



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE STEAMER *BELLA* AND BARGE TAKING ON WOOD
ONE MILE BELOW FORT YUKON.

not "go" on the Yukon, or have not heretofore. Even the Klondike millionaire packs his blankets, and takes what he can get.

The mouth of the Yukon is about a hundred miles broad—that is, from one side to the other side; but there is nothing to suggest a river about it—nothing but small streams, sloughs, islands, innumerable and disconcerting. It is like being brought face to face with a hundred gates, only one of which opens the way which you are seeking, while the others lead to destruction. This is the difficulty in navigation at the starting-point, and the sort of thing encountered all the way to Circle City. It is touch and go, or touch and not go; and you may get through, or may stick on a bar and not budge an inch for many weary days or weeks. Eighteen hundred and fifty miles of river are before you on your way up to Dawson; and it takes about fifteen days, if you meet with no accidents—days of vast, wonderful, and ever-changing scenery; nights of silent grandeur, when you seem to be all alone, surrounded by an untrodden wilderness, silent, awesome, mysterious.

The crews of the vessels are composed of the river Indians from Nulato, Anvik, and the other stations along the stream, and, taken as a whole, are a fine-looking body of men, entirely ignorant of soap, and ready at all times to shirk. In fact, they seem to regard the whole journey as a huge joke,

the principal job imposed on them being to avoid work. The successful dodger tells his less fortunate comrade, in high glee, how it was that he was asleep while the other one was perhaps hard at work carrying wood or moving cargo. I have seen a crew of thirty natives melt away into a possible half-dozen at the moment the steamer was tied up to a bank upon which lay wood, piled cord upon cord. This wood, by the way, has to be cut and stacked in measured cords during the winter, at various convenient points along the bank.

The settlements along the Yukon are few and far between, and consist, for the most part, of the same elements. There are the company's store; the huts and tents of the natives; the crowd of howling dogs; salmon hanging in red strips, burnished with copper tinges in the sun; little tots of children; chattering women offering baskets, moccasins, and trinkets for sale; and here and there perhaps a squad of uniformed children, marking the work of some mission—good-looking, clean-looking children, but, whether Christianized or not, spoiled for living like natives again. The problem is, What is to become of them?

Along the banks are occasionally met the rude huts and tents of small parties of Indians come hither to cut wood for the boats or to fish; but, however simple the habita-



DRAWN BY FRANCIS DAY.

JACK MCQUESTEN. (SEE PAGE 683.)