



True Story of the Discovery of the Klondike by Bob Henderson

CHAPTER I.

My parents were old country Scotch. My mother died first at the age of ninety and father at ninety-eight. There were seven in the family, three girls and four boys. John, the eldest, was drowned at the age of forty. Bill, the second son, died ten years later after sailing the Western ocean for twenty years. My two sisters, Mary and Maggie, married in New York, and Martha is living with her husband in the Yukon.

My brother-in-law owned a little vessel which ran as a packet from Merigonish to Pictou and when I was about nine years old I thought it would be great fun to work on her. Jack McGregor was the Captain's name; he was a fine man and came of a noble family, and his brother, Dr McGregor, was one of the ablest doctors in Nova Scotia.

I sailed part of three summers with McGregor. The boat carried passengers, but Jack took no fares. Liquor was plentiful and as Jack, who was a kind hearted fellow, liked a little drop as well as the rest, they generally had a big time. Then the ship would be turned over to the First Officer and crew—I was First Officer, crew and cook all in one—and I always managed to get her home safely.

Our windlass was the oldest style known—a big log with holes in it for the bars. Sometimes we would lose the bars or they would be used for firewood so we couldn't raise the anchor, in which case we would put a buoy to the chain and leave it. When we came to the next port we would go to a wharf, if there was one, or if not, would make her fast to a tree or run her into the mud, and in this way everything went smoothly. Often just before we were to sail, the passengers would meet the Captain up town to have a final drink, then he would forget to buy the ship's supply of grub, but the passengers generally had some and I always had water on board and if we ran short we could land at some farm and get a new supply.

This went on for two years when, one Fall, Jack ran the boat so hard in the mud that she went into the hands of a receiver. She is still in the mud and I have my wages coming yet.

I next sailed with Captain Miles, a minister's son, in a vessel about the same size as my first. I forget her name, but she carried about twenty tons and was in the same business as the other. This Captain was a very sober man,