

In the year 1898, when the Alaska gold rush was at its height, I was living in Tacoma, Washington. That city, as well as Seattle, was the point to which, and from which, the Alaska steamers came and went. I had been left with a five-year old boy to support, ~~and, never having earned a dollar,~~ and having no profession, and any- thing but a physically strong body, the question was, whether I should depend upon friends and relatives, or start out on a self-supporting career. Naturally, I chose the latter course. After thinking of many plans, and trying to decide whether to stay in the west or go back to my home in the east, Miss Anna Dickey, a trained nurse who had been much in my home, came to ask my advice about going to Alaska. She was a very robust woman, had a marvelous disposition and a heart of gold. She did not want to go alone, and yet she felt there might be great opportunities there in many lines. I was young and open for adventure, so I said "I wish I might go with you." She replied "Why don't you?" Naturally, I asked what we would do with the boy. She had been with me when he was born, and, as he was a very delicate baby, had a peculiar interest in him. She had really saved his life by her constant and untiring care. We discussed the subject at some length, and I finally decided that whatever I did I must keep my boy with me.

After my decision, and consulting with many friends, (all of whom thought I was utterly crazy), we decided on a plan ~~which was~~, that we take ~~me~~ to Skagway or Dyea enough lumber, (already cut the proper lengths), to build a house and use it either as a hospital or a small hotel, or a combination, as there were only shacks there at that time, and we knew there was much sickness. We would also take

~~we~~ sheets and pillow-cases and be very stylish, as everyone slept between blankets, also some real dishes, ~~as~~ no one had anything but tin plates, cups and spoons. The next question was, getting our equipment there. At that time, every boat capable of carrying passengers was brought into requisition, and bunks or "Standees" as they were called, were built on all the decks to accomodate the thousands of men flocking from all over the world to the gold fields. Each passenger was only allowed a half ton, (ships measurement) for baggage and freight, and as each one had to take everything he ate or wore, as well as blankets and bedding, it was impossible to get anything like lumber or extra provisions taken.

Mr. Hugh Wallace, later ^{our} Ambassador to France, was at that time living in Tacoma, and was President of the Alaska Steamship Company. As he was a personal friend, I asked his advice, only to be told that it was impossible for any passenger ship to take lumber or furniture, so our plan seemed ~~utterly~~ doomed to failure. At the darkest hour the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company, (of which my cousin Colonel C. W. Griggs was President and principal owner), decided to send a shipload of lumber to Skagway as an investment, and they chartered a very old sailing vessel, the "Canada". She was entirely dismantled and was to be towed up the inside passage to Skagway, where the lumber was to be sold. While Colonel Griggs disapproved thoroughly of my going, he and one of his partners, Mr. Henry Hewitt, decided that if I was determined to go, they would try to find a way to help. The result was we were told we could store our furniture, provisions, etc., between decks, and our lumber could go with theirs. As it was certain to take at least three weeks to tow the "Canada" to Skagway, we asked that we might go on the same ship, so ~~that~~ we could arrive with our belongings. They

had no passenger license, so we were compelled as stewardesses, which we did. In January, tucked away in the Captain's cabin, (which he insisted upon giving us), we sailed out of the harbor at Tacoma, with hosts of friends waving us goodbye and Godspeed. We were told to get on board very early in the morning. We did this, only to lie in the harbor until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, which was very annoying as we had but to look up the cliff to see the homes of many of our friends, and my cousin Mrs. Wagner waved a sheet out of the upstairs window several times during the day to let us know she was thinking of us. *Had many inquiries as to the wisdom of it - all.*

The Captain's cabin was very comfortable and we had our own mattress and bedding. The food was good enough, but as the boat had never carried passengers, being only a freighter, things were far from clean, but we were very hungry, so we shut our eyes and ate what we could, going back to our cabin and finishing with some very tempting and dainty things provided for us by our loving friends. Mr. Weinburg, a friend who had been most helpful in getting our things on board and giving us advice, came out in a small boat, and we were certainly very glad to see him. The boy, of course, was wildly excited and at once became the pet of the ship and was called "Commodore." A stowaway was found when we were well under way, and, as the Captain did not want to turn back to land him, he put him to work to help the cabin boy, and things were somewhat cleaner. One day while we were waiting for the tide, (as the water was too low to go on), the Captain and Mr. Cole went ashore and shot some ducks and two deer, which gave us a nice variety of food. During the trip Miss Dickey and I played cards with Mr. Cole and Mr. Murphy when the Captain was not looking, as he was superstitious about card-playing on a boat.

I forgot to mention that the lumber company also sent up four large truck horses and their stalls were built in on the upper deck.

We faced head winds and bad weather all the way and at the end of ^{21 Feb 14} ~~eighteen~~ days cast anchor at Skagway harbor, not being allowed to tie up at the wharf, which, on account of the scarcity of lumber, was a very frail and small affair. There was a howling gale the the thermometer registered sixteen below zero. The Captain advised us to stay on board until the storm was over and we were most willing to do so, but we did go ashore and arranged for having our things taken over to Dyea ^(by scow) as soon as possible. They were to be loaded on scows from the "Canada", towed to Dyea, and unloaded on the beach when the tide was high.

I developed a severe attack of ^{Gonorrhea} ~~bronchitis~~ and was in bed, most thankful for a place to keep warm, when suddenly about 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the second day the Captain came down ^{Lynn Kudlak} ~~stairs~~ saying "We have broken our anchor and are adrift and only God knows what will become of us." Our tug had immediately left us, for its homeward trip and another job, and there were no large steamers or passenger boats in port, ^{all} being ~~all~~ tied up at Juneau, on account of the severe storm. If one can imagine the sensation of being adrift in the open sea with no power and no anchor, one can understand something of our feelings. I immediately got up and dressed. The Captain said "Put on every warm thing you have and if you have any money or valuables put them somewhere on your person and be ready for anything." It was fast growing dark and as we stood on deck in the freezing weather it was surely a strange sensation to watch oneself getting shipwrecked. After cavorting about from side to side in the Lynn Canal, (a narrow

body of water with high and precipitous rocks on either side), the boat finally landed on a jagged rock, piercing a hole in her bottom, and hung exactly as you would hang a hat on a hook. We went, as best we could, back to the cabin. The boat was in an almost perpendicular position, ~~so~~^{for} it was most difficult to get about. Of course, the fires were ordered out at once, as a safety measure. The poor horses were in a horrible plight, two of them on their haunches ~~and the other~~^{two} two on their heads, as their stalls were built facing each other. For days we had used salt water for everything but drinking, so the horses might have enough fresh water to drink. The long trip had made out tank very low.

By this time it was pitch dark and a horrible wind howling. During all my life, if I stop to think, I have been able to hear that weird and horrible sound. As the water washed up on the overturned ship it froze, and everything was soon covered with glare ice. We huddled in the cabin waiting for the tide to rise, ~~as~~^{as} the Captain said ~~that~~^{true} if it ~~was~~ unusually high we might float off. We were so loaded with lumber ~~that~~ we could not sink, but as we had a very heavy deck load we might turn over completely. However, in the middle of the night the tide came and went and we were still there. With the receding tide the boat cracked and broke almost in two, and the water commenced to flow into the cabin. We were helped out by the crew to the highest point on the deck, and the bales of hay for the horses put around us to break the wind. The peculiar position of the boat affected us very strangely. Miss Dickey was deathly seasick and I several times lost consciousness, as one does ~~in~~ fainting. The boy minded it less, but his constant

cry was "Mother I am so cold and hungry, when are we going to have something to eat." Even at that early age he was a little philosopher and after I had explained the exact situation to him he quieted down, clinging to me and asking no more questions. Captain Andrews later testified that in all his experience as a seafaring man (and he was not young), he had never met ^{any} ~~two~~ women who in time of stress asked him not one ~~single~~ ^{foolish} question. I felt it was a tribute to our sanity.

We had taken a sewing-machine with us and all the way up had been making sheets and pillow-cases, and binding pieces of carpet for rugs. Of course, as soon as the water touched these things they froze and one sailor, more brilliant than the others, rescued ~~these~~ ^{the} frozen sheets and wrapped them around us. As they were wind-proof, I have always felt they saved us from being frozen.

We could see the lights of Skagway and were sure they knew we were adrift, but, of course, had no idea where we were, and there was not a boat there large enough to venture out. All night we felt a certain weird comfort that we were at least in sight of civilization. By midnight it was decided to shoot the horses, and, as were sitting against the stalls, we heard all the greusome sounds of the shooting and felt it might be the kindest thing that could happen to us. The Captain had ^{made} gotten the life boats ready but it would have been sure death to have launched them. The galley was under water and there was no possibility of getting food, although someone earlier did rescue a loaf of bread, which we broke and carefully apportioned, eating it absolutely dry.

All night we sat there, expecting every minute would be our last, and I have never been so thankful for daylight as I was to welcome the first break of dawn; but still there was no rescue in sight, and we were there cramped, and hungry, and merely frozen until afternoon, when suddenly we saw a small tug, the "Lady of the Lake" coming out from Skagway harbor. With every wave she was lost to sight, coming up again covered with ice. The sun was shining and all the rainbow hues were reflected in this apparent "ice-boat" struggling to get to us. As they came near enough the two Captains ^{McCallender} ~~called~~ to each other. The Captain of the tug feared none of us would be alive. After much consultation it was decided impossible to tie the small boat to us; also impossible to get her around on the leeward side on account of the rock formation, so it was thought best for the tug to swoop in on a wave as close as possible and that we should, one at a time, be brought down to the water's edge, and, as the tug swirled close to us, we were to be literally thrown from the wreck to her deck. It was a hair-raising enterprise, but seemed the only possible solution. As miss Dickey was very heavy and afraid she would not only go to the bottom herself but take everyone with her who was trying to help, she did ~~not~~ ^{arrange to} go first ^{so} ~~and~~ it fell to my lot to make the experiment.

On the boat had been a young Irishman named Murphy, who was to take care of the horses in Skagway. If ever there was a true nobleman it was that man. He had two little boys at home and had been the playmate of my boy all the way up. He came to me saying "Will you trust ^{your} ~~that~~ boy to me? I'll get him over to the tug or we will both go to the bottom together. He is altogether

too heavy for you to manage." While the Captain and each member of the crew had made the same offer, Mr. Murphy insisted that he was younger and stronger than any of them. I told him ~~that~~ I could not let him, as his life was too precious for his own children's sake, but he insisted, so, wrapped up into rather an awkward bundle, I put my boy into his arms, telling him very seriously that his own life and that of Mr. Murphy depended upon his absolute obedience; that no matter how frightened he might be, when he was told to take his arms from Mr. Murphy's neck he must do so. That was the only way either of them could be saved. (Fortunately, he had been taught from the cradle to obey.) I was then brought down by a sort of human ^{made of} ladder, the crew holding hands and making a life-line at the side of the incline, ^{having cut} ~~cutting~~ steps in the ice for their feet. The "Lady of the Lake" came in on a big wave, the order was given to "jump" and, in some way, I shall never know how, I found myself pushed from behind and caught in front, and after an awful moment in mid-air, safe on the deck of the tug and then on a large wave we were out again in mid-stream, with my boy back on the wreck. I do not think it necessary to describe to any mother my feelings at that moment. The next task was to get the boy over. I held my breath in horror and suspense as I watched Mr. Murphy take him, saw the little arms gradually relax from his neck, the little face as white as death look at me. There was an awful moment when the child was in mid-air and then, I had him in my arms. Strangely enough Miss Dickey was also gotten over safely. The Captain and Mr. Murphy came with us, leaving the crew temporarily on board for directions from the steamship office at Skagway. On a second trip they were all taken

off and the wreck, with its dead horses, left to its fate.

The Captain of the tug took the boy in his arms and said "Well my little man, what do you think of it all?" and the boy said "It's awfully funny Captain, but I ^{was} ~~am~~ ^{almost} five years old, and this is the very first time I have ever been shipwrecked." In our four years of Alaskan life, he was always to be known as the boy who was never shipwrecked until he was ^{was} ~~am~~ ^{most} five years old.

We had to eat very carefully after our long fast, and it seemed incredible that with all this experience we did not even get our feet wet. It would have been difficult, however, as everything was frozen stiff. Strangely enough I had entirely forgotten my throat, and had not Miss Dickey, who had been attending to it, assured me ~~that~~ there were large spots on both tonsils, I would have thought I had imagined it all, for when she looked at my throat after we landed there was not a trace of any trouble left. So perhaps being shipwrecked at sixteen below zero may sometime become a scientific cure for tonsillitis.

All the citizens of Skagway were at the wharf when we arrived, and had stretchers, warm clothing, and enough whiskey to have given us a much needed bath. They did not know whether to expect us dead or alive and were prepared to handle us either way. We were taken at once to what was known as the Fifth Avenue Hotel, which was owned by ~~a Mrs. somebody, who was~~ a widow with a little girl. She was most kind and sympathetic and did every-
thing she could for us. Later she married Frank Burns, ^{steamship} agent at Skagway. The little girl has long since grown and married well,

Insert after "backs" on page 10

The question arose as to keep clean clothing until something could be sent up to us, so at night we washed what was necessary, being allowed to dry it by the kitchen stove, but we could not dress in the morning until it was dry enough to put on.

and Mr. and Mrs. Burns are prosperous people living in Seattle. I always see them when I go to that city.

This hotel was built of very green lumber and, as it seasoned, the cracks became very wide and the snow blew in. I remember the next morning finding almost a blanket of it on our bed. There was a sign on the stairs reading "Accomodations for Women." There was one large room upstairs where about two hundred men slept. Each ^{was} assigned a shelf on a "Standee", which was built of upright pieces of rough lumber, having shelves on either side. Each man took his own blanket and rolled into his own shelf. At the end of this room was a small place with a calico curtain instead of a door, and in it a homemade bed, consisting of four posts, the side and head pieces all of unplanned rough lumber. The same kind of lumber formed the slats and on these, with no springs, was a mattress not ~~more than an inch thick~~ ^{thick enough to lay about}. The rest of the furniture consisted of a box with a tin basin on it. Into this bed Miss Dickey, the boy and I tumbled, glad enough to rest. We had absolutely nothing but the clothes on our backs.

At that time the food in Alaska consisted mostly of beans and bacon. There was practically no sugar and the average meal consisted of boiled ~~or baked~~ beans and, more often than otherwise, bread with no butter and coffee with no cream or sugar. The reason for this was the small amount of freight allowed on passenger steamers, so that nothing was brought up except absolute necessities.

Strangely enough, that night in an extremely high tide the old "Canada" floated. Later she was picked up as a derelict

and towed in to Juneau, where she was beached. Then came the legal contest. The Alaska Steamship Company owned her; the St. Paul and Tacoma Company had chartered her; the insurance underwriters claimed her, and the boat which picked her up as a derelict held her ^{for} as salvage. ^{when we started} As she was utterly unseaworthy, we were able to get only five hundred dollars insurance on all our belongings, and that amount we received four years later. She was finally sold at auction on the beach at Juneau, and the money put in the bank subject to the decision of the court. It took four years to settle the various claims.

One of the incidents of the wreck was the fact that Captain Andrews, not being especially familiar with salvage laws, went down to Juneau thinking he could take possession of his ship. He went on board and was immediately arrested, brought back to Dyea and put in jail for piracy. It seems like a joke now, but he was a very ^{angry} ~~mad~~ man. However, it did not take the company long to get him released.

I have often wondered who found our clothes, our furniture, our sheets, pillow-cases, etc. Naturally, they were all water-soaked and worth very little. This was our introduction into Alaska, and our well-laid plans of building our house and having a home for ourselves and a chance of making a living were absolutely wiped out.

After we had rested and gotten fairly back to normal, the serious question of what we were going to do presented itself. Mr. Frank Burns, who was the steamship agent in Skagway, at once offered us free passage back to Tacoma on any of his steamers, but we had burned our bridges behind us. All of my possessions, except those

which had gone down with the wreck, had been sold. My life would have had to be entirely re-constructed, so the problem was a serious one. There was no telegraphic communication between Puget Sound and Alaska in those days, and my friends only heard of the disaster after one of the steamers had landed in ~~Seattle~~, ^{Tacoma} ~~or Tacoma~~, and we could only get word from them on a return steamer, so it was at least three weeks before we had any news from the outside world. Naturally everyone wrote saying, "I told you you were crazy to go." Now I hope you will come back and behave yourself." During those three weeks, however, we had done some serious thinking and planning. Dr. Moore, the only physician at Skagway, had come to see us immediately and offered Miss Dickey a position in the hospital. It was at the time of the very serious Spinal Meningitis epidemic, and men were dying like flies for lack of adequate care. The hospital was a one-room log cabin with a dirt floor, on which, rolled in blankets, lay men in all stages of illness and convalescence, one having a frozen foot amputated, next to him a man dying and next to him, possibly, one already dead, and another being fed his meal, the few nurses available stepping over these men and trying to do what they could for them. Into this condition Miss Dickey went with her splendid body, mind and heart.

I was a different problem. I was not strong, I was not a nurse, and I had a five-year old child with me. It looked as though I would have to go home, when Dr. Moore came to me one morning, saying "I have a scheme for you. Some friends of mine who have a little cabin about a mile from here, wish to spend the

winter in Juneau, and would like to rent the cabin. The main cabin has a big double bed and there is a small lean-to." The little lean-to had what is called a "Klondike" cookstove, which is a collapsible affair made of sheet iron, with the stove pipe running directly through the roof. The rest of the furniture consisted of a homemade table, four boxes, a few tin dishes, ~~and that's about all.~~ Between the main cabin and the lean-to was a calico curtain. Dr. Moore said Miss Dickey could sleep in there during the day and go on night duty at the hospital, and that probably something could be found for me. At any rate it was a makeshift and ~~it~~ was much less expensive and more comfortable than living at the "Fifth Avenue Hotel." Into this palatial establishment I moved with the boy and spent the first night there alone, with no protection from the outside world except a leather strap on the inside of the door, which fastened on a nail.

Everyone who has read Alaskan history knows that at this time Skagway was a wide-open town, filled with desperate characters, and there was much drinking. It was a saying that "there was a man for breakfast every morning" meaning that during the night at least one murder was committed. The fact that everybody who landed ~~there~~ from the outside world would necessarily have to have some money, made it a profitable place for criminals, and many a young man, perhaps taking all of his own or his family's life savings to go to the gold fields, was utterly cleaned out the first night in Skagway by gamblers and robbers, and, if he resisted too strongly, might easily be murdered. This is not a pleasant picture, but it

is a true one. ^{and} ~~These~~ were the days of the "reign of terror" occasioned by the lawlessness of "Soapy Smith" and his gang. As it was the time of the Spanish-American war, one of their fiendish tricks was to open a fake recruiting office of the United States Army. Hundreds of men, either discouraged at what they saw ahead of them, or through a feeling of patriotism, entered Smith's recruiting office and were told to strip for physical examination. While a fake surgeon was examining them all their clothing and outfit was gone through and everything of value taken. If the victim showed fight his body would be found floating in the bay, riddled with bullets. Another form of the same game was an information bureau, where strangers were lured to get knowledge of the fabled "trails beyond." They crowded into that office like flies and were never let out until they were stripped and robbed.

Strangely enough "Soapy Smith" was a liberal contributor to the local church and on one occasion collected quite a sum of money and handed it over to a very hard-working conscientious young pastor, but that night one of "Soapy's" gang crawled under the tent and took the money away. However, there came a time when that sort of thing had to stop and Frank Reid, an engineer and known as a brave and determined man, started out to "get" "Soapy." The result was they both fired at once and "Soapy" dropped dead. Frank Reid died at the hospital two weeks later. Incidentally Miss Dickey nursed him and closed his eyes as he died. A granite shaft was erected to his memory, the inscription reading:

Frank H. Reid
Died July 20, 1898
He gave his life for the honor of Skagway.