

"Murder Island"

By CST. T. E. G. SHAW

ALTHOUGH the big stampede for gold in the Yukon had been over for three years, there was apparently still enough of the glitter lingering throughout the country to entice men from far and wide to pack bag and baggage and head for that romantic frontier where it was still said that a fortune could be had for the taking.

Two French Canadians, Alphonse Constantin, 41, of Montreal, and Guy Beaudoin, 23, of St. Evariste, Que., left Montreal by train June 4, 1902 for Vancouver, B.C. Five days later they registered at the Granville Hotel at the West Coast seaport where they had to wait over for three days before their ship, the S.S. *Amur* was scheduled to leave for Skagway, Alaska.

Another French Canadian, Leon Bouthillette, 41, of St. Francis, Que., was a day behind Constantin and Beaudoin leaving Montreal, and he arrived in Vancouver June 10 and registered at the Gold House. Also booked for the *Amur*, Bouthillette had a two-day stop-over. The day after his arrival in Vancouver, Bouthillette met Constantin and Beaudoin, and so the three decided to travel the rest of the journey North together. The route was not new to Constantin, who made the trip to the Klondike in the Spring of 1898 at the height of the Gold Rush and had filed several claims about 15 miles from Dawson, Yukon. However, he had disposed of these claims in September 1901 and returned to Montreal to live with his father. Bouthillette wrote to relatives in Quebec later that day, telling of his new-found acquaintances, and that the trio would be leaving the following day aboard the *Amur*.

The steamer docked in Skagway June 16—a Monday—and an hour later, the

three men climbed on board a White Pass and Yukon Railroad coach bound for Whitehorse, Yukon, arriving there at 6 the same evening. At the railroad depot, the three adventurers encountered a fellow Frenchman who introduced himself as Peter Forrest. Anxious to proceed to Dawson, the trio wasted no time in accepting Forrest's offer to transport them with two other men by boat down the river route. The four walked over to the wharf where Forrest said his boat was tied up and were introduced to Louis Ladoceur, one of the other men making the trip.

When Leon Bouthillette inquired where the sixth man was, he was told that his name was Charles Mack and that he was an American. Forrest and Ladoceur announced they would be leaving at 8 the following morning. The five Frenchmen then held a lengthy discussion and it was eventually agreed that as Bouthillette, for one, did not converse in English, and that in all probability the American would not understand or speak French, the five of them should travel together and possibly leave that same evening.

Following this decision, the quintette dropped into Rook Brothers' general store nearby and purchased provisions for the journey including a sack of potatoes, eggs, sugar, tea, bacon and other foodstuffs from Paul Rook, one of the owners. A hearty meal followed in the next-door restaurant, and after this, Louis Ladoceur contacted the North-West Mounted Police to see about having the boat registered for the trip down river to Dawson. The Mounted Police had been registering all boats and passengers travelling between Whitehorse and Dawson since the height of the gold strike as