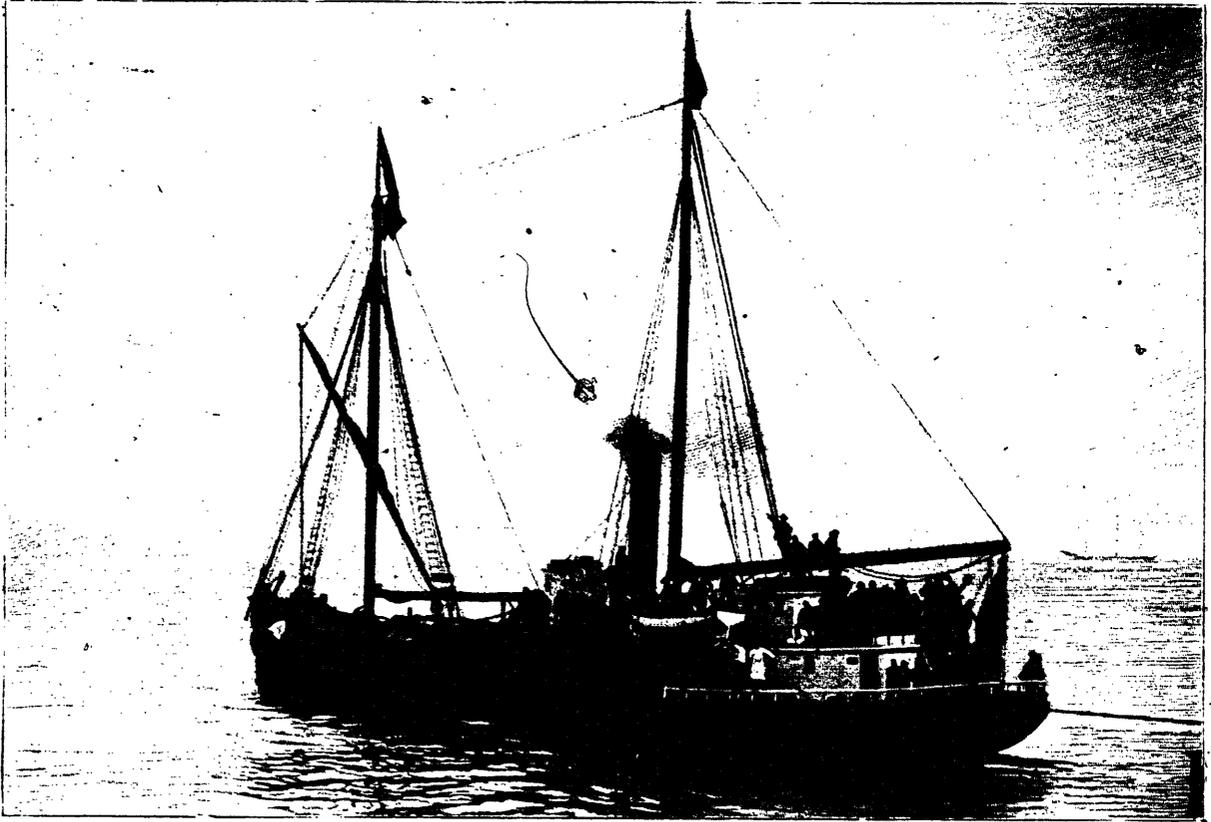


Confusion, good-humored but terrific, prevailed. A few men in the caps of officers jostled about, shouting at each other, yelling at the stevedores and writing between whites in note books. But the crowd ruled things, walked over everything, sat on everything, climbed upon everything, and jeered and offered advice alternately.

At four o'clock the wharf was deep in freight all along where the *Humboldt* lay.

night and probably not the next day, a hilarious, irresponsible sort of good humor prevailed. The travelers were almost all in a state of feverish high spirits.

A good many of the men had been taking a farewell tittle, and glassy-eyed and gay, stood in circles of glassy-eyed friends and talked of the great times coming. Most of them were fine looking fellows, strong, red and beefy, good men to fight the fight of the pioneer.



THE "NORTH FORK" CLEARS FOR THE NORTH.

Personal effects were arranged in large piles upon which the owners sat. A Klondike outfit is a serious and extensive matter. There were old-fashioned trunks roughly corded, and newly bought trunks gleaming in varnish and brass, many solid wooden chests such as sailors use, and long bags of white duck stuffed to the mouth, which was drawn up with a rope and tied.

Shovels and picks, miners' pans and saws of all sizes laid between boards and strapped together were a part of every outfit. Provident parties had laid in supplies of flour, of candles, of kerosene, of cottolene, of canned goods, and many square wooden boxes which bore the names of grocery firms.

The Arctic wardrobes lay on the top of the heaps. They consisted mostly of long rubber boots, winter flannels, snow stockings, such as are worn with snowshoes, big fur coats, jackets of flannel and corduroy, lined with leather, and fur caps or "Klondike helmets," as the shops call them now.

Almost every outfit included a small sheet-iron stove, which came to pieces and folded together in a box. Back and around all this lay the ship's own stores, sacks upon sacks of onions and potatoes, which the crowd found useful as seats, the disjointed iron carcasses of what looked like half a dozen ships' boilers, hundreds of boxes, and in the background a good sized launch, standing on a truck.

This launch had to be squeezed in somewhere, since it was what the passengers were going up the Yukon in.

Though it was obvious the *Humboldt* would not sail that

Upon some of the heaps of baggage women and children sat roosting, and these little parties did not look so joyful. Only the small boys, in their Sunday suits, enjoyed their importance, and told the loungers they "weren't going up till the spring. It was too cold now for the baby. But they'd come down to see popper off."

There were not many women passengers; and they were distinguished neither by youth nor good looks. One elderly woman, pale and delicate, as though she had arisen from a sick bed, sat on the largest pile of luggage on the wharf, with a young girl beside her. The girl was the focus of many glances as the future belle of Klondike, and the next great American heiress to be scrambled for by European nobles.

She was about fourteen, fat, freckled, sandy-haired, but with a jolly, bright face and a pair of shrewd, honest eyes—upon the whole a first-rate looking girl, and very much the type of the bonanza heiress of California.

At six o'clock the *Humboldt* was still placidly resting at her moorings, the wharf still breast-high in freight, still thick with people, the legend still passing from mouth to mouth that it was to sail that night. The next night at seven it did weigh anchor, which was not so bad for a scratch Klondike tramp.

The *North Fork's* record of departure was not so creditable. It was advertised to sail on Wednesday at two, and did so on Friday at twelve.

"Are you certain the boat will leave at that hour?" was asked the clerk at the office.