

THE FRONTIERSMAN

CHAPTER I

NIGHT IN THE WILDERNESS

CREEK, swish! Creek, swish! hour after hour sounded forth the yielding snowshoes as Keith Steadman, hardy northman and trailsman, strode rapidly forward.

For days he had listened to their monotonous music, as he wound his devious way over valleys, plains, and mountain passes, down toward the mighty Yukon River, pulsing on to the sea through the great white silence.

There was snow everywhere. Snow on the river, sparkling like a million diamonds; snow on the lakes, lying smooth and white. Snow on the trees, hanging in beautiful, fairy-like clusters; snow on the sun-kissed mountains, fleecy, golden, drifting. Snow, frosty, hard, surrounding the traveller, pouring into his lungs at every breath, clinging to his eyebrows, whitening his unkempt beard, and decorating the furry fringes of his loose parka.