

### THE ROMANCE OF THE YUKON.

The romance of the Yukon was never better illustrated than in the career of Mr. William Scouse, one of the 343 lost on the morning of the 25th of October, when the Str. "Princess Sophia," one of the vessels of the Canadian Pacific Steamship Co., having struck a reef in Lynn Canal while en route south, sank and carried all her passengers and crew to an untimely end. Mr. Scouse was one of the real "Sourdoughs," whose ranks are fast thinning. It was he who raised the first bucket of "pay" on the famous Eldorado Creek.

It was in February, 1896, before the days when the finding of the gold made the Klondyke a household word throughout America, that four young men of Nanaimo, B.C., impelled by a spirit of adventure, decided to set out on a trip through the Northland. They were William Scouse, William Sloan, Jack Wilkinson, known by the sobriquet of "Big Jack" to the miners of Nanaimo, and Thomas Flack.

"Our idea was to prospect the country," explained Mr. Sloan in recalling the circumstances of the expedition, "but I think that what was even more prominently before our eyes was that we would see the vast and mysterious northern lands of which so little was known in those days."

The little party took passage by the old Str. "Willapa," and outfitted at Juneau from where they hit the trail into the interior, passing over the Chilcoot Pass, where a few years later, when the historic trek to the Klondyke started so many were to give up their lives, into the Stewart River Country.

For the greater part of the summer they prospected without success. Running short of supplies they decided to work into the Yukon, where, just at that time, excitement ran high over the discovery of rich deposits on Bonanza Creek. They reached this creek too late—all the ground had been staked. This turned them aside to Whipple Creek, later to be known the world over as the Eldorado. On September 7th, 1896, Mr. Scouse staked No. 14 and Mr. Sloan No. 15, Eldorado, while Mr. Wilkinson recorded No. 25, Adams Creek; Mr. Flack No. 32, Bonanza; and others were staked on Hunker Creek.

When the four left Nanaimo it was understood that they were equal partners in anything that was found, and to this agreement they held throughout. Their joint efforts were generously rewarded, each leaving the Yukon with a substantial fortune.

Having made their records, it was decided that the Eldorado prospects should first be developed and a small but comfortable cabin was built close to the claims. The lumber for the cabin's floor was whipsawed, Messrs. Wilkinson and Sloan doing the whipsawing which was required for all operations at that time. Mr. Sloan, in this connection, remembers that, with "Big Jack" on one end of the saw he had to "go some."

In discussing these early days, Mr. Sloan says, that the reports that his partner, the late Mr. Scouse, hoisted the first "pay" dirt on the Eldorado is quite correct. He recollects the circumstances quite clearly. "I was the boss carpenter," Mr. Sloan recalled with a smile, "and thus it fell to my lot to make the first windlass and bucket for the prospecting of the first shaft on the Creek. There was some argument as to the required size of the drum and the bucket. When they had been constructed I gave them their first trial and raised the first dirt, which then was without pay, on the Eldorado."

While Sloan and Flack were hauling supplies to their claims from the Klondyke River, word reached them that the first "pay" dirt had been raised on their property.

At the time they were on their way to the Creek and, meeting Alex. Orr, a miner with claims above theirs on the Eldorado, he told them that Scouse and Wilkinson had reached bed-rock and that Scouse, with Wilkinson in the shaft, had brought the first gold to the surface, there being \$57 to the bucket.

In sinking the shaft the character of the ground was watched with interest and carefully prospected, but the results were disappointing all the way down. When the gravel was thawed out it was found, Mr. Sloan explains, to be a loose light wash. About 20 feet down a pile of drift wood was encountered and it was not until after this had been passed that hard tight wash was reached, this being only a short distance from bed-rock. While there was exceptionally good pay at bed-rock on this shaft the main pay was found in cross-cutting to a second shaft. Mr. Sloan states that before the claims were thus proved the partnership was "stony broke" so that the day that the first gold was hoisted saw them step from a condition of poverty to one of comparative affluence.

While luck was with the Nanaimo men, other miners were not so favored by the Goddess of Chance. It was the old story of a thousand gold fields. Some made good and others failed. Some were brought within easy reach of fortunes only to be turned aside by the whims of chance. This was the case, Mr. Sloan narrated, with Jack Kool and French Pete, partners in the great game of gold hunting. They could have staked Claims 16 and 17, next to the Scouse-Sloan, et al, combination, the former of which turned out to be the richest of the Yukon. They, however, did not like the looks of the Creek at that point and left to take up Nos. 26 and 27, Adams Creek. The latter did not pan out and later on the two returned and worked for wages for the Nanaimo partnership. No. 16, Eldorado was staked later by Con Van Alsteine, who had been prospecting near Messrs. Scouse, Flack, Wilkinson and Sloan in the Stewart River Country that summer. Van Alsteine traded No. 16 to Mr. T. S. Lippy, who had staked No. 37 on the same creek, and it was thus that Mr. Lippy came to be possessed of the wealth of one of the most productive pieces of ground in the Yukon. Van Alsteine, it was recalled by Mr. Sloan, sold No. 37 for a good figure. Going to New York he lost his money in a matrimonial venture, his bride, to whom he had entrusted his "roll" deserting him as they boarded a steamer which was to take them to Europe on a honeymoon.

A human interest touch is given this story of the Yukon by the fact that the four Nanaimo men, when they separated after their success, agreed that on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Eldorado strike they would meet again, all being alive, to celebrate and to live again in reminiscence the days of their pioneering. The pact provided that they would come together on that date no matter how far anyone of the four might have to travel. Mr. Scouse's death makes the first break in the partnership.

"The last time I saw Scouse he referred to our reunion," observed Mr. Sloan, "Now he is gone. He was a man of the utmost integrity, a genial companion and a thorough gentleman in every respect. We four worked harmoniously together for some years; there was never the scratch of a pen in our dealings together and when we finally dissolved the partnership and dispersed, there remained an enduring friendship which has continued through the years. I know the other members of the partnership, Messrs. Flack and Wilkinson, will feel keenly, as I do, the untimely and sad fate of our old friend, William Scouse."

Mr. Wilkinson is now retired and living near New-castle-on-Tyne and Mr. Flack at present is living in Chicago, Ill.