

TO KLONDIKE BY SEA

By Geraldine Bonner

The Californian novelist describes with graphic accuracy the stirring scenes at the wharf when ships sail for the Klondike.



HE reports of the terrors of Chilcot Pass, combined with the lateness of the season, have turned the attention of the Klondike argonauts to the sea route. This is by steamer to St. Michaels, at the mouth of the Yukon, and thence by steam or gasoline launch up the river to Dawson, a trip of some five weeks in length.

Vessels northward bound have been leaving San Francisco for the last month, notwithstanding the gloomy prophecies of those who know the country. Predictions are rife that many of these expeditions will be frozen up all winter between St. Michaels and Dawson, that the boats will run a good chance of being broken by the ice pressure, and the passengers must face the possibility of starving.

The ticket costs \$300, or \$350 from San Francisco to Dawson, with, in most cases, a guarantee to furnish provisions at \$2 a day per head if the expedition is detained in the river by early frosts.

The prospect of wintering in a small launch, packed like cattle, on an Arctic river, fed upon the sort of provender a coasting steamer will carry for an emergency supply, has not damped the ardor of the new argonauts. The traditions of '49 still survive in California, and the making of the great pioneer fortunes is the romance that the Californian is bred up on.

But the hardships of those who crossed the plains in '49 are said to be slight in comparison with what the Klondike emigrants may expect from hunger and cold. Meantime, ship after ship weighs anchor and, sunk to the gunwale,

puts out to sea with her load of human freight for the conquest of Fortune.

The departure of one of these vessels is like a general



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water-front picnic. The first ships went with a show of method and punctuality. But later ones, lured to risk the journey by the demands for transportation, have gone with a fine disregard for time or tide.

Passengers have sat on their luggage on the wharf for two days while the stevedores packed the freight in a rambling and irresponsible manner. The vessel advertised to go on Monday at 4 P. M. is lucky if it gets off on Wednesday at the same hour. Yet a universal air of good humor and gaiety prevails. The gold-seekers are determined to go off bravely, and hope keeps up their spirits.

The *Humboldt*, a large, lumbering coast steamer, fitted up in a few days with extra accommodations, and deep in the water with her immense load, was only twenty-four hours behind her time of leaving.

At four o'clock, the hour advertised for her departure, the dock was crowded with idlers and passengers, and almost impassable with freight and personal baggage.

Sufficient for the word to pass that this old man in the fur cap was a passenger, or that group of ugly, pale-faced women were going to open a boarding house in Dawson, for a crowd to collect about them and general conversation to ensue. The travelers told their plans and hopes to the gaping circle, and it answered back offering suggestions and advice.

Behind and around outsiders scrambled and pushed to see what was going on. Sweating stevedores roared orders at each other, and brushed back the people from the freight they carried away piece by piece.

