches wide, with a small strap running back of the ears to hold it in place. Once this was adjusted, the driver found no difficulty in harnessing or packing. Without the blinder the mule would kick furiously at anyone that came near him.

“They’re kickers and rollers,” said Hawkins. “They don’t like being handled by any stranger.”

But, as Sue went among them while they were being packed, she only found them sad, quiet animals with long, foolish ears.



“What are you thinking about?” Sue asked her father one afternoon. But he didn’t answer. He was watching a long string of pack mules slowly climbing the Pass. They looked like flies on a wall. He turned to her mother.

“Your brother Dennis was right,” he said. “This *is* a preposterous thing to do. I’ve no right

to take you and Sue on so long and heavy a march. How would you like to take Sue back to Vancouver to spend the winter there?"

Sue's mother looked at him. "You know I wouldn't like it at all, Jimmy," she said. "We're going with you."

"But look, my dear, at the height of that mountain. It's too much for any woman, much less for a child like Sue."

"I'm strong," Sue protested, "and if I've come this far—I can go the rest of the way."

But her father shook his head. "Have you noticed how tired the men are when they come down the Pass, Aileen?" he asked.

Sue's mother nodded. "Yes," she said, "but they've been both up and down. We will only be going up."

Michael and Major Bell joined them. To Sue's astonishment, they agreed with her father. They felt it was too heavy a trip and that Mrs. Winston and Sue should go back to Vancouver.

"What does Sue think about it?" asked Michael.

"I don't want to go back," said Sue. "I want to see what's on the other side of that mountain."

"So do I," said her mother, "but I had no idea it was going to be like this."

"You wouldn't turn back now, Mummy," Sue cried.

Michael drew her away from the others. "Your father is not really worried or concerned about your mother, Sue," he said. "He's worried about you. You remember I've always felt you could make the trip." Sue nodded. "Well, that was before I saw Chilkoot. Why, Sue, that mountain frightens me. As I look at it, I wonder whether I can make it myself, and your legs aren't as strong or as long as mine."

Whatever could be coming, Sue wondered. Here was Michael, her very best friend, doubting her. "And, Sue," Michael continued, "after you've climbed that mountain, it's only the beginning. It is six hundred miles from Chilkoot to Dawson City. The responsibility of taking you is greater than we had any idea of. Mrs. McGonigle is going to Vancouver on the next boat. She could take you back with her."

Sue shook her head. "I don't want to go to Vancouver," she said stubbornly. "I want to go to the Yukon and find a gold mine."

"Sue, you wouldn't do anything that would bring criticism on the Force, would you?" asked Michael.

"Never," said Sue, firmly.

"Well, if you take this trip and are not able to go every inch of the way without holding up the party, you would bring criticism on the Force."

That sounded perfectly dreadful to Sue. "I can do it," she said, trying not to let the lump in her throat get any larger. "I got my red coat, I got Joe Labiche. I can go all the way without one speck of trouble."

Michael sighed. "I'd hate to see you turned back, Sue, but understand this. On the trail we move together. No one stops for another. If you can't keep up, you're left behind. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Michael," said Sue, "but nobody will have to stop for me."

It was still dark when reveille sounded the next morning. There was a breathless sort of feeling in the camp, and after breakfast the tents were struck, packs adjusted, and animals brought into line. Sue tied Minnie-Pooh-Pooh to her belt with an old shoestrapping and, putting the leash on Fieldy, joined the slowly moving pack train with her father and mother.

At first it wasn't bad. The air was cool and the first rays of the sun brought out a rainbow stretching across the valley. Sue remembered Mrs. Schofield telling her once that whoever reached the end of the rainbow would find a pot of gold. "Perhaps it'll be me," Sue thought, as she followed her father's steps.

There were queer sounds on the trail, quite unlike any she had heard before, the scunch of feet on shale and gravel, the cough of a mule, a driver's voice calling out ahead, the rush of a little spring. Now and then fog would drift by until they could hardly see the trail.

Sue shivered. Michael's words came back to her. "No one stops for another. If you can't keep up, you're left behind."

"I mustn't be left behind," she thought. "I must keep on going."

The sun rose. The fog drifted away. The trail grew steeper. Once she looked up. The mountain seemed to be falling over on them. There was snow on the trail now—light, powdery snow that was hard to walk in; deep snow on either side. And still they climbed. Sue thought her legs would break in two. Her back was aching, her ankles hurt, her breath came in gasps.

"Keep on going," she said to herself. "Keep on going. . . . Keep on going."

There was a sudden jerk of the leash on her arm. Fieldy ran between her legs. In a moment she was on her back and rolling off the path, down the side of the mountain. There were sharp cries above her. She grabbed at the snow and clutched at bits of jagged rock, and finally came to rest against a little hummock. Above her she could see the long line still moving forward to the top. Faces were turned toward her but the line moved steadily upward.

She didn't see the tall figure in uniform climbing down to her, but Michael's words came back. "If you can't keep up, you're left behind."

"Keep on going," she said to herself, and scrambled to her feet. "Keep on going." She was afraid she was going to scream, she was so frightened that she might be sent back with Mrs. McGonigle. "Keep on going," she gasped. "Keep on going." She didn't know where Fieldy was, she didn't know where she was. She only knew that she must join that long, black line again before it reached the top.

"Steady, Sue," Michael's voice came to her. "Steady is the word." He put his hand in the middle of her back. "Keep on going," he said.

Sue thought her legs would crumple up, but Michael's hand was a great help, and soon she joined the party again. Hawkins gave them both a hand over the snowy edge of the trail.

"You're all right?" he asked. Sue couldn't even speak. She couldn't even smile. She could only keep on going.

The trail grew steeper. The party rested every five minutes now, and while they rested, no one spoke. They only gasped for breath.

"Keep on going."

Scrabbling, pushing, always climbing higher, they moved slowly upward. At last Sue heard a voice, far off. It sounded like Major Bell's.

"Well done, Susannah," it said. "You're at the top of Chilkoot Pass."

CHAPTER V DOWN RIVER

“Name, please.”

“Susannah Elizabeth Fairfield Winston.”

“Where are you going?”

Sue smiled up at the tall, bronzed Mountie.

“I’m going to Dawson City.”

“What is your purpose in going there?”

Sue thought for a moment. “To find a gold mine,” she answered.

“Have you enough provisions to last you a year?”

“I haven’t,” answered Sue, “but my father and mother have.”

The Mountie nodded understandingly and then, with a twinkle, asked her another question.

“Have you any firearms or weapons of any sort?”

Sue shook her head. “Only a catapult,” she said, “and the elastic’s worn out.”

The Mountie inspected it gravely and took it away from her. “Have you any money with you?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Sue, “just a minute. I’ve the loveliest piece of money.”

Burrowing into her bloomers pocket, she produced the same grubby hankie tied in knots that she had shown Smith. With the combined help of fingers and teeth, she opened the last knot and there in all its beauty lay the shiny golden sovereign that Lady Charlotte had given her.

“Here, boys,” called the Mountie. “Come over here.”

Two other Mounties joined him. “Look,” he said, and the three stood admiring the gold piece.

“Where’d you get it?” asked one of them.

“In London at the Jubilee,” said Sue, proudly. “Why do you ask so many questions?”

The tallest Mountie laughed. “Before you can cross Chilkoot,” he said, “we must know all about you. If you are not properly equipped, we send you back. No one without the necessary food, clothing, and money may enter this Northland. If he does, he starves or dies, and no gold is worth that trouble.”

Sue nodded. “But why did you take my catapult?” she asked.

“No peaceable citizen needs weapons in the Yukon,” he answered. “We are here to take care of trouble.”

Sue looked around her. They were at the top of the mountain. Far below wound the trail, still black with people climbing to where she stood.

“I don’t understand about this Pass business,” she said. “We climbed the mountain until I thought I’d burst. Then, when we reached the top, we found the top was called a Pass. Where’s the Pass and where does Chilkoot come in?”

The younger Mountie smiled. “You come up the trail or road of the mountain,” he said, “and when you reach the top you’re at the beginning of Chilkoot Pass.”

“Where is it?” asked Sue.

“Look.” The Mountie pointed. Below them a trail led directly down to a wide valley, with mountains on either side. “That valley is the Pass,” he said.



Before you can cross Chilkoot we must know all about you

Sue smiled. "I like it up here," she said.

On the snowcapped mountain there was a tiny hut and, not far away, a flagpole with the Union Jack flying. Over all lay a powdering of snow and the air felt light and dry. Away down the Pass, dark figures of men and animals moved slowly forward. Equipment and food supplies lay on either side of the trail, secure from theft, Sue knew, because three young men in scarlet coats stood on a mountaintop.

Sue felt her heart swell with pride. "I'm glad I kept on going," she said to herself.

Michael had given her a little packet of raisins when they reached the top. "You are to eat them all," he had said, "before you start down the Pass."

Sitting on her coat, with Fieldy beside her, she nibbled the little dried raisins and rested her tired legs. But it was not long before Hawkins came for her.

"We must be off again," he said, briskly. "We are camping not far down the trail."

Sue bade her new friends good-by. The tall Mountie handed her back her catapult. He had mended the broken sling with a strong elastic. "Good hunting, Susannah," he said, and she started down the trail with Fieldy and Hawkins beside her.

It was so much easier going down that, in spite of her weary legs, Sue made good time. When she reached the bottom, she saw that the snow was gone and that their party had camped near a noisy, rushing little stream.

Sue watched the cook mixing flapjacks. Opening the flour bag, he dug a little hollow in the flour, added salt and baking powder, poured water in it, and stirred until he had a ball of soft dough. Removing this, he cut off small pieces which he fried in the hot bacon fat. Sue had never seen such enormous flapjacks. Each was the size of the whole frying pan.

"Do big flapjacks taste like little flapjacks?" she asked.

The cook grinned. "I don't know, Miss Sue," he said, smiling. "Shall we try and see?"

Sue's eyes glistened as he put a very little bit of dough in the pan and placed it over the fire. It bubbled and he flipped it over. It was brown on top now. Sue grew hungrier and hungrier. The cook wiped out a tin plate and, with a quick turn of his wrist, the flapjack flew from the pan and landed straight in the middle of the plate.

"There you are, Miss Sue," he said. "Let me know what you think of it."

Sue's teeth broke into it. Her legs and back ached and she felt sore all over, but, as the delicious morsel disappeared, she began to feel better.

She held out her plate. "What!" said the cook. "Gone already?"

Sue nodded. She couldn't speak at the moment. He placed another bit of dough in the pan. "I think the big ones are best," Sue said, "because there is more of them."

There were beans for supper, too, and thick pieces of bacon, and blueberries picked by her mother while the men were putting up the tents. Sue had never eaten berries without sugar before and was surprised to learn none could be spared except for tea. She drank the tea this time, thirstily.

Suddenly her head began to nod. She wished she were a dog and could just turn around two or three times and go to bed without any tiresome washing or hairbrushing.

Hawkins passed them with a small pail of hot water. "I'm putting this in your tent," he said to Sue. "There's no reason why your mother shouldn't have hot water as long as we can give it to her."

"Why do you want hot water?" asked Sue, sleepily. She hoped her mother wasn't going to wash her.

"To wash a grubby little girl," her mother answered, laughing.

Inside the tent, Sue found feathery boughs of evergreens and, on top of them, lay two

sleeping bags. There was no bath, just a rubdown with the warm water out of the pail, a swift hairbrushing and soon she and her mother were tucked in their sleeping bags. Her father came in to say good night.

“Why do we sleep on boughs?” asked Sue.

“Bounce a little,” her father suggested. Sue did.

“They’re like the springs in Uncle Dennis’s big bed,” she said, “only a bit lumpier.”

“That’s what they’re meant to be,” said her father, opening the flap of the tent wide and turning up the sides.

The skies were dark now, the evening star just showing. A bugle blew the Last Post. There was no sound in all the world. Sue closed her eyes. She was glad Chilkoot was behind her.

There was a frightened whimper near by. It was Fieldy. She had left him with the Major, but somehow he had lost himself and was cold and lonely.



“Here, Fieldy,” she called and, in a moment, there was a rush of soft paws, and Fieldy was beside her, licking and scrambling with affection. She tugged at the opening of her sleeping bag, reached out and pulled him in next to her. Contentedly, he snuggled down with just his nose poking outside of the warm bag, and in a moment they were both sound asleep.

High and clear reveille sounded. It was still dark and Field Marshal was barking queer puppy barks, as if he, too, were sleepy.

“Sue,” called her father. “Sue!”

“Yes, Daddy.”

She felt her father loosening the sleeping bag around her.

“Up you get. We must be on our way in no time at all.”

“My, my,” said Sue, as she and her mother dashed cold water on their faces in the dark, “this is a nice short way of washing.” Her mother didn’t answer. She was combing, *not* brushing, Sue’s hair and braiding it into two tight pigtailed with little loose curls at the end, for all the world like donkey’s tails, thought Sue, as she looked at them.

“Do I have pigtailed all the way?” asked Sue.

“Yes,” answered her mother, braiding her own hair with fingers that flew. “There mustn’t be one extra bit of work that we can avoid on this journey.”

There was no porridge for breakfast, Sue noticed, but plenty of flapjacks, bacon, and tea. The camp cook gave her six dried apricots.

“You were a plucky one, yesterday,” he said. “Not a whimper out of you when you rolled down the mountain. Whenever you get tired or hot today, eat one of these and you’ll feel better.”

Sue and the cook became great friends and, every day, just before they started out on the trail, he had a little packet for her, just big enough to carry in her pocket.

The nights were growing longer now. Shadows fell earlier on the mountains. Some days the trail went up and some days it went down. Some days Sue rode her donkey, Softy; others, she walked. They all grew thin and brown, and sometimes Sue thought her legs would break. Then one day at sunset they arrived at the head of Lake Tagish.

In the morning, they started down the lake in flat-bottomed boats like those in which they had crossed from Skagway to Dyea. It was a noisy start, for none of the animals liked going on board. Even Softy proved to be a kicker that morning.

The boats were handled with huge sweeps or oars and Sue soon saw that it was the current that was taking them along so swiftly that the sweeps were used only for steering the boat. It was an exciting day, free of fatigue for the whole party. None of them had ever seen boats manned with sweeps before, and Sue sat with Hawkins beside a riverman and learned how to watch the current; when best to hold the sweep steady against the water and when to let the boat ride fast and free. She pulled off her shoes and gaiters, her stockings and hat. There were no mosquitoes, no slippery trails to bother one. Nothing but the wind and the sun and the soft swish of the water.

A cry arose, “Tagish! Tagish!” They swung in to shore.

On the beach there was a little clearing and a log cabin. Beside the cabin stood two Mounties, smiling their welcome. The party spent the night there.

Once more their boats moved into the stream. Twisting, turning, now in little crooked channels, again in wide straight stretches of water, the boats passed down the river.



“Soon we will make White Horse,” said the riverman to Sue, “and then you will see how fast water can tumble.”

They were passing other boats now, boats so heavily laden that even in the swift water they hardly moved. On one of them a man was playing an accordion and singing “Alouette.” Sue waved delightedly and joined him in his singing, the other boats took it up, and soon the narrowing channels echoed to the old song.

“Alouette,
Gentille Alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai.”

The waves were white-crested now, and the rivermen stopped singing and calling to each other, the channel grew narrower, the boats banged and bumped.

“We are near White Horse Rapids,” said Michael as they swung in to shore. “We leave the boats here and take the trail again.”

“Does everybody come ashore?” asked Sue.

“Everybody,” said Michael. “We pack the animals again and carry everything with us, as we did over the Chilkoot.”

That night when they drew in to shore and made fast their boats, Hawkins built a great bonfire. When supper was over, they all gathered around. Those with mouth organs and mandolins played. Sue and Michael sang and danced their favorite song “The Pretty Maid Milking Her Cow,” and then Major Bell stood up and made a speech. Sue noticed everyone looking at her and smiling.

“What is it, Mummy?” she asked.

“Look,” answered her mother. The camp cook was moving very slowly toward her. He carried a cake covered with pink icing. On it, flickering in the breeze, were eleven little candles.

“For me?” asked Sue, and then she remembered. It was her birthday, and she was eleven

years old. In the excitement of the trip she had forgotten all about it.

“Oh, Mummy!” she said. “Oh, Cook! Oh, Michael!”

“Oh!” called everybody. “Oh, Oh, Oh!”

Sue and the cook cut the cake. It wasn't very large and Sue knew it wouldn't go around, but Major Bell had the first piece, for it seemed that his speech had been all about wishing her a happy birthday, only, not listening properly, she hadn't understood.

But there was more to follow.

A riverman stood up and, twanging his banjo, sang a song which he said was called “Susannah.”

“I come from Regina Barracks
With my banjo on my knee.
I'm gwine to Dawson City,
A gold mine there to see.

“It rained all night the day I left,
The weather it was dry,
The sun so hot, I froze to death.
Susannah, don't you cry.

“Oh, Susannah, don't you cry for me,
I'm gwine to Dawson City
With my banjo on my knee.”

Michael lifted her up on a big stone, so that she could see over the heads of the men. Laughing, waving, smiling, they sang back:

“Oh, Susannah, don't you cry for me,
I'm gwine to Dawson City
With my banjo on my knee.”

And Sue's father told her of how the song “Susannah” had been written by a great American named Stephen Foster, and of how it had been sung on that other Gold Rush to California, fifty years before. The firelight died away and so did the voices, but before Sue slept that night, her mother told her of how she had brought the candles all the way from Regina.

“I knew you couldn't have a party, dear,” she said, “but I wanted you to have some remembrance of your birthday. When I asked the cook about the cake, he took everything right out of my hands.” She laughed. “You've had both the cake and the party, too,” she said. “You are a lucky girl.”

Sue thought so, too, and softly sang the refrain of “Susannah” as she undressed for bed.

At times the trail around White Horse lay close to the water. They could see the rivermen guiding their boats through the rough, foaming rapids, and hear their cries as they passed. Day by day they journeyed.

“Keep on going, keep on going,” sang the hooves of Sue's donkey's feet.

Sue felt she had been traveling all her life, but at Lake La Barge the boats were packed for the last part of their journey.

She was particularly pleased with the boat that Michael chose for them. It wasn't a boat at

all, she thought. It was a large raft, with small, flat-bottomed boats full of firewood tied to the sides. It was called the *White Lady* and wasn't white at all, just blackened logs and boards. In the middle of the raft a tent was pitched, and here Sue and her mother slept. There was no engine. They just floated down the river, using the great oars or sweeps to guide them. When there was wind, they made sails out of their large, canvas tarpaulins and scurried ahead faster. The water was dreadfully cold. Sometimes there were flocks of wild geese overhead. Once a great caribou came down to the water's edge and watched them pass. Wild ducks circled and headed south.

Her father sketched for a time each day, took a turn with the sweeps, and laughed at Sue as she struggled with her French recitation. She could never understand why it was necessary to speak French.

"Nobody speaks French to me," she complained.

"How would you like to go to France someday," her father asked, "and not be able to speak one word?"

"I couldn't bear it!" exclaimed Sue, for next to riding and hunting for a gold mine, she liked talking best.

Fishing was a daily adventure. Every day Sue cast her line overboard and waited for the sudden tug that told her she had a bite—and with a flashing of silver sides, a salmon trout would rise, struggle, and lash the water. Sue learned how to play her fish, to give him plenty of line and then, having tired him, to slowly, surely, draw him in. She loved the breathless moment when her father dropped the net over the side and lifted in the lovely shining fish, spotted in scarlet, black, white, and brown.

Each night the call "Wooding up" rang out until in turn men gathered, cut, and piled wood in the little boats that were tied alongside. This wood was for the stoves and, in case they should be held up by storm, for the campfires.

Each night they tied up to the shore; each morning they pushed out again into the stream. Everyone hurried, Sue noticed, even the river, and the sweeps seemed to sing "Keep on going. Keep on going."

One morning there was ice at the side of their boats. The Major looked anxious. "We must make Dawson before the freeze-up," he said. "Put up all the sail you can."

Sue was too happy to care now whether they ever reached Dawson. Wrapped in her warm coat, she sat in the sun, watching the life of the river, glad to be sitting still, glad that she needn't ride a donkey or pony again for a long, long time, glad that in each of the boats ahead there were red-coated Mounties, laughing and gay.

One morning the mountains seemed to crowd closer to the water's edge, the rivermen were smiling, the Mounties moving briskly about. Once again Sue felt as if the men and boats were pushing each other out of the way, hurrying and scrambling. Through a narrow channel they swept and out into a broad stretch of the river.

"Look, Sue," said Michael. Far off she saw a plume of smoke in the sky.

"Are we almost there?" she asked.

He nodded. "We will be by noon."

Mrs. Winston came out of the tent. Gently, she unbraided Sue's pigtails and brushed her curls until they shone.

"No more pigtails, Sue," she said. "Let us change our suits."

They both felt very gay and festive.

On the river bank Sue could see ragged butts of trees and burnt bushes. The mountains seemed farther away. Soon the outline of buildings appeared, huddled together on a flat bit of shore, with the white canvas of tents showing here and there. Long, black wharves were built along the shore.

Nearer and nearer they came. Slower and slower. Sue didn't see how they could ever get into shore, for each wharf was crowded with boats of every description. Old boats and new, good boats and others so battered that they hardly held together, little boats, big boats, rafts, and canoes. Food and equipment lay piled along the banks. There seemed no place for them to land.

Suddenly Sue saw red coats among the crowds that lined the beach and wharves. A way was cleared. A riverman warped them in.

"We're at Dawson," said Michael. From the wharf there came gay, welcoming voices, much smart saluting and curious faces peering down at Sue and her mother.

"Hello, young'un," cried a voice.

Friendly hands helped them off the *White Lady*. A short, stoutish officer came forward, reminding Sue of the Commissioner, his eyes were so bright and fiery. He had a mustache and goatee. Major Bell turned to her mother.

"Mrs. Winston, may I present Superintendent Consell."

"Welcome to Dawson," said the Superintendent, "and to you, sir," turning to Sue's father. The fiery eyes twinkling, he looked down at Sue. "And who have we here?" he asked.

"Susannah of the Mounties," answered Sue, saluting smartly.

CHAPTER VI

DAWSON

The light lay in queer, ragged patches on the rough wooden floor, when Sue opened her eyes next morning. It was cold and, when she yawned, her breath made little clouds. Sitting up, she tried to look out the window running alongside her bunk.

It was the queerest window in the world, she thought. It was made altogether of bottles and not very clean bottles at that. You couldn't even see through them but they let the light in. Pushing her blankets back, Sue stood up and examined the window carefully. The bottles were all about the same size, with moss tightly wedged between them to keep the cold out. Some of them still had labels. She tried to read them.

"G-i-n spells *gin*," she said softly to herself, "and b-r-a-n-d-y spells *brandy*, and c-a-t-s-u-p spells *catsup*, though I don't know what that is, and here's more gin and here's *pain killer*, and this is *bitters*."

"I'll have to find out about this," she decided, and, feeling cold, burrowed under the blankets again and thought about the day before.



It was the queerest window in the world, Sue thought. It was made altogether of bottles

What a mad day it had been! She and her mother had gone to luncheon with Mrs. Consell,

while her father and Angus had, with the help of some miners, sorted and moved all their luggage to this one-roomed cabin, the only one in Dawson that was empty. It was built of logs and chinked with moss to keep the cold out. Inside there were two bunks built against the wall, some rough benches, a cupboard, and a kitchen stove.

Sue's father had looked very grim when he brought them to it. "Can you stand it, Aileen?" he asked. "Just for a few nights? There is a nice little house that will be free soon and the Superintendent has managed to get it for me."

Sue's father put an arm around his wife. "I shouldn't have brought you," he said. "It is too rough for either of you."

Sue's mother smiled. "Don't be silly, Jimmy," she said. "Can't you feel the tingle in the air, the excitement there is in the people? Why, everything's going to be a grand adventure. . . . Now at home, I'd bathe Sue in a nice porcelain tub—whatever am I to do here? She must be bathed."

"I lost my soap overboard," said Sue, hopefully, fearing the old order of cleanliness and hairbrushing was going to begin again.

"Then you can unpack my bag," said her mother. "I haven't lost *my* soap."

That had been a most exciting bath. There was no bathtub, but down at Snakey Jim's Emporium Daddy had found a small tin tub which he brought home. Then there wasn't enough water and Daddy had gone out again and four men had come to the house with pails of water and they filled the tub and put it on the top of the stove. When it was hot, they took it off and put it on the floor, and then it was so boiling hot it couldn't be used and Daddy had to go out and get more water to cool it.

"If giving you a bath is this much trouble, you'll only get one a year," whispered her father, "but don't tell your mother I said so!"



Sue's mother finally made him fill a barrel that stood outside, and after that the water problem didn't worry them.

That night Sue slept in a nightie for the first time since she left Dyea. It felt very cosy, but

she fell asleep so quickly that all she remembered was her mother and father laughing as they tried to make bannock bread.

Sue looked across the room. Her father and mother were asleep. She coughed softly. She thought some breakfast would be nice. They didn't move. She bounced in her bunk. They paid no attention. The more Sue thought about porridge, the hungrier she became.

"Daddy," she called. She slipped out of bed and pattered across the cold floor.

"Daddy," she whispered, peering at his face, "are you foxing?"

"Yes," he whispered back, "but don't wake your mother," and, hopping out of bed, he carried her back to hers; then, in two twinks, lit the fire and put on the kettle.

"What would you like for breakfast?"

"Porridge," said Sue, "with lots of sugar and cream."

"Very good, Madame," answered her father, in the way that the waiters did on the trains. He twisted a paper into a chef's cap on his head, rolled up the sleeves of his checked robe, and started burrowing into some of the boxes lined against the wall. At last he found a cylinder-shaped package, and came over and sat upon Sue's bed.

"Susie," he whispered, "did the Force teach you how to make oatmeal porridge?" Sue shook her head. "Because," said her father, "the instructions on this package say that four ounces of oatmeal are to be soaked in one and a half pints of cold water, overnight, that in the morning the water must be drained from the oatmeal and poured into a stewpan. When it is boiling, the oatmeal is to be added, along with salt to taste. This mixture," her father continued, "must simmer for twenty minutes, being well stirred during the process."

He and Sue looked at each other.

"What did it say about overnight?" asked Sue.

"The oatmeal has to be soaked overnight," read her father, "so that means, Susie, that you have to go to sleep again and that you can't have any porridge until tomorrow morning."

"I wouldn't like that at all," interrupted Sue.

"But Susie, do you know what four ounces of oatmeal looks like, for we've no kitchen scales?"

Sue shook her head. "Couldn't we guess, the way Mrs. Schofield used to?"

Her father turned the package over. "Here's another way to make it! Listen, Sue. . . . Sprinkle the oatmeal into boiling, slightly salted water with the left hand, meanwhile stirring briskly with a wooden spoon or spatula. When the porridge is thick enough, draw the stewpan to the side of the fire, and cook the contents slowly for twenty to thirty minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the pan."

"Make it that way," said Sue, "and then I won't have to wait until tomorrow morning," and they both laughed softly.

The room was warmer now and Sue hopped out of bed and followed her father to the stove. They filled the stewpan with boiling water from the kettle, but they couldn't find a wooden spoon. Sue's father whittled a bit of firewood. "It'll do just as well," he whispered. "Now, Sue, which hand do I use for the oatmeal?"

"It says the left," answered Sue, "but I don't think it really matters. I don't see how the oatmeal would know the difference, do you, Daddy?"

"You never can tell," said her father, "and we don't want to take any chances."

At first it didn't look like oatmeal porridge at all, and they were both worried. But her father stirred and stirred, and at last it began to look like porridge.

"Now, Sue," said her father, "we'll have to hunt for sugar and cream. If I can find the tea,

we'll make your mother a cup."

While her father lifted packages out of one of the big boxes labeled "Groceries," Sue pulled a bench over to the table. She liked the bottle windows and the bunk beds built into the wall, the Hudson's Bay blankets of scarlet. She loved the untidiness of it, with their coats hanging from nails on the wall, instead of being hung neatly away in cupboards. She liked the tins of food on the shelf.

"All I'll have to do is wash my face, jump into my clothes, gobble some breakfast, and be outside playing all day long," she thought.

"Do you see a tray any place?" her father asked, but before Sue could find one, he had covered the lid of a box with paper, placed a tin plate and cup and saucer on it, together with sugar, and an opened tin of condensed milk.

Carrying the tray in one hand and the large enamel teapot in the other, he went over to his sleeping wife.

"Shake her, Sue," he said, and Sue shook her mother gently. Mrs. Winston opened her eyes sleepily, and smiled.

"Your tea, Madame," said her father, in just the way Matilda said it.

Her mother sat up, looked at her father in his funny cap, then at the tray, and laughed. "Oh, Jimmy," she said, "you're such fun. Isn't he, Sue?"

All three of them laughed together. Sue and her father told her about the porridge and brought the pan over and showed it to her.

"Do you think it's done?" asked Sue, anxiously. "I'm dreadfully hungry."

"I think so," said her mother, "but, in any case, I'd go ahead and try it."

Sue's father filled a bowl and spread brown sugar generously on top. "Hop back into bed," he said. "The cabin's getting stuffy with all this cooking going on. I'll open the door, and you can have your porridge in bed."

From her bunk Sue could just see out the open door to where the mountains towered to the sky again. The air was fresh and clear, the kettle sang upon the stove, and her father whistled as he brought her her porridge.

"Where's the cream, waiter?" asked Sue.

"Beg pardon, Madame," said her father, and came back bearing the tin of condensed milk. Sue poured it lavishly over her porridge and took a spoonful.

"Oh, Daddy, take it away," she said. "It's awful," and her face crinkled with distaste.

Sue's father tasted it. "It's very good porridge," he said, "and very good brown sugar. It's the condensed milk you don't like."

"I hate it," said Sue, "and I'm hungry. I want some real milk."

"Sue," said her father, "do you realize that there isn't a single cow in the whole of the Yukon, and that all the milk you'll have for a year will be out of tins?"

"But I don't like it," answered Sue, hardly able to believe that there wasn't a cow *anywhere*.

"Don't be a silly Cheechako," broke in her mother. "You've come up here to the Yukon and you must take what the Yukoners take. You'll never make a Sourdough."

Sue took another spoonful of porridge, swallowed it, and shuddered. "I don't like it," she said to herself, "but I'm hungry, so I suppose I'll have to like it."

It was a scrambly sort of morning, for they had all been so tired the night before that they had just dropped their things anywhere. Sue's mother was hardly even dressed when Constable O'Reilly came down.

"I'm O'Reilly, sir," he said. "The Superintendent's compliments, and he would like to know if

I can be of any help.”

Sue’s father looked around the room. “We are moving out of here and into a house tomorrow,” he said, “so there is really nothing to be done that we can’t manage by ourselves. Will you thank the Superintendent for me?”

“When I first went to the Barracks in Regina,” broke in Sue, “Constable Hawkins took me all over the place and showed me everything.”

Constable O’Reilly laughed. “Would you like me to show you over Dawson?” he asked.

“Very much,” said Sue, struggling into her coat, and she and her new friend set out together to inspect the town.

Sue felt very grand going over Dawson with a Mountie, and everyone they passed seemed smiling and friendly, but it was difficult to believe that it was to get to this place that they had traveled so far and so long. The main street lay back a little from the river front, which was just as crowded with boats and rafts as it had been on their arrival the day before. There were no sidewalks; just a muddy road over which dogs, horses, mules, donkeys, and human beings hurried to and fro. All the houses and stores were built of logs or newly cut, unpainted boards, with tents sprawling everywhere between them.

Sue thought she had never been in such a busy place before, not even London during the Queen’s Jubilee. Of course, London had been a much larger place, and there had been many more people there but not half the rush and excitement.

“Why is everybody in such an awful hurry?” she asked O’Reilly.

“That’s how we do things in Dawson, Miss Sue,” he laughed. “Everybody’s trying to get as much work done as he can before the freeze-up.”

She learned, too, that every drop of water had to be carried up from the river by hand. O’Reilly pointed out men with wooden yokes over their shoulders and strong ropes dropping to the handles of pails or large square tins. These ropes, O’Reilly told her, eased the weight of the water and made it less hard on the men’s arms.

Over some of the stores were the most exciting signs. O’Reilly showed her “Snakey Jim’s Emporium” and explained that it was a general store; a sign “Shaving Done Here” meant a barbershop; “Klondike Bill’s” was where you bought your hay at a hundred and fifty dollars a ton. “Red-Eye Snyder’s, Outfitter” read another sign. This, O’Reilly explained, was where you bought your mining tools. “Miss Minnie’s Laundry” was where you got your shirts washed at two dollars a shirt.

“Gracious,” exclaimed Sue. “Two dollars! Now I know why everyone wears dirty shirts here!”

The Constable laughed. “What do you think of it all?” he asked.

“Well,” said Sue, “I think it’s a very funny place. Everybody’s dirty and shabby, the dogs are thin, and the horses old and tired. Everyone seems rushing up and down the streets and not going anywhere, and I didn’t know there could be so many mud puddles.”

O’Reilly agreed. “But Dawson’s built on soft ground,” he said, “and until we get sidewalks, we’re going to have dirty roads. When it freezes, it won’t be so bad. . . . But I wouldn’t be too critical if I were you,” he continued. “The men that have come to Dawson may not be clean and tidy, but they’ve had courage and endurance. Don’t talk too much about their looks.”

Sue suddenly felt very small and silly, and was only too thankful when O’Reilly asked her if she would like to see some gold.

“Just wouldn’t I!” exclaimed Sue.

On a corner of the main street there was a small wooden building with a neatly painted sign:

“Banking Done Here.” They went in, and a tall, fair man came smiling toward them.

“Good morning, Constable,” he said. “I see you’ve brought us a new customer.”

He was the bank manager and O’Reilly called him Mr. Noblett. Sue liked him. He was very polite and called her “Miss Winston” and invited them into his private office where he showed her a little heap of nuggets; queer, knobby-shaped things, Sue thought, but such a lovely color.

“Is that gold?” asked Sue.

Mr. Noblett smiled. “That’s gold. Take it up and look at it if you want to.”

Sue picked up some of the nuggets and turned them over in her hand. Some of them shone brightly and some were dull and dark, with just a glitter here and there.

“Now, I’ll know what to look for when I go to find my mine,” she told O’Reilly, when they left the bank. “But where do we go now?”

“This way,” said O’Reilly briskly and started off beyond Snakey Jim’s.

Soon Sue heard the loveliest sounds in the world—puppy sounds. In a small shack they found more than twenty Husky puppies, just two months old, tiny round balls of fur with sharp ears, pointed noses, dark, almond-shaped eyes, and fat bushy tails curving over their backs. Some were white, some black, and others gray. Sue squealed with delight.

“May I go in?” she asked. O’Reilly smiled and opened the little gate. The puppies jumped and snuffled and wagged. They yelped and whimpered and barked short puppy barks.

“Do you think I could have one for my very own?” asked Sue. “I mean, do you think Daddy might get one for me?”

O’Reilly laughed and shook his head. “No, Miss Sue. You’re to take your pick now. The Major said you were to have one if you liked them, and that is really why I was sent down this morning. He said you’d done a good job bringing Field Marshal in and that you’d be lonely without him. Fieldy’s in the Superintendent’s office now, guarding the whole Force.” O’Reilly grinned. “Everyone’s afraid of the Superintendent,” he said, “but Fieldy. He was sitting in his chair this morning when the old man came in, and he wouldn’t get out. When I left, the Superintendent was sitting on a stool.”

They both laughed then, and, after much discussion, chose a puppy. O’Reilly was in favor of an all-gray pup. “He’ll grow into a handsome creature,” he said, but Sue chose a white one with a black ear and a gray one. He had an engaging way of carrying his head on one side and barking sharply as if giving an order.



“What’ll we call him?” she asked O’Reilly.

“Let’s give him a military title,” said O’Reilly. “Let’s call him Bombardier.”

“What’s a bombardier?” asked Sue, who thought she knew all the military titles.

“A noncommissioned artillery officer whose duty is to load shells, etc., and to fix the fuses, and who is particularly appointed to the service of mortars and howitzers,” O’Reilly rattled off, and clicked his heels together with a flourish.

Sue frowned thoughtfully. “He’s very tiny for such a big name. Do you suppose he’ll grow up to it?”

“Sure he will!” exclaimed O’Reilly. “Come along now and we’ll inspect Headquarters.”

With Bombardier wriggling in her arms, Sue trotted after O’Reilly. She was having a delicious morning, she decided, and didn’t mind the dirty streets nearly so much as when they came out.

“What do you do in the Yukon all day?” she asked.

O’Reilly smiled. “Everything you can think of,” he said. “We run a gold train, take out the mails, register claims, fine gamblers, collect customs duties, build houses, put out fires, bury the dead, christen babies, arrest thieves. . . .”

“How do you arrest a man?” Sue asked.

“Well, I like that!” said O’Reilly. “Didn’t you arrest Joe Labiche?”

“Oh, but that was a sort of accident,” explained Sue. “Monty really did it. . . . But how do *you* arrest a man?” she repeated. “Is it exciting? Are you afraid? What do you say?”

“Oh,” said O’Reilly, “we just generally say ‘Come along with me.’”

“And do they come?” inquired Sue.

“Sure,” said O’Reilly. “You see when we say ‘Come along with me,’ it’s the whole of the British Empire speaking and that’s a lot for one man to buck.”

“I should think it is,” said Sue.

Headquarters was a log cabin, bearing over its entrance the magic letters “N.W.M.P.” There was a waiting room and beyond it two offices, the first of which belonged to Superintendent

Consell.

Sue showed him Bombardier. He laughed with her over the funny dog and his warlike name. “Have you had a good morning?” he asked.

Sue told him all about it. “Have you ever been in Snakey Jim’s Emporium?” she asked, for she wanted a leash for her new pup.

The Superintendent shook his head. He seemed suddenly very stern with her, she thought, as he warned her never to go outside of the town alone and never to enter any of the places with the exciting names that she had seen that morning—Snakey Jim’s or Jake’s Eating House or Red-Eye Snyder’s.

“You are not even to go into a store unless someone is with you,” he said. “Do you understand, Sue?”

“Yes, Superintendent,” answered Sue, “but if I never go out alone, how can I find a gold mine?”

“Do you want a gold mine?” asked the Superintendent, gravely.

Sue nodded. He rang his bell. Michael came in, smiling.

“Mr. O’Dare, get O’Reilly and take Susannah out tomorrow and see if you can find her a gold mine,” said the Superintendent.

“Yes, sir,” said Michael, but Sue wondered why they all smiled at her so mysteriously.

CHAPTER VII

SUE PAYS A VISIT

Sue could hear them laughing but she couldn't see out the bottle window and ran to the door. There they were, just as they had promised, Michael and O'Reilly and, between them, Softy, with a red blanket under his saddle, red rosettes at his ears, and a general air of festivity about them all.

"Ready, Sue?" called Michael.

"I think so," Sue answered. "Do I have an inspection?"

Michael nodded. "I want to make sure of your equipment."

"Well, I'm just as I was when I came up on the boat," said Sue, "except Mummy says I don't need to wear a hat because the sun isn't hot any longer."

"But you'll need warm gloves," Michael said, "and a scarf. It'll be cold coming home *and*—you'll need rubber boots."

"Rubber boots?" cried Sue. "It isn't raining."

"I know," answered Michael, "but you'll need them when we get to the mine."

After a little search, a fine new pair of rubber boots was found in Sue's holdall. O'Reilly tied them across Softy's saddle, Sue mounted the little donkey and started out with the two young men.

"Where is the mine?" Sue asked.

"Out toward Forty Mile River," explained O'Reilly, "and then back in the hills a piece to Big Dan's Claim."



“But I’ve nothing to dig gold with,” said Sue, anxiously. “Shouldn’t I have a spade or something?”

O’Reilly shook his head. “I wouldn’t worry about that,” he said. “Big Dan’ll fix us up with everything we need when we get there.”

They had left the sprawling, muddy, main street now and were headed along a busy trail that followed the river bank. It was a clear, sunny morning, with no wind and just the right nip in the air to make Softy move briskly without coaxing. The trail was crowded with men and animals, hurrying to make their winter camps before the freeze-up.

Sue had never seen so many different ways of traveling. A middle-aged man with a long, black beard pushed a heavily loaded wheelbarrow; two others in high yellow boots, gay plaid shirts, and wide felt hats rode by on rangy, piebald horses; a train of donkeys passed, with tails switching and huge loads tied to their sides. Now and then an Indian padded softly by on moccasined feet, carrying a large pack between his shoulders. And everyone they passed seemed to have at least a couple of dogs, some small, some large, and some toting small bundles like their masters. Behind her on the trail, Sue heard the tinkle of a bell. She turned in her saddle. Coming toward her was a small gray horse with a bell around his neck. Behind him followed a dozen mules, as quiet and well-mannered as if they’d never tried to kick anyone in all their lives.

“Well, for goodness’ sake,” said Sue. “A horse leading mules!”

Michael nodded. "They'll follow a bell horse all day without a murmur," he said.

Sue found that Softy approved of the idea, too, for when the last mule passed, he dropped into line behind it and followed on for more than a mile.

"Michael," asked Sue, when they had left Dawson behind a great bend in the river, "aren't we ever coming to the mine?"

O'Reilly pointed ahead. "Do you see that crooked pine ahead?" Sue nodded. "That's where we turn off for Big Dan's Claim."

It wasn't long then before he swung Softy off the main trail and into a ribbonlike path that led up a shallow, rushing creek. Before long, Sue could hear men's voices ahead, and the sharp ring of metal on stone. The path turned sharply around a spur of rock. In the middle of the stream stood three men. One of them had a flat pan in his hands and was shaking it to and fro while the others watched. Hearing Softy's feet on the stones, they looked up and, crying "Welcome!" to O'Reilly, one of them came forward.

It was Big Dan, a man with a short black beard, a great booming voice, and a merry twinkle in his eye. "What can we do for you?" he asked.

Michael explained that Sue wanted to find a gold mine. Big Dan swung her off the donkey with a great roar of laughter.

"You want to what?" he said.

"I want to find a gold mine," said Sue.

"Well," said Big Dan, "this is a gold mine. What do you think of it?"

Sue looked around her. *This* a gold mine? It couldn't be, she thought. There was a tiny shack, half logs and half boards; a shabby old tent; some picks and shovels lying around; a number of long wooden boxes; and a lot of flat pans like the ones Mrs. Schofield used back in Regina at Uncle Dennis's to set the cream. This surely couldn't be a mine, Sue told herself. It looked more like an untidy picnic ground. There were certainly no piles of gold lying around anywhere that she could see. Only a great heap of dirt and gravel across the small creek from the camp.

"If this is a gold mine," she said, looking up at Big Dan, "where's the gold?"

Big Dan smiled. "Louie," he roared, "have you finished rocking that pan?"

The man who had been standing in the middle of the creek came forward. He was old, with blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, and white hair, but he had the friendliest smile in the world, Sue noticed.

"Look!" he said. In the pan was some wet black sand with one tiny piece of yellow about the size of a pea. Old Louie touched it with his finger. "Help yourself," he said. Sue lifted the tiny yellow nugget. It was rough and had black specks where the sand still clung to it.

"Gold?" asked Sue.

"Gold!" chorused the men around her.

"Where did you get it?"

"Right from that heap," replied Louie.

"Show me," said Sue, breathlessly.

"I couldn't do that," objected Louie. "You'd get your feet all wet in the stream. That water she's very cold."

Sue knew now why Michael had ordered rubber boots. Hastily pulling off her shoes, she scrambled into the long rubber boots and, with Big Dan steadying her, walked out into the rush of water in the little creek. She was surprised to find how cold the water was and how strong. She had to lean against Big Dan very hard not to lose her balance. When he had shown her

how to stand with her feet braced wide apart, he took a spadeful of gravel and put it in a pan like the one old Louie had used.

“Wish us luck now, everybody,” he boomed.

Bending down, he held the pan so that the rushing water passed over it, taking away bits of wood and old leaves, earth and rubbish. Draining the water, he showed Sue what was left. She could see nothing but black sand, bits of gravel, and round stones about half the size of a walnut.

“It doesn’t look very much like gold,” she murmured.

“Wait,” said Big Dan. Filling the pan with water, he rocked it back and forth in his hands, just the way she rocked Minnie-Pooh-Pooh’s cradle, to and fro, to and fro. Each time he rocked, a stone would wash out or a piece of gravel, until finally there was nothing left but wet sand and a few bits of darkly glittering gold.

“Nuggets?” asked Sue.



“Nuggets,” said Big Dan. “Now you try.”

He filled another pan and showed her how to hold it, but it was too heavy and slipped out of her hand just as old Louie came smiling over from the camp. He waved a small frying pan at her.

“A little pan,” he said, “for little hands. By and by, you will grow big but just now, a little pan.”

She took it and held it out for Big Dan to fill. Then he stood over her while she rocked it gently until dirt and leaves and gravel were washed away and in the bottom lay some shimmering sand.

“No nuggets,” said Sue, mournfully.

Big Dan agreed. He scraped the little pan out and handed the wet sand to old Louie who put it in another pan and laid it on the ashes of an almost dead fire.

“Let’s try again,” said Big Dan, “but this time we’ll try another place.”

Downstream a little way, he filled her pan again and Sue rocked. Suddenly, Big Dan let out a great whoop and began dancing up and down in the stream, splashing Sue and everyone around.

“Gold!” he cried. “Gold and a crackerjack! Look here, Louie. See what our Cheechako has panned!”

Old Louie came running out into the stream and, sure enough, at the bottom of Sue’s pan there was a nugget as big as her thumb. Big Dan took it and rubbed it dry.

“Do you see what I see?” he asked Sue.

“What do you mean?” asked Sue, who could hardly see anything, she was so excited.

“I see,” said Big Dan, tracing the shape of the nugget with his finger, “that this is shaped like a letter ‘S’ and if ‘S’ doesn’t stand for Susannah then I’m even a worse speller than I thought I was.”

Big Dan was right. When you held the nugget the right way, it was shaped exactly like an “S.”

“It’s yours,” he said, “and I hope it brings you the best luck in the world.”

Gold mining seemed a very satisfying business, Sue thought, as they splashed their way to the bank, but she wondered how she would go about finding a mine herself. A little later, when they were finishing the hot bannock and tea old Louie had made, she asked the miners to tell her.

“How do I find a mine?” she asked.

“It isn’t so hard if you’re lucky,” explained Big Dan. “First you find a likely-looking creek. One that isn’t too swift or too slow and has flat ground on either side. You wash or rock a few pans and if it shows gold you stake your claim.”

“How do I do that?” asked Sue.

“You mark off five hundred feet along the bed of the creek. At each corner of your claim, you drive in a stake with your name on it. Your claim is as wide as the ground is flat on either side of the creek. Understand?”

“I think I do,” said Sue, breathing very hard, “but what do you do next?”

“Ho, ho!” laughed old Louie. “You run as fast as your legs will carry you, right straight to the Registrar of Claims.”

“Where’s the Registrar?” asked Sue.

“In Dawson,” said Big Dan.

“You ought to know him, Sue,” added Michael. “Just now he’s Superintendent Consell.”

“Is that all there is to finding a gold mine?”

“That’s all you need bother about, Missie,” said Big Dan. “Come along here. I’ve got something more to show you.”

Inside the little cabin, he took down an old tomato can and handed it to her.

“My goodness, it’s heavy!” she exclaimed. “Whatever’s in it?”

“Hold your hands out and I’ll show you,” he said. “This is my biggest prize.”

Sue held her hands tight together and into them Big Dan slowly poured the contents of the tin—more than a dozen gold nuggets, some flat and some round, some clean and gleaming, some streaked with lines of black.

“There’s over two thousand dollars’ worth there,” said Big Dan, proudly. “Know what I’m

going to do with 'em?" Sue shook her head. "Well, next August my old mother and father are going to have their golden wedding. I'm figgering on going home for it, and I'm going to give them these nuggets for their golden wedding present. Don't you think that's kind of a nice idea?"

Sue thought it sounded as nice as any idea she had ever heard, but when Big Dan showed her an old soapbox half filled with gold dust and a wooden pail with smaller nuggets in it, she wondered at his leaving his gold around so carelessly. She knew what care she took of her gold sovereign.

"Aren't you scared that a robber'll come along and take your gold when you're not here?" she asked.

"No," he said. "We're watched in and out of the country, and since the Mounties arrived, we've had no stealing of gold."

Sue knew that this was the chance to ask all the questions she wanted. "When you take this gold to the bank," she continued, "what happens to it then?"

"The Mountie gold trains take it out," he said. "Hundreds of thousands of dollars and never a cent of it lost."

"Where's the gold train?" Sue asked.

"Come, come, Sue," said Michael. "The gold train is a dog team that takes gold out across the snow and ice in the winter time. One or two of us harness up the dogs and skitter along the snow until we've delivered the gold at Skagway. That's all there is to it. Sometimes it's cold but it's all in the day's work."

Old Louie beckoned to her. "You come along with me," he said, "and I'll show you something better than gold."

Sue followed him over to the shabby tent and in a moment he came out with three dogs at his heels. She could see that they were not young and not really very handsome but old Louie acted as if he thought them the finest dogs in the world.

"What you think of them, eh?" he asked. "Aren't they three fine, strong dogs?"

"What are their names?" inquired Sue.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Louie. "You'd never guess in one thousand years. This big, black feller here, I call him Blizzard. He's lead. That gay feller, that's Storm, and this lazy feller here, his name is Zero."

"Blizzard, Storm, and Zero!" repeated Sue. "What funny names," she laughed.

Old Louie laughed, too. "The colder it gets, the more that Zero enjoys himself." And Louie laughed harder than ever.

"But what kind of dogs are they, Louie?" asked Sue.

"Well, now, that's pretty hard to say," Louie answered, scratching his ear. "That Blizzard, he's little bit sheep dog, maybe little bit collie, but he's one big strong dog all the same." Sue loved the way Louie talked.

"Zero, he's sled dog," he continued, "pure husky, with maybe a little touch of Newfoundland, I don't know for sure. All I know is those dogs have gone thousands of miles with me. They are my treasure and I would not trade you them for all Big Dan's gold."

Louie patted them and rubbed their ears and showed Sue all their fine points. He told her he was French Canadian, and came from Quebec in Lower Canada, that his name was Louie Champagne and that he had been a dogpuncher or dog-team freighter in the Yukon for years.

"Maybe those days for me are over," he said. "Maybe this winter I'd do best to stay in Dawson. Maybe Louie is getting too old to mush."

“Didn’t you ever find any gold?” she asked.

Old Louie laughed, as if finding gold were a foolish business at best. He put his finger against his nose and smiled knowingly at her.

“The best gold is found right here in the heart,” he said, and patted his shirt.

Sue wanted to ask him what he meant but Michael, Big Dan, and O’Reilly joined them.

“Come along, Sue,” said Michael. “We’ve been here too long already. It will surely be dark before we get home.”



“May I really keep the nuggets for my very own?” asked Sue, as she said good-by to Big Dan. “The ‘S’ one and the other?”

“Keep them both,” boomed Big Dan, “and come back soon, all of you.” And then he and Louie and the dogs insisted upon coming as far as the crooked pine with them.

“The gold doesn’t lie around in heaps, Michael,” said Sue, when they were on the main trail again, “but it does lie around.” And she felt in her pocket to make sure her new treasures were safe.

There was hardly anyone on the trail going home and they were able to move quickly. Softy trotted along with Sue, her rubber boots slung across the saddle. The two tall young Mounties strode along beside her, the sun dipped behind the mountains, and a coolness came in the air. Sue wrapped her scarf around her neck and pulled on her gloves. High up against the sunset clouds there were wild geese in flight.

There were voices now from the river and lights showing from houses in the town but none in the little cabin with the bottle window as Michael led Softy past and down the street.

“Where are we going?” asked Sue.

“You’ll see,” said Michael, and walked a little faster.

It wasn’t long before he lifted Sue off Softy in front of a bare little house of freshly cut pine. Michael knocked loudly on the door.

“Who’s there?” cried her mother’s voice.

“The North West Mounted Police,” answered Michael, in his best official manner.

The door flew open and there stood Sue’s father and mother smiling, both rather ruffled, her mother in a blue woolen dress Sue hadn’t seen since they packed their holdalls in Regina.

“Oh, Mummy,” said Sue, “is this our house? Are we going to live here for always?”

Her mother laughed. “Perhaps not for always, Sue, but this will be home for many months to come.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE FREEZE-UP

It was a tiny house of just four rooms with a lean-to kitchen at the back. Downstairs there was a dining-living room on one side of the little hall and, on the other side, her father's studio. When Sue came downstairs next morning his easel was up, paints were scattered about everywhere, and his smock was hanging from a nail in the wall.

Upstairs, the two bedrooms had walls of fresh, unpainted pine but there was real glass in all the windows, and, in Sue's room, nails along the walls to hang her clothes on, a chest of drawers, an enameled bed and, on the floor, a very gay carpet covered with true lover's knots in blue and red. In her mother's room, there was a brass bed, very shiny, with fat knobs topping off the brass rails. And there were also white lace curtains at the windows, with roses sprawling so thickly on them that Sue wondered how anyone could ever see out.

In her own room Sue had a small mirror over her chest of drawers and a funny little washstand with an enamel jug and basin, but it was the stoves that interested her more than anything else in the house. The biggest one was in the hall and was called "The Queen's Jewel." It was most imposing, Sue thought, with all kinds of queer curves and bumps on it, and eight little windows you could look through and see the fire inside. From its top, pipes seemed to branch out in all directions and one went straight through the ceiling to the upstairs where it widened out and became much larger. This large part, her father explained, was called a drum, and caught and spread the heat.

"Do we have to have stovepipes crawling everywhere?" Sue asked.

"If it gets half as cold as they say it does here in Dawson, Susie," he answered, "we'll wish we had twice as many."

In the little lean-to kitchen, there was the most elegant stove Sue had ever seen, a cookstove called the "Pride of Aberdeen," with its name raised in shiny nickel letters on the oven door. Except on top, where you did the cooking, it was covered all over with black cast-iron roses, and even its four feet were made so that they looked like roses, too. Her father made fun of it and called it "atrocious," as he did the dining-room furniture, which was made of golden oak, but her mother only laughed at him.

"Never mind the style, Jimmy," she said. "It's clean and comfy, and I'm so thankful to be in one of the newest and best-furnished houses in Dawson that I'm not going to be critical about anything."

Except for the stove, Sue didn't think much of the kitchen. It was dark and rough and without proper shelves or sink.

"You must have a new kitchen," said her father. "This one won't do at all. We'll build one of logs to keep out cold and we'll have plenty of windows, and divide it into two parts—one for the kitchen and one for the wood, the dog, and other odds and ends."

Sue didn't altogether like Bomby being called an "odds and ends" but she had already learned that huskies were never allowed to stay long indoors and thought that perhaps Bomby would be better off sleeping in the new woodshed than right out in the cold.

"Aileen," called her father from the hall, "where did we put my cap, when we unpacked last night?"

It was quite a scramble looking for the cap, but Sue found it at last under a pile of coats in the studio and her father left, whistling gaily as he banged the door behind him.

“What’s he going to do, Mummy?” asked Sue.

Her mother laughed. “He’s going to find someone to build a new kitchen for us, Sue,” she said. “He may be gone most of the day. Let’s unpack while he’s away and surprise him with a nice, tidy house.”

Sue carried her clothes upstairs and hung them on the wall. She filled her drawers with woolies and undies and placed her picture of Miss Vicky in her wedding dress on the shelf. Over her bed she tacked up a photograph of Beppo, and on her chest of drawers placed one of Monty and Lady Charlotte. Her treasure bag she hung by the window, and her catapult on the bedpost. Last of all, she took out her golden crest and fastened it to a square of cardboard, as Monty had done so long ago. She looked at it. It wasn’t quite right, she thought, and then remembered. Monty had printed the motto of the Force above the golden crest. Down the stairs she raced and into the studio, and, with her father’s best red paint, she lettered carefully the words “Maintiens le Droit.”

She looked at it critically. It was a bit crooked and some of the paint had smudged, but the golden star looked better in its new setting and somehow she believed Monty would have approved. She tied it to the foot of her bed, “so that I can see it always,” she said to herself.

“Are you ready, Sue?” called her mother, and with their rooms all neat and tidy, they went downstairs together.

“What’s for supper?” Sue asked, late that afternoon when the little house was at last tidy.

“Green-pea soup, beans, stewed apricots, and tea,” said her mother, busily, “and Mrs. Consell sent me over a loaf of sourdough bread, so I won’t have to bake any biscuits.”

Her father bustled in. He had had a very satisfactory day, he told them, and completed all arrangements for the building of the new kitchen. He had purchased material, hired carpenters and handy men, had run across Angus and engaged him to come and work, too.

Sue and her father laid the table. They had no tablecloth, and the knives and forks and china weren’t at all pretty, but the happy voice of her mother singing in the kitchen made them lay things extra straight. The lamp was in the center of the table and the chairs were all drawn up, when Sue’s mother came in, carrying the soup.

“I dissolved three soup tablets in hot water,” she said, “and added salt and pepper. It’s very hot, but it doesn’t taste to me much like green-pea soup.”

Sue’s father tasted it. “Well,” he said, “it may not taste like green peas, but it does taste like soup.” All three of them finished their bowls hungrily and called for more.

The beans were not quite cooked enough, Sue’s mother thought, and besides there wasn’t any mustard for them, but the stewed apricots and fresh sour bread were delicious and, after a drink of hot tea, Sue began to feel drowsy.

She was glad when her father carried her upstairs and her mother helped undress her and tuck her into bed. They opened the window and piled blankets over her and closed the door.

Sue could just see the star at the foot of her bed.

One of the great advantages of a house in the Yukon, Sue found, was that you could hear everything at once. It often gave you an idea of what to expect.

At first she thought it good news when she heard there was no school in Dawson. Then it turned to bad news, for as she listened to the voices below in the living room one afternoon, she heard her mother and Mrs. Consell and Michael planning her education.

Sue thought Mrs. Consell knew far too much about education and a favorite word of hers was “discipline.” Sue hated the word. It generally meant something unpleasant.

She listened hard. Mrs. Consell was talking about her son now. He had been up at Forty Mile River ever since the Winstons' arrival and was returning the next day. His name was Alexander Cochrane Wyndham Consell, but they called him "Consy" for short.

"Consy," repeated Sue to herself. "That's a nice name."

Consy was thirteen years old, Sue heard, and "quite a handful." There were no children in Dawson he could play with, Mrs. Consell added, which made him even more "difficult." The Anglican Padre, Mr. Bruce, was teaching him mathematics, Latin, and Greek; Mrs. Consell, literature and history.

"He's a good boy," said Mrs. Consell, "but very, very restless. At times I don't quite know what to do with him."

"I know," said Mrs. Winston. "Sue is restless, too." Both ladies sighed heavily and then took up the question of education again.

"I can teach Sue French, history, and reading," said Mrs. Winston, "but I can't teach her mathematics, for I can't divide very well myself."

"I'll teach her," broke in Michael. "Twice a week I'll give her mental arithmetic. Within a year she'll be able to add, subtract, and divide in her head."

"How can Michael be so mean to me," murmured Sue.

"Send her to me for literature and composition," continued Mrs. Consell, briskly. "I am really very good at those subjects."

"Oh, I couldn't think of bothering you about Sue," Mrs. Winston protested.

"It's no bother, but rather a help," said Mrs. Consell, "and in exchange, perhaps, you'll give my boy a French lesson a week."

That sounded pretty bad to Sue, but evidently the two ladies in the living room below thought they had settled all matters of education satisfactorily, for they began to discuss the way to cook caribou steak.

Sue lay back in her bed. There was no way she knew of that she could escape French. She had tried to do so, but without success. In spite of her mother's gentle ways, she had unsuspected firmness.

There was no playing with Bomby, no dressing and undressing of Minnie-Pooh-Pooh until the French recitation was over, *every* day. Sue sighed. She had tried every trick she knew, including that of having a headache. Her mother just smiled and said, "Then you'd better stay in bed, Sue darling, and not eat any breakfast," and pulled the blind down and left her alone. After a morning of such treatment, Sue decided that French was the better choice. But with a boy in the French class, it might be better fun.

Michael and Mrs. Consell were leaving now. Sue could hear them saying good-by and the sound of the front door closing behind them.

"Young Consy must be quite a lad," her father was saying in the studio a few minutes later. "He evidently hates his lessons, skips them whenever he can, and never prepares his homework. It seems that Mr. Bruce gave him a wiggling just before our boats came in. He warned the boy that he would be gated the next time he came without his lessons prepared."

Sue sat up in bed and listened harder than ever.

"Mr. Bruce is a kindly old man," her father went on, "but he's very vain about his fine, silky beard, and he always combs and fluffs it out before he enters a room. He carries around a special little comb with a handle.

"Well, the day our boats arrived, Consy didn't know his lessons. Bruce gated him and the boy missed the fun. That night at a dinner for the Major at Big Jake's Consy came up to Mr.

Bruce just as he was entering the hall.

“Here’s your comb, Mr. Bruce,” he said. “You dropped it out of your coat.” The old gentleman was in a hurry and ran it rapidly through his whiskers—only to find that Consy had filled it with thin mucilage. Well, you may imagine Mr. Bruce’s rage. It took a deal of pleading on the part of the Superintendent to patch up the trouble. Consy goes back to his lessons tomorrow, but he’ll not find ‘Old Whiskers,’ as he calls him, so easy to manage now.”

Sue wriggled her toes. She could play tricks on a boy like this, and, when the snow came, perhaps they could go dog-sleigh riding together. Pulling Minnie-Pooh-Pooh closer to her, Sue snuggled down in her blankets and hoped that Consy would turn out to be as nice as he sounded.

In the morning she was awakened by cries of “Freeze-up!”

Her father closed her window with a bang. “Lie down and cover up,” he said, “until the house is warm. They’re crying ‘freeze-up.’ We’ll go down and watch.”

Downstairs there was a terrific shaking of the stoves, stoking of fires, filling of kettles, and much happy clatter before the warmth crept through the house and her father brought up her mother’s morning tea.

“Hop into your clothes, Sue, quick!” he said, “and don’t bother washing too much. A lick and a promise will do and I’ll fix it up with your mother when we come back.”

Sue dressed as rapidly as her father. She was glad everything had elastics in it, for no one could dress as fast with buttons. She had just reached for her brush when her father beckoned to her. One finger on his lip meant “Don’t disturb Mummy.” Lifting a cap off the wall, he tucked Sue’s unbrushed curls under it.

“Come with me,” he said, and down the stairs and out the door and across to the river they ran. For days thin sheets of ice had been floating down the stream, almost as thin as window glass and about a yard square. Each day these sheets of ice rubbed each other in passing until their edges frayed, turned white, and curled up like lily blossoms above the gray-green water. In a few days the lily blossoms had turned into solid lumps of ice, which, gradually, had increased in size until they looked like ice islands in the river. This morning, Sue saw, all the islands had frozen together and the river was white from shore to shore.

“Fix your eyes on the middle of the river, stranger,” called a man, as they passed.

Sue’s father stopped and lifted Sue to the top of a pile of wood. Down the center of the river huge cakes of ice were moving slowly. Every little while the current would jam them against each other until they began to pile up into a barrier. The grinding and crushing sound as each cake crashed against the other was frightening.

Sue shivered. She had never really been so frightened by anything before. Not even by the Commissioner or by Joe Labiche, not even when she rolled down the side of Chilkoot. But the ice moved so slowly and so surely. It came nearer and nearer until it formed a barrier almost across the river. Sue clutched her father’s arm.

“Will it ever stop, Daddy?” she asked.

Her father didn’t answer. He was looking at the ice barrier with his eyes half closed, the way he did when he was painting. Sue shook his arm.

“Daddy, won’t it ever stop?” she repeated.

“Sure thing,” a voice said behind her. “You fix your eyes on the middle of the river. You see the ice go slow. By and by the river, she go slower. Soon she freeze tight and the ice she stop.”

Sue turned. Behind her was old Louie and with him Blizzard, Storm, and Zero.

“Oh, ho!” he laughed. “Don’t you be frightened of ice. The river she make a big sound

when she freeze, but it is a good sound for a dogpuncher. Soon I carry freight again. Fix your eyes on the middle of the river, petite.”

Sue watched. Old Louie was right. The ice was moving more slowly. By night, he told her, there would be dog teams crossing the river.

Michael swung along. “How are you, Sue?” he asked. “Did the ice frighten you? It frightened me. I thought it was never going to stop piling up.”

Sue felt better. If a Mountie could be frightened by that crushing, grinding sound, she wasn’t such a baby after all. But she was glad that no one had noticed her terror.

Her father went on looking at the frozen river beyond. Sue turned around. The crowds along the river front were breaking up, old Louie and his dogs had disappeared, Michael was talking to a group of miners farther down the river bank. The freeze-up had come.

She remembered that she hadn’t had any breakfast and that Mrs. Consell’s son was coming to the house for his first French lesson that afternoon. “What a lot of things there are to do in the Yukon,” she thought.

At noon that day, Angus arrived with two other carpenters to build the kitchen. They brought with them logs and boards and window frames and little kegs of nails and, although it was very cold outdoors, fell right to work.

“We need another man,” said her father, and went off and brought back old Louie as a handy man. Blizzard, Storm, and Zero were with him, and he tied them to a post near by.

The kitchen and storehouse slowly grew. Sue’s father and mother were outside, watching the carpenters, when a knock came at the front door. Sue ran and opened it. A dark-eyed boy stood there, scowling.

“I’m Consell,” he said. “Who are you?”

“I’m Sue.”

“Oh, you are, are you?” he answered, mimicking her way of speaking. “Well, is your mother in?”

“Yes,” said Sue, shutting the door behind him, “at least she’s outside for a moment.”

“That’s a good job,” said the boy. “Say, what’d you come out here for anyway? Nobody asked you to.”

“I came because I wanted to,” answered Sue.

“Yes, and you want to find a gold mine and you think the streets are dirty, and you’re learning to speak French.”

He pulled off his coat and cap. “If you’d minded your own business and stayed at home, I wouldn’t have had to learn French, too. Frog’s talk, that’s what French is. I don’t like girls and what’s worse, you’re a girlie-girl.”

“I’m what?” stormed Sue.

“You’re a girlie-girl. You can’t ride or drive a dog team. You can’t snowshoe. You can’t shoot. And you’ve curls.” Consell made a face at her. “Girlie-girl!”

“I *can* ride,” raged Sue. “Dogs *or* horses, and there isn’t any snow to snowshoe with, and don’t you call me a girlie-girl, you big balloon.”

“What’d you call me?” the boy demanded.

“A big balloon,” said Sue, getting behind the table, for Consell had turned such a fiery red that she thought he was going to burst.



The door opened and Sue's mother came in.

"How do you do?" she said. "You're Consell, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Winston," the boy replied, in a choked sort of voice.

"Your mother tells me," continued Mrs. Winston, "that I'm to call you Consy."

"That's a funny name," broke in Sue. "Sounds like a girl's name."

Consy made a gurgling sort of sound.

“I think it’s a very nice name,” said her mother, sitting down. “Shall we have French conversation this afternoon? Parlez vous français, Consy?”

Consy shook his head. Mrs. Winston smiled. “Then let’s sit down and begin with a few verbs.”

Sue and Consy groaned but the lesson went on and on for a long, dreadful hour. At the end, while Consy was putting on his coat, Sue went upstairs. She took her catapult off the bedpost and the bag of beans, and opened the window. Consy was just leaving the house. Fitting a bean into her sling, Sue took careful aim.

“Wow!” exclaimed Consy, as the bean hit him. “Wow!” he yelled again, as the second bean struck him on the back of the neck.

“Wow, wow!” mocked Sue, from her window. He looked up. “Who said I couldn’t shoot?” shrieked Sue, and let loose a whole volley of beans.

Consy hesitated a moment and then came back. “I said you were a girlie-girl, and so you are!” he shouted. “Only a girl would shoot from a window. You’re afraid to come down and shoot right here where I can get at you.” And, sticking his hands in his pockets, he started off toward home.

Sue rushed downstairs and flung the door wide open. She had no intention of letting any boy tell her she was afraid of him, but her mother’s voice stopped her.

“Where are you going, Sue?” she called.

“I’m going after Consy,” Sue answered. “I don’t like him.”

“Then why bother running after him?” asked her father. “Come along out here and see what we’re doing.”

They had the logs placed and were chinking them with the gray moss that Sue had seen growing everywhere in the Yukon. They gave her a little pointed stick and she helped chink. Working hard in her warm clothing, Sue hardly felt the cold, and old Louie worked beside her, whistling softly and telling her stories of his dogs and how it would not be long before he could take her for a ride, now that the freeze-up had come.

“There will have to be snow first,” he said, “but that will come most any day now.”

When Sue and her mother started out for a walk a little later, they found Dawson already overrun with dogs of every shape, size, and description—all of them wearing harness, all of them with their owners, and all of them keen to work again after a summer’s rest.

“It’s always like this when winter sets in,” said Superintendent Consell as he met them outside of Police Headquarters. “The minute the freeze-up comes, the Yukoner brings out his dogs and runs them up and down the streets, giving them a taste of the road again, as well as showing off their good points.”

Barking, racing, leaping from side to side of the road, the dogs were everywhere.

“How long do you think it will take Bomby to grow into a sleigh dog?” Sue asked the Superintendent.

“A full year,” he answered, “but Consy has his own dog team and he’ll take you out when the snow comes.”

Sue wasn’t so sure that he would, and began to wonder if she had made a mistake in using her catapult so freely.

The new kitchen was quickly finished and Louie helped her fix a little kennel in a packing box in the storeroom for Bombardier. They lined the box with moss.

“Won’t he be cold here?” asked Sue, for Bomby seemed so very little to be left alone at night.

Old Louie shook his head. "Too warm quarters hurt a husky," he said. "Maybe when cold weather come, your father will put up a little stove."

But Sue found that her father had already thought of that and when she said good night to Bomby that night in the storeroom there was a tiny little stove to keep him company. Sue felt a bit mournful about leaving him alone.

"Don't you worry," said old Louie. "That dog, Bomby, has quarters fit for a king. I wish we had a place one half as good." Calling Blizzard, Storm, and Zero, he said good night and left.

Sue wondered about Louie as she fell asleep. Did he really mean that he wished he and his dogs could sleep in a storeroom?

The next day the snow came. When Sue awakened, there was no sunshine, and the world seemed full of feathery snow that kept on falling all day. The men that passed the house wore fur caps with ear muffs pulled down. Angus, Louie, and her father brought wood into the storeroom and filled the water barrel. Out on the river Sue thought she could see men and dogs, blurred shapes in the falling whiteness.

When Michael came in, his coat was changed. He was wearing the winter uniform of the Force, a short fur coat of buffalo, a cap of muskrat, and long black stockings and gray-colored moccasins, but he still had on the blue riding breeches with their yellow stripes.

"Want to come for a run, Sue?" he asked. "Wrap up well and when you go out remember to breathe through your nose only, and don't talk. Just breathe through your nose."

"Now, run!" he said, as he opened the door. "Down to the first turn and back."

At first Sue remembered to breathe through her nose and not talk, but she wanted to find out about Consy's dogs and started to question Michael. She drew her breath through her mouth. A sharp, burning pain filled her chest.

"*Stop talking,*" said Michael, sharply, and brought her back, rosy and snowy from a tumble.

Sue put her hand to her chest. "Whatever happened?" she exclaimed. "I felt as if I was burning."

"That's the cold," said Michael. "Until you are used to it, you breathe through your nose only, and you don't feel it. After a time you won't mind it."

It snowed for three days. The smoke rose straight up from the chimneys and then spread out, mingling with the snow. The windows frosted over, so that you couldn't see out.

"Look," said old Louie. "I show you something. Warm this penny in the stove and put him on the window."

Sue did. It burnt a hole through the frost and gave her a peephole. Old Louie knew so many pleasant things to do, thought Sue.

On the fourth day, the sky was still gray when Sue got up but the snow had stopped, and she found her father and Angus outside, shoveling out a pathway to the street. Later, they cut out big blocks of snow and fitted them close to the house and then poured water over them.

"Why do you do that?" she asked.

"To keep the cold out and the warmth in, young lady," answered her father. "There won't be so much stove filling to do when this job's done."

But long before they had finished, Sue noticed that there were patches of blue sky showing overhead and suddenly the sun broke through. It was far to the south and low down on the horizon but in an instant it changed the whole world from gray to shimmering gold and blue.

"Come along, Sue," cried her father. "You and I will have a look at Dawson."

Everywhere were great piles and mounds of snow, sparkling in the winter sunlight. The

dirty streets, the shabby litter of untidy boats along the water front had vanished, the patched roofs had disappeared. The river was a wide white blanket with queer exciting colors in it, and the ice barrier a soft rumple stretched across it. Beyond rose the mountains, cleaner and higher than Sue had ever seen them.

At last, Dawson was the magic city she had dreamed of. And somewhere, under all this lovely whiteness, Sue felt she might yet find gold lying around in heaps.

CHAPTER IX

MUSH ON!

Old Louie was building shelves in the kitchen and from him Sue learned that you could mine for gold in the winter.

“Why, that’s easy, Miss Sue,” he said. “First you must have your mine. Then you build a fire on the gravel and it thaws the snow and ice. Then you scoop up the loose gravel and pile it to one side. Then you burn some more and pile some more. By and by you have one big heap. And when spring come, you wash. Maybe you find lots of gold.” Louie pounded hard on some big nails.

“Tell me, Miss Sue,” he went on, “what for you want a gold mine? It cannot be for money. You have all you wish.”

“Oh, no, I haven’t,” said Sue. “Louie, I’m having a dreadful time. Everybody in Dawson has a dog team but me!”

“Chut, chut,” said old Louie, sympathetically.

“And I need a dog team badly,” Sue continued mournfully.

“Then that is two things you need,” said Louie, “one gold mine and one dog team. We all know about the gold mine. You want him because you want him, eh? But why you want a dog team?”

“Well,” said Sue, impressively. “If I had a dog team, I could go gold mining by myself, instead of always having to wait for someone to go with me . . . and if I had a dog team, I could race my dogs and beat Consy.”

Louie chuckled. “So that’s the reason, eh? I guess you don’t like that feller very much, eh, Miss Sue?”

“I can’t bear him!” exploded Sue. “He’s so stuck up. He’s so full of himself, he’s like a big balloon! Do you know, Louie, he thinks he’s better than anybody in the world. I told him I was just as good as he was; that I had been to the Jubilee; that I’d captured Joe Labiche and ridden with the Commissioner *and* got my golden crest, and do you know what he said?”

Louie shook his head.

““Stop blowing your own horn!””

“Chut, chut,” said Louie. “That’s too bad.”

“And that’s not all,” continued Sue. “He won’t take me riding with his dogs because I’m a girl.” Sue paused. She wondered if she should tell Louie the whole awful truth.

“It’s even worse than that, Louie,” she finally said. “He doesn’t only call me a *girl*—he calls me a *girlie-girl*!”

“Ah-h-h!” said old Louie. “That’s bad. That’s very bad.” He stopped hammering as if the news were too much for him. Sue thought him very comforting.

He laid his finger on one side of his nose. “See,” he whispered, “have you asked your mother for a dog team of your own?”

“Yes,” said Sue, with disgust, “and do you know why she won’t let me have one? She says it isn’t ladylike for me to race dogs up and down the streets of Dawson. Who wants to be a lady?” demanded Sue.

“Oh, that is a good thing,” said old Louie, and shook his head at her, reprovingly. “Being a lady takes you places you can’t go if you are not one. Now, in the old days,” he continued, “you could drive your dogs any place in the Yukon, but now everyone is rushing here for gold,

there are some pretty rough people. I think maybe your mother is right.”

Sue felt as if the whole world were against her. Michael had been sharp with her for not being able to multiply twelve by thirteen in her head, her father had forbidden her to go into his studio because she had left his best tube of blue paint on the window sill and it had frozen in the night; the water had been frozen in her bedroom that morning and she hadn't seen why she should wash in ice and had come down to breakfast unwashed. Her mother had been most disagreeable over it. Sue sometimes thought her mother must know everything. When she didn't air her bed as usual, but just smoothed the bedspread over the blankets tidily in the belief she wouldn't be discovered her mother had called her upstairs.

“This mustn't happen again, Sue,” she said. “Beds in my house are stripped *every* morning and made properly. You mustn't think because we are in the Yukon that we are going to live in an uncivilized fashion.”

And now even Louie, whom she had come to depend on since Hawkins had gone to the post at Forty Mile River, was against her.

Old Louie smiled and leaned forward. “I tell you what I do,” he said. “I bring my dogs to live here, also my sleigh, and every day at noon I teach you to drive. How's that? If you do what I tell you, maybe someday you beat your Consy, eh?”

“Just wouldn't I like that!” cried Sue. “Louie, I do think you are the kindest man in the world. You understand just how I feel about everything.”

Feeling much better, she pulled on her coat and cap, laced her moccasins, and took Bomby out for his morning run. He was so snowy white that if it hadn't been for his ears and bright black eyes and nose, Sue felt she wouldn't have known where to find him in the snow.

Since the snow came, the main street of Dawson was very gay and busy with the dogpunchers and their teams of six to eight dogs plodding their way farther north. There were single sleds, too, lightly laden and pulled by three dogs. Men training young dog teams plunged up and down the street. A Mountie dog team passed with a cheery wave and call. And everywhere there was much shouting and cracking of whips and calling to dogs and friends.

Sue found it all very exciting and so did Bomby, who lunged wildly at every dog that passed. He was growing so strong now that unexpected pulls were likely to upset Sue. Consy rode proudly by. He had a very smart, red sleigh and three beautiful huskies.

“Hi, girlie-girl,” he called, and waved his whip at her. Sue no longer cared what he called her, for her chief worry was over. She was going to have a dog team and while it might not be her very own, she was sure that once she learned to drive, she could persuade her father to buy her a fast team. “Then won't I show him,” she promised herself. “He'll never dare to call *me* a girlie-girl again.”

But learning to drive dogs was quite a business, Sue discovered; much more difficult than riding a horse. And old Louie was sterner than Sergeant Whiteside. First he made her learn the correct way to feed them, then the way to harness them, then the different “hitches.” Sometimes Sue wondered if the day would ever come when she would begin to drive them.

There were so very many hitches to learn. The fan-hitch, which the Eskimos used in open country. This let the dogs spread out like an open fan in front of the sleigh.

The gang-hitch, Sue found, meant hitching the dogs in pairs, with a single lead dog out in front.

But the tandem-hitch was the one Louie said was used by the police and the dogpunchers. In heavily wooded country or in the mountains where the trails were narrow or crooked, it was the best hitch for both dog and man.

With the tandem-hitch, Sue found, the dogs were harnessed one ahead of the other. Each wore a collar somewhat like a horse collar, with traces fastened to it on either side and held in place by a backband and a bellyband. Each dog was hitched to the traces of the one behind. The sled dog traces were the shortest.

Louie's sleigh was known as a "basket sleigh" with handlebars at the back. It was low and flat and just the width of a snowshoe trail between the runners. From the front of the sleigh to the handlebars, ran two light poles. The sleigh runners extended a short distance farther than the handlebars and Sue learned that she was to stand on them and direct her dogs by her voice.

"Is that the way you drive?" she asked Louie.

"No," he said. "As you grow older and bigger, you use a gee pole, but this way is best for little ones when they first begin to drive." Sue didn't like being called a "little one" until she heard that Consy used the same kind of sleigh.

"Always," said Louie, "remember the most important thing about your dogs—how to care for them." Old Louie's blue eyes sparkled.

"First, your dog is your friend and as you feed your friends first, so you feed your dog.

"Next, you must be always kind. You talk with your dog, in your most friendly voice. You tell him your secrets.

"The better you treat your dog, the better he works. Never nag or peck at your dog with a long whip.

"*Always* trust your lead dog." Louie put his hand on Blizzard's head and the big dog wagged his bushy tail in response. "This Blizzard, he always bring me home. When I am lost, I just leave everything to him—and always I come home.

"You stop your dogs on the trail to let them get their breath. When they are rested, they will get up and show you they are ready to mush on.

"When your dogs fight, you must lick those fellers to break up the fight, but"—old Louie's eyes were like blue fire—"never lick a dog when you are mad."

Sue shook her head. "No, Louie, I never will," she promised. "But this is just like learning French, staying in all the time. Aren't we ever going out and drive them?"

"When you are good friends with my dogs," said old Louie, "you shall go out. Not till then."

"But I know them now," exclaimed Sue.

He shook his head. "Ah, no, not like you know Bomby," he answered. "Bomby knows when you are glad or sad. He knows when he can play with you or when he is best off in his kennel. You shall drive my dogs when you make friends with them."

Sue tumbled out of bed next morning and tiptoed downstairs. The house was cold. She pulled a coat over her nightie and slipped her feet into woolen socks and moccasins and opened the door into the storeroom.

"What a noise!" exclaimed Sue, for all three dogs broke into sharp barking.

"Bon jour! Bon jour, my beauties!" she cried, imitating old Louie's deep voice as well as she could.

"Hoh, hoh!" she cried. "Quiet now, quiet."

The sharp little barks of Bomby joined the happy din. Sue filled a tin with frozen fish from a pail outside the door and, calling each dog by name, flung fish to each of them in turn.

"Now, now, Blizzard, you old beauty," she crooned. "Storm, you old slowcoach. Zero, you lazy old man. Stir yourselves. Come, eat your breakfast, my beauties." Over and over she called to them and flung them fish until it was all gone. "I haven't any secrets," thought Sue, "but

Louie told me I should tell them secrets.”

“Oh, yoh, hoh, Blizzard, my beauty,” she began again, “where shall we go today?”

The old dog wagged his tail and Sue scratched behind his ears. She opened the storeroom door wide. The cold air rushed in, biting cold. Bomby scuttled back into his warm kennel but Blizzard strained against his chain and howled happily. Sue took down his harness and shook it. Zero and Storm leaped madly to reach her.

“Yoh, hoh, my beauties,” she called again. “I’ll tell you my secret. Today is the day you take me riding.”

The three dogs barked louder than ever, and, as she, too, was cold, Sue shook the harness and pranced madly to keep warm until the noise brought her father down.

“What are you doing, child?” he cried, picking her up and carrying her back to her bed. “Don’t you know you might get frozen?”

“I was making friends with my huskies,” Sue answered, proudly.

Old Louie shook his head at her when she came down to the kitchen later. “What’s this I hear, Miss Sue?” he asked. “What’s all this about feeding the dogs so early?”

Sue laughed. “I was telling them a secret,” she said. “Would you like to hear it?”

“Sure thing,” said old Louie.

“I was telling them we’re going for our first ride today.”

Old Louie laughed, the dogs barked, and, dropping his hammer, Louie told her to get into her warm things, quickly.

It was only a minute before she was back and, with old Louie standing beside her, she harnessed the dogs herself, Blizzard first, as lead dog; then Storm; Zero, the sled dog, last. Louie put a fur robe in the bottom of the sleigh.

“Jump in,” he said.

“But I thought I was going to drive them,” said Sue, in dismay.

“By and by, maybe,” answered old Louie, “after we leave the town. You would not want that Consy boy to see you make mistakes of driving, eh?”

“No,” answered Sue, “I would not.”



Off they started, down the main street and out along the river. Old Louie ran beside his dogs. He talked very little to them but they seemed to know just what was wanted. Sue felt she could go on driving forever. The air was so still and cold, and she was so warm and cosy wrapped in her furs. At a turn of the road, Louie stopped and helped her out of the sleigh.

“*Now!*” he said.

Sue stood on the runners, holding the handlebars tightly. The dogs moved off slowly but with a strong pull. The sleigh seemed as light as a feather and she felt very wobbly. As soon as the dogs broke into a trot, she lost her footing and fell off. As if Blizzard knew and understood her troubles, he stopped and sat down. Zero and Storm looked around, as if in surprise.

“Don’t stand so stiff,” cautioned old Louie. “When you feel you are going, bend your toes around the runners.”

“How can I?” asked Sue. “I’ve moccasins on.”

“So have I,” he answered, “and look at *my* toes.”

Sue looked down. Old Louie’s toes were rising and falling, twisting and wriggling, under his

thick socks and moccasins. Sue wriggled her toes. It was hard at first, but after a time it came easier.

“Now try doing it on the runners.”

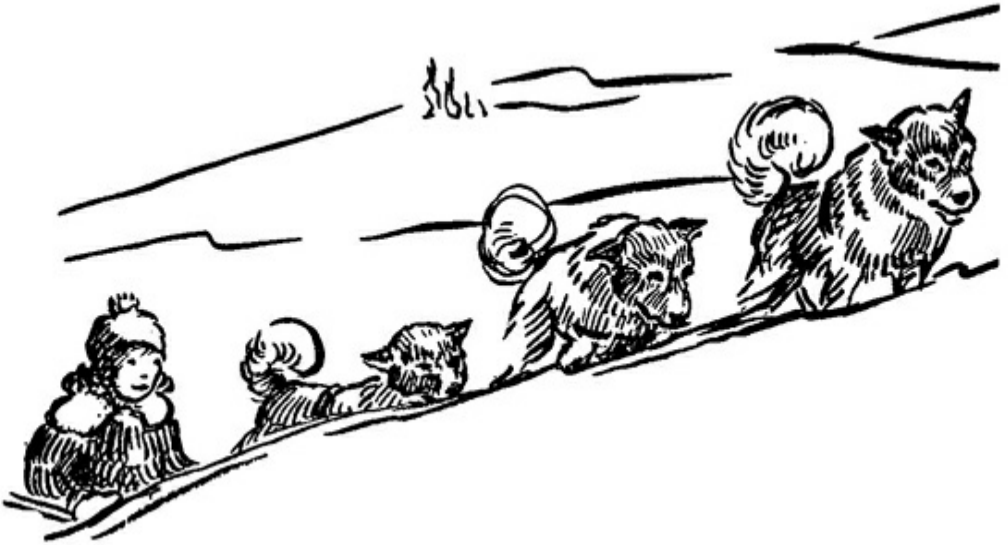
Sue tried and found she could hold on very nicely when the sleigh was standing, but when they started off again, no matter how hard she gripped the runners with her toes, she lost her balance every time the dogs gathered speed.

She was snowy, breathless, and happy when they arrived home and, by the wagging of their bushy tails, Sue knew the dogs were happy, too. She unharnessed them, gave them each a bit of fish, and rubbed their ears.

“Tomorrow,” she promised them, “I will do better.”

Soon old Louie took her out twice a day and for longer drives. She learned to keep her feet on the runners, then to bend her knees a little and sway with the sleigh as the dogs rounded a curve. This, Louie explained, was to balance her weight for the dogs.

“Your body must sway gently with the sleigh,” he said.



Day by day she raced faster. Day by day she grew better able to handle her dogs. Day by day she grew stronger. Often on the road to Crooked Pine Turn or on the broad frozen river, Sue would remember the prairies stretching clear away to where the sky met the earth. Here the mountains were like great giants, marching on either side of the trail. Beyond them were more mountains, like guards watching the gold, she thought. And, as the pale winter sun dimmed earlier each afternoon, she would leave her dreams of gold behind her and skim home behind the dogs, with the strong cold air in her face and the song of the runners on the trail in her ears.

Even the French lessons weren't so bad since she had the dogs. She was even so happy she could have made friends with Consy, if it hadn't been for the way he still called her a girlie-girl whenever they met.

One day old Louie spoke to her of the dog races. “There is a children's race of four miles, every year,” he said. “You start from Dawson in front of Snakey Jim's, and go out 'round Crooked Pine Turn and back. The first one to pass Snakey Jim's is the one what wins the race.”

No one over fourteen could enter, but anyone from five up could be in it. Only dogs born in the Yukon could be used.

“Which counts most in the race?” asked Sue. “The dogs or the driver?”

“The best dog in the world can’t win if he has a poor driver,” answered Louie. “But in racing, Miss Sue, you must know how to jump your turn.”

“Jump my turn! What does that mean?” Sue asked.

“When your dogs go round the turns fast,” said Louie, “your sleigh swings out with a big jerk and upsets the driver. But a good driver jump off the runners and with his handlebar tips the sleigh round the curve on one runner, so that it don’t drag on the dogs.” Old Louie wagged his head seriously. Sue listened as carefully as she could.

“It takes one good driver to jump back on those runners quickly. For, if you miss that jump, you hold your dogs back.” Old Louie flung up his arms. “And then you have lost the race.”

“Let me try,” said Sue. Over and over, they made turns on the smooth surface of the river. First, wide and slow, then short and fast. Over and over Sue missed her footing and spilled, but one day she found her balance and after that the difficult turn became almost the best fun in driving.

Her mother came with her as a passenger one day and another time she drove Michael out to Crooked Pine Turn. He brought her a light whip the next day, with a bright red handle and a long, long lash.

“It’s not to use on your dogs, Sue,” he explained, “but to crack. All Yukoners have dog whips like this.” Michael lifted the whip and cracked the lash far out ahead of him. “Try it, Sue.”

It took quite a bit of practice, but very soon Sue cracked her whip like a Sourdough.

“And now,” said Michael, “you can take me out to Crooked Pine again, and I’ll see how good a dogpuncher you are.”

Sue piled the robes over him and started out. She rounded Crooked Pine with a flourish and then cracked her whip high above the dogs. It made a lovely sound in the still, cold air. Michael motioned to her to stop. Sue wondered what she had done wrong.

“You drive very well, Sue,” he said, “but you don’t drive with style. Keep your head up and your back straight and when you order your dogs to stop, do it snappily. Like this—*Mush!*” called Michael, in just the way Sergeant Whiteside used to roar in Regina at the new recruits.

“Do you remember my teaching you to salute?” Sue nodded. “And then Monty came and taught you that you must salute with ‘snap, precision, and grace.’” Sue nodded again. “Well, that’s how you must learn to drive, with ‘snap, precision, and grace.’ There must be style, Sue, in everything you do. Let’s try again.”

Sue thought of the Sergeant Major. “*Mush! Mush!*” she cried. Blizzard led off at a fast trot, faster than he had ever used before.

“My gracious,” thought Sue, “that old Blizzard’s been fooling me. Perhaps he goes fast enough to run in the race.”

She spoke to Louie about it that night.

“I don’t know, Miss Sue,” he said. “There are some very smart dog teams in that race and maybe my dogs are too old by now. Mr. Consy has one very fine team. He raised them himself from puppies. Last year he lost the race at the Turn. He race his dogs too fast when he start, and they cannot make the big turn without an upset. The dogs behind all tangled up with his and there is such a dog fight as you never did see.” Old Louie chuckled, as he remembered.

“And Consy was beaten by a little boy,” he concluded. “Oh, such a little boy, with three old dogs, but he drove steady and he weighed next to nothing, so he won.”

"If Consy don't win this year it will be too bad."

"Why?" asked Sue.

"Why?" answered Louie. "Because he will be too old next year to enter, that's why."

Consy was late for French that afternoon. He explained that Old Whiskers had been crabby.

"I can't remember those old Latin verbs," he told Sue's mother. "And he said he was sick and tired of me and the next time I didn't know my lessons he'd gate me. I can't learn Latin, Mrs. Winston, when my lead dog's got a sore foot. I can't think of anything else with the races only two days away."

"I know," said Mrs. Winston. "But, perhaps it'll be all right by that time. Suppose I excuse your French today and let you go home and study your Latin."

Consy jumped up so quickly that he upset all his books. "You're a jim-dandy, Mrs. Winston," he said as he picked them up, but, as he rose, he gave Sue's curls a tug.

"How are your dogs, girlie-girl?" he whispered.

"What was it Consy said to you?" asked Sue's mother.

"Oh, I couldn't tell you," said Sue, "but I just hate that boy. . . . Mummy," she coaxed, "old Louie says I drive very well now, and that if you say so, I can go into the dog races. May I, Mummy?"

"Oh, Sue darling, I'm not sure," answered her mother. "I don't know. We'll have to ask your father."

It was supper time before her father came home and he said he'd have to think about it and that meant waiting until the next day. Sue could hardly sleep that night with impatience. Grown-ups took so long to decide everything, she thought.

But the next day both parents said *no*. They had made inquiries and thought it too heavy a race for Sue. There would be at least a dozen teams racing, a great deal of dog fighting and upset sleighs, and altogether it would be a pretty rough-and-tumble affair. She might be hurt.

"You'd think I was a bit of sugar," she complained to Louie, when she told him the bad news. "And I'm not. I'm as tough as a nut. I heard Michael tell Daddy so."

"Softly, softly," said old Louie. "Someday you will be older and then you can make race all day long." But Sue knew he was disappointed, too.

When he called for her next morning, he was all dressed in a new plaid parka and fur-trimmed red cap.

"Ask Madame, your mother, if I may take you to watch the race," he said. Sue rushed up the stairs and down again.

"I may go," she cried.

"Then put your chamois jacket on under your coat," he said. "It is not so cold, but you will be standing still a long time."

Sue put on her fur cap and tied the lappets over her ears, tucked the scarf in at the top of her jacket and pulled over it the blanket coat.

"I'm ready," she said. She lifted the smart red whip from its nail on the wall. "I think I'll take this, Louie," she said. "It'll make me feel cheerier," and she and Louie started out together.

"My goodness," exclaimed Sue, "I never knew there'd be a crowd like this!"

The main street of the town was jammed with a laughing, restless crowd, all of them in their brightest coats and caps, and everyone having a good time. The center of the street had been cleared and across it were drawn up more than a dozen dog teams, three dogs to each team and all of them using the tandem-hitch. Some of the dogs were old, some thin, some fat, but all of them restless and excited, barking and jumping and getting tangled in their traces. The sleighs

were just like the dogs, Sue noticed, some old and shabby, some shiny and new, some painted, and some rough and clumsy. In the very center, Sue saw Consy's bright red sleigh and his team of beautiful gray huskies. Standing beside them was Hawkins. Sue rushed over to him.

"When did you come back, Hawkins?" she cried. "And where's Consy? Isn't he racing his dogs?"

"I got back from Forty Mile late last night," said Hawkins, smiling at her. "As for Master Consy, if he doesn't hurry down quick, he'll never get in this race. It's going to start soon."

"Yes, but where is he?" asked Sue.

Hawkins laughed. "Well, Miss Sue," he said, "if you must know, he had an awful row with his pater this morning. It seems that Old Whiskers has been complaining that he won't learn his lessons and right in Master Consy's hearing Old Whiskers was told to keep Master Consy in until he did. And," said Hawkins, "it looks as if Old Whiskers was carrying out orders to a fare-thee-well."

Sue wasn't quite sure what that meant, but it sounded pretty bad. She looked anxiously down the street. There was still no sign of Consy. The Mounties were starting to line the teams and their young drivers across the street. Both drivers and dogs were fretting to be gone. Sue thought the drivers very tough looking, even though they weren't much older than herself. A big boy near her had a fine team, which he was crowding into Consy's place. Louie came over and took Consy's team as Hawkins joined Michael at the starting post.

"Where is Mr. Consy?" Louie asked. Sue told him.

"Oh, Louie," she cried. "They're going to start and he isn't here! It's the last year he can race."

"Too bad," said old Louie, shaking his head. He looked at Sue. "Too bad," he said. "His dogs are in good shape but there are some very fast dogs here this morning. It would have been one fine race," Louie sighed, and shrugged his shoulders.

Sue remembered her heartache when she had been refused permission to race and Consy's anxiety over his lead dog's sore foot. And now, when it was well again, he couldn't be in the race because of some miserable old Latin verbs. Michael's voice rang out.

"Steady your dogs, everyone! I'm going to count one, two, three. At three, I shall fire my pistol . . . and you start. Don't crowd each other. Steady your dogs!"

Old Louie was holding the red sleigh steady. Still no sign of Consy.

"*One!*"

"*Two!*"

Sue couldn't stand it. She pulled off her big coat.

"*Three!*"

The pistol shot rang out. There was a roar from the crowd. "They're off!" She grabbed the handlebars. Old Louie pushed the whip into her hand.

"*Mush!*" screamed Sue, and, a full length behind, was away.

Away through a cheering noisy crowd, away after a mix-up of dogs, sleighs, and drivers. Away through the frosty air, flying past the houses and into the country, and, drawing steadily ahead of her, the other teams.

"Yo-h, ho-h, my beauties!" she cried. "Yo-h, ho-h!" The dogs gained a little.

Somewhere a voice came echoing back to her. "*Ride steady*"—a voice from the prairies, Smith's voice.

"Shuh, shuh!" she cried again, as she had with the wild horses. Her dogs were gaining. She wriggled her toes around the runners.

“Oh-h, yo-h, hoh!”

The lead dog moved steadily forward. They were creeping up. They passed a team. They swung past two others.

Sue felt as if her heart would burst. She hadn't known dogs could run so fast, that holding one's balance could be so hard. She wondered if she could make it. She heard a voice calling.

“Keep on going! Keep on going!”

Sue laughed. It was her own voice.

“Mush!”

The lead dog settled into his traces. They left another team behind. They were nearing Crooked Pine now. Two teams were fighting by the trail. She swung out. It lost time, she knew, but she had no time for a fight.

“On! On!” She couldn't tell how many were ahead of her now. She only knew that in a few minutes the chief test of the race would be over.

“Oh-h, yo-h, ho-h-h!” she cried, and, as the team rounded the turn, she jumped off and tilted her sleigh on the inner curve. There was a blinding mix-up of snow, dogs, bumps, and slides. She jumped again, felt the sleigh slide, then steady under her. Lifting the red whip, she cracked it blindly through the air.

“Yo-h, hoh! Yo-h, hoh-h-h!” she cried.

Faster, faster, faster still, the dogs raced on. They passed other teams and suddenly there was only a long white road in front of her.

“On! On!” she cried. *“Mush, my beauties!”*

Up and over the crest of the little knoll—two teams in front of her now. The road was no longer clear and white. Old Louie's voice came back to her:

“Always trust your lead dog.”

Once again the red whip cracked out its message. The sleigh lurched. There was snow in her eyes, frost on her lashes. She couldn't see the teams she passed. The road was clear and white again. There were people at the roadside now, houses, stores—a dizzy, flying picture.

She heard a gun.

“Steady on,” a voice cried. The dogs eased a bit.

“Ste-a-d-y on. . . .”

It was Michael.

“Ste-a-d-y, there.”

It was Louie.

“Stea-d-y-y-y. . . .”

It was Hawkins.

“Sue, my darling.”

It was her mother, smiling.

“Well run, Sue!”

It was her laughing father.

“Well done, Susannah!”

It was the Superintendent.

“Quiet, quiet.”

It was Consy, holding his lead dog's head.

“I take it all back,” he said. *“You're not a girlie-girl.”*



CHAPTER X

MAGIC

The afternoon of the race was almost as exciting as the race itself for, after luncheon, Consy had come down with a present for Sue. It was wrapped up in a cardboard box and he warned her to be careful opening it.

"It won't break," he said, "but it's dry and it chips."

"What is it?" asked Sue, handling the box carefully.

"Guess!" he said.

Sue lifted back the soft yellow paper. In the box was a dry striped skin, a funny gray-brown skin with diamond-shaped markings on it.

Sue caught her breath. She was almost sure, but not sure enough.

"It's my rattlesnake skin," said Consy, proudly. "I caught and skinned it myself. Isn't it a beauty?" Consy lifted the skin out and held it at arm's length. "He was a bad rattler," he said, "but I finished him and now he's yours."

Sue couldn't see how anyone could part with such a treasure, or how anyone could be so nice as Consy was when you really knew him.

"Say, Sue," he said, "did you know that there was a prize for that race this morning?"

Sue shook her head. "A prize?" she asked. "What kind and where is it?"

"It's twenty-five dollars," said Consy, "and it's to be shared between us. I get half because I trained the dogs, and you get half because you drove so well. Only I don't get my half because no member of the Force ever accepts prizes or gifts from anyone."

"I belong to the Force," said Sue, "so that means I can't have the prize either."

She was determined she would be as much like Consy as she could. He was such a nice boy now, she thought. "Who has the twenty-five dollars?" she asked.

Consy explained that Snakey Jim gave the prize money, but that instead of giving you the money, he gave you twenty-five dollars' worth of goods from his store.

"That seems a funny business," said Sue. But Consy said it was "the way of the Yukon," and Sue took his word for it.

He wanted to show her how well he could drive his own dogs, so he tucked Sue into his sleigh, and they started out on the trail toward Forty Mile. Sue snuggled down in the fur robes. She felt very warm inside, very happy and very grand, driving down the street with the Superintendent's son and with the dogs that had won the prize.

On the dogs trotted, as if they hadn't gone over the trail at breakneck speed earlier in the day. Consy had tricks of driving that old Louie hadn't taught her. She decided to take a few lessons from Consy, when suddenly a small, dark figure appeared on the trail ahead. It was an Indian child, poorly dressed against the cold, dirty, and unhappy.

The lead dog slowed down. He seemed restless and uneasy, for there were cries coming from the child in front of them. Sue jumped off and ran forward.

"Who is she," she cried, "and where's she come from?"

Consy knew. "She's one of the Chilkat Indians," he said. "They are always losing their kids." They put the baby child in the furs and Consy turned off the trail a short way farther on.

There was a small shack there. An Indian woman was cutting wood outside. She picked up the baby and carried it indoors. Sue and Consy followed her.

"My *gracious!*" said Sue. "I've never seen anything like this before."

It was a one-roomed cabin. A box stove stood in the middle. There were untidy bunks on either side, soiled dishes, wet clothing, snowshoes, and tattered blankets lying around. The air was heavy and sour. Sue backed out of the cabin and stood in the doorway. The woman could only speak a few words of English but from her they learned that she and her children were hungry, that the father was a guide and had not been home for weeks. They had no money. The baby had wandered away without the mother noticing. Sue couldn't understand it all very well, but she could see how unhappy everyone was and Sue couldn't bear being hungry, ever.

She got back into the sleigh feeling miserable. All the fun of the day was gone. Consy looked unhappy, too.

"You know that prize money?" asked Sue, finally. Consy nodded eagerly. "Well, if we spent that money for food for these poor people, it would be the Force taking care of them, wouldn't it?"

"You bet," said Consy.

"Let's go and ask old Louie," said Sue.

Full of plans, the two raced back home again. When they got there, Louie made them talk to Mrs. Winston. She listened carefully and thought it was an excellent plan. Together, the four of them went down to Snakey Jim's Emporium.

It was a big place, crowded with food in tins and boxes, warm miners' clothes, gay silk scarves, woolen underwear, flannel shirts, high felt hats, mining tools, parkas, blankets, sweets, toffee, dried fruits, flour, tea—in fact, everything anyone could ever think of.

They told Snakey Jim, who was called Snakey Jim because his eyes were so small and bright, how they wanted to spend the prize money. He thought it a splendid idea and threw in a few bars of soap when Sue told him how dirty all the children were.

Sue wanted to buy food only. But Consy thought a few clean shirts wouldn't do the family any harm.

"I went farther in the cabin than you did," he said, "and they need clean shirts."

With Consy's sleigh laden, they started back once more along the trail, this time with Mrs. Winston riding behind old Louie's dogs and Louie himself on the runners. When they reached the cabin, Louie, who could speak a little Chilkat, told the Indian mother she would have to clean things up and take better care of her children.

"If you do," he said, "this little one will take care of you. If you don't, she'll tell the Mounties to come out and—they'll fix you up!"

Louie was very severe but Sue thought the Indian woman seemed very happy as she thanked them over and over again and promised to do everything that Louie told her.

Back home, there was tea almost as gay and exciting as the ones Sue used to have at Bachelors' Hall, with everybody dropping in to say hello and congratulate her and Consy on the day's adventures. And when it was time for everyone to go, Mrs. Winston took Sue and Consy into the studio.

"I know you two don't like French lessons very well," she told them, "but the French have a delightful way of describing the poor and friendless. Whoever takes care of anyone less fortunate than himself is called a 'marraine' and the one looked after a 'filleul.'"

"So you and Consy have become marraines," she continued, "and those poor little Indian children are your filleuls. Which means that you'll both have to look after them from now on."

Consy nodded briefly. "I'll divvy up if you say so, Mrs. Winston," he said, "and Sue is willing to help me keep an eye on them."

That night, when she was going over all the day's adventures with Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, Sue

wondered whether it hadn't been the best day yet. There had been many wonderful days—the day of the Jubilee procession, the day she had won her gold crest, the day of Monty and Vicky's wedding, the day . . . She finally gave up trying to decide which had been the best.

All she knew as she drifted off to sleep was that this day had been perfect—for never would she have to listen to anyone telling her she was a girlie-girl again.

But the adventures of the race were not ended yet, Sue discovered next morning. Quite early there was a knock at the back door and Sue's mother opened it. Louie Champagne stood there. He looked slightly anxious and held a box in his arms, covered with a blanket. The box was bobbing about in a most curious fashion.

"Bon jour, bon jour!" he said. "I bring a present for Miss Sue, if you will allow her to have it, Madame. Yesterday, she make good race. Today, a little gift from old Louie."

Sue loved presents and a present at eleven in the morning was a splendid adventure. It meant an interruption of her history lesson, too. She was tired of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella, and she thought Columbus's vessel *The Golden Hind* not nearly as interesting as *The White Lady* had been. A present in the morning! Whatever could it be that bounced in such a funny way?

"Come in, Louie," said her mother. "What have you there?"

"Hens," said Louie, proudly. "Hens. Three of them, Madame, and all of them laying."

"Fresh eggs!" cried Sue's mother. "Oh, Louie, what a lovely present! Let me see!"

So Sue's friend uncovered the box and there were three hens—a black one and two white ones. All good layers. What a day that was! Daddy had left his painting, Sue her lessons, her mother her cooking, and all joined with Louie in making a warm, cosy corner in the storeroom for the hens.

"They must be warm," said Louie, "if they are to lay."

A barrier had to be built to keep Bombardier and the huskies from getting at them. But they all settled down in a few days and everyone told Sue how lucky she was to have hens' eggs. She used to hunt for them every morning after she had fed her dogs and played with Bomby and said her multiplication table—and a day came when there were two eggs.

"I think I'll make a cake," said her mother, and with the cookbook between them, she and Sue sifted flour and beat up the eggs and opened another tin of condensed milk, and used a little of their precious sugar. Finally they put it in the cake tin and closed the oven door of the *Pride of Aberdeen*.

The kitchen was all floury and while they waited for their cake to bake, they tidied up and washed the dishes. Sue's mother looked at the clock.

"How would you like to ask the young officers to tea?" she said to her husband. "I've baked a cake." Sue's mother looked very important. "It will be a change from that everlasting bannock."

Sue's father smiled and went off to ask their friends to tea. Sue and her mother tidied the living room, too, and then, seeing the forty minutes were up, opened the oven door.

There was cake tin there, but no cake!

"Wherever is it?" asked Sue. Her mother lifted the tin out. In the bottom there was a tough, leathery strip of cake, not at all what the cookbook had called a "delicious fluffy cake." Sue's mother put her head down on the kitchen table and wept.

"I'm no good," she wailed. "Sue, I can't even cook and I've wasted two precious eggs."

Sue caught her breath. She had never seen her mother cry. She didn't know a mother *could*

cry.

“Hush, Mummy,” she said. “Let’s give it to the chickens to eat and nobody’ll know.”



“Oh, but Sue, I’ve asked people to tea, and now there is no cake.” Her mother wept again.

Sue felt this was serious. What would the Mounties have done in such a case?

“Whenever in doubt, consult your superior officer,” Michael had told her.

She reached for her fur cap and coat, her moccasins were handy, and she slipped out the front door and made for Headquarters.

“I want to speak to the Superintendent,” she said. It was easier to reach a Superintendent than it had been to reach the Commissioner.

“You told me to come to you if I was ever in any trouble,” she began.

“Good girl,” he said. “But what’s the trouble?”

“It’s Mummy,” explained Sue. “She made a cake and it turned out all wrong and she’s crying. How do you make a cake, Superintendent?”

“Well,” he said, “as a Superintendent of the Force I have had many requests but never before have I been asked how to make a cake. But I’m not going to let a cake stump me. Let’s see.” The Superintendent looked thoughtful.

“Did you mother ever cook before she came out here?”

Sue shook her head. “Just toast and scrambled eggs and coffee,” she answered.

The Superintendent nodded understandingly and went into the outside room. When he came back, he started talking about a thing called “magic.”

“It’s a sort of enchantment given one at birth by the fairies,” he said. “If you have it, you’ve the greatest gift of all, for with it you make life a shining adventure to those that journey with you. Your mother has it—the magic of laughter. Your father has it—the magic of adventure which takes him to strange places. Mrs. O’Reilly has it—the magic of cooking. She’s the Constable’s wife and she complains she hasn’t enough to do. She is going home with you now to show your mother how to make a cake.”

“Thank you,” said Sue, who liked the sound of the word “magic.”

But when she went out the door, she turned to smile at the Superintendent. “I think,” she said, “you’ve the magic of kindness,” and she and the Superintendent exchanged salutes.

Mrs. O’Reilly was a very understanding person. She told Sue’s mother that she had had dreadful trouble at first with the use of condensed milk instead of cows’ milk, but that by following the instructions on the can, better results could be obtained. There were no more eggs that day but she laid a tea tray and made little pancakes which she and Sue put together like sandwiches, with brown sugar in between, and soon the house was full of young officers and mining men and Sue watched her mother moving among them. Yes, she thought, she has a magic, for everyone smiles as she passes.

And in the kitchen there was the magic of food and hot spicy smells and a cheerful bustling. And in the studio Sue heard two men talking of her father’s sketches.

“Only a great painter could catch the magic of that sky,” one of them said, looking at a picture of a sunset across the Yukon.

She asked Mrs. O’Reilly about the word.

“Sure,” said Mrs. O’Reilly. “There’s magic in everything. Now if it wasn’t for magic I’d never be out here in the North country, so far from Corrymeela.” She popped a pan of cookies into the oven.

“Yes,” she continued, “it was the magic of a Mountie’s red coat that brought me so far from Ireland.”

Sue nodded. This was magic she could understand. “I know,” she said. “Their coats are the loveliest color, but then gold’s a lovely color, too. . . .”

Mrs. O’Reilly banged the lid of the stove. “I don’t like to hear you talking so much about gold,” she said. “You’ll go crazy about it like everyone else, if you’re not careful. Gold is where your heart is,” she added.

Sue remembered that old Louie had said something just like that about carrying gold around in your heart. It sounded pretty silly to her.

“Still, it’s a nice color,” she said.

“Sure,” said Mrs. O’Reilly. “But blue is a good color, too. Once I had a blue dress. It wasn’t a pale blue, yet not a dark blue.”

“Blue, like a blue bag?” suggested Sue.

Mrs. O’Reilly nodded. “It was of silk,” she added, “with a lace vestee and a well-fitted basque.” Mrs. O’Reilly put her hands on her hips and held her breath as if to make herself quite

slender. “The sleeves were leg-of-mutton,” she went on, “and I wore a gold chain and locket. My hat was blue straw with a feather.” Mrs. O’Reilly beat up some fresh batter. “If I say it myself, I was a picture in it.”

“When did you wear it?” asked Sue.

“On my wedding day,” she answered, with a toss of her head, “and O’Reilly said I looked like a whin flower, set in a sapphire sea.”

Sue knew what a sapphire was—a lovely blue stone like her mother’s ring—but a whin flower? That was something new. “What color is a whin flower?” she asked.

“Gold,” said Mrs. O’Reilly, ecstatically, “the loveliest gold in the world, pure gold.”

“Like a mine,” said Sue, slyly, and they both laughed.

When Sue was feeding her dogs the following morning, Louie came down to bring some frozen fish for them. He knew about magic, too.

“I wish those hens would lay more eggs,” he said. “Big Jake down at Jake’s Eating House has one bad cold and the only thing he wants is an eggnog—and not a hen’s egg in the Yukon today.”

Louie looked very sad as he went away.

About twelve o’clock there was a great cackling in the storeroom and Sue went and hunted busily. A cackle generally meant an egg. Blackie *had* laid an egg, and, with it in her hands, Sue made her way through Dawson to Jake’s Eating House. She pushed open the door and slid in very quietly. The large room was full of rough-looking men, seated at tables. Everyone was busily eating or talking loudly and at first no one noticed her.

Slowly she made her way up the room. She knew no one there and was beginning to wonder how she could find Big Jake who was ill, when a man called to her from a table.

“Come over here, Missy,” he said. Sue went over.

“Do you know where I can find Big Jake?” she asked.

A waiter came down the room.

“What do you want him for?” asked the miner.

“I’ve brought him a new-laid egg,” she said, “to make an eggnog of and I should like to give it to him myself. My black hen laid it this morning.”

There were men crowding around the table and it was very hot, Sue thought, and they were all listening, but they seemed friendly and smiled at her.

“Big Jake’s in bed and I don’t think you’d better go up to see him. He’s got an awful cold,” said an old miner near by, “but if you’ll come with me, I’ll take you to his partner.”

The crowd parted to let her and her new friend through and they went up to the end of the room to a big table covered with pies and puddings.

Sam Ladue stood there, heaping plates faster than Sue ever imagined could be managed.

“Hello, Pete,” he said. “What ya want?”

Pete explained about Sue and her black hen and Sam turned.

“Christmas!” he said, “You’re a nice kid.” He took the egg from her, carefully. “Jake’ll be very glad to have this.”

“Look, Missy, have you had your chow?”

“What’s chow?” asked Sue.

There was a great laugh at that and Sam lifted her to a high stool at a table and there she had her dinner. She was brought a large plate of sowbelly and asked if she would like some axle grease on it. Sue wrinkled her nose.

“I don’t think so,” she said.

But Pete whispered to her that axle grease meant gravy. “Yes, thank you,” she said, and then, with Pete helping her, she asked for spuds, which she found were potatoes, and “red paint,” which was mining language for catsup.

Sue poured catsup on everything. She was not allowed such things at home and Sue dearly loved catsup. She wished she could eat at Jake’s every day. Rice-and-raisin pudding, called “spotted calf,” was offered her, and a suet pudding with currants called “spotted dog.” She chose spotted dog and had a liberal helping of “black strap,” or molasses, over it.

Sue had a busy time, when suddenly the crowd parted and she looked up into the stern, unsmiling faces of Michael and her father.

“Are you through with your pudding, Sue?” her father asked.

Sue nodded. She couldn’t speak, for that last spoonful of pudding had been enormous.

“Then thank your friends and come with us.” Sue slipped off her stool.

“My gracious,” she thought. “I’m certainly in for a bad time,” but she curtsied and followed her father out very quietly.

Her father and Michael walked so fast she could only barely follow them, trotting. At home, Sue’s mother was very pale.

“Sue, dear, where have you been? We all thought you were lost,” she said, but her father broke in.

“What did the Superintendent tell you,” he asked, “about entering any building?”

“He told me I was never to go without a grown-up,” answered Sue, in a very small voice.

“Why did you go?” asked her father, sharply.

“I forgot,” said Sue, “and besides I wanted to give Jake an egg.”

Michael broke in. “I think, sir,” he said, “that this is a case for the Superintendent. May she report to him at eleven tomorrow?”

Sue’s father nodded, and Sue was sent to bed for the rest of the day. She was not allowed books or sewing, not even Bombardier. She could hear her father whistling in the studio below, her mother and Mrs. O’Reilly cooking in the kitchen, the sound of the steel runners over the snow outside, and yet here she was in bed in a world that held such exciting new things as red paint and spotted dog.

Sue smiled naughtily to herself. “It was worth it,” she said, as she remembered the lashings of black strap.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTMAS PLANS

“It’s a quarter to eleven,” said Sue’s mother. “Are you all wrapped up?”

Sue nodded. It seemed a dreadful thing to go out in the cold all by yourself, and to be sent down in disgrace to see the Superintendent. She would have liked to ask her mother to take her, but there had been no suggestion of that and Sue hardly knew what to do. Everyone seemed very chilly to her.

“It’s time to go,” said her mother, quietly.

Sue opened the door and went out. It was so cold that her moccasins made a crunch on the ground, so cold that her breath almost froze in the air before her, but not so cold as Sue felt inside. She went up the steps of Headquarters and entered. There was a miner sitting in the outside office. At the window a tired-looking man stood with a little bag in front of him. A woman with a yellowish collie was weeping.

Michael came in and beckoned to the miner. He disappeared into the Superintendent’s room. It was not so long before he came out with some papers in his hands, and smiling.

“I thank you, Mr. Superintendent,” Sue heard him say. “You are one very smart colonel. Now I have my mine and one day I go home to Quebec where my grandchildren are and tell them how smart you are. I thank you, Mr. Superintendent. My next grandchild, I shall call by your name.”

Michael beckoned the woman and her collie. She came out in a few minutes. She had stopped crying and, as she passed Sue, she said, “My dog is not to be killed. The Police say he is not mad, just hungry. I am to take him to the Sergeant for a dinner.”

The tired man entered the room. Sue heard the Superintendent’s voice raised. He sounded very happy. The tired man came out, still carrying his bag. A constable went with him. Sue learned later that his bag was full of gold, that he didn’t know where to put it, as he was foreign, and that the Superintendent had sent him with an escort to the bank.

“Miss Winston.”

Sue shivered and got up. There were three tables in the Superintendent’s room and the Superintendent moved from one to the other. He read from a little book to Sue. It was the date on which she had promised never to enter a building without a grown-up. The Superintendent’s eyes snapped.

“If there is one thing I dislike more than another, Sue, it is insubordination,” he said. “You gave your word, you took your orders, and *yet*”—the way he paused after *yet* was terrifying—“without any excuse, you go off and enter Jake’s Eating House, *alone. Why?*”

Sue explained that she had only thought of Jake’s wanting an eggnog, and of how her hen had laid an egg and that was why she had forgotten her orders.

“Did you forget?” thundered the Superintendent, “or was it that you didn’t want to remember?”

“The last,” said Sue, who couldn’t have said another word at that moment without crying.

“Then you were *really* disobedient,” said the Superintendent, more quietly.

“Yes,” whispered Sue.

“Sue,” said the Superintendent, “there was no reason why you shouldn’t have gone to Jake’s Eating House with your egg. No one there or anywhere in the Yukon would hurt a child . . . *but*, you are young and adventurous. We are few people here and very busy. When you

disappear, you only give us extra work to do, and we are already over-worked. When we make an order, it is because it is best for everyone, yet you, a member of the Force, disobey, give us extra work, and give worry to your mother and your father. If you were in my place, what would you do?"

"I've done it," whispered Sue. "I've brought it," and she laid her shining gold star on the table. "At the barracks at Regina, whenever I had a bad-conduct sheet, it was taken away from me," she said, "so I thought I'd bring it with me, rather than have to go back for it."

There was a long silence in the room.

"Sue," said the Superintendent, "I don't like removing the badge from a member of the Force. I've never done it and I don't want to begin now. Will you promise me faithfully that never again will you break your word in the Yukon?"

"Yes, Superintendent," said Sue, "faithfully."

The Superintendent pushed the golden star back to her.

He rose and saluted. Clutching her star in her hand, Sue saluted silently.

Late that night she was awakened by voices. One voice in particular rose above the others. It was the Superintendent.

"What I feel you should do, Winston," he said, "is give the child an out-of-doors companion. She is used to an active life and just driving her sleigh and dogs around is not enough. She must be able to go farther than she can alone. All this winter should be spent as much as possible in out-of-doors sports. Why not give old Louie Champagne the job of looking after her? He is reliable, entirely trustworthy, and Sue likes him. He taught her to drive his dogs. Fix up a corner of your storeroom and let him sleep there. He will look after fires, do all the odd jobs, and be here at night when you want to come over to play a game of whist with us. Make him understand that his job is Sue and you need have no further worries."

"Gee whittakers," said Sue to herself, "I hope they say yes."

They did say yes, and were very pleased with the suggestion, so that from that day forward old Louie and Sue were inseparable. Day after day he trained her so that she grew more and more skilled in driving her dogs. He taught her to snowshoe, to skate, and how to bed the fires down for the night. First, she found, you made a bed of red-hot coals; on this you laid green wood to hold back the dry wood from too rapid burning; lastly you filled the oven with green wood, so that it would be dry for the morning. And always, when he had bedded down the fires for the night, old Louie would say, "Tomorrow is another day."

"Why do you always say that, Louie?" she asked.



The old man shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know, Miss Sue. Perhaps to finish today and to greet tomorrow. My father in Quebec and my grandfather before him spoke thus, and I also.”

He taught her how to clean the lamps and that, Sue found, was a very tricky business. The wicks had to be wiped off, first, with a bit of paper, so that all the blackened and burned edges were even again. The burner had to be wiped, oil poured into the bowl of the lamp and, last of all, the lamp chimney polished. This was complicated. First you wiped the inside with a bit of paper to take off the soot, then you took a long breath and breathed heavily into the top of the glass chimney and, from the other end, you rubbed the inside madly with a soft cloth. Next, you held the chimney to the light and squinted your eyes to make sure that there wasn’t a mark on the glass. It was such a business that very soon Sue learned to go to bed in the dark, rather than clean a chimney the next day.

Winter food was a business, too. All the oranges and lemons were frozen and so were the potatoes. They had to be soaked in water for hours to thaw them out for cooking or eating.

All water was delivered at the door in huge blocks of ice, which had to be melted in the kitchen. Sue learned to be careful of even a cupful of water, as she realized the trouble it was to fill the water barrel every day. For washing, Louie filled the big snow barrel and let the snow

melt. It made nice, soft water, Sue discovered, and far too precious to use to wash Bomby or Field Marshal.

Field Marshal was a trouble. He didn't like the huskies. He didn't like the cold, and barked and snapped every time she arrived at Headquarters to take him out.

Sue couldn't understand it, but to Consy the reason was quite clear. "You're too bossy," he said to Sue. "You want to have things all your own way. Well, Fieldy is Irish and the Irish are used to getting *their* way. If he can't be lead dog of the huskies, he won't play, see?"

"But Fieldy can't be first everywhere," objected Sue.

"Well, he's first at H.Q.," said Consy. "Dad gives him his only cushion to lie on. The Major wraps him in his best sweater to keep him warm on cold nights, and, having some sense, Fieldy stays where he's cock of the walk. Besides, he hasn't a warm coat like the huskies."

"He used to come when I called, even though it was cold," said Sue.

"Yes," said Consy, "but that was before you got to bossing so much. You try a bit of blarney on him the way I do with my dogs and he'll come with you." Consy called to his dogs in a crooning way, just as Little Chief had called to his wild horses, "Coom-coom-coom."

The dogs started away with Sue and Bomby on the sleigh, and Consy running alongside, on their weekly trip to their filleuls.

"Do you think I'm bossy?" Sue asked Mrs. O'Reilly that night when she told her about Field Marshal.

"A bit," said Mrs. O'Reilly, "but I think Mr. Consy's right. Fieldy hasn't the heavy coat of the huskies. The poor creature'd appreciate a nice sweater for Christmas. Now, suppose I bring some wool and needles in the morning and teach you how to knit him a coat? How would that be?"

Sue thought it would be a very fine idea indeed, and after that she knitted busily for Fieldy every afternoon. It was dusk by four o'clock these winter days now, and often when she got up in the morning there would be lamps on the breakfast table. But the little dog coat grew. The body was of bright red wool, the legs of blue with yellow stripes, just like the Mounties wore themselves. The stripes were hard to manage, but Mrs. O'Reilly and Sue's mother helped her with them and it soon looked as if the coat would be finished for Christmas.



Mrs. O'Reilly came every day now, and both Sue and her mother were learning to cook. It seemed strange to be using egg powder instead of eggs, and to make cocoa with water instead of milk, and to be careful over the amounts of sugar. Flour was not only scarce but it cost twenty-four dollars a hundredweight. Sue grew very tired of beans. The only meal they didn't have beans, she said to Mrs. O'Reilly, was breakfast.

"If you were a miner or a dogpuncher, you'd have them for breakfast, too," answered Mrs. O'Reilly. "Besides, beans keep out the cold and make a nice, warm poultice inside you if you're out of doors all day."

Caribou steak was very tough and corn beef came out of tins and was almost without taste. Now and then they allowed themselves the luxury of a goose, frozen after the late hunting. Bear steak, when cooked with wild berries and plenty of spices, made a very good roast, Sue found. Bacon cost a dollar and a half a pound, beans a dollar, kerosene for the lamps fifty dollars a gallon. Candles were a dollar apiece. Sue knew all about the prices, for Michael made her do sums now in her head, such as:

"If a nugget of gold is worth ten dollars, and flour is worth thirty dollars a hundred pounds, how many nuggets would you need to buy one hundred pounds of flour?"

You had to think very hard to follow that, but, after a time, you said three nuggets, and you

were right. Arithmetic this way wasn't so bad, thought Sue.

Cookies, Sue learned, could be made of oatmeal and dripping, with lots of salt and a little flour. They were baked in a flat pan and put together like sandwiches, with a filling of stewed dates or raisins. Once a week Consy and Sue took a batch of cookies and some dried fruit down to the Indian family.

The littlest one, Marie Michaud, was Sue's special favorite, but when Sue talked about Christmas to her, neither she nor the other children seemed interested. That was so strange that she and Consy asked Louie to go along with them and find out what was wrong. Louie talked to the Indian mother and from her learned that she didn't want the children to know that Christmas was near.

"They will want presents," she said, "and if they don't know about it, they will never miss the presents." Neither Sue nor Consy could bear that, particularly when the mother had worked so hard to tidy things up around her cabin.



Sue showed her sovereign to her own mother. “I can buy them all presents with this much money,” she said, “as well as all the rest of my friends.”

But Sue’s mother shook her head. “Not at the price we have to pay for everything here,” she said. “We must be cautious, Sue, and make our money go a long way. Let’s first plan what we can do with spending hardly any.”

They decided that Sue could make shaving balls for all her friends in the Force, so down to Snakey Jim’s Emporium they went and bought all the colored tissue paper he had. Sue’s mother showed her how to make the shaving balls. First, you folded the tissue paper into a square about the size of a saucer. Then, you wet a lead pencil in your lips, the very way you had

always been told not to do and, with the wet pencil, outlined the rim of the saucer on the tissue paper. That made a good black mark. Next, with a sharp pair of scissors, you cut the tissue paper around the lead-pencil markings. That gave you dozens of rounds of tissue paper. These you folded in half, then in quarters, then in eighths, and so on, until they were as narrow as you could fold them. These were strung on a piece of string and tied tightly together. Then the real fun began. You opened the rounds of paper until each piece looked like a half-opened flower, and at last you had a large, fluffy ball. A man could hang one of these over his washstand and, by tearing out a paper flower each morning, have something on which to wipe his razor.

Sue made Michael the biggest one. It was of three shades of blue paper, and she thought it looked very like a forget-me-not, so she wrote on the card bearing his name: "When this you see, remember me." She made Hawkins a red and yellow one, and the Superintendent one of all yellow, like the sun. There were many others, too, and much sewing and knitting.

It was hard to hide things in so little a house, but Mrs. O'Reilly helped her knit a pair of bed socks in rosy pink for her mother. Sue thought her mother would know where her knitting ended and Mrs. O'Reilly's began—Mrs. O'Reilly's knitting was so smooth and her own so rough and uneven, but Mrs. O'Reilly told her not to worry.

"No lady ever looks a gift horse in the tooth," she said, "and if ever I saw a lady, it's your mother."

Mrs. Winston took the silver foil off the tea packages and made small silver flowers and a star.

"We'll hang these on a tree in the studio, Sue," she said, "and have all our friends in on Christmas Eve. We must be sure not to forget any of them."

In the storeroom there were wild geese and ptarmigan, and Mrs. Winston and Mrs. O'Reilly made cranberry sauce out of the wild, dried cranberries and applesauce out of dried apples. One day Mrs. Consell came over and talked for a long time about what "Mrs. Beaton says."

"When I was coming up here first," said Mrs. Consell, "I made only one request of my husband, and that was that I bring Mrs. Beaton. He refused. He said she was too heavy and that every ounce counted on the trail. But I was very firm," continued Mrs. Consell. "I simply said: 'Charles, either Mrs. Beaton comes with me, or I don't move an inch.'"

"Did she come?" asked Sue.

"Most certainly," said Mrs. Consell.

"Have I ever seen her?" asked Sue. "Where is she?"

Everyone laughed at that, and Sue learned that "Mrs. Beaton" was the name of an English cookbook. "The most famous cookbook in the world," said Mrs. Consell. "In it is food for everyone, everywhere. I brought my copy over today," she continued. Sue looked at the large brown and red book in Mrs. Consell's hand. It seemed as big as a dictionary, as Mrs. Consell started reading out loud from it.

"I've found a recipe for 'Goose Hams,'" she said, "and I like the sound of it. We have more wild geese than we can possibly eat and I thought if you and I, Mrs. Winston, with Mrs. O'Reilly and Sue helping, could only prepare, say, half a dozen of them, we might have a little party here on Christmas Eve, just your family and mine and the young officers. I've saved a tin of English biscuits and a small pot of butter. We could have thin slices of these hams, with the biscuits and butter. It would seem like a bit of home if we could all have such a supper together."

Sue noticed that everyone who spoke of "home" in the Force meant the "Old Country," as England, Ireland, and Scotland were called.

“But how can you make a ham out of a goose?” broke in Sue. This seemed very strange to her.

“It’s very simple, my dear,” said Mrs. Consell, opening the book. “Mrs. Beaton tells us how.”

During the next few days, Sue learned how to turn a goose into a ham. First you cleaned the goose and then rubbed it with spices, salt, and coarse sugar. Then you put it in a big tub in a brine pickle and turned the goose every day, after rubbing fresh sugar and spice into it. At the end of fourteen days, old Louie rolled each goose in sawdust and hung them over a green wood fire where for days they were mildly smoked.

Then the Pride of Aberdeen groaned as the eight geese, one after the other, were popped into the oven, wrapped in a covering of flour and water, to cook for two hours each. As each ham came out of the oven, Mrs. O’Reilly placed it on the high shelf nearest the window.

Sue and Consy packed baskets for their filleuls. There were oranges and warm socks, a doll, some games, bright beads, hair ribbons, a mouth organ and a bugle, two new blankets for the mother, and more food.

“We’ll have to work very hard to get everything done in time,” said Sue, for it was already only seven days away from Christmas, and her mother was tacking boughs of evergreen over the doors and the house had a pleasant, piny smell.

There was a knocking at the door. Sue opened it. An oldish man, looking very like Louie, stood there. Behind him was a team of six dogs, and, behind them, three sleighs laden with parcels.

“They are addressed to Mrs. Winston,” said the dogpuncher, “and they have come first-class rate all the way from London.”

Louie went out and helped unload the parcels while the dogpuncher told them of how he had traveled with this special load as fast as he could. “If I arrived before Christmas Day, I was to get double my fee, Madame,” he said, “and here it is seven days before Christmas. I hope it will be happy for you.”

Louie and Sue’s father unwrapped the outside papers and boxes of all the packages. Mrs. O’Reilly pounced on the papers. “Let’s fix the kitchen up for Christmas, too,” she said, and showed Sue how to fold and cut papers so that they looked like scalloped embroidery. These they placed over the edge of the kitchen shelves.

There were no lessons, either, just short winter days full of Christmas excitement. Sue’s mother wanted Christmas trees, but was too busy to go out to find them.

“Jimmy, you take Sue and Consy,” she said, “and bring me back Christmas trees. I want three small trees and one large one. The large one must be tall, but not too tall, slim but not too slim, with fat branches at the bottom to hang things on without having to reach up too far. And I want two small trees for outside the front door and a very small tree for the kitchen for Sue’s dogs.”

“For such a little person, Daddy, Mummy can order an awful lot of big things,” said Sue, laughing.

Over the snow they went and found the trees just as Mrs. Winston wanted them. Back they came over the crisp, hard snow, with their breath and that of the dogs rising like steam in front of them. And then what a tussle to get the big tree into the house without breaking its branches! Outside the front door old Louie cut holes in the snow to hold the little trees, one on either side, and poured pails of water in the holes to freeze and hold the trees up straight and strong.

In the studio old Louie held the big tree straight, while Sue's father and Consy braced it at the foot. The branches were tied to the ceiling and the wall. At the top there was the shining silver star, and each branch was tipped with a piece of silver. Under the tree they heaped a scarlet Hudson's Bay blanket, and there the packets from England were laid. The shaving balls were added to the tree and made gay spots of color. Oranges, tied in red mosquito netting, completed the decoration. Sue thought it the prettiest tree she had ever seen. She felt the parcels under the tree. Some were knobbly, some soft and slinky, and others so hard that she couldn't even think what was inside them. She only hoped Christmas would come soon.

Early in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, old Louie and Consy harnessed up their teams and met outside Snakey Jim's. Sue and her mother joined them and all four went in to shop for last-minute presents for the Michauds. Big Jake was there and he and Snakey Jim advised them about presents.

"Those kids like bear grease for their hair," said Jake, "and they've never had enough black strap yet. The boy'd like a knife, and how about some peppermints and a pair of warm gloves?"

"How much will it all be?" asked Consy. "We've only got two dollars and a quarter between us."

"That's exactly what it comes to," said Snakey Jim. "Thank you very much. I'll wish you a happy Christmas tonight, for I'm coming to see your tree."

Sue's mother asked her, as they left, if she knew how many people she had asked to see the tree. Sue shook her head. "I can't remember," she said. "I just asked all my friends, and they all said they're coming."

They got into their sleighs and set out for the Michauds' cabin. There they left their presents, and, with the dark, funny little figures of the Indian family at the door, said good night and Merry Christmas and started off.

It was hardly four o'clock when they left the Michauds' cabin but already the Arctic sky seemed low over them and the stars near enough to touch.

The first house they passed was that of a miner. It was little more than a one-room cabin. There was a light in the window, and, as they went slowly past, the door opened a crack. Full-throated, a woman's voice rose. The song "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" poured out of the house.



Louie and Consy halted the dogs, and all four stayed there listening, even the dogs standing still. The song stopped and Sue's mother walked up to the house. She rapped on the door and a tall, strong woman answered.

"Was it you who sang?" asked Sue's mother. The woman smiled.

"Yes," she said. "Will you come in?" Sue and her mother entered, while Louie and Consy waited with the dogs.

The little cabin was poor, but clean and tidy, and the woman moved with a royal air.

"Loosen your wraps," she said. "You are the little girl who came before the freeze-up . . . and you," turning to Sue's mother, "you are a brave one to come up here. Did you like my singing?"

Sue's mother nodded. "Last year," she said, "I heard that sung at the Viceroy's Carol party on Christmas Eve in India. This year to hear it coming out across the snow, with the stars so low and near, is more lovely still. How is it I have never met you? How is it I have never heard

you sing?"

The woman smiled. "My husband and I have had bad luck," she said, "and having very little money, we did not care to accept hospitality that we could not return."

Sue's mother smiled. "This is a land of gold," she said, "yet not one of us can buy your gift of song. Be generous and come to our house tonight, and sing to us. It's my daughter's first Christmas in the Yukon."

The woman hesitated. "I am Mrs. Larsen," she said. "Perhaps you have heard of me as Lestien."

Mrs. Winston clapped her hands. "Of course!" she cried. "I heard you in Covent Garden years ago, in London."

Mrs. Larsen laughed. "I married and followed my husband out here. Our luck has not been good but our happiness is complete."

There was a knock at the door, and Louie appeared. "My dogs, they are cold," he said. "You come now, Madame, or do I return?"

Back they went over the snow, full of excitement about their new friend and the thought that they might have music that night.

After supper, Sue's mining friends came to the house to see her tree, Jake and Snakey Jim and all of them, slicked up and with hair shining with pomade. They all wore brightly colored scarves and had an air of gay festivity about them. Bomby had a red bow around his neck and Sue's friends brought her little parcels which her mother took and put upon the tree. And more and more people came and nobody went away, until it seemed that the small house could hold no more.

Old Louie and Mrs. O'Reilly heaped coats and caps on the kitchen table. There was a nice, rich Christmasy smell of pine boughs, furs and spices and, just as the house was ready to burst, old Louie came with hot spiced punch, which Sue's pretty mother handed around.

Then a tall fair man arrived with their new-found friend, Mrs. Larsen. Their clothes were old-fashioned but Sue felt they carried themselves as if they were a king and queen. Mrs. Larsen looked around the crowded little room.

"Would you like me to sing a song?" she asked.

"Sweet Rosy O'Grady!" called someone, and Mrs. Larsen nodded. Her lovely voice was softly muted to the size of the room, as she sang the opening verse.

She paused. "Everybody join in," she cried. "Sing the chorus with me now."

"Sweet Rosie O'Grady, my dear little Rose,
She's my steady lady, most everyone knows;
And when we are married, how happy we'll be,
I love sweet Rosie O'Grady and Rosie O'Grady loves me."

"Encore," called everyone. "Encore!" This time a fiddle joined the voices. Sue looked around and saw old Louie standing in the doorway with a fiddle in his hands.

"Annie Rooney," called someone else.

As the song finished, there was a loud knock and Sue's father opened the door. There, standing in the light, was *Jocko*! Jocko, her friend of the steamer trip, who wore such lovely shirts.

"Jocko!" cried Sue. "Oh, Jocko, you've just come in time to see my tree and sing with us."

"Well," said Jocko, grinning, "I said I'd see you Christmas Day and here I am. How are you, friends?" He bent over as he came through the doorway and laid a packet under the tree. "For

you,” he said, “Spitfire.”

Sue heard Consy laugh behind her, but she didn’t mind, for Jocko was asking her if she wouldn’t sing and dance for them all. Sue shook her head. Jocko wore a lovely parka—a blue, purple, and green plaid—and he had a fur cap with a peak, which he held in his hand.

It grew hotter and hotter in the rooms.

“Sue,” said her mother, “one of your guests has asked you to sing. Come, my dear.”

Mrs. Larsen bent over her. They held a whispered conference with old Louie.

“Clear a little space,” called Mrs. Larsen.

Everyone pushed back as well as they could, but it didn’t leave much room.

“I am going to sing the first verse of the ‘Sidewalks of New York,’” said Mrs. Larsen. “Sue will sing the chorus and then you must all join in with us.” Her lovely voice began. Sue’s heart was beating very fast . . . the verse had come to an end . . . old Louie gave her the cue on his fiddle.

“East Side, West Side,
All around the town,
The tots sang ‘ring-a-rosy,’
‘London Bridge is falling down,’
Boys and girls together,
Me and Mamie O’Rorke,
Tripped the light fantastic
On the sidewalks of New York.”

“East Side, West Side,” the voices rang out with her, and Sue danced as Michael had taught her when first she arrived in Regina.

“More! *More!*” cried everyone.

Mrs. Larsen repeated the chorus again, and the voices rose until the walls of the little house seemed to swell outward with the joyous sounds. And then they sang “Jingle Bells” and “Good King Wenceslas,” and more people came and others left until suddenly everyone was gone but the Larsens.

The front door opened and in came the Superintendent, Major Bell, Michael, and various other officer friends. With them was Field Marshal, who promptly tried to fight Bombardier. In fact, Fieldy was so bossy that Bombardier had to be tied to the kitchen table and the rest of the evening Fieldy spent watching the door, so that the husky shouldn’t enter the dining room again.

Mrs. Consell and Sue’s mother began to look very important. They brought out the tin of butter and the English biscuits and the goose hams with frills of paper for decoration. Michael carved very thin slices and everyone placed the bits on their biscuits and thought the goose hams delicious. Sue’s father brought out a bottle of sherry. Louie brought in another goose ham, and Mrs. Consell and her mother looked very proud over the success of their cooking. They all raised their glasses. Sue’s father held his watch in his hand. It was almost midnight.

“It’s Christmas Day,” he said. “Merry Christmas, everyone!” They all lifted their glasses and said “Merry Christmas” to each other, and then Mrs. Larsen and her mother took Sue up to bed and tucked her in. She had never been up so late before.

Downstairs she heard the glorious voice again.

“Oh, little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie,”

the words came floating up to her.

Sue remembered last year's Christmas in the barracks but, lovely as it had been, she liked this one better.

“Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by,”

the voice continued. They were all singing softly downstairs again.

“Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years,
Are met in thee tonight.”

Sue felt very safe and warm and cosy. It was Christmas in Dawson.

CHAPTER XII

GIFTS FROM OVERSEAS

“Isn’t Christmas the loveliest time?” asked Sue, breathlessly.

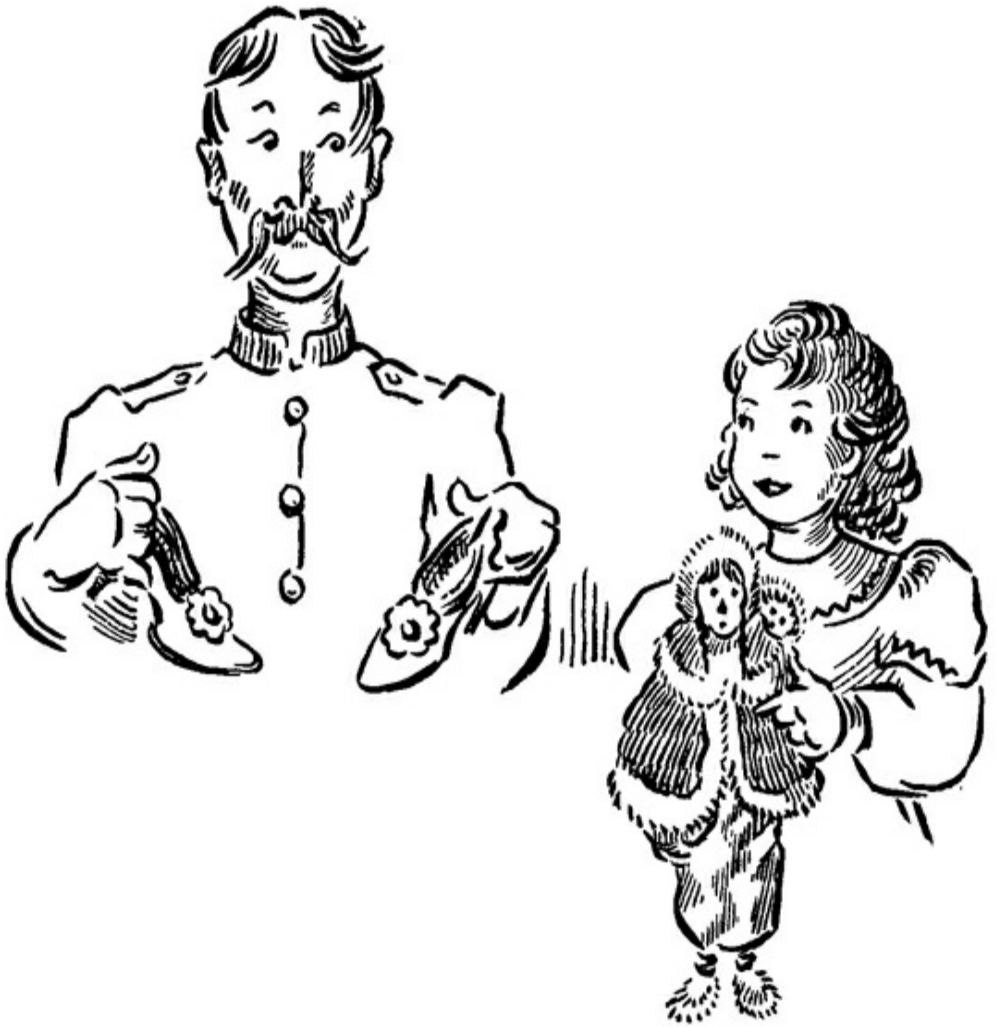
She had made her bed and tidied her room and helped clear away the breakfast dishes and helped dry them, too, and her mother had scurried around with her father, putting things straight from the night before. The dogs had been fed, and Bomby was racing about the house like mad. Everyone was a bit excited, for as soon as things were settled in the house and their friends arrived they would begin taking the presents off the Christmas tree.

Hawkins came first. He had a parcel in his hand and he and Sue went out into the kitchen together to examine it. In it were her mother’s blue satin slippers.

“Remember, Miss Sue? I promised to bring them for you?” asked Hawkins. Sue nodded. “Well, I forgot all about them until last night when I was hunting in my bag for your Christmas present. You see, I brought your present with me, Miss Sue.”

Sue opened it and there was a little fur-trimmed cape with hood of squirrel, small fur-lined shoes and mittens—all in the size that would fit Minnie-Pooh-Pooh.

“Oh, Hawkins!” exclaimed Sue. “No one but you would ever remember that Minnie-Pooh-Pooh couldn’t go out in the cold without proper clothes. Wherever did you get them?”



Hawkins coughed a little and seemed embarrassed.

“I asked your nurse, Matilda, whom I never liked, to make them like a picture I gave her. She made them before we left Regina.”

“Do you know, Hawkins,” said Sue, “I think you liked Matilda better than you pretended.”

Hawkins, however, had another parcel.

“I spoke to your mother about this,” he said, and he untied the string. Inside were three large bones and one small one. “For the dogs,” he said. “For their Christmas tree.” With which Sue flung her arms around Hawkins’s neck and kissed him soundly. She almost scratched her nose on his beautiful waxed mustaches, but it was worth the risk.

“Oh, Hawkins!” she cried. “I think you’re really the best friend ever! You remembered Mummy, and Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, and even the dogs!”

Michael had arrived and the Major and other members of the Force, and with the O’Reillys,

Louie, and Hawkins in the background, they started opening the Christmas presents.

What fun it was! There were warm knitted things from Scotland, heaps and heaps of them; a padded blue silk dressing gown with a hood for her mother, from Lady Charlotte. When she slipped it on and brought the hood over her fair hair, she reminded Sue of the Blue Madonna hanging in Lady Charlotte's house in London.

There were heavy tin boxes that were difficult to open, and inside them were all kinds of good things, such as shortcake, two plum puddings, mincemeat, dates, and crystallized ginger. There were boxes of chocolates, raisins, and licorice and hoarhound candy; and there were hair ribbons of every hue and three dresses for Sue. One was particularly elegant—green serge with five bands of braid around the hem and three bands of braid at the wrists and one at the neck. The second had a skirt of three shades of brown plaid, which reminded Sue of Jocko's shirts, and a waist or jerkin of brown velvet. There were warm gloves and scarves and a little 'possum coat for Sue and a muff and fur cap with a bobble on it, and two sashes.

There were puzzles and, most wonderful of all, a great parcel of magazines and papers. There were letters from Vicky and Monty and the Commissioner and Mrs. Walsh. The Commissioner wrote that this great package of things had come out to Regina, and that he had opened and repacked everything. He had added their presents and written them of all their old friends.

There was another parcel for Sue, tied to the lowest branches and wrapped in shining silver paper. It was from Monty and Vicky and was a velveteen dress of cherry red, made with a simple waist and full skirt. The sleeves were short and the neck had a little frill of lace tucked inside the tiny collar.

"For Sue to wear on Christmas Day, in place of her red coat, from Monty and Vicky," read the card.

Sue wanted to put it on that moment, but her mother explained that it was intended for evening wear and that she must wait until they went to dinner at the Superintendent's that night. It was badly crushed, but Mrs. O'Reilly said steaming would take out the wrinkles by night, which was comforting, for Sue wanted to wear that red dress almost as much as she had wanted her red coat and quite as much as she wanted to find a gold mine.

But the biggest box held a thing called a gramophone and three dozen wax rolls or cylinders. There was a great to-do about putting the parts together and much questioning about whether you wound it up before you put on the cylinders or whether you put the cylinders on first. Everyone was very excited, for it seemed this was a talking machine, the only one in the Yukon. Finally, they turned it on and there came many squeaks and rasping sounds, and then a woman's voice singing a song called "Long, Long Ago." Everyone thought it wonderful, and then a man called Hayden Coffin sang a song, a very funny song, all about a parrot named Polly who winked her eye.



Sue stole off by herself to the storeroom to give the dogs their Christmas bones. Old Louie was there with a little fire in the stove, cooking the dogs' Christmas dinner. Beside the stove there was a little Christmas tree. The bones were hanging from it, tied by red cords and beside them were four pairs of little leather shoes, like babies' booties.

"Whatever are they?" asked Sue.

"Boots for Bomby," said old Louie, smiling. "The Michauds made them for you, so that he will not cut his pads when he goes out on the river. These," he handed her a smaller set, "are what I made for Field Marshal. He will look very fine with his new knitted coat and these on his feet."

Sue wondered how the world could have so many kind people in it. But her mother called, "Come along, Sue. It's time for church." Soon, all of them, wrapped in furs, went over the snow to the little log church called St. Paul's.

It was the tiniest church Sue ever remembered, with a great stove in it, and much green on the altar. There was a wheezy little organ, but all the Force were there in their red coats and they

sat in the choir and led the singing of “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,” and the nice old parson, Mr. Bruce, preached about Shepherds and how they brought the Baby Christ gold and frankincense and myrrh. Then, after singing “Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful,” they all went out into the crisp cold again and home to their dinners.

Mr. Bruce joined them as they left the church, and when they opened the front door of the house there was such a delicious smell of roast goose that everyone was hungry at once. They had game soup and goose and stuffing and wild cranberry sauce and applesauce, as well as browned potatoes and then, wonder of wonders, little mince pies and a plum pudding, too.

“How did you manage?” Sue’s mother asked Mrs. O’Reilly. “I didn’t know we had any pastry.”

“We hadn’t,” she answered, with a chuckle, “but I made a sort of biscuit dough and stuck it around the mincemeat from Scotland, and I put the plum pudding on to steam as soon as you left for church.”

Sue thought she would never be able to eat again. But at four o’clock they put on their new clothes and walked over the snow again to the Superintendent’s house where they had another Christmas dinner, and Sue found she had room for this one, too.

Fieldy joined them as they passed Headquarters. He seemed very happy in his warm, knitted coat and little boots, and trotted along as if he owned Dawson or, for that matter, the whole Yukon.

Sue looked at her mother when they took off their wraps. Her blue dress was very nice, Sue thought, but her feet were lovely. She had worn the blue satin slippers and silk stockings under her fur boots, and told, over and over, of how Sue and Hawkins had brought them into the Yukon, as a surprise for her.

Sue felt very grand in her red velvet dress and when Mr. Bruce fluffed out his whiskers and told her she reminded him of a bit of Christmas holly, he so won her heart that she began to argue with Consy about him.

“I don’t think he’s so bad,” she said. “His beard is really very soft and nice—if a beard can ever be soft and nice.”

But Consy shook his head at her. “No man that teaches Latin or Greek could be nice,” he said, firmly, “even if I didn’t hate beards.”

“What about your father’s goatee?” asked Sue.

“That,” said Consy, loftily, “is *quite* a different matter. Besides, my father doesn’t teach Latin or Greek. He maintains law and order.”

“I do, do I?” said the Superintendent, laughing. “Well, my boy, that’s more than you will ever do.”

He had been standing behind them and now brought them, smilingly, into the living room. Sue wasn’t so sure that he was right. She could easily see Consy dressed in a red coat, riding a big horse, and shouting commands to millions of Mounties around him.

In the drawing room they were all talking about the news of the outside world that their Christmas letters had brought. In every letter there was the same story. When spring came there would be thousands of prospectors coming in over the trail from Chilkoot; all of them to hunt for gold.

“From what Commissioner Walsh writes,” said the Superintendent, “we’re going to need extra men. And there will also have to be a grand clean-up of Dawson itself.”

“Oh, now, Charlie,” said Mrs. Consell. “This is Christmas and spring is a whole five months away. It’s forty below tonight and no one can even think of spring.”

“Well,” said the Superintendent, “all I know is what the letters from the outside tell me.” He turned to Sue’s father. “The dogpuncher that brought in your Christmas presents said that Skagway is full of prospectors, that Chilkoot is lined from top to bottom with men, that the boats made late last autumn are waiting to push off as soon as the ice breaks. We’re going to have a bigger rush than any gold camp in history.”

Mr. Winston laughed. “I’ll begin to get the gold fever myself, if I’m not careful,” he said.

“I have a surprise for you all,” interrupted Mrs. Consell. “It came at the same time as the Winston family but I’ve kept it a secret until now.” She looked very important. It was almost the end of dinner and Sue hoped it was nothing more to eat that she liked, for she was just ready to burst.

Mrs. Consell signaled Hawkins and there on the table was a thin, round wooden box.

“Cheese!” cried Major Bell. “Roquefort cheese!”

“Not *Roquefort* cheese!” exclaimed everyone. “Not *really*?”

“We’d better get in on this,” whispered Sue to Consy. “Do you know what Roquefort cheese is?”

Consy shook his head. “No,” he answered, “but do you smell anything funny?”

Sue sniffed. “Yes, I do,” she said. “A very queer smell, indeed.”

“And seeing that it’s Christmas night,” broke in Mrs. Consell’s voice, “I think that both children may have a tiny bit.”

“Oh, Consy,” whispered Sue, “it’s coming our way.” It was. Hawkins was holding the round cheese at her side. “Gee whittakers, what a smell!” thought Sue. She lifted the knife but it grew too much for her.

“Oh, Hawkins,” she said, “take it away. Please take it away! It’s a skunk’s cheese.”

She thought they would never stop laughing at her. Consy laughed, too, but he took a bit of the cheese on a biscuit and then a bit more.

“It’s not half bad,” he said, “once you get used to the smell. Better try some.”

Sue shuddered. “I never could,” she answered.

There were toasts after that—to the Queen, to the Commissioner, and to Absent Friends. While Sue and Consy played animal grab at a small table, the rest of them settled down to a game of euchre. Every little while Hawkins would come in and pile more wood in the stoves. “It’s getting colder,” he said each time, “but it’s clear and the sky’s wonderful.”

Sue found out what he meant when they left the Superintendent’s. In a great sweep across the sky, stretching from mountain peak to mountain peak, crackled the Northern lights, flooding the world of snow and ice and quiet houses with rose and green and yellow.

“The sky fairies,” said old Louie, “making their Christmas dance.”

CHAPTER XIII

LOST!

After New Year's it grew colder, but Sue's father insisted upon her going out every day, even when she told him that it hurt her to breathe. "Cold never hurt anyone yet," he would say. "Breathe through your nose."

She and Consy raced their dog teams to and from lessons. On the river, when the sun was up, Michael took them ice-boating. They saw the police-dog teams take out the mail and the gold trains leave, always in charge of Mounties. Sue learned to watch on her friends' faces for the white spots which showed the beginning of a frostbite. If rubbed with snow, the white spot would disappear and leave no pain or soreness.

The mails came in very slowly, and there was much planning and talking about spring and what it would bring in the way of newcomers and new discoveries of gold.

Angus Mackay came to the house one day, excited and full of gossip, and Sue listened to him tell her father about Mr. Larsen and how he had staked a claim at the head of the Trumpet River. It seemed that Mr. Larsen had gone out late in the autumn, before the freeze-up, and had found much to make him believe that there were gold deposits all through that section.



"Every mail tells of the thousands who are waiting to come in here in the spring," Angus said, "and Mr. Larsen feels he should go out now and stake more claims. He's taking a friend of mine, Alec Graham, along with him. I'd like to go, too, but I haven't the money for an outfit." Angus paused. "From what I can gather, Mr. Larsen thinks he has struck it rich. Why don't you go along, Mr. Winston, and take me with you?"

Sue's father laughed. "I know nothing about gold mines, Angus," he said, "and, anyway, I

came out here to paint, not to mine.”

Angus shook his head mournfully. “It might be a grand chance to make a fortune,” he said. “And right now there isn’t light enough for painting.”

Mr. Winston shook his head. “I’m afraid you’ll have to get someone else to take you along, Angus,” he said. “I’m going to stay right here in Dawson.”

Angus went sadly away, but when Michael came in to supper the same night, Sue’s father told him of how Angus wanted to go prospecting.

“Mackay’s a good man,” said Michael. “He knows the country and the Superintendent has used him several times for special work. If Larsen really goes on this trip, he couldn’t find a better man.”

A day or two later Angus came to the house again, this time with a new leash for Bomby. As he was leaving, he took Sue aside.

“You might tell your father, Miss Sue,” he said, “that if he should change his mind about going with Mr. Larsen, I’m still ready.”

Sue’s father just laughed when she repeated the message to him, but later she heard him talking to the Superintendent.

“Do you suppose there’s anything to this story of Larsen’s that he struck it rich just before the freeze-up?” asked Sue’s father. “He’s going out to stake more claims.”

The Superintendent laughed. “I could believe anything in this country, Winston. Gold is so easily found, so easily lost. What promises to be a rich find often peters out in a few weeks. Poor showings often turn out to be very rich. But Larsen should know his way around by now,” and the Superintendent went on to discuss a new way to build rafts.

Sue wondered if the sun would ever shine all day again. When it snowed, the lamps had to be lit, and her father couldn’t paint. He was restless, in spite of all the snowshoeing and ice-boating, and the dog-team racing with herself and Consy. He was a big man for such a tiny house, Sue thought.

He talked often to Mr. Larsen about the trip up the Trumpet River.

He told his wife about it. “It sounds exciting,” he said. “They’ll be gone about six weeks. The claim is not exactly at the head of the Trumpet, but on one of its tributaries—”

“What’s a tributary?” interrupted Sue.

“It’s a small stream of water which contributes water to the big stream,” answered her father.

“Is his claim on the tributary or on the river?” asked Sue.

Her father laughed. “I don’t know, Sue.” But when the Larsens came to supper the next night Sue heard all about their plans. Mr. Larsen was taking a team of five dogs, and carrying food, tools, a small tent, and a portable stove. He said that it would be a rough journey, but that they would be back within six weeks or perhaps a month.

“You would love such a trip,” he told Sue’s father. “The country is even more beautiful than around Dawson.”

Sue’s father seemed very interested. “How long did you say you were going to be away?” he asked.

“Six weeks at the most,” answered Mr. Larsen.

“Aren’t you afraid to let him go?” Sue’s mother asked Mrs. Larsen.

“Oh, no,” she said. “He goes and he returns. He has done it so often now that I never worry. I hope for both our sakes he finds gold this time. He has had too much bad luck.”

It was snowing again the next morning and breakfast with the lamps lit was a bit dreary. Sue sighed as she thought of lessons. “I wish,” she said, fretfully, “that I could go away with Mr.

Larsen and hunt for gold. I hate staying still in the house while the snow hides everything.”

“I know, dear,” her mother answered, “but only a Cheechako travels in a snowstorm. You wouldn’t like to be lost.”

“No,” said Sue, “but I would like to go and hunt gold with Mr. Larsen.”

“So would your father,” said her mother, quietly.

Her father laughed. “How do you know I would?” he asked.

“Oh, Jimmy,” her mother answered, “ever since Angus Mackay told you about the trip, you’ve been kicking your heels to get away. Did you think you were fooling me?”

“No,” said her father, “but you see, Aileen, it isn’t as if I could paint any finished pictures here. I’ve done all the winter sketches I can. I’ll have to wait for spring now to complete my record of the gold country. If I went off with Larsen, I could stake a claim and if it was worth anything, I could sell it or have someone work it for me while I was painting spring in the Yukon.”

But Sue’s mother was afraid of winter storms and snows, afraid of being left alone, afraid he might never come back. Angus Mackay came in again and talked to her about the trip.

“You don’t need to be worried, Mrs. Winston,” he said. “I’ve been on many trips like this and we always come back. It’s being done every day.” Angus looked so confident and cheery that Sue’s mother said she would “think about it.”

They talked of nothing else, it seemed to Sue. Was it safe? Did people always return from such a trip? These were the questions her mother asked everyone. Mrs. Consell said her husband had gone out on such trips so many times that now she never even thought about them. Big Jake said that he had men outfitting every week at his store and they had nearly always returned. Mr. Bruce thought her mother was worrying needlessly; that such trips were common in the north. Snakey Jim, meeting them on the street one afternoon, told Mrs. Winston that before she knew her husband had gone he would have returned. “Time passes so quickly in the Yukon,” he said.

But it was old Louie that finally settled the matter.

“Do you really think it’s a safe journey, Louie?” asked Sue’s mother.

“Sure thing,” he answered. “Many and many a time I have gone with such a party and yet here I am today. I have been lost, yes, many times, but I have always come back one way or another. With good dogs and good guides, you are always safe. If Mr. Winston trusts his lead dog, eh, Miss Sue?”

“He will always come home safely,” finished Sue triumphantly.

Her mother was very silent that night at supper, but as she poured the tea, she looked across the table.

“Jimmy,” she said, “if you’ve really set your heart on that trip, why don’t you go?”

Her husband rose and put an arm around her. “If ever anyone had a heart of gold, it’s you, Aileen,” he said.

Sue noticed that one way or another, gold was always being used in conversation up here in the Yukon.

There were only three days for her father to get his outfit ready, and very exciting days they were. There was a new bustle in the house. Mr. Larsen and Angus were in and out all the time. There was much talk of provisions and pemmican and beans, of dogs and sleighs, frozen fish for the dogs, a little tent, a portable stove which folded up like a box for traveling. There was an argument over whether to take bacon and chocolate. Sue’s mother won that argument.

“I don’t know anything about pemmican,” she said, “but I do know that bacon tastes good

and keeps you nice and warm. You must take bacon.”

Sue added the chocolate because she felt that a party wasn't any good without sweets, and if ever she saw anyone going on a party, it was her father.

But she had something more for him, too. From her treasure bag she took out the little bag of pemmican. “You must wear it at your belt, Daddy,” she said. “That's how you carry food when you go out for a few days. Chief Kicking Horse told me so and this pemmican was made at his camp.”

Her father tied it to his belt. “I'll never take it off, Sue,” he said, “until I see you again. How's that?”

Sue thought it very good indeed, and felt much better about the whole adventure.

Early one morning the party started away, Mr. Larsen and Alec Graham with one sleigh, Sue's father and Angus Mackay with the other. Each sled had its own complete supply of food, mining tools, sleeping bags, and each man wore a warm parka, fur cap, heavy mitts, and moccasins. All were on snowshoes.

“Good-by, Mrs. O'Reilly,” said Sue's father. “That was an extra-good breakfast you gave me this morning.”

“Good-by, Louie. Take care of my two womenfolk until I come back. Don't let any harm come to them.”

“Sure, sure thing, M'sieur Winston. I watch them always. You watch yourself.”

“Aileen, if I'm not home for a month or six weeks, don't worry,” said Sue's father. “Even if I'm a little longer, don't worry, for I shall come back.”

“Sue, take care of your mother, and I'll see if I can't find you another piece of gold.”

Gay and confident, he waved to all of them. The dogs leaned into their collars; the sleds moved off. Across the ice the party faded and disappeared into the gray Yukon day.

“Sue,” said her mother, when the sleds finally vanished, “let's all clean up the studio today so that it will be ready when Daddy comes back.”

It was quite an exciting clean-up. Old Louie carried things out and they washed the floor and the tables and tidied up his paints and Mrs. Winston covered the cushions on the cot with fresh red print and, when they shut the door that night, it was all ready for his return.

“And now, Louie, will you go down to Mrs. Larsen's, present my compliments, and ask her to come and have supper with us tonight?”

“Oui, Madame,” said old Louie. He brought Mrs. Larsen back with him, and she was so cheery and gay and so full of plans of what they would do when the party returned that all Mrs. Winston's color came back to her cheeks again.

“Sue,” said her mother, after Mrs. Larsen had gone, “show me how to burn a peephole in the glass.”

Sue warmed the penny on the back of the stove and, holding it with a potholder, pressed it against the thick frost that completely covered the inside of the windows. Slowly the frost melted and, with constant rubbing, Sue showed how the space could be kept clear.

Sue's mother took the penny, heated it, and burnt a peephole in her bedroom window. “We can look out of this each night and morning,” she told Sue, “and someday we'll see your father coming back.”

The days sped by and each day the sun rose higher. Each morning Sue's mother said, “They'll be coming back soon now.”

But when the February storms came and the snow piled higher every day, she would leave Sue and Consy at their lessons and go outdoors to watch the north where, somewhere beyond

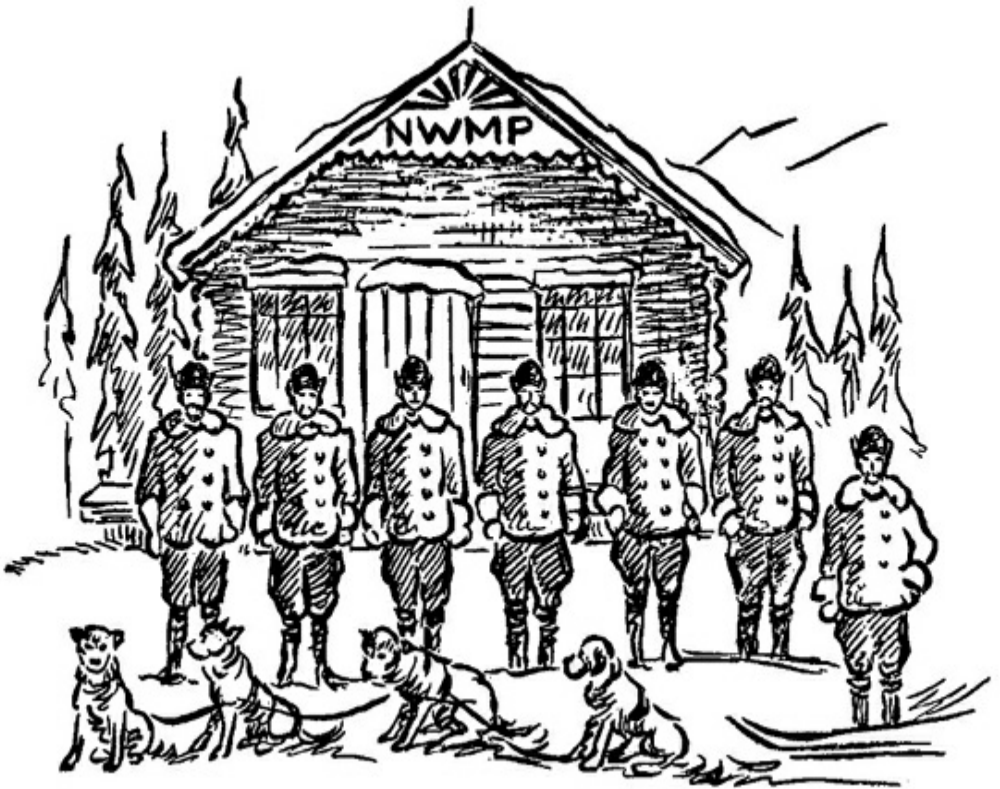
the hills, were the headwaters of the Trumpet.

“Don’t worry about a little snow, Madame,” old Louie would say. “It just makes the traveling more easy.”

Six weeks passed and, one day early in March, there were tiny specks across the ice. Sue and her mother watched them come nearer and nearer. They grew larger and Sue saw a sled, three tired dogs, and two men only, Felix Larsen and Alec Graham, foot-weary and weak from lack of food.

They knew nothing of Sue’s father and Angus.

Their story was a very simple one. They had gone up the Trumpet, had burnt out and staked their claims, and then turned homewards. Mr. Winston had taken the lead with Angus. The second day on their way home, a terrific snowstorm had come up and they had lost sight of each other. Mr. Larsen and Alec camped for the night, but the storm grew and it was three days before they could move. By that time all traces of the trail had been covered by snow, and they decided that Mr. Winston and Angus must have gone on ahead. They moved the rest of the way as fast as they could, but broken traces, sick dogs, and other storms delayed them. Finally, they lost two dogs and their food had given out. But all along they thought of Mr. Winston and Angus as being safe at home.



The Superintendent came down at once. It was evident that Mr. Winston and Angus had been lost in the storm, otherwise they would have come in first. The question now was what to

do. Mr. Larsen described the route they had taken and with this information a party of Mounties was sent out to search for the lost ones.

“You are to go as far as this tributary of the Trumpet,” said the Superintendent, pointing to a map.

“Try not to fret,” he said to Mrs. Winston. “Men have been lost before in snowstorms and have been found all right. Jimmy had provisions with him and an excellent guide in Angus. Even if we do not find him, he may come back by himself someday.”

The party started that afternoon.

“Don’t worry too much,” said Mrs. Consell. “My husband was lost for three weeks once. He came home with the worst beard I ever saw and an appetite that frightened me.”

“I’m not worrying,” Sue’s mother answered. “I know he will be back. It’s just a bit lonely waiting for him.”

“You are brave, Madame,” said old Louie, “and bravery, while one waits, takes courage. You have the heart of a lion,” and old Louie shook the stove until it almost fell down. If it hadn’t been that Sue knew men never cried, she would have said that old Louie had been crying.

By mid-March the Mountie rescue party returned. They had found no trace of Mr. Winston and Angus—no sign of sled or dogs. The snow had been deep and hard-packed, evidence of terrific storms, but there was no sign of either man.

The Superintendent was very white. Michael and Major Bell were in the living room with him and everyone looked unhappy. Sue couldn’t understand it. She only knew that her head ached with trying to follow all the strange happenings of the afternoon.

They had told Sue’s mother that her husband was lost and the Superintendent had used a strange word—“*irrevocably*.” Sue wasn’t quite sure what it meant, but it had an unhappy sound. They explained to her mother that no one could live through the storms and disappear completely . . . that it was evident that her father and Angus had lost the trail.

Sue’s mother didn’t speak. She only listened. Over and over they said the same words to her. Sue had an awful feeling that her mother was going to scream. But she didn’t. She just sat still and listened.

The Superintendent leaned forward and placed a hand on her mother’s shoulder. “I hate to say this, Mrs. Winston,” he said, “but I do not think there is the slightest chance of your husband being found alive.”

Her mother stood up. There were high spots of color in her cheeks, and she was fierce instead of gentle.

“You are very kind, gentlemen,” she said, “but somewhere in this awful country, my husband is alive. . . . I know that and you will know it, too. He will come back. He told me he would come back and he will. Meanwhile, Sue and I will wait for him.”

She lifted down her fur coat and cap and told Sue to do the same. “Mrs. O’Reilly made cookies this morning,” she said. “Let’s take some down to your filleuls.”

Silently they went over the snow. On the way back, Sue’s mother stood still and looked up at the sky.

“There will be many people in the house now, Sue,” she said, “all trying to be nice to us, trying to comfort us. Perhaps I won’t be able to talk to you alone. But neither you nor I will ever admit to anyone that your father will not be back. We will just say that he is lost and that he will be back in the spring.”

Sue’s mother’s voice seemed to crack just then. “He *will* be back, Sue! He has never broken his word and he never will, but you must help me to be brave.”

When they got back to the house, Mrs. Larsen and Mrs. Consell were there and Sue noticed that her mother wouldn't let them talk of anything but the plans for the new hospital they were hoping to build.

That night when Sue was on her way to bed, there was a knock at the door. Her mother opened it. Consy stood outside. He stepped in, looking very worried.

"I came down," he said, "to tell you that if you would like to have a man sleep in your house, Mrs. Winston . . . until Mr. Winston comes back, I'd be glad to sleep on that cot in the studio. . . . I just thought you might be scared. . . . Louie is getting pretty old."

Sue didn't think Consy looked much like a man, for, after all, he was only thirteen, but he did remind her of Monty and her father, and, somehow, she and her mother felt happier to have him with them.

CHAPTER XIV

OLD LOUIE STANDS BY

Sue was in bed, but she could hear the voices below her very clearly. She couldn't understand what it was all about. Grown-ups were queer people at any time, with their habit of saying one thing and meaning another. First the Superintendent and everyone else kept saying her father was lost and would *never* return . . . then her mother said her father was lost and that he *would* return. Now the Superintendent and Mr. Noblett of the bank were telling her mother she hadn't any money and her mother kept saying she had plenty. Sue felt very bewildered.

"You're right, Mrs. Winston," said Mr. Noblett. "Your husband has plenty of money in his account, but it is *his* money and we cannot pay out any of it, until a court order is made directing us to do so."

"But I need money," said Sue's mother. "Why can't I have it?"

"Because," explained the Superintendent, gruffly, "until Mr. Winston is proved dead and his will read, the bank cannot pay out the money belonging to him."

Dead? Her father dead? Her mother had never used such a word.

"My husband is not dead," said Mrs. Winston. "He is lost but he will come back in the springtime. I only want money until he comes back."

"I can't do anything, Mrs. Winston," said Mr. Noblett. "I feel very badly about it, but I cannot do anything to help you."

"Poor Mummy," murmured Sue. "No money, nothing to eat."

"Mrs. Winston." It was the Superintendent's voice again, gentler than Sue had ever heard it. "I've known your brother, Dennis, ever since he joined the Force and feel I have the right to insist on helping you. Until the spring comes and you go back to your brother in Regina, you must let me finance you. You will need very little money, but I hope you will let me lend it to you."

There was a long pause and then came her mother's voice, very low and with more than a hint of tears in it. "Thank you, Superintendent," she said. "Jimmy will be more than grateful when he knows how kind you have been."

Sue drew a breath of relief. It was very confusing, all of it, but her mother was speaking of her father being grateful. That surely meant that he was coming back . . . that he was only lost. In spite of her confusion, Sue felt happier, and before the voices below had ceased, she was asleep.

In the morning Sue had a long talk with her mother. It seemed that while she was willing to borrow money from the Superintendent, she wanted to borrow as little as possible. "I'm going to dismiss Mrs. O'Reilly, Sue," she said, "and Louie, too. We cannot afford any servants now, even at the small wages we pay them. We must learn to live on as little as possible, for I don't want to run into debt. We will keep ourselves well and strong, of course, but there are luxuries we can do without and our servants must be the first to go."

Sue looked at her mother. It hardly seemed possible that she should have to look after fires and bring in wood, clean the kitchen stove, and carry water from the soft-water barrel as Louie did every day. She wondered if Louie would take his dogs away when he left. She would miss them dreadfully, she felt.

"You can be a great help to me, Sue," said her mother, "for you're so strong now, and

you're growing so capable that I know we shall manage very well."

Together they discussed the way they would divide the work. Sue wanted to give up her lessons immediately, for she felt there wouldn't be time for them, but her mother was very flat about that. "The lessons go on," she said. "*Nothing* can ever interfere with lessons, particularly French," and they went on planning.

Sue was to do all the upstairs work, bring in wood to the kitchen, and it was her particular business to watch the fires so that they didn't go out. Her mother was to do the cooking and the downstairs work. Together they would wash up and share the burden of melting the water for washing and drinking.

Having completed their plans, her mother went down to interview Mrs. O'Reilly and old Louie, leaving Sue to do her first "upstairs work."

Sue had just finished making her mother's big brass bed, when a great hullabaloo began downstairs. Mrs. O'Reilly was crying and old Louie was saying, "No! But *no*, Madame, and I mean *no*." Her mother's voice could hardly be heard in the commotion. Bomby started barking and Mrs. O'Reilly could be heard saying "Wurra, wurra, woe is me!"

"There she is, going Irish on us," said Sue to herself. "I'd better go down and see what's up."

It was a real row, Sue found, for neither Mrs. O'Reilly nor old Louie would hear of leaving and both were very determined about it. Mrs. Winston argued and pleaded, and told them she couldn't pay their wages any longer. They wouldn't listen to her. Neither of them wanted wages, they said. They just wanted to stay on until she left the Yukon. Mrs. O'Reilly was very difficult, for each time Sue's mother tried to argue with her, she flung her apron over her head and started to "wurra, wurra" all over again. Old Louie's white hair stood up on end as he ruffled his fingers through it. Finally, Mrs. Winston lost her patience, and stamped her foot at them.

"I'm tired of this argument," she exclaimed. "I've never been through such a scene in my life. I won't permit it. You must both go now. Don't you understand? I can't afford to keep you any longer."

Mrs. O'Reilly howled louder than ever, and at times Sue thought she sounded exactly like a dog. If the Irish were often like this, Ireland must be an exciting place to live in, Sue decided.

Old Louie came over to the table.

"Madame," he said to her mother, "old Louie is twice your age. He has seen much trouble and much of life. I promised M'sieur, your husband, I would watch over you until his return. Would you have me break my promise?"

"No, Louie," her mother answered, "but circumstances alter cases and I know he would approve of my decision."

"But would you have me break my word, Madame?"

Sue's mother started to speak, then stopped.

"What would M'sieur Winston say to me if he found I had broken my word?" went on Louie. "That I had gone away just when you have the most need for someone, and all because of some foolish business about wages? You think he would approve of that, Madame?"

Mrs. O'Reilly had stopped crying. She had pulled her apron down from her face and was watching Louie.

Still Sue's mother didn't speak.

"No, Madame, I shall stay. I shall stay until that door opens and M'sieur himself comes in and says 'Louie, where is my good wife?'"

“Oh, Louie,” cried her mother. “Louie, say that again. Say you know he will come back,” and Sue’s mother laid her head on the table and sobbed. Old Louie patted her shoulder.

“But surely, Madame,” he said, in his soft voice, “surely. The spring will come, the ice will go, and then he will return. I have seen the same thing happen, many, many times.”

Mrs. O’Reilly took Sue by the shoulder.

“Leave her,” she said. “Leave her be. The more she cries the more she’ll be able to stand the waiting.”

Old Louie stood waiting by the door and, in the kitchen, Mrs. O’Reilly made a pot of tea and fresh biscuits. “There’s nothing like a cup of tea and a bit of food when your heart’s breaking,” she told Sue.

After a time they carried in the tea, old Louie silently disappeared, and Mrs. O’Reilly and Sue made her mother sit down and rest while they did the morning housework.

After luncheon, Mrs. O’Reilly had a talk with Sue and her mother.

“Mrs. Winston,” she said, “I know how much better it will be for you and Miss Sue, if you have more work to do. It’ll keep you busy and occupied, which is a grand thing when your heart’s aching. Now, let me tell you what old Louie and I have decided to do.”

Sue’s mother tried to interrupt.

“Hush, now,” said Mrs. O’Reilly. “I’m going to come three mornings a week and do the heavy baking and cooking and the washing. Old Louie will remain here all the time. In that way you’ll be getting proper care and yet have more work to do. And as for you, Miss Sue,” she said, “I’ll be finding out whether you really learned all the cooking I’ve taught you.”

That morning Sue had thought that the French Canadians were the kindest people in the world, but now she decided the Irish were even better.

CHAPTER XV

SUE'S DISCOVERY

Easter came. Sue saved six of her precious eggs and dyed them with ink and colors from her father's paintbox, then made a nest of tissue paper and took them to Mrs. Consell on Easter morning.

"It's like finding a gold mine to have six new-laid eggs," said Mrs. Consell.

"Gold mine," said Sue to herself, as she trotted home. "I *will* find a gold mine. I've got to find a gold mine to help Mummy. It's like wanting my red coat. Outside of Daddy I don't seem to be able to think of anything much else."

Big Jake was waiting for her outside the house. He had brought her a molasses pie for an Easter gift. Little Pete, the cook, had made it that morning and Big Jake thought it was a pretty good pie. Sue peeked inside the paper. It looked very dark and rich and luscious.

"How's the mining business?" Big Jake asked.

"Slow," answered Sue, with a doleful shake of the head, as she had seen all the miners do. "If the snow would only go, I'd go out and see what I could do about it."

"Have you all your equipment?" asked Big Jake, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Not quite all of it," Sue admitted.

Big Jake smiled knowingly. "Suppose you get your mother to bring you down to the store one of these days, and we'll see if we can't fix you up."

"I'll be down just as soon as the snow goes," cried Sue, waving good-by.

Mrs. O'Reilly was in the kitchen getting dinner ready. Sue showed her the precious pie. Mrs. O'Reilly sniffed.

"If you were my child, I'd never let you eat that pie, Miss Sue. It's so rich it'll give you a bilious attack. Now, I've made a nice jelly for dessert and I think you'll enjoy it better."

"I'd rather have a bilious attack than jelly," murmured Sue.

Mrs. O'Reilly sniffed again, this time even harder than before.

"Don't you like pie?" asked Sue.

Mrs. O'Reilly banged the oven door.

"Don't you like molasses?" asked Sue, trying not to laugh, for she knew Mrs. O'Reilly was only jealous of Little Pete's cooking, and she thought that very funny.

"If you want pie, Miss Sue," said Mrs. O'Reilly, her eyes snapping, "you can ask *me* for pie. I can make as good a pie as Little Pete any day in the year!"

"May we have a molasses pie every day then?" asked Sue. "And will you show me how to make it?"

Mrs. O'Reilly laughed. "I'll show you," she promised, "only I know you'll only get yourself tangled up in the molasses."

Eating a molasses pie was a pretty tricky business, Sue found. Consy, who had dropped in along with Michael, managed his share very well, but Sue thought it was because he ate so fast that the molasses couldn't trickle off the spoon. Her mother and Michael said it was far too rich, but Sue loved every mouthful. It was, she thought, the best meal she had had since the day she had taken the black hen's egg to Big Jake.

The Easter holidays were a surprise to both Sue and Consy. At first they were only to have ten days free from lessons but this was increased to three weeks. "Because you have worked so hard," said the two mothers. Sue was delighted, but Consy told her they hadn't been given

the extra time because of high marks, but just because their mothers wanted the holiday, too.

“Our mothers, Sue,” he said, “hate teaching us worse than we hate learning.”

“That couldn’t be possible,” answered Sue, as she remembered irregular verbs. “Let’s go down to the river, Consy,” she added, “and see if there’s any sign of the ice breaking.”

Sue was very interested in seeing the ice break up, for Snakey Jim had told her that once you saw the ice go out in the Yukon, you were no longer considered a Cheechako, but a Sourdough. And there was another even more important reason. The breaking of the ice meant that spring had come and then, old Louie kept saying, her father would return.

Sue and Consy watched a miner fix a pole bearing a red flag in the ice, halfway between the far bank of the river and Dawson. On the shore another post was erected and here men took turns in watching the line between the two posts.

“When the ice begins to move,” Michael explained, “the red flag passes beyond the line of watching. That means the ice is breaking and everyone says it’s quite a sight.”

Sue and Consy watched, but though the mud in the streets was thick and soft, the river remained white and still, and the red flag fluttered limply.

Spring came in slowly, with alternately hot and cold days. There were brown patches on the hills, the sound of water running off the trails, the roofs showed again, icicles dripped steadily from the eaves, mud and dirt began to ooze above the snow and all the ugliness of Dawson seemed to be coming back. Smoke drifted now from the chimneys, instead of rising straight upwards as it had in the cold weather. There was a restlessness over everything.

Snowshoes were cleaned and put away, the dogs were rarely taken out, the hens laid more regularly, the sleighs were hung up on the rafters of the storeroom, with their runners greased for protection.

The days grew longer, the sun warmer. There was a patch of open water at the river’s edge.

Mrs. Consell and Sue’s mother wrote long letters home, for when the ice went out there would be boats coming in and out, fresh supplies, new people, much to do.

The restless feeling grew. Sue was fretful over the heavy clothes her mother still made her wear. Consy complained bitterly of Old Whiskers and Latin verbs, for Mr. Bruce said there would be no let-up until Consy caught up with his work.

Big Jake reminded Sue of his Easter promise to “fix up” her mining equipment. She and her mother joined him at Snakey Jim’s one afternoon.

Big Jake leaned across the rough counter of the Emporium. “We want a small-size miner’s outfit,” he said sternly.

“Well, now, how small?” asked Snakey Jim.

“The smallest size you have,” answered Big Jake, pounding the counter.

Snakey Jim produced a card, not much bigger than an envelope. On it Sue saw a tiny auger, pick and shovel, a hatchet, two little pans and a pail, all made with pins to wear like brooches.

Big Jake scowled and pounded the counter harder.

“We don’t want any of your doll’s outfits,” he roared. “We want a *miner’s* outfit. Can’t you see this miner is through with dolls?”

Sue hoped he’d never find out she took Minnie-Pooh-Pooh to bed with her each night.

“Well,” asked Snakey Jim, “how’ll these do?” He produced the largest set of tools Sue had ever seen. She felt they must have been made for a giant.

“They *won’t* do,” roared Big Jake. “What do you think we are? A herd of elephants?”

Snakey Jim behaved as if he were really terrified. “How about these then?” he said, reaching under the counter and pretending that he was shaking with fear. Big Jake examined them

carefully and lifted them down to Sue. It was a most beautiful set of miner's tools and all just the size for her to handle.

"Will they do?" asked Big Jake.

Before Sue could answer, a whistle blew down by the river, and there was a cry outside:

"YUKON BREAKING!"

Snakey Jim leaped over the counter, the smiling men around her made a dash for the door, carrying her mother along with them. Out in the streets everyone was running toward the river. Bells were ringing, whistles blowing, men shouting, dogs barking and howling.

"YUKON BREAKING!"

There was a great crashing, grinding, tearing sound. Sue looked out the open door. On the counter beside her lay her precious mining tools. She couldn't bear to leave them and yet she couldn't carry them loose. Grabbing an empty flour sack on the floor, she thrust the outfit inside and slung it over her shoulder. All the tools banged against each other in a delightful din as if they, too, knew that the Yukon was breaking.

From the high steps of the store, Sue looked out over the crowded shore. It seemed to her as if everyone in Dawson was down along the river front. The ice was piling up in great cakes, moving faster and faster down the river, until it reached the ice barrier below the town. There they stuck and the greenish water rose and rose until the barrier was hidden beneath it and only the pole bearing the red flag could be seen.

"YUKON BREAKING!"

The cry rolled back and forth between the mountains, all the whistles on the sawmills screeched forth the message, and every dog in Dawson added to the joyous din.

Suddenly around a huge bluff up river, there appeared one of the strangest sights Sue had ever seen; another great wall of ice sweeping down the stream. Rolling, plunging, hurling ice cakes upwards, it moved toward them from the east. The water at the barrier piled higher and higher. Sue wondered if it would ever stop.

"YUKON BREAKING!"

The wall of marching ice crashed against the barrier. There was a rending sound, as if the mountains were being torn apart, the red flag disappeared and in a tumbling swirl, the ice swept down the Yukon on its journey to the Pacific Ocean.

Michael joined Sue on the steps of Snakey Jim's. "Well. Sue," he cried, thumping her soundly on the back. "How does it feel to be a Sourdough?"

"Salubrious," said Sue. And with the mining tools clanging merrily behind her, she joined her mother and went home.

"Mummy," said Sue, the next morning, "could Louie take me out and show me a gold mine?"

Her mother nodded. She was very pale, Sue thought, and thin, but when O'Reilly brought Softy to the door with a red blanket on his back and straps from which to hang her mining tools, her mother called to her, "Wait for me, Sue. I'm coming, too."

O'Reilly and Louie helped arrange the mining outfit on Softy's back and when they set out there was a cheerful clatter of tools and a general air of important business over all of them. Softy was very skittish from the winter's rest and the spring in his bones, Bomby barked noisily, and, protected by their high rubber boots and short skirts, Sue and her mother splattered happily along the thawing street.

They followed old Louie out beyond the Larsens' and off the beaten trail to where there

was only moss under foot. Down a little slope they turned to a tiny creek chattering busily over the gravel. It was warm and sunny there, with blades of tender green among the rocks.

Sue showed her mother how to pan gold and they spent a happy morning there, with old Louie telling them fabulous tales of the miners and of gold.

“First they take it out by the wheelbarrow,” he said, chuckling, “and then one day they take it out by the market basket, and then they leave. ‘Gold all gone,’ they say, in their greed. I think, maybe, many claims abandoned now are still good.”

“I wish I could find a gold mine,” said Sue. “I could buy you lots of lovely things, Mummy. I still have my sovereign, and sometimes when Louie and I go to Jake’s, I’d like to spend it. There is a large red silk handkerchief there that is simply beautiful. It has pictures of ladies in the corners, wearing lovely floppy hats, like you did at the garden parties in London. It’s exactly five dollars.”



But her mother shook her head. “Keep your sovereign, Sue,” she said. “Don’t you remember Lady Charlotte said it was to be used only for ‘emergencies’?”

Sue kicked the gravel at her feet. The little stream was running freely with a chattering sound. The sun was warm on her back, but the water was too cold for her to try any more panning.

“We’ll come another day,” her mother said, and they “packed” Softy and went home.

But the old desire to find a gold mine had returned. Sue talked to Consy about it. He told her she was crazy.

“Girls can’t find mines,” he said, “and you’re a girl. You leave such stuff to men.” There were times when Sue felt she would like to scratch Consy.

One day Sue’s mother called on Big Jake. “Do you ever hear anything of a wrecked sleigh or of two men who were lost?”

“The Force are looking after all that, Ma’am,” he answered.

“I know,” she said, “but you see so many people the police never talk to. I thought perhaps you might hear something about my husband.”

Big Jake looked at her, pityingly, and shook his head. “I’ve heard nothing,” he said. “But I’ll ask everyone that comes around here.”

Each day the sun rose higher, the hours of daylight lengthened, and from dawn to dark the main street was filled with miners in from their winter camps to celebrate the break-up. The number of strange faces began to worry Sue’s mother.

“I don’t like you on the streets with such a rough crowd, Sue,” she said, one morning. “If you’ll promise me to come back the moment you hear the whistles blow, you may take Softy and Bomby and go out each morning to the little creek to play.”

“This,” said Sue to herself, “will be a real adventure.”

She mounted Softy and, with tools clattering and Bomby running alongside, she set off for what her mother had called “a morning’s play.”

Slushing down the muddy street, easing Softy over the moss and picking her way down the gravel slope, singing and talking to Bomby as she went, Sue finally arrived at the creek. Tying Softy to a tree at the top of the bank, and Bomby to an old scrub pine below, she carried her tools down to the water and gravely panned all morning. She found a tiny nugget the size of a small pea, a few specks of gold dust, some pretty stones, greenish and glittering, and altogether felt like a seasoned miner.

It was hot standing there in midstream and Sue tucked her dress up around her waist and tied it with her scarf. She pushed her toque back off her forehead and stepped a little further into the creek, but nothing came of the gravel in the deeper water and, wading ashore, she sat down beside Bomby. “I’m very hot, Bomby,” she said, loosening his leash.

Bomby wagged and scratched around in the hope of finding something choice in the way of an old bone and then climbed a little way up the bank, scratching and snuffling, looking down every few minutes at Sue, as if to see whether she was still there. Sue opened her coat. The wind was refreshing to her hot skin. Suddenly, she heard a whimper and, looking up, saw Bomby with a paw caught in an old spruce root, almost at the top of the little bank of earth and gravel.

“Good Bomby,” she called. “Stand still, I’m coming.”

The dog waited patiently, and with much pulling and scrabbling of the earth by Sue, the paw was released with a sudden jerk. They both paused for breath, when suddenly the ground under them started to slide away, and with a tumble and a roll they found themselves falling down the bank, all mixed up with gravel and bits of ice and frozen earth.

“Gee whittakers,” said Sue to Bomby, “that gave me a scare,” and both she and Bomby looked up the little bank.

The ice above had melted in the warm sun and the scratching of Bomby and her pulling of the root had loosened the earth until, like Jack and Jill, they had both come tumbling down the hill. Sue’s face was dirty, her hands muddy, and she could hardly see, but a few splashes out of the gold pan tidied her again.

“My goodness!” exclaimed Sue. “*What’s that?*”

She was looking up the bank. "That" was a faint glitter of gold amid earth and gravel. Swiftly she filled her gold pan and, standing in midstream, rocked feverishly. Dirt, mud, leaves, bits of twigs spilled over the edge. Stones came rattling out. Sue's heart almost burst with excitement and she had the queerest feeling in her tummy. There were bits of something in the bottom of her pan, but it took so long to get them clean.

"Keep on rocking," she said to herself. "Keep on rocking. Bomby!" she called. "Bomby." The dog ran out into the water.



Lifting the pan high out of the water, she drained it

“Oh, Bomby,” she cried. “Bomby, I’m not sure yet but I think it’s . . . Oh, Bomby, wait!”

Bomby splashed a bit. Sue rocked harder. She could see bits of yellow in the bottom of the pan now, but they might be only colored sand. They might just be pebbles. She held the pan where the water ran a little harder. She shut her eyes. She knew it would not be long now before

she was certain.

Lifting the pan high out of the water, she drained it. “*Gold!*” cried Sue. “*Gold, Bomby!* We’ve found a gold mine!” She splashed ashore and sat down to count her treasures. Four good-sized nuggets lay in the pan; two tiny ones, a little dust, not much, and one piece of gravel with another nugget stuck to the side.

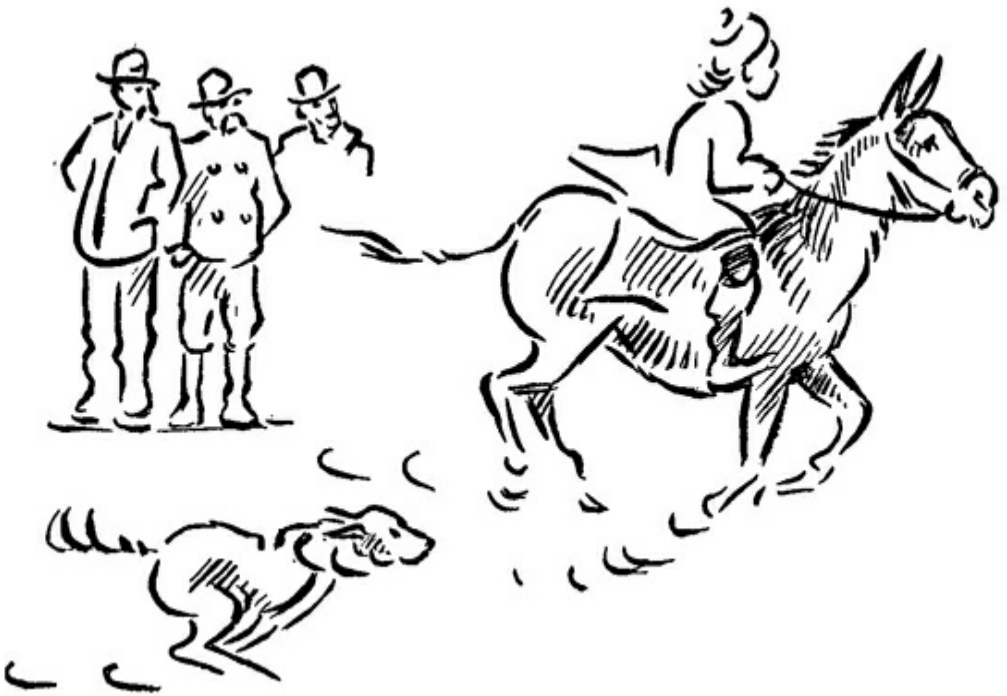
Bomby looked into the pan and wagged. Sue looked into the pan. “I’ve found a gold mine, Bomby,” Sue whispered. “I’ve found a gold mine. Won’t everyone be surprised!”

Old Louie’s words came back to her. “When you find a mine, you run as fast as your legs will carry you, right straight to the Registrar of Claims.” Sue remembered that the Registrar was Superintendent Consell.

Spading wet earth over the freshly uncovered gravel and putting a leash on Bomby, she started up the icy side of the bank. Scrambling up on the astonished Softy, she dug her heels into his sides and scurried into Dawson and Headquarters as fast as his short legs could carry her.

Michael was just coming out the door as she and Softy arrived breathless at the small police building.

“Oh, Michael, I must see the Superintendent at once,” said Sue, swinging to the ground.



Michael shook his head. “He’s holding an investigation this morning, Sue,” he explained. “I’m afraid you’ll have to wait until after dinner.”

“But I can’t wait,” said Sue. “It’s very important.”

“I’m sure it is,” laughed Michael, “but I’m afraid we’ll all have to wait today. What’s it all about, Sue?” he continued. “Couldn’t I help?”

“Oh, Michael,” said Sue. “It’s my gold mine. I’ve found it at last, and I must register it right away or someone might take it away from me.”

“Have you staked it?” asked Michael, gravely.

“No,” said Sue, “not yet.”

“Well,” said Michael. “If I were you, I’d stake it first and then come back and see the Superintendent.”

Sue looked at him closely. He was smiling.

“Oh, Michael,” she said, “you don’t believe me. How can you be so mean?”

“Run along like a good miner, now,” he said, “and stake your claim.”

Something made Sue look around. Standing back of Michael, and in the shadow of the door, was a tall, dark man she had never seen before—a half-breed. He seemed to be listening to what she was saying and drew back when she looked at him. Michael turned and re-entered Headquarters.

Michael was gone, the Superintendent busy. Sue spied Consy on his way back from Old Whiskers.

“Consy!” she called. “Consy!”

“Don’t shout at me on the street,” said Consy, as she and Softy caught up with him. “No man likes being shouted at by a girl, right in the middle of the main street.”

“I’ll shout as much as I like,” answered Sue. “You don’t know what’s just happened to me.”

“Well, the whole world’ll know if you don’t stop shouting,” said Consy. “What’s it all about anyway?”

Sue told him, showed him her nuggets.

“Suffering cats! And the Old Man won’t see you?”

Sue shook her head, but she felt very grateful. Consy believed her, anyway.

“And Michael told you to go off and stake your claim?”

Sue nodded.

“I’ll come with you, then,” said Consy. “I’ll help you stake your claim and we’ll just show Michael he’s not as smart as he thinks he is. And, anyway, Sue, I know the back way into Dad’s office, and I’ll take you in to see him if there’s any shenanigan over this.”

Sue liked the new word, “shenanigan,” but she liked better the bustling, important way Consy hurried along beside Softy. Taking the new-found nuggets out of her pocket, she handed them to Consy. “They wiggle around in my pocket,” she said. “You’d better keep them until we’re back. I might lose them.”

“Are your tools still down there?” asked Consy.

“Yes,” said Sue, and Consy hurried along faster than ever.

But back at the little creek strange things had happened. The fall of gravel that had sent Sue and Bomby rolling down the hill had only been the beginning of a small landslide. The whole bank had tumbled in and where Sue had tied Softy in the morning was now a flat surface of newly fallen gravel and uprooted bushes.

“That’s fine!” exclaimed Consy. “That landslide gives you a broader claim.”

“Now, when I step as wide as I can,” he continued, “that’s one yard. One yard is three feet, and we have to mark off five hundred feet along the bed of the creek for your claim. How many steps will I have to take to make five hundred feet?”

Sue remembered Michael and her arithmetic lessons. “I can do that in my head,” she said. “It’s . . . one hundred and sixty-six and a little over. You’d better make it one hundred and sixty-seven to be sure we have enough.”

Down the stream Consy walked, stretching his legs as far as he could.

“. . . and sixty-five, sixty-six. . . one hundred and sixty-seven!” cried Sue triumphantly.

“Now,” said Consy, “let’s cut our stakes.”

Taking Sue’s hatchet, he chopped down a small poplar and divided it into four stakes, sharpening each of them at one end and cutting a flat surface on one side.

“You’ve got to write your name on these now,” said Consy. “Have you got a pencil?”

Sue shook her head. “No, have you?” she asked.

“But, you’ve got to have your name on the stakes, Sue,” he said, “or you haven’t made a proper claim. Are you sure you haven’t a pencil?”

Sue fished in her pocket. She brought out her catapult and some beans, a peppermint. “I didn’t know I had that,” she said, and popped it into her mouth. Two rubber bands came next, a bit of string, a hairpin, a tiny piece of ribbon, her hankie with the sovereign tightly tied up, one of Bomby’s winter boots and, last of all, a stump of a pencil. Sue gave the end of it a lick.

“Is my tongue blue?” she asked, putting out her tongue.

Consy nodded.

“Then it’s indelible,” said Sue, “and one of Daddy’s best pencils.”

Carefully she labeled each stake

Sue
Wins
Ton.

They hammered the stakes in at the four corners and stood back to admire their work.

“There, Sue, that ought to hold ’em,” said Consy, brushing the mud off his hands.

“What do I do next?” asked Sue.

“You’d better go back and register this claim,” Consy answered. “I’ll stay here until you come back. And bring Michael,” he called. “I’d like to be here when he sees what a rich find you have.” Tired with his work of measuring the stream, Consy settled himself in a shelter of two rocks, far back but overlooking the new claim.

Once more Softy trotted back to Police Headquarters. Once more Sue asked to see the Superintendent. Hawkins was on duty and brought Michael out at once. This time Michael listened more carefully to her story. He didn’t laugh, either, but took her in to the Superintendent’s private office.

With Bomby beside her, Sue saluted and walked up to the table. “I have found my gold mine, Superintendent,” she said, “and I have come to register it.”

The Superintendent smiled. “Well, Susannah,” he said, “that is good news. Tell me all about it.”

Sue told her story all over again. Major Bell came in and Michael, each of them asking new questions. How had she found her mine? Where was it located? Sue told them everything that had happened.

“It sounds as if she’s really found something,” the Superintendent said, finally. “Sit down, Sue, while we search the records.”

They found her claim had been registered by one Joseph Dumont, who had never worked it and had, therefore, forfeited his ownership.

“Then it belongs to me?” asked Sue, for she was getting very anxious.

But just then there was a commotion in the outer office and Michael went out. He came back quickly, looking very grave.

“I think, sir,” he said, “that we’ll have to examine this claim further. There is a man here who declares the new claim belongs to him and not to Sue.”

“Who is he?” demanded Sue.

“A half-breed named Joe Dumont,” answered Michael.

“Bring him in,” ordered the Superintendent.

A tall, dark man entered the office, followed by three others, clearly his friends. Sue looked at the first one carefully. She remembered having seen him that morning when she was talking to Michael. He had been standing in the doorway. She remembered, too, passing the four of them on her second trip to Headquarters.

“State your claim,” said the Superintendent, briskly.

Joe Dumont said he was sorry to disappoint the little girl, but only yesterday he had restaked that same claim himself. He had been nosing around looking for gold. He had seen the trail into the little gully, had washed and found nuggets. It was a rich find and his stakes were on the claim now.

“How is it you didn’t register your claim yesterday?” asked the Superintendent.

“The law says I may have sixty days in which to register,” Dumont answered, with a shrug.

“Sue, were there any stakes on that claim this morning before you put up yours?”

“No,” answered Sue, “not one.”

Joe Dumont shrugged his shoulders again. “She is very little, that one,” he said. “She knows nothing about mining. My stakes were a few feet from hers. She didn’t see them, that’s all. I have my friends here,” added Joe. “They were with me when I laid out my stakes yesterday.”

The Superintendent questioned the other three men. They all were positive that Joe had staked his claim the day before.

There was a loud knocking at the door. Michael opened it and in came Big Jake. He was very angry.

“I pay my respects, Mr. Superintendent,” he said, “but I’m a mighty mad man. I’ve known this Joe Dumont twenty years. He couldn’t speak the truth, even if he tried to. I heard these four talking down at my place. Dumont did not stake any claim yesterday. He only arrived in town this morning and these three men with him.”

Everyone but the Superintendent seemed very angry and noisy.

The door opened and Consy stood there, very hot and dirty, his eyes blazing.

“I saw you, you skunk,” he said, marching up to Joe Dumont. “I know what you did and I came along as fast as I could.”

He turned to his father.

“I waited while Sue came up to register her claim,” he said. “She was going to bring Michael back. This skunk came along with his three friends and, without measuring, drove in new stakes, a few feet away from Sue’s.”

“Is this true?” asked the Superintendent.

Joe Dumont came forward. “The law says whoever stakes their claims and pays their fees first, gets the mine.”

“Yes,” said the Superintendent, “that is so.”

“I pay my fee, then,” said Joe, and laid a roll of bills on the table.

The Superintendent turned to Sue.

“Miss Winston, to register your claim you have to pay a fee of fifteen dollars. Unless you can pay this, this man’s claim will come first. Have you fifteen dollars?”

“Fifteen dollars?” repeated Sue. “What a lot of money.”

Joe Dumont smiled. Consy moved up on him with a scowl.

“Fifteen dollars,” muttered Sue. She reached down in her pocket and, coming forward to the Superintendent’s table, she brought out Bomby’s winter boot, the pencil, her catapult, some beans, the bit of string, the hairpin, and tiny piece of ribbon. Further searching brought out last of all, the grubbiest handkerchief in the world, tied in tight knots.

Sue untied the first knot with her teeth, and brought out a nugget shaped like a letter “S.”

“This is my first nugget,” she said, “and Mr. Noblett at the bank said it was worth at least ten dollars.”

She untied another corner of the handkerchief. “Here is a little nugget,” she said. “It’s worth almost a dollar.

“Twenty shillings is five dollars, isn’t it, Superintendent?” she asked. The Superintendent nodded. Behind him the group of scarlet-coated men watched Sue as she loosened the last corner knot with fingers and teeth. “This is my gold piece that Lady Charlotte gave me,” she explained, pushing the sovereign across the desk. “Will all that make fifteen dollars?”

The Superintendent took the little nugget, the big nugget, and the gold piece.

“Please sign here,” he said, turning a big book to her.

“My whole name?”

“Your whole name, if you please.”

“Susannah Elizabeth Fairfield Winston,” Sue wrote, in a bold, round hand.

“And the name of the mine?”

Sue wondered. She hadn’t even thought of a name yet. But just at that moment Bomby gave a low growl at Joe Dumont. “I know,” said Sue, proudly, “Bombardier!”

The Superintendent wrote down Bombardier, stamped a piece of paper, and gave it to her. “Mr. O’Dare will take you home, Miss Winston,” he said, in his most formal manner. “Good afternoon, gentlemen.”

Sue went out, paper in one hand and Bomby’s leash in the other. Once outside Headquarters, Big Jake could contain himself no longer.

“Strike me blind, if you’re not a smart one, Miss Sue, but you, Joe Dumont, I’d like to kick your pants off. Trying to jump a little girl’s mine, you dirty skunk. I think you’d better clear out of here.”

Michael spoke sharply. “Easy, Jake, Miss Winston’s still here,” but Sue was beyond even realizing the importance of being called Miss Winston by Michael. All she knew was that Joe Dumont had tried to steal her mine.

Loosening Bomby’s leash, she whispered “Mush!” and down the street Joe Dumont ran for his life, Bomby and everyone else running after him and shouting “Mush!”

When Bomby limped home that night, very tired, footsore, and very, very waggly, Sue’s mother only smiled when he crawled up on her bed and sank off to sleep.

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. WINSTON TAKES A STAND

After the break-up summer came with a rush. It seemed to Sue as if the trees burst into bloom overnight. One day only bare limbs showed, and the next the birches and poplars were in full green foliage.

Off the trail to Bombardier Mine, there were wild flowers springing everywhere, wild strawberry blooms, bluebells, arbutus, and many strange plants which Sue had never seen before. All the flowers were of the palest and most delicate shades. None had the vivid color that Sue remembered in the prairies. Louie explained that the Yukon was too far north for brilliant coloring.

In the daytime the heat was intense, but each night a cooling breeze sprang up that ruffled the river and cooled the air, so that they always needed blankets on their beds.

The mosquitoes came with the heat, and swarmed over everyone like a cloud. There was a humming, droning sound from them that never ceased. Sue never went out of doors without a headnet, tied over her hat and tucked into the collar of her shirt. The wide brim of the hat held the net out from the face. She looked rather as if she were inside a bird cage, Sue thought. She and her mother wore heavy drill shirts when they went out and stout gloves covered their hands. Every house had its smudge pot on the steps.

There was much talk of the best remedy for mosquito bites and what to do when first bitten. Mrs. O'Reilly advised baking soda and boracic lotion. Mrs. Consell thought a paste of violet powder and eau-de-cologne pleasanter and quite as effective. Sue's mother rubbed her with camphorated oil before she went out each day. The mosquitoes seemed to dislike the odor of camphor. After it was used, Sue found she could stay out longer without being bitten.

Coming back from exercising Bomby one day, she ran into Consy, grinning from ear to ear.

"I got 'em all licked, Sue," he said. "Old Whiskers sent me home. The old boy just took one sniff of me and said, 'That will be all for the day, Consell,' and here I am with no Latin!"

Consy seemed very pleased with himself.

"Gee whittakers," asked Sue, "what'd you do?"

"I mixed olive oil and musk and rubbed myself with it and told the old boy it was my new mosquito oil. So it is," he grinned.

"Let me smell," demanded Sue, taking a good, long sniff. "Mercy me," she said. "*What a smell!*"

"Yes," said Consy, proudly, "and as long as we have mosquitoes, I'll bet there'll be no Latin. It's not so bad outdoors," he continued, "but in the house, it's worse than skunk."

"Could I get some of it?" asked Sue, enviously.

"Here," said Consy. "Take this." Sue sniffed the open bottle he handed her.

"I bought the musk at Snakey Jim's," he said. "It's so strong, it almost knocks you down."

Sue smelt again and shuddered. "How can you stand the smell yourself, Consy?" she asked.

"It's pretty ripe," Consy admitted, "but I just walk fast and make a draft as I go, and it blows the worst of it behind me."

"Do you suppose it'd work on Mummy for French?" asked Sue.

Consy looked doubtful. "Your mother's pretty cute," he said. "Much cuter than Old Whiskers. But my mother says musk is a vulgar perfume, so I don't think your mother would

know what it is and we might get away with it.”

“Give me some!” Sue ordered.

She took a long breath, loosened her headnet, and rubbed the oil and musk all over her face and hands and behind her ears and neck.

“Ugh,” she said. “I feel queer.”

“How queer?” asked Consy, anxiously.

“Frow-up queer,” said Sue, in a hoarse voice.

“Buck up now!” Consy growled. “Just stick it and we’ll be out of the house in no time and up at the mine.”

Together they went into the house for their French lesson.

Mrs. Winston came into the room, her charming voice greeting them in French.

“*What?*” she exclaimed, stopping and wrinkling her pretty nose.

“*Where . . .*” she began.

“*Musk!*” she cried. “How awful! Where did you two pick up that horrid stuff? Sue, you smell like a polecat. Consy, you’re not any better. Go home and wash! . . . Sue, outside to the storeroom!”

As Mrs. O’Reilly said later, “What a moither the afternoon was.” They pulled off Sue’s clothes and washed her in the big laundry tub and there was a fine rich smell of camphor oil and musk and olive oil and soap and wetness. Then they threw out that water and washed her hair, and bathed her all over again. Every little while Mrs. O’Reilly would sniff at her and say, “What she really needs is a good boiling, Ma’am.”

Just before supper, while Sue was making a headnet for Minnie-Pooh-Pooh, Consy appeared at the front door. He had brought a fresh loaf of sourdough as a peace offering. Sue giggled. He looked as if he had been soaked for a week, and his shirt was stiff with starch.

“My, but you’re clean,” she said. “Did the soap feel strange?”

“You ought to know,” he snapped. “I hear they had to boil you.”

Bombardier Mine had proven to be very valuable. The Superintendent had placed Mr. Larsen in charge, and he and Alec Graham were working it for Sue.

“You may be very well off, someday, Sue,” the Superintendent told her, “but until you’re twenty-one, your mother will handle all the income from the mine.”

“That’s all right,” said Sue, “but could I have enough nuggets now to buy some presents with? I’d like to buy Mummy that red silk handkerchief down at Snakey Jim’s.”

But all the Superintendent said was, “Ask your mother.”

Except for lapses now and then with things like mosquito oil, Sue didn’t like to worry her mother too much.

The Yukon seemed to be a stranger place than ever. The sun shone twenty-one hours every day. It seemed queer to go to bed at nine o’clock at night with the sun pouring in the windows and to wake up finding the same sun still shining in just the same way. Queer, too, to learn that there was no real darkness, no stars or moon, just something called twilight in between the setting and the rising of the sun.

Late one night, her mother wakened her and together they went downstairs and out in front of the little house. “I want you to remember your first Yukon twilight,” said her mother. “Look, Sue.” Her mother held a newspaper up to her and Sue found she could read it as clearly as if it were morning. “Look again,” her mother said, and pointed out over the river. Above the warm shadowy hills the mountains pushed their peaks into the strange yellow half-light of the Yukon

midnight sky.

No sun, no moon, no stars, and yet this strange yellow light. It wasn't the yellow of flowers, nor of the sun, nor yet the yellow of gold, but rather a greyish yellow, as if the sun were veiled and waiting for some touch of magic to make it shine again.

But next morning came another kind of magic. Just before noon the Superintendent arrived at the house. Sue felt she would never forget his face as he came into the room. It was almost as if the midnight sun had risen all over him.

"I have news, and I hope it's good news," he said. "Some men came down the Yukon this morning from the Trumpet. Two weeks ago, up in the headwaters, they saw smoke rising from a valley near where your husband was last seen. Knowing nothing of any lost party, they made no search for the campers. When Big Jake heard their story, he brought the men straight to me. I questioned them and their story stands up under examination. They were even able to give me a rough map. I don't want you to hope too much but there is just a chance that it might be your husband and Angus Mackay."

"When do we start?" said Mrs. Winston.

"I plan to send a party off in the morning—three canoes and six men. They should be back within a month at the outside."

The Superintendent patted Mrs. Winston's shoulder. "You've been a brick, and I know just how you feel," he said. "But don't hope too much. It's a chance and we must take it." The Superintendent coughed and blew his nose.

After he had gone, Sue's mother went into the studio and closed the door. Sue started to follow her, but old Louie caught her arm.

"Not now, petite," he said, "not now. Leave her for a while. She wishes to gather her courage again. Wait. When she needs you, she will call."

But when Consy arrived for his French, Sue's mother was still in the studio.

"She doesn't even talk," said Sue.

"Well, she's not a magpie," answered Consy. "She doesn't shout at the top of her lungs whenever she gets excited, like *some* people I know."

But there was no French lesson and shortly after Consy left, Sue's mother called her into the studio.

"Sue, I'm going with the police to find your father. I'm going down now to see the Superintendent and make my arrangements. I want you to wait here for me."

"Yes, Mummy," said Sue, her mind busily at work on plans of what to take with her on the journey.

Sometime later her mother came back, looking very flushed and angry. "I can't talk to you just now, Sue," she said. "The Superintendent has refused to take me on the police party. I'm too upset to talk calmly about anything. Wait here quietly until I call you," and her mother went upstairs.

Sue was wondering what could possibly happen next, when Consy returned.

"*Psst*," he whispered. "There's a grand row on up at our house. When Dad told Mum that he wouldn't let your mother go on the police party to hunt for your father, Mum let loose. Did she scold him! Jiminy crickets, I didn't know she had it in her! What she said to the old man was frightful."

Consy looked very pleased with his mother, Sue thought. "But what did she say?" she asked anxiously.

"She told Dad that if she was your mother, she would go down and jump in the police canoe

and wouldn't get out of it. That'd mean the Force would have to take her. *And,*" Consy chuckled, "do you know that Dad, who's got the whole Yukon buffaloed, looked scared to death of Mum and sent for Hawkins." Consy lowered his voice. "He gave Hawkins an order changing the hour of leaving. First, they were to start at six. Now, they're going to start at five."

"I see," said Sue. "I see."

"I thought you would," said Consy, "and I thought you'd like to know. I'll be back if I find out anything more," and the door closed behind him.



“Sue!” It was her mother, standing at the top of the stairs, her face flushed and laughing, her eyes sparkling.

“I heard you both and I *will* go down and jump into the police canoe, and I’ll be there at five, too.

“Has Consy gone?” she asked, as she came down the stairs.

“Yes,” said Sue. “Mummy, what will the Superintendent say if you disobey him?”

“I don’t know,” said her mother, “and I don’t care. I’m going. Seeing your father is a lot more important to me than any rules and regulations.”

“Mercy,” murmured Sue. “There will certainly be an awful row.” She knew that when the Force made a decision they allowed no interference with their orders. But her mother looked pretty determined, too.

“Find Louie,” said her mother. “Tell him I want him at once.”

“This,” said Sue to herself, “is what Daddy calls a ‘nasty fix.’” She found Louie outside and brought him back with her.

Louie listened while Mrs. Winston told him of the Superintendent’s refusal to allow her to travel with the Police party; of Consy’s news that it was to start at five the next morning; and of her plans to take light equipment, be waiting for the Police at the dock, and jump into the canoe with them.

“I want you to pack a light tent for me,” she said, “and as much food as you think I will need and can carry. I’m going with the Force, no matter what happens.”

Old Louie shook his head.

“No, Madame,” he said, “that will not do. I know the Superintendent. He is the kindest man this country has ever known but he is also the sternest. If he says you cannot go with the Police, he means it. You would do wrong to force him to do anything he does not wish to do.”

“But, Louie, my husband may be ill, injured, when they find him. He may need nursing. In any case, my place is by his side, not waiting in Dawson,” Mrs. Winston answered. “I *must* go. You know that.”

“Yes, Madame, but how? That is the question. If you go with the Police, the Superintendent has to take on himself a responsibility that is all wrong. Should you be lost, who is there to take care of Miss Sue?”

Sue’s mother hesitated, and old Louie continued, “We cannot disobey police orders.” Sue wondered if Louie had ever been a member of the Force himself, he seemed to understand about orders so well.

“I’m going,” repeated Mrs. Winston, “and no orders will stop me.”

“Oh, Mummy,” said Sue, “the Superintendent can’t help himself. He took a vow to ‘faithfully, diligently, and impartially execute his duties without fear, favor, or affection toward anyone.’” Sue knew the words by heart.

Old Louie nodded approvingly.

“The little one is right,” he said. “This is a place where we must use our heads. That you must go to join your husband, I agree.” Mrs. Winston sat down on the stairs. Already she looked less angry. “*But,*” continued Louie, with a smile, “that means I shall have to go, too.”

“But why should you, Louie?” broke in Mrs. Winston, impatiently. “The Police would certainly object to a party. But one small woman . . .”

“True,” said old Louie, “but have you forgotten, Madame, that I promised M’sieur Winston I would not leave you until he came again? That means I go with you . . . and then what becomes of Miss Sue? I cannot be in two places at once.”

“Then I go, too,” broke in Sue, delightedly.

“Yes,” he said, “you go, too, but how?” Old Louie rubbed his chin. “I have my red canoe,” he went on, “I could paddle stern and you, Madame, in the bow. In the center we would place Miss Sue with a paddle. You swim, Madame?” Mrs. Winston nodded. “Good. And you, Miss Sue?”

“Like a fish,” answered Sue, “and I can hold my breath under water while you count fourteen.”

“That will help a great deal,” said old Louie, and for the first time Sue’s mother laughed.

Louie continued. “Our plans will have to be made with secrecy, for,” he added importantly, “if the Superintendent got wind of it, old Louie would be in the coop. You have no idea how fast the Superintendent can move, Miss Sue, when he is in the mood.”

“Oh, yes, I have,” said Sue, remembering the time she had dined so splendidly at Big Jake’s.

At that moment Sue had an awful thought.

“Mummy,” she said, “did the Superintendent forbid me to go, too?”

“I never asked him,” said her mother.

“Then if he hasn’t forbidden me to go, I’d not be disobeying orders,” said Sue, “but I think we’d better start, soon,” she added quickly, “for he has a way of knowing what you’re going to do before you do it.”

“Miss Sue is right,” said Louie. “You see, Madame, here are my plans. You and Miss Sue will now go to bed and sleep. If anyone calls I shall say that you are tired with the day’s emotions and have retired early. Everyone will understand that. While you sleep, I will pack our supplies.”

He paused and looked sharply at Sue’s mother. “Madame can paddle a canoe, of course,” he said.

“Of course,” she answered. “My husband and I had a canoe for three years in Montreal.”

“Good!” exclaimed Old Louie. “Then we will slip down to the water where I will have already packed my canoe. Long before the Police are even awake we will be some distance up the Yukon. I know a place we can hide and wait for their canoes to pass. That will be our moment. We will just follow them. They cannot object to that.”

Old Louie broke out laughing. “Oh, ho,” he chuckled, “when a Frenchman uses his wits, he can get the best of anyone, even of the Force. But I am glad,” he added hastily, “that the Superintendent will not be on that party! Not even a Frenchman could help much then.”

“And afterwards,” said Mrs. Winston, “how soon will we find my husband?”

“Ah, Madame,” said old Louie. “Do not hope too much. Just trust le bon Dieu. That river is a slow one to paddle up, plenty of portage, plenty of hard work, plenty of time. Trust le bon Dieu, Madame, and have plenty of patience.”

Louie bustled away and Sue followed her mother upstairs. “We will lay everything out on my bed,” said her mother, “and let’s try to see how little we can take.”

An hour later, dressed in fresh khaki drill shirts and bloomers, they looked at each other with approval. In a knapsack, each carried a change of underwear, two extra pairs of thick stockings, moccasins, soap and toothbrush, a comb and towel, dark glasses, an extra head veil; and, in Mrs. Winston’s pack, short skirts. A pot of camphorated oil, and a few bandages completed their equipment.

Their hair was braided tightly. Sue thought her mother looked very like a little girl herself.

“I’ve written Mrs. O’Reilly a note,” her mother said, “asking her to take care of Bomby while we’re away. Now let’s take a last look around, Sue, and see if there’s anything we’ve forgotten.”

Sue went into her room and tucked Minnie-Pooh-Pooh into her bed. She wanted to take her treasure bag with her, but Louie had warned them they must travel as lightly as possible. Sue lifted it back on its hook, and turned to make sure she had remembered everything. From the foot of her bed shone the golden crest of the Force. Quickly she pinned it on her breast. She was ready now for the great adventure.

Out in the grays and yellows of the midnight dawn, Sue and her mother stole quietly in answer to old Louie's call.

All Dawson lay asleep, shrouded by the river mists. Across the road and down by the shore they found a canoe already packed and hidden from sight under the sloping bow of an old barge.

"Get in," Louie commanded softly.

Helping her mother into the bow and Sue into the center of the canoe, old Louie balanced himself in the stern and shoved off from shore. "So," he grunted to himself, "so! Old Louie has not lost his cunning. She rides perfect."

Silently they moved out into the river.

"One," said old Louie, "two . . . three . . ."

Sue and her mother caught the rhythm of his paddle. There was no sound except the soft drip of the water. No light save that of the soft mist that surrounded them.

CHAPTER XVII

A CHIP OF WOOD

“Halt! Who goes there?”
“Who’s that?” demanded Michael, sharply.

“Constable Winston and party.”

“*What!*” roared Michael.

“Constable Winston and party,” repeated Sue, but a bit shakily this time. Michael looked so very stern below her in the canoe. At first she had thought it good fun to stand on the rock overlooking the bend in the river and wait for the Police canoe. But the Police party now looked pretty grim, and Sue wasn’t so sure that Louie’s plan was going to work.

Her mother’s voice broke the silence. “Good morning, Michael,” she said. “May I follow your party? I am going to find my husband. I have my guide and my daughter, and I should be grateful for the protection of the Force.”

“Mrs. Winston,” Michael cried. “How could you! You know what the Superintendent said. I can’t take you with me.”

“I haven’t asked you to take me, Michael,” said Mrs. Winston, gently. “I would never disobey the Superintendent’s orders.” Sue was glad Consy wasn’t along to hear her mother. She was afraid he might have laughed.

“All I ask for, Michael,” continued her mother, “is the protection that I understand anyone in the Yukon may request—the protection of the Force.”

“Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish!” exclaimed Michael. “I can’t refuse you protection on any count, either that of the Force or that of each member of the party, but, if you are not disobeying the Superintendent’s orders in letter, you are certainly doing so in spirit. I don’t know what I should do.”

“Please, Michael,” said Sue, all her jauntiness gone. “Please let us follow you. We’ll keep up with you all the way.”

Michael growled a bit and then turned to Louie.

“Louie, you old rascal,” he said. “Did you have a hand in this?”

Old Louie sighed and rolled his eyes drolly. “Yes,” he said, “but what would you? Madame, she *would* go. I promised M’sieur Winston never to leave her until he came back. I also promised him never to leave Miss Sue. What could I do? Cut myself in two? Leave part of me in a canoe and the other part in the house?” Old Louie shrugged. “I put my charges in a canoe and came with them. Is it my fault that Madame is willful or that I am faithful to my word?”

“You’re an old rascal, nevertheless,” said Michael. “Everybody ashore!” he called.

“We have won, Madame,” murmured old Louie, “but just by the skin of our teeth.”

Sue looked at Michael and the party again. There were six altogether, with Michael in charge. They had three canoes, two of them heavily packed. Michael’s eyes were very bright. O’Reilly was flushed and angry. The others seemed anxious and distressed.

“You understand, Mrs. Winston,” said Michael, “that you will have to take and keep the speed of the Police party. We are under orders and our orders are to search for Mr. Winston and return as soon as possible.”

“We will all do our best,” said Sue’s mother, quietly. “You can depend on that, Michael.”

“Get aboard then,” said Michael.

Nine lifted paddles dipped into the water. The canoes shot forward. They were away. The

soft coolness of the breeze rose from the water. The mountain peaks shimmered in the sunlight, and the sweet fragrance of pine and balsam swept around them in little gusts. Sue dug her paddle into the water and sang for happiness. They were away, away to find her father, away on a new adventure.

At noon they drew up at the bank of the river. "Everyone out," called Michael. Stiff and cramped, Sue got out of the canoe and joined her mother on the shore.

"Listen, Sue," her mother said rapidly. "You and I are no longer women. We are men, traveling with men. We must not expect or allow any extra help from them at any time. If we are tired, we must never say so. Everything the men do, we must do."

"Yes, Mummy," breathed Sue.

"If we can't keep up the pace, if we grow to be a burden, we will be sent back. I didn't know this trip would be so wild, Sue, nor so rough, but if we can only keep up, we'll see your father sooner."

With her hair in pigtails and her short skirt, Sue thought her mother looked like an anxious little girl.

"Well, Mummy," she said. "We've just got to keep on going. We'll be all right."

Michael gave them all their orders that night and the same routine lasted through the entire trip.

When the day's journey was over, they beached the canoes. Two men unloaded, examined the canoes for leaks, mended them, if necessary, examined paddles, and generally made themselves responsible for their safety on water. Two others turned the canoes on their sides in a circle around the campfire. Boughs were cut and placed under them, blankets laid on the boughs. "The canoes make a little roof if it rains," explained Louie. Sue took out the dishes and placed them around the fire. Her mother made the tea while, in front of each canoe, Louie built a small smudge. Bacon, beans, dried fruit, tea, hot bannock, condensed milk in small quantities; the diet never changed. Yet each night Sue thought she would die of starvation until her tin plate was put before her. All food was rationed. So many strips of bacon, so much bannock, so much sugar, but all the strong, sweet tea you wanted.

Sue could never decide whether the mosquitoes were worse in the morning or the night. She only knew that they were either swarming around her in clouds, or trying to reach her through the whirls of drifting smoke. She and her mother used their headnets all day and at night, when they crept under their canoe, they were glad of the smudges that made it possible to sleep.

"I feel like a smoked pig," said Sue, "but I like it. It's the only time in my life I've been let alone about washing. All I do is paddle my hands in the water and splash my face a bit," Sue giggled. "It's all Mummy does, too. I've watched her."

"You get washed enough during the day," said Michael. "I wouldn't worry about anything else."

Michael was right, for as they journeyed up the river the trip grew more and more difficult. Some days the water was smooth and they traveled swiftly and without fatigue. Other days they would run into "fast water" when, no matter how hard they worked, the canoes moved forward only a few inches with each dip of the paddles. There were days, too, when they would be blocked by dangerous, swift-flowing rapids that no craft could stand. They beached their canoes then and either dragged them over the sand and earth until the swift waters were behind them or made a portage. There were shallow waters, too, where they would all get out in the water and lift, push, and tug the canoes over into deep water again. Time after time, they would

reach the end of the day soaked to the skin but, as Sue's mother said each night as she went to sleep, "We're a day nearer Jimmy."

They all grew lean and brown and on Sue's nose three large freckles appeared. She was scratched, often dirty and untidy, but she was always cheerful and sang whenever she had any breath left from work.

"I'd sing oftener," she said when they told her what pleasant, cheerful company she was, "but I don't like swallowing mosquitoes. Today when I was singing 'Eileen Allana,' I took a long breath, so I'd be sure to hang on to the high note like Mrs. Larsen does, but a large mosquito popped into my mouth, and before I was through with him, half of him was in me and half of him in the water.

"You've no idea, Michael," she continued, "how I've learned to spit."

"Sue!" cried her mother.

"Yes, I know, Mummy," said Sue. "No lady ever spits, but you can't be a lady when a large mosquito is buzzing his way down your throat. There's only one thing to do and that is . . ."

"*Spit!*" they all cried together, and then joined in their favorite song,

"Alouette,
Gentille Alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai."

They all marveled at Sue's mother's strength. She was the first up in the morning, and had tea made before the flapjacks were mixed. Her canoe, with old Louie at the stern, often took the lead. No matter how hard and fast the others paddled, Louie and Mrs. Winston were always near them. Louie paddled a short, choppy stroke like the Indians used. He never seemed to tire. Mrs. Winston used the same stroke.

"She is a game one, that mother of yours," old Louie said to Sue. "To see her first, one thinks only of silks and satins, of carriages and lovely gardens. Never would you think she was made of steel—that she could be so strong, that she could play a man's part. I think she fools us."

"Yes," said Sue, "she does. You think you know what she is going to do and then she doesn't. That's what makes her so delightful, Daddy says. You never know what to expect from her."

"Are we nearly there?" asked Sue's mother, the next morning.

"Nearly," answered Michael.

One afternoon a canoe stuck on a sand bar and they were forced to make an early camp to wait for repairs.

"Will we be there tomorrow?" asked Sue's mother.

"Not tomorrow," said Michael, "but perhaps the next day. After we reach the head of the river," he continued, "we have to take our bearings and hunt up one tributary after another until . . ." Michael paused.

"Until we find them," Sue's mother said.

Early one morning there was a soft, ruffling sound on the water. Sue stirred a little. She knew all the river sounds now, the rush of the dawn breeze over the water, the lap against the shore that meant fast water, the chatter of shallow water; but this soft, ruffling sound was new. Careful not to wake her mother, she gently rolled out from under the canoe and stole quietly down to the river's edge. Again she heard the sound. She looked upstream. Close to shore a wild goose swam slowly by. Behind her a dozen or so ruffled goslings followed with little leaps

and flutterings of untried wings.

Sue looked at the watch hanging from Louie's canoe. It was only half-past three in the morning but the sun was already high in the north. She felt she would be glad to sleep in the dark again. Picking up O'Reilly's rod and reel, she cast far out into the river. The lovely singing sound of the reel pleased her. She waited, then cast again. There was a nibble. She played her fish. There was a tug. She paid out her line. Slowly she reeled in. She could see a flash of silver in the water now. She drew her line tighter. With a rush the fish came to the surface. Picking up Louie's enormous felt hat, she scooped up the floundering trout. It was a mountain trout, the longest Sue had ever seen, with large red spots on its silver sides.

"Fish for breakfast," said Sue. "*Won't* I be popular," and cast again. She had caught five when she heard old Louie move out from his canoe.

"Chut, chut," he murmured. "What are you doing up at this hour?" Excitedly, Sue whispered back. Together they built the fire, mixed the bannock, and set the bacon to cook.

Louie banged the frying pan. "Up! Up! Up!" he cried. Michael sat up sleepily.

"Am I still dreaming," he said, "or do I smell fish for breakfast?"

"Breakfast's now ready in the dining car," chanted Sue, and they all sat down to eat the mountain trout. Sue told them of the goose that towed her goslings past without even being scared.

"It's a lucky omen," smiled Louie. "When wild things are unafraid."

"Tonight," said Michael, "we will make our headwaters camp. Everyone must watch now for signs of where men have been."

"What kind of signs?" asked Sue.

"A tree cut down at the water's edge, or smoke above the trees," said Michael. "A path down to the water and, most of all traces of where a fire has been." The long day passed without a sign.

They camped in a little open space by the river. "This will be our permanent camp," said Michael. "From here we will go off and search up all the tributaries."

They cut down trees and moved some stones to make a better fireplace, and they made a little tent out of blankets for Sue and her mother. It was too early for supper.

Sue watched the Mounties patching the rips in the canvas canoes for a time, and then wandered away outside of the camp. It was cool and damp and shady in among the trees. After the glare on the water, the shadowy forest seemed a very pleasant place. She picked a handful of flowers, delicate, white, bell-like blossoms, and moved back toward the camp. Something stirred at her feet. Looking down, she saw a soft, brown, curly ball, with shining button eyes. She picked it up. It looked like a tiny husky pup, only she never remembered seeing a brown husky before. Holding it between her shoulder and cheek, she went back to the camp.

"Look, Michael," she called. "Look what I've got."

Michael turned and reached swiftly for his rifle.

"*Halt!*" he cried.

Sue stood stiffly to attention.

Bang! Something whizzed by. There was a soft sort of grunt behind her.

"*Don't move!*" cried Michael, as he and the other men ran past her.

Sue stood rigid.

"All right, Sue," said Michael, quietly. "It's all right. Look behind you."

Sue turned. A large brown bear lay dead, a few yards away.

Michael explained that when she had called, he had seen the mother bear moving out of the

shadows of the woods. “You took her cub, Sue,” he said, “and she came after you to take it back. I wouldn’t have shot her if there had been any other way out, but in another moment she might have clawed you.”



"Halt!" he cried. Sue stood stiffly at attention

Her mother lifted the tiny ball of brown fur from Sue's shoulder.

"We must take care of the baby cub now," she said. "I am most grateful to you, Michael." She was very white under her tan.

"Ah," said Michael, "don't thank me, but thank the Force that trained your Sue to obey orders. If she had moved an inch after I called 'Halt!' no one could have saved her."

Altogether, Sue thought it had been a very full day. They tied the little cub to a tree and went to bed early.

For three days they searched, up one small stream and down another. They called and shouted. They portaged around small rapids. They climbed high points and used glasses, trying to find any trace of smoke in the surrounding hills. Each night they came home, hardly able to speak from fatigue and disappointment, ate supper, and studied the map that Michael carried.

"We've been up every stream," said Michael on the third night. "But there's one place we haven't been." He pointed to the bottom of the map. "Down here, where the river takes that big bend and makes a little bay. I remember the place coming up and, although it's nowhere near where the others saw smoke, I think we'll try it first thing in the morning."

Sue's mother said nothing. She fed the bear cub and ruffled its soft fur. Not even Sue slept that night. She knew that only one day more remained for the search, only one more day of hope.

At four o'clock Michael called them. "Eat an extra-big breakfast," he said, briskly. "We have a long paddle ahead of us."

This time they went down river until they found the place Michael had marked on the map.

"We'll follow the main shore line carefully," he said, "and everyone watch for a path or for smoke."

Slowly they started around the bay, all eyes on the shore. Sue looked so hard her eyes hurt and blurred. She was in the last canoe with Michael. She shut her eyes and blinked rapidly to clear them.

Opening them, she looked down at the water. A chip of wood floated by. She looked back into the woods. Again her eyes grew blurred. She blinked and opened them, looking down at the water. Another chip floated by.

A chip of wood! What did a chip of wood remind her of? She thought hard. She remembered. It was Consy, Consy cutting down a poplar pole over the little creek on her claim, Consy whittling the ends of four stakes and the chips of wood sailing merrily down the chattering water like little boats.

A chip of wood!

It came from the left of her canoe. She looked out across the little bay. There was another chip, beyond it another. She watched closely while Michael hardly moved the canoe, the party ahead was paddling so slowly.

Sue watched. There was a current across the bay, a little eddy.

A clean-cut chip must mean an ax. An ax meant a man. Perhaps it would be her father.

Breathless, she turned to Michael and whispered her discovery.

"Not a word, Sue," he whispered back. "Your mother is at the breaking point. If we should turn out to be mistaken, I don't know what she'd do. Let's make sure first." He turned the canoe across the bay. "Paddle," he whispered. "Paddle. They won't miss us until they make the center

of the bay.”

“Paddle.” Following the chips, they skimmed across the bay. As they neared the opposite shore, Sue saw an opening in the trees. Out of the opening a little stream flowed into the bay.

“Listen,” said Michael. Far off they heard the sound of feeble blows. Up the narrow stream they stole. Through the overhanging branches ahead, Sue saw a tiny clearing. A tall, ragged man was leaning against a tree with a hatchet in his hand.

Before Sue could speak, Michael shoved the canoe quickly backwards and out into the bay again.

“Michael . . .” Sue began.

“Hush,” he answered. Sue turned. Michael brushed his sleeve across his eyes. She waited, astonished, while he signaled the other canoes to join them. Things were moving faster than she could follow.

“Police orders, Sue,” Michael said. “You haven’t been up that stream. You’ve seen no one. Understand?”

Michael’s face was stern.

“Yes,” she said, “but . . .”

“There are no buts in the Force,” said Michael.

Leading the party a few minutes later, Mrs. Winston and Louie entered the mouth of the small stream. Michael and Sue followed close behind. Little chips still floated down unnoticed. There was no sound but the drip of the water from their paddles—nothing, until there came the ring of metal through the air.

Mrs. Winston’s paddle dropped from her hand. The canoe drifted forward.

The tall man with his back to them was leaning against a tree, balancing himself with one hand, while with the other he struck weakly with a small hatchet at a gash in the bark.

“Jimmy, oh, Jimmy!” cried Sue’s mother, so softly that it was like a song.

The tall man turned.

“Aileen,” he said. “Aileen.”

The canoes lurched forward. Sue’s mother was out on the shore and Michael beside her, both of them holding up the tall man.

“Sue,” said her father.

O’Reilly ran along a path leading into the woods. “Mackay is here and alive,” he called. Sue’s father lay with his head in her mother’s lap.

Michael was holding her father’s wrist. He smiled at Mrs. Winston. “Don’t worry,” he said. “Happiness never killed anyone yet. He’s just weak from lack of food and illness.”

They carried Angus down to the water’s edge from the cave he had been lying in. He, too, was dreadfully thin and wasted. One of his legs had been broken.

It was very quiet there in the woods. The men bathed Angus and cut back his hair. They started a smudge and heated water for tea. Mrs. Winston fed her husband a spoonful at a time. Michael did the same for Angus. The others rested on the shore.

It was quiet in the woods, a sort of singing quiet, and on Sue’s mother’s face was a shining light. Michael nodded when Sue told him of it.

“I know,” he said. “It’s a light like the midnight sun. It never goes out.”

CHAPTER XVIII

BACK IN DAWSON

O'Reilly and the rest of the party went back and brought their equipment from the Police camp and, from the bow of the red canoe, Mrs. Winston brought out two bottles of Bovril and some soup tablets.

"I'm a better housekeeper than you know," she said to Michael. "This is the best food they can have for the present."

Sue and the rescue party spent the next few days at the camp where her father and Angus had wintered. Little by little she learned the story of that winter day when a snowstorm had shut them off from Mr. Larsen and Alec Graham.

Mr. Winston said that at first he and Angus had thought nothing of the storm. It seemed no worse than a dozen others they had been through. But as the day wore on, the wind rose and the snow fell more heavily, and they decided to make camp by the trail and wait for better weather.

Three days went by. The world they knew, the trail they had followed were entirely hidden by the snow, but the sky was clear and they packed their sleigh and harnessed the dogs. Anxious about their fellow travelers, they climbed up the mountainside behind them to get a better view of the surrounding country. As they started down, there was a rumbling sound, the snow under their feet began to move and in a moment they were part of a snowslide.

Both were knocked unconscious and when Mr. Winston came to, the sun was setting and Angus was lying a few feet away. All traces of their dogs and sleigh had vanished.

"Ah, Sue," said her father, "that was the time your pemmican saved our lives. I had the bag tied to my belt just as I promised. We mixed the pemmican with a little snow and ate it. It brought back a bit of warmth and started us moving.

"Our outfit was entirely covered with snow, but somehow or other we managed to dig down and find our sleigh. It was smashed to splinters, three of the dogs were killed, and the others we never saw again. Just as dark came on we found our sleeping bags.

"We were badly bruised and our movements slow and awkward, but during the next few days we were able to tote our supplies and equipment, which had not been damaged by the snowslide, down to the river. But we were in bad physical shape and soon realized that we could not get very far without a sled. We came as far as the bend in the river, found this little sheltered spot, and dug ourselves in.

"Our plan was to build a small snow raft or sled of light logs, strap them together with the dogs' harness, and start out again, both of us pulling the raft. We felt that in this way, we would surely get home safely, if slowly.

"One day Angus found the cave back there." Mr. Winston pointed to the cave in which O'Reilly had found Angus. "We cleaned out the snow, built a fire at the entrance, and made ourselves as comfortable as we could. Most of our time was spent cutting firewood but somehow or other we managed to get a snow raft built, and just when we were loading it . . ."

"I slipped," interrupted Angus, "and broke my leg. Your husband carried me back to the cave, Mrs. Winston, made a rough splint and bound me up so that I couldn't move. He nursed me as if I had been a child."

"He was a good patient," continued Sue's father. "I knew it would be six weeks before he could walk again, so we just dug ourselves in, and made the best of a bad job. We had to ration

our food, but that wasn't too bad. Our chief worry was knowing that you would think us lost."

Sue's mother smiled. "I never did," she said. "I knew you were alive."

"Yes," old Louie murmured, "Madame had faith all along. But what happened then?"

"Spring came with a rush," continued Mr. Winston. "The creek flooded and swept away our raft. That was a real blow," he went on. "The worst we had, for our ax was swept away, too, and we had nothing left but this small hatchet. The mosquitoes and black flies came and I hacked away at small trees with the hatchet. We were planning to build another raft."

"But I was poisoned by black flies," interrupted Angus, "and went into a fever."

"We were both poisoned," said Mr. Winston. "For days we could do nothing but fight off mosquitoes and flies."

"You're lucky to be alive," old Louie broke in. "In my day I have seen men driven crazy with the flies in this country."

Both men nodded. "There was one day," Mr. Winston continued, "when our firewood ran out and we had no smudge. It was night before we could even get down to the river for a drink. I can't very well remember anything more except hacking at those trees. And then you came." He laughed. "When did you come?" he asked. "I can't remember. I only know that you're here."

"That's all you need to remember," said Michael.

"But how did you find us?" Mr. Winston insisted.

Michael told him of the travelers who had seen smoke early in the spring, of how Sue and her mother had joined the Police party, of old Louie's faith and his care of Sue and her mother.

"It was nothing," said old Louie. "I had given my word and Miss Sue kept the dark days bright for all of us."

They all smiled, knowing how much old Louie himself had done to make the dark days bright.

But Michael wanted to know more. "How was it the Police search party missed you?" he asked. "They went right up to the headwaters."

"That's easy," answered Angus. "We were both in such bad shape that after we got the cave cleared out and our winter camp made, we spent days inside the cave in our sleeping bags, with only a small fire burning. There would be little or no smoke showing and what did show would have been hidden by the hill beyond."

They all sat silent, thinking of the winter, of the spring, and now the summer with its harvest of happiness.

Sue moved forward from where she had been sitting at her father's feet.

"Daddy," she said, "you haven't asked anything about us."

Her father smiled. "You haven't given me time, Sue," he said. "Besides, I don't need to ask anything about you. We're together again and that is all that matters in the whole wide world."

"Yes, Daddy," said Sue, "but you've been away so long that you don't know the things that do matter now." Sue looked very important and anxious at once.

"I still know the most important things in my world," smiled her father, "but now you tell me about yours."

Sue fished deep down in her pocket. Out came the grubby hankie. There was only one knot now and a very small one.

"Guess," she said.

"I know," said her father. "Lady Charlotte's sovereign."

"*Wrong!*" cried Sue, delightedly. "Guess again."

Her father shook his head wearily. "You tell me," he said.

Sue untied the knot and took out a tiny round nugget. She held it up in front of him. "Do you know where I got that? That's from my very own gold mine."

"You're fooling, Susie," smiled her father.

"No, I'm not," Sue answered. "This is the littlest nugget I found, but it was the first one and I kept it for you."

Her father looked around at the group of men. "What's this all about?" he asked. "Is Sue crazy or am I?"

"You're the one that's crazy, Jimmy," said Sue's mother. "Sue is the owner of a gold mine—Bombardier Gold Mine."

"No!" exclaimed her husband, trying to sit up. "No! Where did you find it?"

"Behind the Larsens', at a little place Louie took me. I was playing with Bomby and he got his foot stuck—"

"It is a good mine," broke in old Louie, with pride. "A very good mine."

Sue's father laughed.

"Why do you laugh, Daddy?" asked Sue, curiously.

He laughed again. "I travel two hundred miles in the dead of winter looking for a gold mine, and you and a husky pup find one almost in your own back yard."

Louie laughed this time. "Ah, M'sieur Winston," he said, wagging a finger at him, "we French always say the best treasures are to be found nearest home."

Mr. Winston opened the little empty pemmican bag, hanging from his belt, and slipped the nugget in. "Well done, Sue," he said.

The bear cub grew rounder and fatter and funnier. Angus and Sue's father lay under the trees and slept, awakening only for food.

"Don't worry about them," Michael said. "Once they've slept off the relief from strain, they'll mend rapidly."

The fourth morning Mr. Winston wanted a shave and a haircut. "What use is the Force," he asked, "if it can save a man and yet not shave him?"

"Oh, Daddy, let me cut your beard off," cried Sue, and, with the scissors out of the first-aid kit, she hacked away at the strange, shaggy beard her father had grown.

"I'd leave this on, Daddy," she said, snipping busily away, "if it was a nice soft beard like Old Whiskers' or the Bishop's, but it's so stubbly it frightens me." O'Reilly shaved Mr. Winston and cut his hair. It was Angus's turn next and even the little bear cub laughed when all the barbering was over! Sue looked at the two wanderers. Up above, their faces were brown; lower down, where the beards had been, was pallid white. "You both look just like painted ponies," she said.

But laughter, food, and friendliness worked wonders, and in a week's time, in the yellow dawn, the party set out again.

Mr. Winston and Angus were carried as passengers. Michael was very firm about that.

"It will be fast water all the way home," he said. "Get stronger and we'll let you paddle into Dawson."

The little bear traveled in a different canoe each day. His name was Tumble and, next to eating, tumbling was his favorite pastime. He would fall out of the canoe and swim angrily after them, grunting all the while and making everyone laugh at his efforts. Old Louie would shout happily, "Oh, ho! That feller's overboard again," and so they laughed their way home. When the portages were heavy, when the mosquitoes were extra bad, they laughed. Even when Tumble got into the sugar bag and almost ruined the sugar, they laughed. Laughter all the way,

because nothing could touch their happiness.

Early one morning they left the mouth of the Trumpet behind them and started down the broad Yukon toward Dawson.

“My gracious,” said Sue. “Whatever’s happening here?”

The big river was crowded with boats, more boats than Sue had ever seen. Great flat-bottomed barges, scows, canoes, rafts, boats with homemade sails, full-spread to catch the breeze—boats old and new, and all of them headed toward Dawson. Away to the south came the steady beat of an engine, and Sue saw a dark smudge of smoke far up the river. It was a steamboat.

“Whatever can this mean?” Sue called to Michael.

“It’s the Yukon gold rush,” he answered. “These are all the thousands they said would come in the spring. They’re here, Susannah, and so are we.”

At noon Michael put Mr. Winston and Angus in the red canoe with Sue and her mother in the center. The Police party traveled like outriders on either side, but a little bit behind so that when the first canoe came into sight of Dawson, everyone would know that Sue and her mother had returned in triumph.

Steadily the paddles dipped through the afternoon, guiding the canoes past the slower boats and barges crowded with strange faces, Cheechakos, all of them, hoping to find gold at their journey’s end. And steadily the steamer’s smoke drew closer until Sue could see the stern paddle wheel churning the water behind it and could make out the large letters painted below the wheelhouse. “It’s called the *Klondike Belle*,” she said. “I can read it all this way.

“There are Mounties on it, too,” she cried a few minutes later. “I can see their red coats. Do you think they’ll beat us in, Daddy?”

Mr. Winston and Angus paddled a little faster. The canoes swung around the last bend in the river and Dawson lay before them, shimmering in the heat. In midstream the *Klondike Belle* gave a long blast with her whistle.

“Keep inshore,” shouted Michael, “and we’ll get there first.”

“One, two! One, two!” chanted Sue, to the rhythm of the paddles.

They were nearing the shore now, crowded with people, all looking toward the approaching steamer. Sue could begin to distinguish faces, blurred in the distance.

“Mummy,” she cried, “look, isn’t that Jocko?”

Her mother laughed. “I think you’re right, Sue,” she called. “Only one man on earth has shirts like that.”

It was Jocko, the only person of all the hundreds on the shore who seemed to have his face turned their way.

Suddenly he leaped into the air, pointed toward them, shouted, clapped near-by people on the back, shouted again. There was a stir in the crowd.

“Look! Look!” roared Jocko. “By all that’s wonderful, if it isn’t Spitfire and her pa!”

Red coats started running toward the landing place, followed by the crowd. There were cheers, whistles blew, bells rang, hats were flung in midair.

The red coats parted and in their midst a short, energetic figure appeared.

The canoes shot forward.

“Well done, O’Dare. Welcome home, Winston, and you, Mackay,” said the Superintendent, shaking hands with both of them. He shook his head at Mrs. Winston.

“Will you ever forgive me, Superintendent?” she asked.

The Superintendent smiled. “Forgive you?” he questioned. “You went out to find your

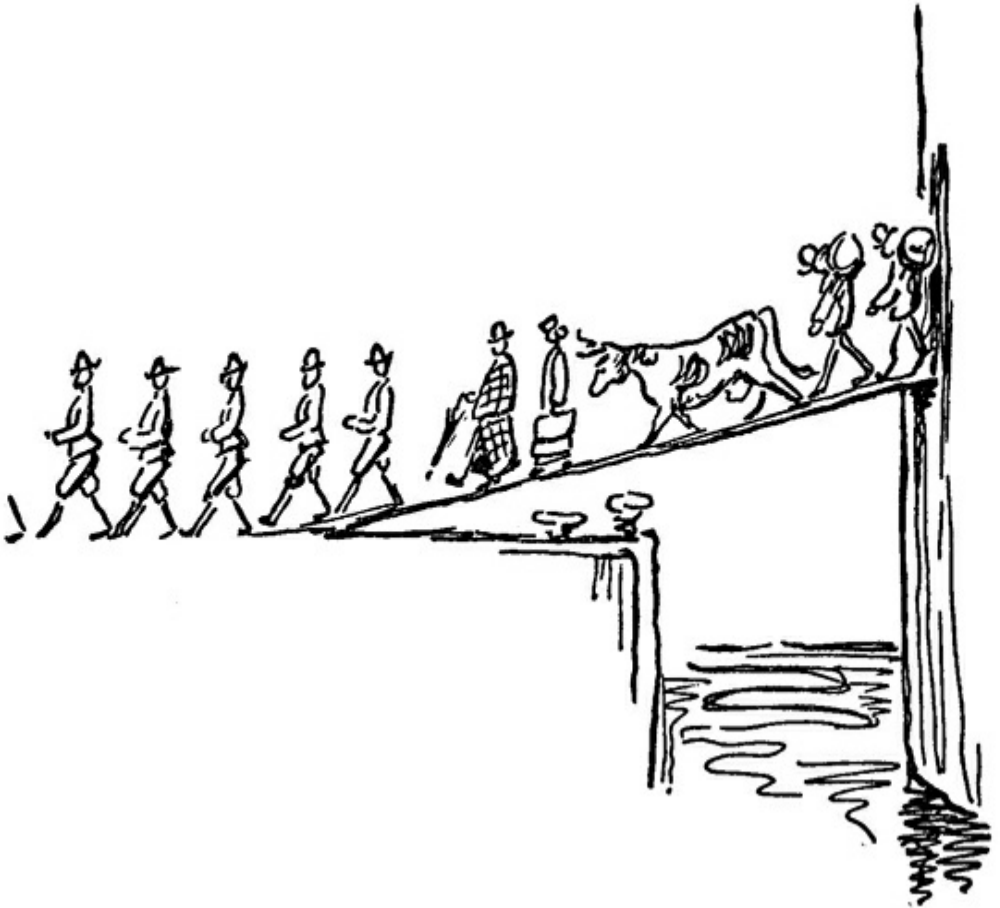
husband and you've brought him safely back. You've followed the best traditions of the Force."

A terrific blast from the whistle of the *Klondike Belle* interrupted the welcomes. "Make fast those lines!" roared the Captain through a megaphone.

Sue turned toward the dock. "I can't see!" she cried, for suddenly she felt quite little in the crowd.

Old Louie swung her to his shoulder. "Maybe you can see now," he said. The crowd parted to let the Superintendent and his party through. Sue looked up at the *Klondike Belle*. Standing beside the Captain was a tall woman wearing a tweed suit, an Inverness cape, and a deer-stalker hat with a quill.

Sue blinked her eyes and looked again. "My goodness!" she exclaimed. "If I didn't know she was in England, I'd say it was Lady Charlotte."



There was more commotion on the dock, the gangplank was run ashore, and down it marched a detail of Mounties, scarlet-coated, smiling, and smart, buttons gleaming. They moved at a brisk pace to a cleared space on the rough wharf. Behind them followed two women,

intent only on keeping step with the Police. One was the tall woman Sue had first seen on the Captain's bridge. She carried a rug and an umbrella. Beside her was a younger woman carrying a little case.

Sue leaned forward so far she almost fell off Louie's shoulder.

"It is!" she cried. "It is! Let me down. Let me down, Louie. It's Lady Charlotte and Matilda." Sue scrambled down and wriggled through the crowd toward them.

"Lady Charlotte!" she called. "Lady Charlotte, wherever did you come from?"

"From London, my dear," the old familiar voice boomed. "Just a moment." With an arm close about Sue, Lady Charlotte turned back to watch the *Klondike Belle*. Slowly, solemnly, down the gangplank plodded a large black and white Holstein cow, mooing loudly as she came. Everyone waited breathlessly until her feet were safely on the dock. There was a sigh of relief and then a mighty cheer from the crowd. Lady Charlotte turned again to Sue.

"I've come all the way from London, my dear," she said. "I picked up the Mounted Police and Matilda in Regina, and the cow joined us at Vancouver. What's the news of your father?"

"He's here," said Sue.

Lady Charlotte swept forward.

"Jimmy Winston," she boomed. "Jimmy Winston, where *did* you get that haircut? It's frightful. Sue, my dear, you've freckles on your nose. You should take better care of your complexion."

"How do you do?" she went on, extending her hand to the astonished Superintendent. "I see you're a member of the Force. Excellent men, every one of them.

"Where's your mother, Sue? Ah, there you are, Aileen. Hair in braids? You're too pretty to wear your hair like that. O'Dare, I'm glad to see you again."

There was a smothered laugh behind Sue. It was Consy. "Who's the old war horse, Sue?" he whispered.

"She's not a war horse," retorted Sue, angrily. "She's Lady Charlotte Dawkins and if you say a word against her I'll kick your shins."

But Lady Charlotte had caught sight of Angus. "Mackay!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing in this place and what is that behind you?"

Angus grinned. "It's Miss Sue's bear," he said.

Lady Charlotte waved her umbrella.

"Take it away," she commanded. "Take it away. I'm sick of cows and burros, mules and horses, flies and mosquitoes. I refuse to live with a bear."

CHAPTER XIX

LADY CHARLOTTE

Sue stretched. What a tumultuous day it had been and how good the mattress felt under her. She stretched again, and wiggled her toes in delicious remembrance of yesterday's confusion and excitement.

After Lady Charlotte had seen the bear, everything grew delightfully muddled. Mrs. Consell arrived at the dock and alternately wept and smiled over them all, Big Jake made a speech over the return of the wanderers, in which Sue's mother's courage, the Mounties' ability and Sue's gold mine were all mixed up together.

Mrs. O'Reilly and Bomby arrived at that moment and Bomby saw the bear and the bear saw Bomby and there was quite a fuss, with Lady Charlotte using her umbrella freely on both bear and dog.

Then they all had come back to the little house that Sue's father had left so long ago. Lady Charlotte was put up in Sue's room. Another cot was placed in the studio and Sue and Matilda slept there. Sue couldn't understand Matilda at all. She no longer whined or tittered, the way she used to. Sue wondered what had happened to her. . . .

"Take it away! Take it away *at once!*" a voice broke in on Sue's day dreaming.

"That's Lady Charlotte," murmured Sue, "and she's mad right through. I must look into this." She hopped out of bed and ran up the stairs to where Lady Charlotte sat propped up in bed with a tray before her.

"What's the trouble?" asked Sue.

"Trouble enough," was the indignant answer. "Sue, have you ever tasted *condensed milk?*"

"Is that what's wrong?" asked Sue. "Why, Lady Charlotte, you're a Cheechako—you're a newcomer, and all newcomers growl over the condensed milk."

"And I'll remain a Cheechako," said Lady Charlotte, firmly, "for I will not ruin good tea with condensed milk. Do you mean to tell me your father and mother have allowed you to take this stuff all winter?"

"There was nothing else to take," said Sue.

"Well, there's something else now!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte, forcefully. "I traveled all the way from Vancouver with a good-sized cow and when I've finished my breakfast and your hair has been washed, we're going out to find it. Matilda! Try some olive oil on Miss Sue's hair before you wash it."

Placing a bath towel around Sue's shoulders, Matilda started a warm-oil treatment of her tangled curls. During the ordeal, Sue learned for the first time of how Superintendent Consell had written to the Commissioner in Regina and told him of how her father and Angus had been lost and how the Police could find no trace of them.

"But how did you find out, Lady Charlotte?" asked Sue.

"The Commissioner cabled Monty, Monty told me, and I caught a boat leaving for Montreal the next day," continued Lady Charlotte. "I cabled ahead for equipment and Commissioner Walsh and his wife had everything waiting for me when I reached Regina. There was a detail of men leaving the following week and I came along with them. I brought Matilda with me as my maid and she has been excellent."

Matilda rubbed the olive oil in harder, as if she was very proud of herself.

"But what did you mean to do when you got here?" asked Sue.

“Take you and your mother back to London with me,” said Lady Charlotte, briskly. “You have to be educated, and you would both be happier in England than in this outlandish country.”

“It isn’t outlandish,” protested Sue. “Wait till you’ve met some of my friends, Big Jake and Snakey Jim and One-Eye Tommy, and Skunky Joe, and you’ll know how nice men can be.”

“Hrmp!” said Lady Charlotte.

“Yes,” continued Sue, “and when you see my gold mine, you’ll be glad you came all the way; and when you’ve seen my burro, Softy, you’ll understand why I can’t understand your not liking burros.”

“Young bones,” said Lady Charlotte, sternly, “may be able to survive a burro, Sue, but I am six feet two, and the burro they gave me was knee-high to a grasshopper. The beast didn’t understand me and I didn’t understand him. We argued every inch of the way. No, Sue, I will not ride another burro.”

“Wait until you’ve seen Softy,” Sue persisted, and then told Lady Charlotte of the winter’s happenings, of the finding of the mine, of Old Whiskers and Consy and the hunt for her father, and of how sweet old Louie was.

“I know,” Lady Charlotte agreed. “On the whole, Sue, I think you will find Frenchmen the most understanding in the world, but they are not British and they are likely to be undersized. If you ever grow to be six feet two, you will know why I like big men.”

“Like Monty and Michael and Hawkins?” asked Sue.

“Yes, big strapping fellows,” said Lady Charlotte. “Matilda, lay out my things, and then wash Miss Sue’s hair. Afterwards come up and brush it here.”

Lady Charlotte was almost dressed when Sue returned, and while Matilda brushed and brushed her hair, Lady Charlotte manicured.

“What time do you go to bed?” she asked Sue.

“Nine,” answered Sue, from behind the veil of hair.

“Before nine tonight, then, Matilda,” said Lady Charlotte, “I wish you would rub olive oil in around Miss Sue’s temples.”

“Yes, m’lady,” answered Matilda, “but would it be all right if I did it a little earlier?”

“And why should you want to do it earlier?” Lady Charlotte demanded. “You’re not going anywhere, are you?”

“Well, you see, m’lady,” answered Matilda, “Mr. Hawkins has asked me to go to a rehearsal of a concert that’s being given in the Sunday School tomorrow night, and he’d like my opinion as to how his song should go.”

Sue tossed her curls back. “Did Hawkins ask you, or did you ask Hawkins?” she asked, and very quickly added, “*Ow*, Matilda! You’re pulling my hair.”

“Quite right, my dear,” said Lady Charlotte, with a sharp look at Matilda. “I’ve no doubt but that you needed your hair pulled. Of course you can go, Matilda. I will look after Miss Sue’s hair and freckles.”

“Thank you, Ma’am,” said Matilda, with a blush, as she went downstairs.

“My, my,” observed Sue. “You’d never know Matilda was the same person.”

“I know,” said Lady Charlotte. “The farther we got from civilization the better that girl was. She’s only silly in well-inhabited places.”

When Lady Charlotte had finished dressing, they said good morning to Sue’s mother and father, and went out to find the cow.

Dawson was very different from the place that Sue had left behind. All the houses were full,

tents had sprung up everywhere, and the streets were crowded with people that Sue had never seen. “Everyone used to know me,” she explained, “and now I’m almost passed by. It’s all very strange.”

They went in to see Big Jake and Snakey Jim. Skunky Joe was out, but One-Eye Tommy was at home in his blacksmith shop and he told them where they would find the black and white cow stabled down the street a little way.

“But, lady,” he said, “if it’s milk you’re after, you’d better take a jug with you. There are no milk deliveries in Dawson.”

They went back to Snakey Jim’s and bought a four-quart pail with a cover. As they were leaving, Snakey reminded them of the sports to be held that afternoon.

“Sports?” asked Sue. “What for?”

“Say, what kind of a Canuck are you, anyway?” asked Snakey. “Don’t you know what Dominion Day is?”

“Of course I do,” said Sue. “It’s the day of Canadian confederation. And Sir John A. MacDonald was the Father of Confederation. He was a big man, Lady Charlotte, like Hawkins and Michael. I learned about him last year in history.”

“I’m glad you did, my dear,” said Lady Charlotte, “but where is that cow?”

Snakey pointed to a small shed back of some other buildings. Lady Charlotte marched down and entered.

“Is there anyone here?” she called.

A man rose from the back of the shed. He had a pipe in his hand.

“Why, yes, lady,” he answered in a gentle voice. “I’m here. Did you kinda want something?”

“I want,” boomed Lady Charlotte, “two quarts of milk,” and handed him the pail.

He looked at it and whistled. “Two quarts of milk?” he said. “Lady, that’s going to cost you something.”

“How much?” demanded Lady Charlotte.

“Sixty dollars,” he replied, sitting down on a box near the hay.

“Sixty dollars,” repeated Lady Charlotte. “Ridiculous! Why, that would make it thirty dollars a quart.”

The man nodded. “Yep, that’s the price sure enough.”

“Thirty dollars a quart! Let me see. That is six guineas. Preposterous, my man. I shall pay no such price. Why, at home in England I could buy an entire cow for that.”

“Take it or leave it, lady,” said the man, knocking his pipe against the box. “It don’t mean nothing to me. It was Bob Miller brought out the cow. I’m only the milkman. But this ain’t England and that’s the price Miller says milk is going to be in the Yukon.”



"I wouldn't buy it," advised Sue. "You'll get to like condensed milk after a little while. I did."

"Give me a quart," said Lady Charlotte, firmly. "And don't you know better than to be smoking in a stable? If you were on my estate in Scotland I would dismiss you immediately."

"Maybe I'm lucky to be in the Yukon after all," the man answered, with a grin, as he sat down on a box and placed the pail between his knees. When he began to milk, the cow moved restlessly, mooing and tossing her head to and fro.

"*Stop!*" commanded Lady Charlotte. "How much do you know about milking? Nothing much if this performance is any example."

"Well, now, I thought I knew, lady," admitted the man, "but I seem to have lost the hang of it."

“You never knew,” said Lady Charlotte. “Get up!”

The surprised man stood up and, sitting down on the box, Lady Charlotte took the pail from him. “So, Bossy,” she crooned. “So-o-o, Bossy, so-o-o.” The cow stood still and the milk began streaming into the pail. Sue suddenly felt very proud of Lady Charlotte.

“Say!” said the man, admiringly. “You’re right slick. How’d you like to take the job on permanent?”

“I wouldn’t like it at all,” answered Lady Charlotte, “but before I leave here today, I’m going to see that you can milk that cow instead of frightening the poor brute. So-o-o, Bossy, so-o-o, Bossy.”

Sue thought it was wonderful to see Lady Charlotte teach the milkman to milk the cow so that it stood still and gave its milk.

“How’d you come to know so much about cows, lady?” the milkman finally asked.

“My good man,” she said, “my cattle take all the prizes at the county fairs and I know how to milk so that I can tell whether a man is a good herdsman or not. As you say in this amazing country, do you twig?”

The milkman laughed. “Lady,” he said, “I’d twig in any country.”

And when Lady Charlotte brought out her roll of bills, he refused payment. “You’ve taught me how to milk,” he said, with a broad grin, “so I guess we’re quits.”

“A most reasonable man,” remarked Lady Charlotte, as she and Sue walked home through the crowded main street, carrying the precious quart of milk. But when Sue had some in her tea for luncheon, she found she didn’t like it. It didn’t seem to have the rich, satisfactory flavor of the condensed milk she’d grown to like.

After luncheon Mrs. Consell called and the whole party went down to Snakey Jim’s Emporium. He had fixed up three benches at the top of his steps and there, with Lady Charlotte in their midst, they all watched the Dominion Day sports. Sue loved them. There were sack races, wrestling, putting the shot, three-legged races, potato races, foot races, and tug of war. Sue liked this the best. First the teams of miners from north and south Dawson tugged and tugged, until one side went down in a heap, then the storekeepers tugged and tugged, and, finally, the Cheechako Police, who had arrived the day before, tugged against the Sourdough Police. This was most exciting. Sue and Consy bounced up and down on their seats as the two teams of constables lined up.

“Who do you bet wins?” asked Consy. “Cheechakos,” replied Lady Charlotte, promptly. “They came with me.”

Consy scowled. “You watch the Sourdoughs,” he said. “They’ll show you a thing or two.”

Snakey Jim came out and joined them. “Last year,” he drawled, “there was a prize for the best team. Too bad there isn’t one this year.”

“Prize? What kind of prize?” asked Lady Charlotte.

“Tobacco,” he answered. “A miner gave me twenty-five dollars to spend on tobacco for the winning team.”

“Tobacco?” said Lady Charlotte. “Oh, no, I don’t like that idea at all. I will give a cup. I gave one at Eton and one at Harrow, where my nephews are at school in England. I will give a cup in Dawson for the best police team and they can tug for it each year. How’s that?”

“Rotten!” said Consy.

“Rotten? What do you mean, you disagreeable little boy?” Sue wasn’t quite sure whether Lady Charlotte was angry or amused.

“I mean rotten,” said Consy, sturdily. “What good’s a cup to anyone when you want

tobacco and it costs too much to buy?"

"I see," said Lady Charlotte. "I see. Well, it's never too late to learn. Young man, go in and tell Mr. Snakey Jim—if that is really his name—to come out here to me at once."

"Do you mean me?" asked Consy.

"Yes," said Lady Charlotte, "I mean you."

When Snakey Jim came out, Lady Charlotte gave him the order, and when the Cheechakos and Sourdoughs took the rope in their hands, the Superintendent stood up. He said he had an announcement to make and explained about the silver cup as well as the tobacco. Everyone cheered. Sue and Consy felt very grand, sitting on either side of Lady Charlotte. The Cheechakos won, and Old Whiskers stood up and made a speech.

He pointed out that this was Dominion Day and that in Her Most Gracious Majesty's Dominion of Canada, the anniversary of the confederation of all the provinces was being celebrated. "Today," he continued, "we have seen the Police teams—Cheechakos and Sourdoughs—vie with each other in friendly rivalry. Let that be our spirit with each other, in the development of this, our beloved Queen's richest Territory. . . . Gentlemen, 'God Save the Queen.'"

Everybody stood up. Mrs. Larsen began to sing

"God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,"

and the crowd took up the song until everyone was singing, even Consy in his high, queer, cracked voice. Everyone cheered then, and they all went home to Mrs. Consell's for dinner.

In the morning Sue asked Matilda how Hawkins's song had gone. Matilda gave her a long and detailed account of the way in which he had held on to the high notes and how sweet and true his voice was. "Pure tenor, Miss Sue," said Matilda, "and sweet, like a bird."

"What kind of bird?" Sue asked.

"A lark," sighed Matilda, "a skylark." Sue buried her head in the pillow. She found it very hard to keep from laughing when she thought of Hawkins with his walrus mustaches singing like a lark.

Sue wanted to take her father and Lady Charlotte out and show them her gold mine that day, but too many people came to offer their congratulations and the little house was full all day long.

Then the Fourth of July came along. There were a great many Americans in Dawson and, long before breakfast, firecrackers were going off all over town. There were sports again in the afternoon, but instead of a tug of war, the event of the day was a baseball game. Lady Charlotte had never seen a baseball game and was properly excited.

"I think I should give a prize, as I did on Dominion Day," she said at luncheon. "I gave one to the Canadians. It seems only fitting that I should give one to the Americans." She turned to Consy. "What would you like as a prize if you were an American playing baseball?"

"Something to eat," he said. "There's a fine lot of fresh fruit just arrived," he continued, "oranges, lemons, cucumbers, tomatoes and bananas. They came all the way from Seattle by boat and do they look scrumptious."

"But, my dear boy," broke in Lady Charlotte, "one can't give fruit as a prize."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Winston. "Fruit is the most precious thing you can buy here. Oranges are seventy-five dollars a case, lemons the same, and a stick of bananas is fifty dollars."

“They’re big ones,” said Consy, “and just ripe, nice and yellow, and not a black spot on them.”

“Well,” said Lady Charlotte. “I’m still not too old to learn, but when I tell my nephews at Eton that I gave a stick of bananas as a sporting prize, they’ll probably disown me. Consy, you and I shall go down and buy the bananas.”

The baseball game was played on the sand bar in front of the town, with bats made from old boat masts. The two teams were evenly matched and there was much excitement as they marched out on the field together. Sue was asked to pitch the first ball.

“How do I do it, Daddy?” she asked, hurriedly.

“Well,” said her father, gravely, “I’ve only watched a few games, but I’ve always seen the pitcher hold the ball in both hands, twirl himself around at least twice, and then throw the ball to the man at bat.”

“Why does he twirl himself around?” asked Sue.

“It’s not really called twirling,” explained her father. “I believe it’s known as winding-up.”

“Come over here, Sue,” interrupted Consy. “I’ll give you a tip worth having. See, you take the ball in your left hand and spit in your right and rub it in the dirt.”

“What for?” broke in the astonished Sue.

“To put a curve on it,” said Consy.

“It sounds like a very funny business to me,” said Sue, as she ran out to the pitcher. He handed her a ball made of blue twine.

“That’s a queer ball to play games with,” objected Sue. “Do I truly throw this?”

The pitcher nodded. “It’s the best we’ve got, Miss Sue,” he said. “All the others are made of wood. They brought up a cow and a piano this spring, but they forgot baseballs. Next Fourth of July we’ll have a regular ball, but this has to do for today.”

Sue shifted the ball to her left hand and wondered if she dared follow all of Consy’s instructions. There were such a lot of people watching her. She could pretend to cough and spit at the same time without anyone knowing.

Raising her right hand, she coughed loudly, then rubbed her hand in the sand and wound herself rapidly. ‘Round and ‘round and ‘round she spun, and then, standing on one foot, threw the ball as hard as she could.

“Well,” said Sue to herself, “I certainly made it curve.” There was a howl of delighted laughter from the crowd, for the ball landed right on Lady Charlotte’s chest. But she didn’t seem to mind it in the least.

“I still think she’s a war horse,” observed Consy, “but she’s a hang good sport as well.”

The Sourdough Stiffs won, and at the end of the game Snakey Jim brought down two banana sticks. “A prize for the winner and one for the loser,” he said, “from the lady from London, England.” There were cheers at that and then the Superintendent made a speech.

“Last week,” he said, “you celebrated with us our Dominion Day. Today, it gives us great happiness to celebrate with all Americans here your Independence Day. We rejoice with you in your prosperity and hope you may always find happiness with us.” And then everyone sang “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee.”

“But ‘My Country, ‘Tis of Thee’ is the same tune as ‘God Save the Queen,’” said Lady Charlotte with surprise.

Old Louie smiled at her.

“Different words,” he said, “but same tune, same meaning, same feeling, eh, Madame?”

In the morning Sue reminded her father and Lady Charlotte that the celebrations were over.

"I'm going to take you to Bombardier Mine," she said, "and that will be the really biggest adventure you've had since you came to Dawson."

Lady Charlotte smiled. "I've seen diamond mines," she said, "but never gold. I'm just as interested as you, Sue."

It was also the first time Sue's father had seen the mine, but when they got there Sue wouldn't have recognized it at all. The little stream that chattered in the spring was dammed up and sluice boxes were built across it. There were rockers and men with spades and great piles of gravel and the clang of the picks on stones, the rasp of spades as they flung gravel on the pile.

Mr. Larsen came forward to greet them. Sue had brought her own tools with her and both her father and Lady Charlotte rocked a pan of gravel until each of them found a nugget. Bomby was with them, very shaggy and summer-worn, and very resentful when he discovered Tumble, the little bear, now a good-sized young cub, tied up in the tool shed of the mine.

They sat on the warm bank above the claim all afternoon, while Lady Charlotte and Mr. Winston talked to Mr. Larsen about the mine.

"You were right, Sue," said Lady Charlotte, on the way home. "This has been the most adventurous day."

"Yes," answered Sue, "and I'd never have had the mine, if it hadn't been for your sovereign."

That night she and Sue's father talked long about the mine and how it should be developed.

"It needs money," said Lady Charlotte, "in order to get the most out of it. I've plenty of money and I'm a good manager. Why don't you get ahead with your sketches, Jimmy, and leave the development of the mine to Mr. Larsen and myself? We can develop it so that it will bring Sue a tidy sum for life. Then, when autumn comes, we can all leave together, having left behind what you Yukoners call 'finished jobs.'"

The summer days fled rapidly. Sue's father sketched and grew strong again; her mother grew prettier every day. Lady Charlotte bossed everything, including Mrs. O'Reilly, and showed her how to make Dutch Apple Cake out of dried apples, powdered sugar, and flour. Louie grew a little stout. Consy and Sue continued their French, but all other lessons stopped. Angus and Alec were helping at the mine. Mrs. Larsen and Lady Charlotte trained a small choir for Old Whiskers. And more and more people came to the Yukon. There was a Citizens' Committee formed, and the streets were cleaned, and a sidewalk laid down. New buildings were going up everywhere and the sawmills ran night and day. There was even a newspaper now—*The Klondike Nugget*. Sue's freckles faded, and her hair, under Matilda's hands, grew soft and curly again. Matilda and Hawkins ceased arguing.

Sue spoke to him about that. "You've stopped disliking Matilda, haven't you, Hawkins?" she said one night.

"Well now, Miss Sue," he answered cautiously. "I don't know how I'd feel about her anywhere else, but up here she's different. I don't like women who faint and roll their eyes and have to be helped over a mud puddle an inch wide. You know how she was, Miss Sue?"

Sue giggled. "I should think I do," she said. "Do you remember how I used to be able to boss her? Well, I can't up here. She knows her own mind, so I just have to wangle her."

Hawkins twirled his mustaches, thoughtfully. "You've given me an idea, Miss Sue," he said. "Wangling? I like that. I might even try it myself."

CHAPTER XX

THE KNIFE

“Sue,” called Consy, “come on out. I’ve got an idea.”

“What is it?” asked Sue. She liked Consy’s ideas, although she had noticed that she was about the only one that did.

“Have you seen that knife down at Snakey Jim’s?”

Sue shook her head. “What knife?”

“Well,” said Consy, “it beats anything you ever saw. It has a bone handle and eight blades, a nail file, a button hook, a screw driver, a corkscrew, an auger, and a drill. Cheap as dirt, too.”

“Why don’t you buy it?” asked Sue.

“That’s the trouble,” said Consy. “I’ve spent all my money.”

“How’ll you get some more?” asked Sue.

“That’s why I called you,” Consy answered. “Sue, you know about the newspaper?”

“Yes,” said Sue. “It’s called *The Klondike Nugget* and it’s owned by a man called Mr. Eugene Allen. He’s a very nice man. He takes his hat off to me and calls me Miss Winston.”

“Good,” said Consy. “I thought you’d know him. Sue, how’d you like to sell his newspapers?”

“Why?” asked Sue.

“So I could buy that knife,” said Consy. “But it’ll need both of us to raise the money.”

“All right,” said Sue, “let’s start now.”

They went down to the office of *The Klondike Nugget*, but Mr. Allen was out.

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” said Sue. “We’ll go out to my mine and get a couple of nuggets.”

It was a hot afternoon, but in spite of the dust and heat they made good time. The men were hard at work and Mr. Larsen busy over maps and diagrams.

“What can I do for you, Sue?” he called, cheerily.

“Nothing, thanks very much,” answered Sue, politely. “I just came out to pick up a couple of nuggets.”

Mr. Larsen looked at her and shook his head. “What did you want them for, Sue?” he asked, gently.

“For a knife,” she said. “It’s the loveliest knife, Mr. Larsen, at Snakey Jim’s. It’s got eight blades, a nail file, a button hook, a screw driver, a corkscrew, an auger, and a drill.” Sue knew its virtues by heart now, Consy had repeated them to her so often on the way out.

But Mr. Larsen shook his head again. “I’m afraid I can’t let you take gold from the mine,” he said.

Sue couldn’t believe her ears and asked him to repeat what he had said.

“I’m afraid I can’t let you take gold from the mine.”

“Whose mine is it?” asked Sue, in astonishment.

“Yours,” said Mr. Larsen, gravely, “but I am your manager and responsible for every bit of gold on the property. I can’t let you come in and pick up gold. That would mean that the mine wouldn’t show correct returns.”

Consy stepped forward. “Let me handle this, Sue,” he said. Sue thought he sounded awfully like the Superintendent in his most important mood.

“I see what you mean, Mr. Larsen,” he said, “but we’ve got to have immediate cash. Now, if

Sue gave you a paper saying she had taken two nuggets, wouldn't that be all right with your bookkeeping?"

Mr. Larsen shook his head. "I can only advance cash out of the treasury of Bombardier Mine on the written order of the Trustees," he said.

"We don't want cash," said Sue, "we only want nuggets."

"Every nugget is considered cash at the bank," Mr. Larsen explained.

"I'm sorry I ever found the old gold mine," muttered Sue. "Come on, Consy."

Angrily the two hurried back to Dawson.

"Even now," Consy said, "the knife may be gone."

"Then get a wiggle on," said Sue. "I can walk faster than you can any day."

The knife was still at Snakey Jim's, they found, and Mr. Allen had returned to his office. Sue explained that they had come in to know if they might help him sell his newspaper.

"Well," he said, "I don't think I need any help. I've a fine lot of lads selling each day, and besides, many people come in to the office to buy their own papers."

Sue leaned across the table. "Mr. Allen," she said impressively, "we have *got* to have five dollars and we've got to earn it ourselves."

"She's right," said Consy. "We're in a bad hole if we can't get it."

Mr. Allen sat down. "Suppose you tell me all about it," he said. "What do you need it for?"

Together they told him about the knife.

"But won't your parents give you the money?" he asked.

They both shook their heads.

"We've been in trouble for months," confessed Sue, "over spending our pocket money."

Mr. Allen turned to Consy. "How did you spend yours this month?" he inquired.

Consy shifted his feet. "It's hard to remember exactly," he said, "but there was a magnifying glass, and some fishing things I needed, and a new kind of popcorn mixed up with molasses, and anyway it's nearly the end of the month."

Mr. Allen laughed and turned to Sue.

"It was the popcorn that cleaned *me* out," said Sue, "as well as a new harmonica with double stops. I've got it here. Would you like to hear me play?"

"Thank you, no," said Mr. Allen, hurriedly. He leaned back in his chair and seemed to be thinking hard.

Sue kicked Consy's shin. She had already learned that when you weren't refused at once, you generally weren't refused at all.

"Here are fifty papers," Mr. Allen said, reaching under his desk. "You go out and sell them for twenty-five cents each. When you return with them all sold, you'll get five dollars."

"Will you be here when we come back for our five dollars?" Sue called, as she and Consy raced toward the door.

"I'll be here until eight o'clock tonight," he answered, smiling, "and that is three hours away."

"*Klondike Nugget!*" shrieked Sue, running out of the office. "Who'll buy a *Klondike Nugget!*"

"*Klondike Nugget!*" shouted Consy, hoarsely. "All the latest news."

A man stopped in surprise. "How much, kid?" he asked.

"Twenty-five cents," answered Sue. She handed him the paper and took the beautiful quarter and hid it in her pocket.

"I've sold one," she called out to Consy.

"I've sold three," he called back. "The knife is almost ours."

"*Klondike Nugget*," cried Sue, but no one paid any attention to her. This would never do, she felt. Waving her papers, she ran across the road to a group of Cheechakos.

"Have a *Nugget*," she cried. "Have a dear little *Nugget*." Each man put his hand in his pocket and drew out a quarter.

"That's pretty good," she thought. "Nine papers. I'll try that again." Breathlessly, she darted to and fro.

"*Klondike Nugget*," she called, over and over. Her pocket was heavy with twenty-five cent pieces now, and it was nearly seven o'clock. Only three more papers to sell.

"Buy my *Nugget*," she cried. "I've only three left."

A hand was thrust out to her, with a ring on it. The ring had a red stone.

A voice said "Three," and gave her a dollar bill, but when she looked up after hunting for change, the man had disappeared in the crowd on Main Street.

She watched Consy complete a deal with two old men.

He beckoned her and they went back to the *Nugget* office. Mr. Allen was there waiting for them. Carefully they counted out their money on the desk.

Gravely Mr. Allen handed them two dollars and a half each. Sue noticed his hand. There was a ring on it with a red stone. She looked up and pointed to his finger. Mr. Allen shook his head at her.

"If I were you," he said, "I'd get home as soon as you've bought that knife. I heard old Louie asking for you at Snakey Jim's. It seems you are going to be late for dinner."

"Gee whittakers," said Sue. "*Won't* I catch it?"

Mr. Allen nodded very knowingly. "I'm afraid you will," he said, "but look, I'll tell you something that may take the edge off any wiggling you two kids are in for."

He leaned forward. "Both your mothers are very interested in the Victorian Order of Nurses and they're arriving in the morning. They came in over the Teslin Trail and have had a pretty bad time of it, we hear. There are four of them and with them is Faith Fenton, a woman reporter for the *Globe*, a newspaper in Toronto. The party was not expected to arrive so soon. Tell your families you've got a scoop. It may take away attention from yourselves."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Allen. Thank you a million times," cried Sue, as she tore out the door after Consy.

Snakey Jim lifted the knife down from the shelf above his head. "Five dollars," he said, "and thank you very much, sir."

"We've got it, Sue!" said Consy, with a gleam in his eye. "Let's look it over." Sitting on the side steps of Snakey Jim's, he opened it and together they examined the precious treasure.

"It's perfect," said Consy, as he shut each blade. "You haven't tried the auger," said Sue. "Would you let me try it, just once?" Reluctantly, Consy handed the knife over, and Sue made a delicious straight hole in the step on which she was sitting.

"Miss Sue," the soft reproachful voice of old Louie reached them. "Miss Sue."

He came around the corner. "I don't know, Miss Sue," he said, "but I think there is trouble at home. Your mother and her Ladyship have been asking for you for the past hour."

"Look at my knife," said Consy.

Old Louie examined it closely, opened the blades, tried them between his finger and thumb, used the auger. "Well, now, Mr. Consy," he said. "That is one very fine knife. Where did you get it?"

Consy grinned. "At Snakey Jim's," he said. Inside the store a clock struck the hour—seven.

All three of them started guiltily.

Sue and Louie trotted home as fast as they could.

“You are not too popular for being late, I think,” said Louie. “If I were you, I would not talk too much at dinner.”

Matilda was waiting for her and lost no time in smoothing her hair and changing her dress, but Sue found the dinner very grim until she told them about the nurses. “How ever did you find out?” asked her mother.

“Mr. Allen told me,” explained Sue. “He said it was a ‘scoop.’”

Mr. Allen had been right, she thought. They had forgotten all about her in the excitement over the nurses, and when her mother told her to run along to bed, a bit earlier than usual, Sue went without a murmur. She was only too thankful that they hadn’t questioned her about the afternoon.

It seemed to Sue that she had been asleep a long time when she first heard their voices. First it was Mrs. Larsen laughing and saying, “But I saw them, Mrs. Consell, running in and out of crowds and calling their papers. Later I heard Sue imploring people to buy her dear little *Nugget*.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Consell, “at last I understand about the knife. I wondered where Consy got the money for it.”

Sue couldn’t see why they all laughed.

“Never mind,” said Michael. “They’re a pair of grand kids.” “That’s pretty nice of Michael,” thought Sue, “he’ll be on my side if there’s a row.” The voices ebbed and it became difficult to hear. Sue dozed off to sleep again.

Later, much, much later, she was roused by the closing of the front door followed by Lady Charlotte’s voice.

“Aileen! Jimmy!” she said. “It’s high time something was done about Sue. How much longer do you intend to let this child of yours run wild? She’s growing rapidly from a nice little girl into a noisy little tomboy.”

“Oh, come now, Charlotte. Sue doesn’t mean any harm,” her father said.

“Nonsense, Jimmy,” said Lady Charlotte. “Sue’s not only a tomboy but a bit of a show-off and I don’t like it. Another year here and she will *be* a show-off. You’re not giving her a fair chance. She is having no proper schooling.”

“I wish she’d had to learn my French verbs,” growled Sue to herself.

“And what is worse.” Lady Charlotte continued, “the child is almost altogether being brought up by men, which is bad for her.”

“I can’t call being brought up by the Force bad for anyone,” broke in Sue’s mother. “The Force have taught her self-reliance, obedience, loyalty, courage. Sue could go anywhere and I’d have no worries. She is afraid of nothing.”

Sue loved the way in which her mother argued for her. But Lady Charlotte wasn’t through.

“Yes,” she said, “but you have overlooked the fact that the Force are always gentlemen. Their appearance and their manners are as perfect as their discipline. I cannot say the same for Sue.”

Sue wondered what was coming next for neither her father nor her mother had any answer to that bombshell.

Lady Charlotte began again. “The ability to do things gracefully, to have charming manners to old and young, is a very important matter for a girl.

“And *so*, I am going to take you all home to England for a second winter here is not to be

thought of. Jimmy's health has suffered, the mine is under excellent management now, and a winter in England will not do any of you any harm. We will go to France for the dark months and Sue will enjoy boarding school."

"You are very good," began Sue's father, when Sue heard her mother laughing and almost crying, too.

"I'd love to go, dear Lady Charlotte," she said, "and I know Jimmy would, too. He can finish his pictures in England and send them out to Montreal afterwards. And you're right. I do want my little girl to grow into a gracious woman," and then they all talked in a muddled sort of way together, so that Sue found it difficult to follow.

But suddenly Lady Charlotte's voice rose again. "I think," she said, "that we should leave on next week's boat, and get back to England as soon as we can."

"Oh, no," Sue's mother objected, "I can't leave until the hospital is finished."

Lady Charlotte laughed. "There is only the roof to be put on," she protested. "Why do you want to wait until the last boat and run the risk of being held up by the ice? Surely you don't want to cross that terrible trail to Skagway again?"

"I'm going to wait until the last boat," repeated Sue's mother.

"You're most unreasonable, Aileen," said Charlotte.

"I am not," flared Sue's mother. "I am going to stay until I've put that hospital in first-class shape.

"All the time Jimmy was lost, what did the people of Dawson do for me each day and every day? Nothing but think of me, pray for me, give to me. I've never had any interest before in my life except Jimmy and Sue. This time I'm doing something that's worth while, and when I go away, the people here will know that I was grateful."

Sue wondered what was happening in the next room. Not a word was spoken for so long. Then she heard Lady Charlotte's voice, but so soft and quiet she hardly recognized it. "I'm sorry," she said. "I'm afraid I'm a domineering old woman. You are right, Aileen. It's just that I didn't understand. We will all go by the last boat and I'll help all I can to see the hospital is properly established."

They went upstairs then and while Sue lay there, wondering what in the world could happen next, she heard Lady Charlotte's voice again. "Not a word of this to Sue," she said, "until our plans are made and then we can surprise her."

"Oh no, you can't," said Sue softly to herself. "You can't surprise me at all. I'm a show-off and a tomboy and I have no manners and I'm altogether a very unpleasant person." There was a catch in her voice and for a long time she stared up at the ceiling thinking over all these shortcomings Lady Charlotte found in her. Then she rolled over to the side of the bed and touched Minnie-Pooh-Pooh. "I suppose I should be very, very unhappy," she murmured, "but that *was* a lovely knife."

When Matilda stole in a short time later, Sue was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CONCERT

“There are geese flying against the sky,” said old Louie, “and last night the Northern lights were crackling. Indian summer is on us.”

In the mornings now a small fire was lit and down at the mine Sue found a thin sheet of ice over a shallow pool of water.

In Dawson the sound of the sawmills, and of building and hammering grew daily louder and busier. Everyone began to talk of getting things done before the freeze-up. Lady Charlotte shivered when she heard the expression.

“When does the last steamer sail?” she asked, anxiously.

“In about a month,” answered Mrs. Winston, but Hawkins told Sue it would be a shorter time than that. “It’s going to be an early winter,” he said. “I think you’ll be away from here before you know it.”

“Oh, Hawkins,” Sue mourned. “I hate to go away, but I’ve got to go to school in England and dear knows *when* I shall ever see you again.”

But Hawkins told her to buck up. “You’ll be back again, Miss Sue,” he said cheerily. “You’ll always turn up like a bad penny. We can’t lose you.”

Sue wasn’t so sure, and that afternoon at the civic reception to the Victorian Order of Nurses, she asked everyone about the freeze-up. They all said it was coming but cheered her by saying they thought it would be late. After that Sue enjoyed the reception more. She was glad she didn’t have to think she would be saying good-by so soon to all her kind friends.

Sue thought the nurses looked very smart in their summer uniforms of royal- and light-blue stripes, with kerchief, cap, and cuffs of white. Each one wore a Jubilee ribbon and silver medal around her neck. Miss Fenton had a Norfolk suit of dark-green duck. Sue looked at it for a long time. It was hard to decide which she would be when she grew up, a nurse or a journalist. The journalist was not so stiff and didn’t seem to work so hard, but the nurses were very grand in their uniforms and medals. They were official, like the Mounties, Sue realized, and she had almost decided to be a nurse when Old Whiskers got up and made a speech.

He told them all that the nurses were members of the Victorian Order of Nurses, an organization founded by Her Excellency, the Countess of Aberdeen, as a national memorial of Her Majesty the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. The nurses had come to the Yukon to attend any sick among the soldiers, government officials, or Mounted Police free of charge, and to help the miners and others in establishing small hospitals where civilians could receive proper care and attention. “They do not come, however, to nurse just one section of society,” he continued, “but to help all of us, and to join with other nurses in the hospitals that may be built, in caring for the sick and dying, regardless of race or creed.

“I present them to you,” he said. “Miss Powell of New Brunswick, the Superintendent of the party; Miss Payson of Nova Scotia; and Miss Hanna and Miss Scott of Toronto.” As each nurse’s name was called, she rose and bowed.

And then to Sue’s astonishment, her mother rose. She was flushed and spoke quickly, as if she were frightened.

She reminded them all that the following week there would be a concert in aid of the Good Samaritan Hospital. “It will be held in the Big Hall,” she said, “and I can promise you all an excellent entertainment. Will you tell all your friends, so that we may raise a lot of money. We

have managed to get the roof on the hospital but we need so many things in the way of furnishing. If you all come and bring your friends I know we will be able to equip and furnish it before the freeze-up.”

Miss Scott showed Sue her medal and told her of how they had been entertained at Government House in Ottawa before they left for Dawson and of the day spent in Regina on the way out. They had met the Commissioner and Mrs. Walsh and Uncle Dennis, who had sent nice messages to them all.

Sue and Consy passed little cakes and tea, and everyone looked at the nurses and Miss Fenton with a bit of awe. They had come so far to help them, and over the hardest trail of all, the Teslin Trail. They were brown as berries and thin and tired, but so cheerful and gay, and already anxious to do something to help the concert.

“We shall want you nurses in the final tableau,” said Lady Charlotte, who was helping Sue’s mother and Mrs. Consell.

“What kind of tableau?” asked Miss Powell.

“Imperial,” said Lady Charlotte. “Come to the rehearsal tomorrow and I’ll show you all about it.”

The next week was really very exciting, Sue thought, for when they weren’t rehearsing the concert, they were sewing on garments for the *Tableau of the British Empire*.

“My gracious,” said Sue, “I never knew the British Empire held so many different kinds of people.”

The walls of the little house were lined with colored sketches her father had made for the costumes. They had very limited material to work with, but Diamond Dyes and her father’s paintbox helped a great deal. There was plenty of shoeblack for the Indians and Africans and Zulus, lots of cotton batting for the snow scenes, and gilt paper to make crowns and spears and scepters. As the costumes were finished, they were hung in the studio, so that when Sue wakened in the early morning light, they swung like ghosts above her.

Sue thought that everybody in Dawson was going to take part. All her friends came to be measured by Lady Charlotte and were given parts to play. No one had any lines to speak. They would just pose in the final tableau, but Sue noticed that everyone who came to the house received a lecture on how much furnishing the new hospital needed, and how, if everyone helped even a little, there would be ample money to take care of everything.

Matilda sewed like a beaver. Mrs. Larsen and Lady Charlotte held rehearsals of the singers in the little log Sunday School of St. Paul’s Church. Hawkins was going to sing a song called “Say au revoir, but not goodbye,” Matilda told Sue she had never heard anything so touching as the way the chorus went. “He sings it so soft and sweet,” she said, “that it brings tears to your eyes.”

“Well, Matilda,” said Sue, “you’d better take a large hankie down, for he sings the chorus twice.”

The Boys’ Sunday School choir was to sing “The Maple Leaf Forever.” They were to carry large, stiff maple leaves made of cardboard, and every time the chorus came they were to lift their maple leaves and hold them high above their heads.

Sue and Consy were to dance a Highland Fling. Consy knew how to dance very well, Sue thought, but when Sue told him so, he only growled that a man hated to be made a fool of by a pack of women, and went quickly home.

“Don’t worry about him,” Lady Charlotte. “You’ll find, Sue, that all men are as vain as peacocks. They talk like that before a show and then glory in the applause.”

Two of the Mounties rehearsed a song from *Pinafore*, and Mrs. Larsen and Michael dressed up as Japanese and practiced a ditty about “the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la.”

There was a harmonica and fiddle orchestra, with a few banjos as well, and two very funny men who blacked their faces and told stories that made Sue and Consy scream with delight.

Lastly there was to be the *Tableau of the British Empire*. Sue was given the part of Britannia. She was to stand before a throne at the top of a flight of steps, and, holding a trident in one hand and a shield in the other, was to receive the homage of the British Empire.

A trident, Sue discovered, was a stubby, three-pronged pitchfork. One-Eye Tommy made it for her in his blacksmith shop, and her father painted the Union Jack on her shield.

One by one the various British colonies were to pass her and, having done homage by bowing low, take up places on the stage until everyone was grouped around her. Then they were to sing “Rule, Britannia,” and “God Save the Queen.”

“And then what?” asked Sue.

Her father laughed. “Well, then, Sue,” he said. “We take up the collection.”

The costumes grew until Sue and Matilda could hardly get into their room, and Mr. Winston complained that every chair he sat on had a pin or needle in it. Mrs. O’Reilly declared she couldn’t make bread, as she never knew any longer whether she was handling flour or cotton batting, and Bomby had to be sent out to the mine. He didn’t like the noise Sue and Consy made practicing their Highland Fling in the storeroom.

Sue’s costume was perfect, she thought. She had a golden crown to wear on her head, a white dress, sleeveless and low-necked, falling to the ground, and, from her shoulders, a long court train stretched out far behind her. For the rehearsal she didn’t wear her train and dress for fear they would be soiled, but Lady Charlotte pinned an old tablecloth to her shoulders and told her to stand up straight and hold her tummy in.

Everything went wrong at the rehearsal. The boys in the Sunday School choir forgot to wave their maple leaves, the funny man couldn’t remember his stories properly, Consy wouldn’t dance and shout as the Scotch people did, and the orchestra couldn’t keep together. Lady Charlotte got cross and grew bossier than ever. Old Whiskers dashed around upsetting everyone by asking them to “Keep quiet, please. Keep quiet.” Even Mrs. Larsen and Michael didn’t seem very cheerful about “the flowers that bloomed in the spring, tra la.”

And when it came to the tableau, most of the people weren’t there at all. They sent word that they’d be there for the show.

“I don’t know what on earth it’s going to be like,” said Sue’s mother. “It’s all a horrible show now, but we’d better rehearse the tableau with those who are here anyway. They will at least know how to guide the others tomorrow.”

Mrs. Larsen began playing a march on the piano. They showed Sue where she was to stand and when she was to come on the stage and mount the throne. Dragging the tablecloth behind her, Sue entered and slowly marched to the throne and stood before it. Representing the colonies, various people passed, one by one, bowing low as they did so. Sue smiled or exchanged sly jokes and made people laugh and altogether had a grand time. She felt that the part of Britannia was the best in the show. Then they all sang one verse of “Rule, Britannia” and “God Save the Queen,” and blew out the lights in the hall and left for home. Mrs. Larsen was worried.

“It’s the worst show I’ve ever seen,” she sighed. “Not one person even tried to do his best.”

“They never do at rehearsals,” said Lady Charlotte. “But tomorrow I’m going to have a talk with some of those young people. I think you’ll find they’ll all do better at the concert.”

Sue had just tumbled into bed when Lady Charlotte knocked at her door.

“May I come in, Sue?” she said. “I want to talk to you about your part in the tableau.”

Sue moved over in bed, and made a place for Lady Charlotte. She could just see her sitting there in the moonlight, her gray hair a little loose around her face.

“Do you remember the day of the Jubilee, Sue?” she asked, “and when the Queen passed?”

“I could never forget it,” Sue answered.

“I thought not,” said Lady Charlotte, quietly, “yet tonight when you were playing the part of Britannia and receiving homage, you behaved as if being a Queen were only an amusing show, some kind of mockery of a great tradition. You were playing the part of Britannia, which is only another name for the Queen. The Queen has grown older this year, Sue. She is now very frail and often very tired, yet . . . her peoples come from far and wide to see her, so that they may go home and say to their children ‘I have seen the Queen.’ Since she was seventeen, she has answered every call, Sue. Now, she is no longer young and her heart is sad for the many of her loved ones who are gone . . . but still her peoples come from far and wide to see her, and she takes her place in her carriage and drives abroad.”

Lady Charlotte lifted the folds of the white gown hanging by Sue’s head. “Your gown is cheesecloth, Sue, your crown tinsel, yet were your heart as truly royal as the part you play, this train would turn to velvet, your crown to gold and jewels, your gown to satins and brocades. Tomorrow, when the time comes, think of the Queen and be as queenly as the part you play. Good night.”

Sue wiped away the tears Lady Charlotte’s voice had brought to her eyes. She thought of the Queen, of her golden star and Uncle Dennis, of the Chilkoot, of the Queen.

The next day was a mad whirl. Outside the Hall a big notice, printed on cotton, said:

BIG CONCERT

In Aid
of

GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL

Seats Free
No Admission Charge
Collection

Bunting, lent by Snakey Jim, was hung up inside; great boughs of evergreens were placed around the windows. Curtains hung over the front of the stage, which had steps leading down to the seats. At the back of the stage, they placed a little flight of steps and a platform. On it was a golden throne and, back of the throne, hung a huge Union Jack.

Below the stage and beside the steps stood a piano. At the right and left of the stage were two curtained rooms for the performers. In the basement, Mrs. Larsen, Mrs. Winston, Michael, and Lady Charlotte, with the help of Matilda and Mrs. O’Reilly, were putting on grease paint and rouge, darkening the eyebrows and lashes of the performers.

Sue wore her Highland outfit. Consy looked very smart, she thought, as he swirled his kilt. Sue tried a step or two as the piper tested his bagpipes. Altogether everything was in the delicious confusion Sue loved so well.

The Hall filled rapidly, performers went into the little waiting rooms off the stage. There were catcalls and clapping from the audience. The aisles filled. There were people sitting in the windows and others trying to peek in from outside. There was more clapping and stamping of feet.

Michael signaled O'Reilly, who was in charge of the stage, and the curtains were pulled back. The audience clapped loudly at the sight of the throne and flag. The boys' choir came out. Their faces shone with soap and water, their collars gleamed with starch.

Their voices shrilled with excitement as they opened the concert with "The Maple Leaf Forever." Sue watched from the stage waiting room.

"The Maple Leaf, our emblem dear,
The Maple Leaf, forever,
God save our Queen and Heaven bless
The Maple Leaf forever."

With a magnificent swoop every right arm appeared and held aloft a cardboard maple leaf.

Sue thought the audience would never stop clapping but it was the same with each number. There were encores for everyone. The funny men remembered all their jokes. Mrs. Larsen looked beautiful as the Japanese lady and she and Michael had to sing about the "flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la" three times. The harmonica and fiddle orchestra were helped out a bit by the piano, and Sue thought they were going to play all night, for when they played "Turkey in the Straw," the audience stamped the time with its feet, and wouldn't let them stop.

Hawkins then sang a mournful ditty, with a chorus that made everybody cry. Sue noticed that all people in the Yukon laughed or cried very easily.

"Say au revoir, but not goodbye,"

sang Hawkins.

"For parting brings a bitter sigh,
'Twere better far, that we'd not met,
I loved you then, I love you yet."

"My goodness," said Sue to Consy, "look at Matilda!"

"She's just about to drown in her own tears," said Consy.

But Hawkins sang the refrain three times, and then Sue and Consy danced the Highland Fling. Consy was wonderful. He cheered and danced until every Scotchman in the place was cheering with the two of them.

Next, seven men came out dressed as British Grenadiers, and sang

"With a row, tow, tow, tow, tow, tow,
For the British Grenadiers."

No one in the audience knew that their busbies were made of hanks of wool combed out to look like bearskins.

A little man with an enormous voice sang a hunting song called "John Peel." That was a lovely song and so was "Tommy Atkins." While the audience was singing it, and the harmonica and fiddle orchestra played again, Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Winston dressed Sue in

her robes and train and gave her the trident and shield.

Standing alone in the little dressing room, Sue heard the audience cheering wildly for another encore, but she heard, too, another sound, the sound of marching feet in London town, silver bugles shattering the air. She saw a little old lady in a carriage drawn by cream-colored horses.

“Psst, Sue!”

Sue opened her eyes. It was Consy, signaling to her.

“Go away,” said Sue, “I’m thinking myself into a Queen.”

She shut her eyes again.

“I’m a Queen,” she said softly to herself, “and my people are coming to do me homage. My back is tired and my heart aches for my loved ones who have gone . . . but my people need me. I must not be old. My back must not ache, for my people have need of me. I am a Queen, I am a great Queen. I am Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India and the Dominions beyond the Seas . . . and my people are coming to do me homage.”

“Ready, Sue?” It was Michael, beckoning her to come forward. Slowly, with head erect, heart beating fast, the long train sweeping out behind her, Sue came out on the lighted stage. There were Mounties standing on either side of her throne. Slowly, she walked up the steps, and stood facing the audience. From the right and left came her subjects. The Dominions first, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. The tall, turbaned Indian was really Snakey Jim, but he bowed before her with the dignity of the Indian Prince Sue had seen accompanying the Queen in London; Zulu Chiefs, Indian Chiefs, Africans, soldiers, sailors, miners, French Canadians, Scotchmen in their kilts, two Irishmen dressed in the uniforms of the Royal Irish Constabulary. One by one, they paid their homage as they passed, and took up positions around her throne. To all she bowed, slowly and with grave dignity.

Lastly, a detail of Mounties swung on the stage and grouped themselves back of her.

The orchestra struck up “Rule, Britannia,” Mrs. Larsen sang the first verse, the Mounties the chorus, and then the audience broke into song. Over and over and over. “Would they never stop?” Sue wondered. Michael signaled to the orchestra.

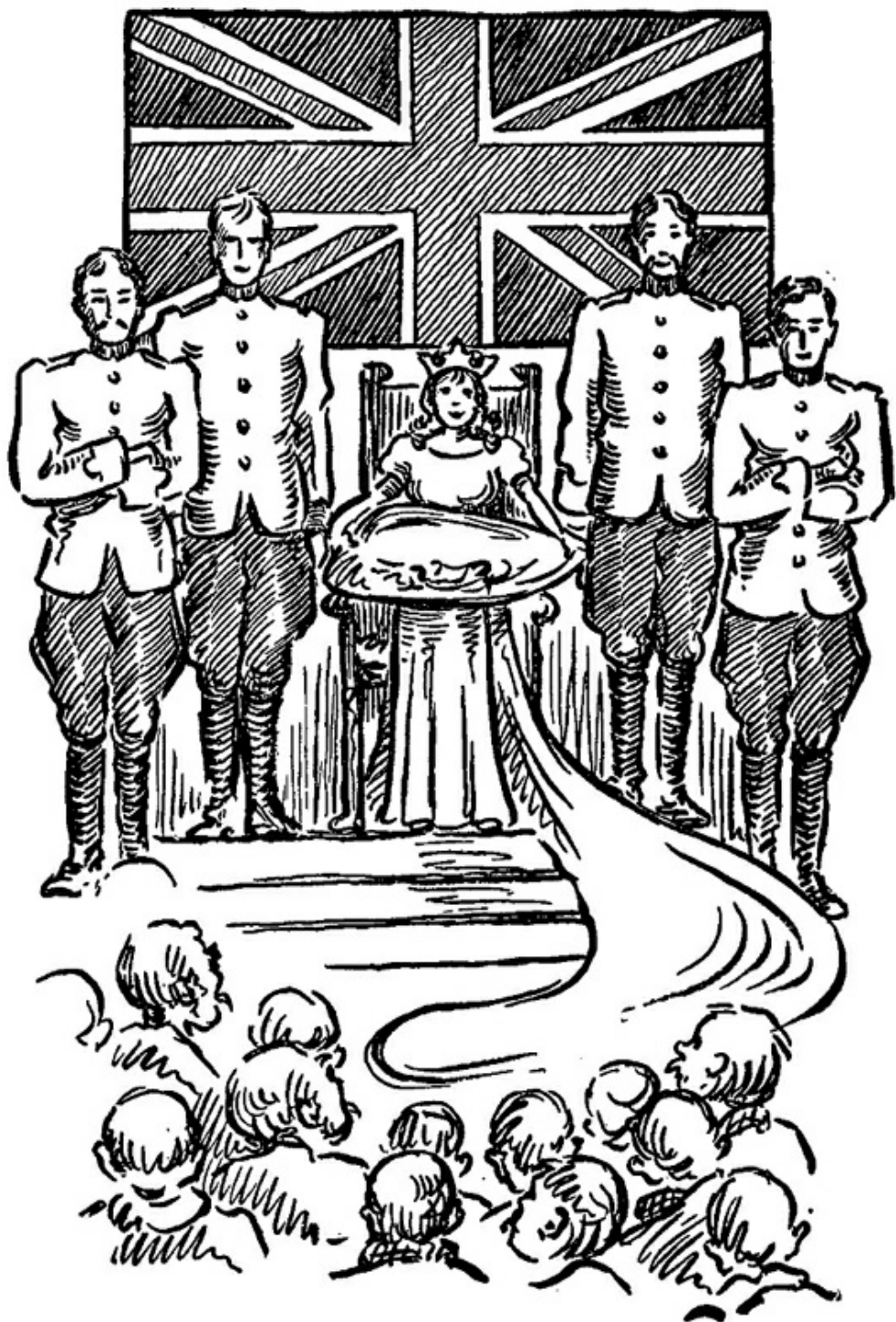
Every man was on his feet as the notes of “God Save the Queen” sounded. They sang the whole three verses. Still Sue stood there. The clapping and cheering faded a little. A voice called out:

“Hi, Britannia, what would you like?”

“Ho, Britannia,” another voice called, “name your wish.”

“What ho, Britannia,” a cockney voice bawled. “What d’ye want for your hospital?”

There were whistles and cries and slowly Sue moved down the steps from her throne to the stage. She remembered that they were going to take up a collection but something had gone wrong, for no one was passing collection plates as they had planned. More slowly still, she moved to the edge of the steps leading down to the audience.



Sue held her shield out to the audience

“That’s it, Britannia,” a cheerful voice cried. “Give us a speech.”

“Speech! Speech! Speech!” came from all over the hall.

Sue didn’t know what to do. Michael was behind her. What would the Queen have done?

She handed her trident to Michael and then held her shield out to the audience.

“If I were a truly Britannia,” she said, “I would ask you to fill my shield with gold. I would ask you to give me enough money so that none of my people should ever be sick or unhappy, except in the new hospital. Please will you give all you can?” She held out her shield to them. It was like an empty shallow cup.

“Right you are, Britannia,” the cockney called. There were cheers and shouts and yells and a rain of money began falling into the shield. Men and women pressed forward up the steps and dropped bills and coins and nuggets into it, until it almost slipped from Sue’s grasp. Two Mounties moved forward and held the shield in front of her. That brought out more cheers. Snakey Jim stood beside her.

“Turn out your pockets, you Sourdoughs!” he cried. “Give! Give more!”

He took the Stetson off the head of the nearest Mountie and held it out. Big Jake followed by leaping on to the platform on the other side of Sue.

“Come on, Cheechakos, Sourdoughs, Yukoners all,” he cried, and held out his ten gallon hat. “Give until she’s full.”

It was all so exciting that Sue thought she might cry if she stayed there any longer.

Across the heads of the crowd, she saw the figure of the Superintendent standing in the open door at the entrance to the Hall. He was someone she knew would understand. Slowly she walked down the steps and through the cheering people to where he stood.

He looked at her with the quick, sharp sympathy she had learned to expect, and picked up her train and wrapped it around her shoulders. The cool night air poured in the open doorway. Sue shivered. “Give me your coat, O’Reilly,” said the Superintendent, and taking the red tunic, slipped it over Sue’s shoulders.

“May I take you home, Britannia?” he asked.

Together they set out down the quiet street, the red coat swinging from Sue’s shoulders. It was not velvet and brocade like the Queen’s mantle, she told herself. It was different, even better. This mantle had to be won. Holding her head higher, Sue drew the red coat proudly about her and moved along with a dignity that matched a Queen’s.

CHAPTER XXII

FAREWELLS

The day after the concert, there was a long blast from a whistle on the river and the *Columbia* steamed slowly into Dawson. The Captain reported ice in the channels and announced that it was his last trip that season. The *Columbia* was to leave as soon as possible, direct for Seattle.

There had been great hurrying to and fro then, taking of passages and packing, frantic good-bys, the mine to visit, Softy and Tumble to see for the last time, and Mrs. O'Reilly weeping in the kitchen. A committee of the townspeople came and thanked Mrs. Winston for all she had done for Dawson. The concert had brought in enough money to furnish the hospital completely and to pay salaries of nurses and doctors for two years.

Old Whiskers was on the committee. "We bless you, Mrs. Winston," he said, "for in your time of sorrow you worked for us and in your time of happiness you remembered us." Even Consy, who was present, admitted that Old Whiskers had his good points.

The little house seemed to burst with good wishes for their happiness. No one really said good-by. They were all coming down to the boat. The studio in which Sue and Matilda had slept all summer was bare of everything now but their traveling clothes hanging on the wall.

Sue tucked Minnie-Pooh-Pooh closer to her in bed that night and thought with satisfaction of the white fur coat and cap Major Bell had given her that evening. "It's a bit long," he said, "but you'll grow to fit it." Attached to the coat had been a card, "From Fieldy, in memory of the Chilkootee."

Major Bell had been up north all summer and had had Fieldy with him. It was nice to see the terrier again, with his gay, waggly tail and bright eyes. Tomorrow night they would be far from Dawson. Sue wondered what boarding school would be like. Not as much fun as the Yukon, she felt sure, and the room with its clothes swaying in the late September breeze faded into dreams of England.

She awakened later. At first she couldn't remember where she had heard the sound before. Then it came back to her. It had been Matilda crying when her mother had refused to bring her to the Yukon. Could it be Matilda again? Sue listened and then pattered across the floor to Matilda's bed.

"Matilda," she whispered, "are you crying?"

"Yes," said Matilda, "but please be quiet, Miss Sue. I don't want anyone to know."

"What's the matter?" asked Sue.

"I can't tell you, Miss Sue."

"Sure you can," Sue answered.

But all Matilda did was weep afresh.

Sue pulled the quilt around her. "Matilda," she said, severely, "are you crying because you're leaving Hawkins?"

The bed heaved with fresh sobs.

"Matilda, why do you cry at leaving Hawkins?" asked Sue, sternly. She was getting tired of all these tears.

"Well, Miss Sue, we love each other," sniffed Matilda.

"Why don't you get married then?" asked Sue. Grown-ups and their ways were beyond her understanding.

“That’s just what Hawkins kept on saying,” wailed Matilda.

“They why don’t you do what he tells you?” insisted Sue. “Mummy does what Daddy tells her.”

“I can’t,” bawled Matilda. “You see, Miss Sue, it’s the mistress.”

“Lady Charlotte?” exclaimed Sue. “She wouldn’t care if you got married.”

“But I promised to return with her,” wailed Matilda, “I did when I left Regina. I can’t break my word. It wouldn’t be honest.”

“Well, for goodness’ sake,” said Sue, “if that’s all the trouble, just leave Lady Charlotte to me. I’ll fix her and I’ll fix you and Hawkins, too . . . if you leave me alone and stop crying so that you won’t have a red nose.”

There was light in the window now and Sue crept upstairs to Lady Charlotte’s room.

An hour later, Sue had breakfast in the kitchen with Louie and Mrs. O’Reilly. Mrs. O’Reilly was her most Irish self, Sue thought, that morning, but Sue was too busy to enjoy her. There was so much to do before the steamer sailed.

Breakfast over, she started out for Old Whiskers. He had hardly finished dressing when Sue arrived, but came into his sitting room to see her.

Sue explained her visit, and Old Whiskers laughed and smiled and laughed again. “You’re sailing at high noon, Sue,” he said. “You’d better have them all here at ten.”

Back again Sue raced. Hawkins was waiting to see her and she wondered how Matilda had sent word to him. Sue told him what she wanted him to do and he left immediately, looking very important and proud.

Sue went into her room. “It’s all fixed, Matilda,” she said. “I’ve had it out with Lady Charlotte and she’s planned everything for you. She thinks Hawkins is an excellent match, and Hawkins thinks he’d prefer a very quiet wedding, so Lady Charlotte sent me down to see Old Whiskers and you’re going to be married at ten o’clock. That gives you an hour and a half to get yourself dressed.”

Matilda was all rosy and smiling. “Is it really true? Am I going to be the bride of Hawkins? Oh, Miss Sue!”

“Now, don’t be silly,” said Sue, sternly. “I’ve told you already about your nose, and if you have a red nose you can’t be married.”

“Run away,” said Matilda. “Run away. I’m going to get dressed. It’s my wedding day.”

“Yes,” said Sue, “and I’m going to be your bridesmaid.”

“Aileen,” called Lady Charlotte, later, “I’m taking Sue out to say a few good-bys. We’ll be back in about an hour.”

“All right, my dears,” answered Sue’s mother, and they started down the main street of Dawson—Lady Charlotte, Sue, and Matilda—to the little log church of St. Paul’s.

Lady Charlotte went in to see Old Whiskers, and Sue took Matilda in her soft blue dress to the vestry, where Hawkins was waiting for her.

Old Whiskers was laughing as if he could never stop.

“It’s all very well to laugh,” said Lady Charlotte, “but the fact remains that a wedding is not a wedding without the wedding march. It’s true I haven’t played the organ for twenty years, but with your permission, or without it,” she added, “I am going to play the wedding march this morning,” and turned briskly into the church. Placing herself at the organ, she tried the stops and the pedals, and pumped hard with her feet.

“Get your surplice on,” she said to Old Whiskers. “I’ll just try a little soft music to get my hand in.” Sue didn’t think much of the soft music. It was pretty loud and bumpy, but Lady

Charlotte seemed very pleased with herself.

“Now then, Sue,” she said. “Off you go. Get the pair and start the procession.”

Sue went back to the vestry. Matilda was looking very pretty, Sue thought, with a soft light in her eyes, and Hawkins kept twirling his mustache in quite an imposing fashion.

“Quick,” said Sue, “this way,” and led them into the entrance porch of the church. On a chair lay her new fur coat and cap.

“Why, Miss Sue,” exclaimed Matilda. “I packed those last night.”

“I know,” said Sue, busily getting into them. “They’ll be pretty hot, but I hadn’t a bridesmaid’s dress so Lady Charlotte unpacked them so I could wear something special. I brought them down when I came to see Old Whiskers this morning.”

She pulled the cap down over her curls. Her golden star was on her breast, and she felt as excited as if Matilda were wearing a white satin dress and a veil and as if the church were full of people.

The little organ began again.

“It’s the wedding march,” said Matilda. “Oh, Miss Sue!” But Sue had opened the door and was stepping proudly up the aisle.

When they reached the chancel, the organ music faded into just a whisper. Old Whiskers smiled down at them.

“Dearly beloved,” he began. Sue listened very carefully, and when he asked “Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?” Lady Charlotte answered, “I do,” without ever stopping the music. And so they were married, and this time Matilda did not weep but seemed very proud and Hawkins very, very military.

Old Whiskers took them into the rectory and gave them all a glass of sherry. Lady Charlotte was vastly pleased with herself.

“It’s five and twenty years since I played an organ,” she said, “and yet when I sat down to that organ this morning, it all came back to me as easily as if it had been yesterday.”

Sue remembered the bumps and wheezes of the organ, and went out on the porch to hide her laughter.

Old Whiskers joined her. “At first,” he said, “it was twenty years since she had played the organ, now it’s five and twenty.” He laughed again. “I’m an uncharitable old man,” he said, “but I hope it’s another five and twenty before she plays the organ in my church again,” and they laughed together.

The morning hours sped. There were congratulations at the little house and then they all went out into the clear sunshine together. Down the streets they passed, with good-bys at every turn and good wishes from everyone. Big Jake ran out with a box of licorice sticks for Sue. Snakey Jim handed her a little pearl-handled knife. “It’s not as big as Consy’s,” he said, “but it’s as big as your small hands can hold for a time. Good-by, Miss Sue, and good luck.”

They passed Police Headquarters and the young constable on duty waved to Sue. The sun was hot and warm and the air sparkling. In front of her marched a detail of home-going Mounties, Sourdoughs all, their Yukon service over. Beside her, tail curled over his back, ears sharply cocked, trotted Bomby. He too, was a Sourdough, and he too was on his way to England. High and white the mountains rose above them, the blue waters sparkled, a Scotch piper played “Bonnie Dundee.” A group of miners doffed their hats and waved. The Consells, Old Whiskers, Michael, and Major Bell, and other friends stood at the dock to say good-by. Everyone was delighted over the wedding. Consy slipped a small box into Sue’s hand.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Nothing much,” he answered.

“Can I open it now?” Sue asked, for she knew Consy would want to know what she thought of his present.

“If you like,” said Consy.

Inside a little box, on a bed of pink cotton lay a dried beetle. “It’s a *coccinella novemnotata*,” said Consy, “and very hard to find in the Yukon.”

Sue knew it was a ladybird, his favorite beetle. “I’ll never lose it, Consy,” she said. “I’ll keep it forever and ever along with my dried rattlesnake. Thank you a thousand times.”

There was a long whistle, followed by confused good-bys, and cheers from the crowd. But something was wrong. Sue looked around. She had missed something, someone.

“Hurry, Sue,” cried Michael, urging her toward the steamer.

“Oh, Michael,” Sue cried. “It’s Louie. I’ve missed him. I can’t go without saying good-by to Louie.”

“Quick then,” said Michael. “He’s behind that pile of logs, Sue. He’s upset at seeing you go. Run down alone. I’ll hold Bomby.”

Michael was right. Louie was sitting there, but not alone. Beside him were Blizzard, Storm, and Zero. “Here we are, Miss Sue,” he smiled. “All four of us, to bid you bon voyage and good luck.” There were tears in the old man’s eyes and tears in Sue’s as she patted each dog in turn.

“Good-by, Louie,” she cried. “I shall come back again, and never, never will I forget you.”

“That will be as may be,” said the old man. “Bless you, and may all your wrinkles come from happy smiles.”

“Let go the lines!”

There was a long blast of the whistle, a rousing cheer from the crowd and the *Columbia* swung out into the stream. They were away, away on the voyage down the Yukon to the Pacific and across Canada to England. From the Captain’s bridge, Sue’s mother and father and Lady Charlotte were waving farewells. On the deck below and on the dock were the red coats of the Mounties and on shore a band was playing—

“God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save our Queen.”

Below her Sue could see Hawkins and Matilda, Michael and the Superintendent, Consy and O’Reilly, old Louie with Blizzard, Storm and Zero.

Sue’s eyes filled with tears again and she held on tightly to Bomby. She was setting out on another adventure—but her own people and her own Mounties were with her. Across the rush of the water, carried on the river wind, came Consy’s voice,

“Goodby, Spitfire.”

And then, before she could answer, he was calling something else. Sue could hardly believe her ears.

“Good luck! Good luck, Susannah of the Yukon!”



TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Obvious printing errors have been silently corrected. Otherwise, inconsistencies, variations and possible errors in spelling and grammar have been preserved.

[The end of *Susannah of the Yukon* by Muriel Denison]