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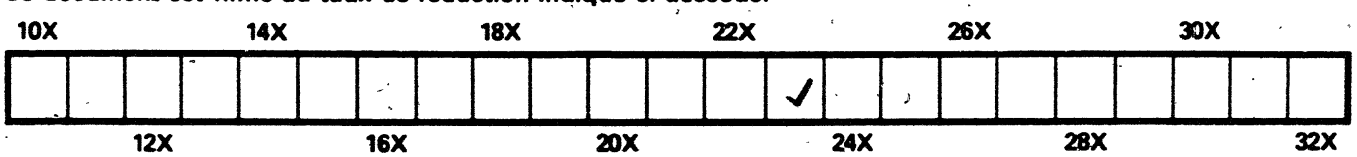


JOAQUIN MILLER'S RETURN FROM THE KLONDIKE.

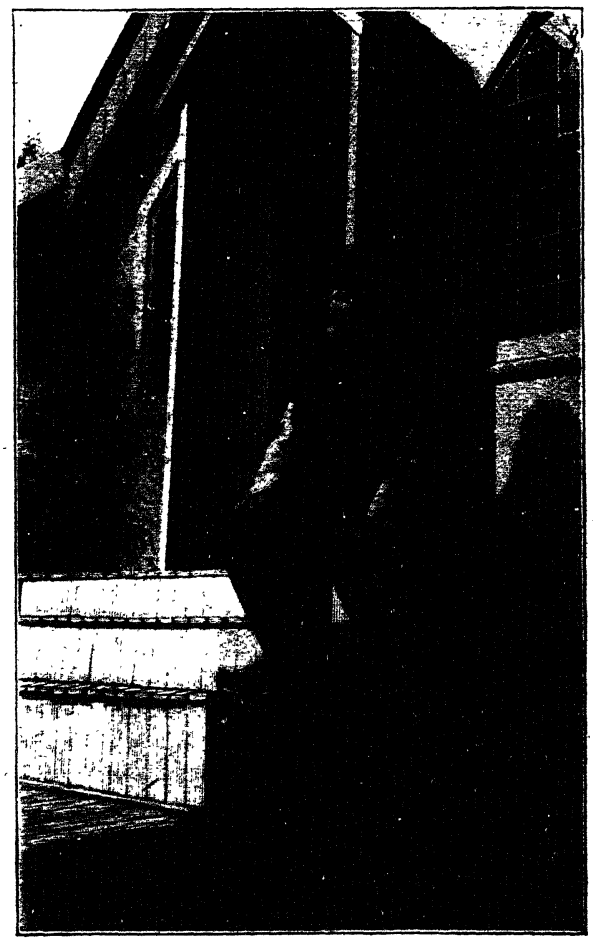
By Isabel Darling.

ALL through the fall we watched and waited for him, but the days grew shorter and shorter till they "dwindled to a dim little ray of light," the ice closed in between us, and then it was night there, and the moon rolled up out of the cold darkness and circled

"Around and around all the vast night long".

At first he was glad, grateful for a sight of the same moon that shone on his own Heights at home; but at length he grew weary of the monotony of that one face continually staring, making more evident the frozen desolation on every hand, then he almost hated it, and called it "disreputable, pale, and dark around the eyes, blowsy, frowsy, exhausted, low-necked, shriveled, wrinkled," but the tireless moon cared nothing for his disapproval.

He had tried to come home, but the pitiless ice-king drove him back from Circle City to Dawson again, and he sat down and wrote of the perils, the failures and successes by river and by snow-covered land, of the mines and miners, of the flowers and the few beasts, birds and men inhabiting that region of "this old, old world that is so new, so very, very new"; even of the hair-breadth escapes "when Kreling cooks," and then of the things that the men in the Klondike cabins talk about when the nights are three months long and the latest newspaper is above half a year old.



HOME AGAIN!

As he wrote, the au-

rora borealis flashed in his face, seemingly from the cavernous bed of the river, where he "could see the very roots" of the flaming brightness and "could look right through the swishing, sweeping, rustling light"; when "one instant the shaft shot straight up in the air and the next instant flashed apart, wide apart, closed, spread and closed, spread as you spread a fan"; when "the light lay low upon the waters, as the flickering of a great lamp"; when "it sprang high in the air and finally seemed to fall to pieces, and a fragment, a flower of this strange fire-blossom, drifted over the street and lay almost within reach, a bluish, transparent cloud, so fine and so thin that it was only for a moment visible." At length there came a time when the dim little ray of light came back, when the sun ventured nearer and nearer, showed his halo, then his forehead, then his full, brilliant face, and his smile rested on a mountain peak beyond the river; and the poet was glad and ran to meet the sunlight and exulted in it, till suddenly it was gone, and he turned sadly yet hopefully back toward his cabin to wait for another morning and evening.

As swiftly as they had shortened, the days lengthened and increased in heat till the ice was gone and the homeward journey begun, down the river, down the ocean, over the land. On June 22d, a little more than a year from the time of leaving, he placed his heavy-booted foot on his own doorstep, leaning lightly on his walking-stick, the trunk of a pine tree that had grown within the Arctic Circle, threw open his reindeer coat, slightly raised his furry Alaskan cap, and looked long and lovingly toward the Golden Gate. Home again!

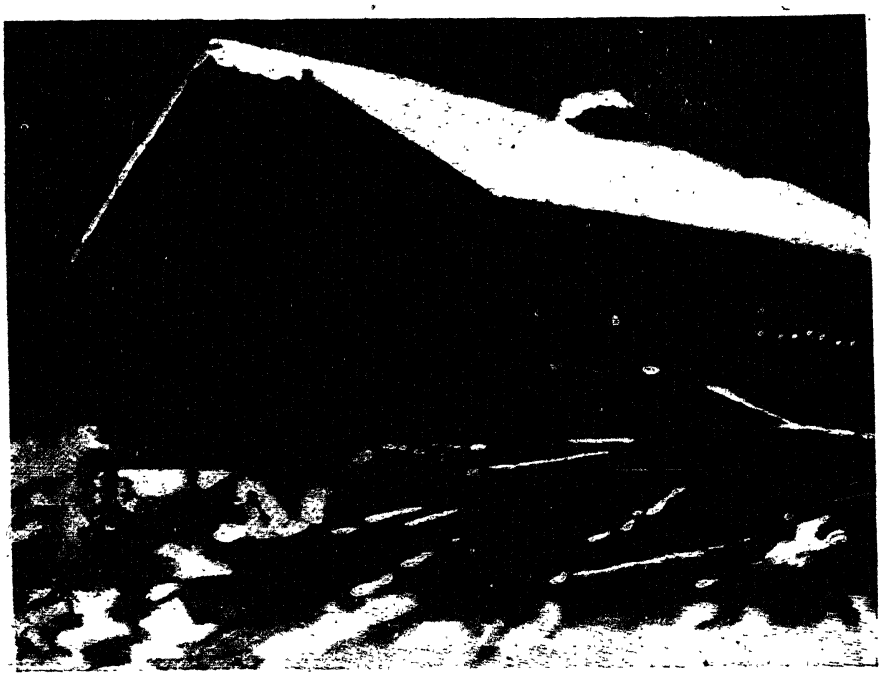
IN A KLONDIKE CABIN.

WHAT A LONE MAN THINKS ABOUT.

By Joaquin Miller.

AND you wonder what a lone man in a Klondike cabin does and thinks about, with nothing at all to read? Would it bore you if I took you into my confidence and told you, frankly and truly, what a live man really does besides hewing wood with a dull old meat ax and carrying water from the Bonanza in a gunny bag? What if I should tell you, heart to heart, soul to soul, what a thinking man thinks about where there are no books, no friends at hand?

It never crossed my mind before, but now in this dead calm that has followed a month of stormy stampedes and excitements I have a mind to risk the prude's displeasure and be a bit boyish—even childish. I have not plucked any roses for a long time; nor sat in the sunlight for months and months. I have only seen a single gleam of sunlight for a few minutes up at the mouth of El Dorado on a high hill-top opposite, and ran the very breath out of me to try and photograph it and keep it with me. But the sun is getting in his wedge of gold now a bit, just a little bit further in between these black blocks of night, every day. To my boundless delight, the sun at 12 M. to-day fell like a halo on the head of a great mountain peak across



THE CABIN IN THE KLONDIKE.

the Klondike, and, forgive my folly, I started to try and reach it. Silly? Of course; that is conceded. But, frankly, I would have gone through fire, floods, anything that man might pass, at almost any price, to feel, to touch, to make familiar with once more a little bit of real, solid sunlight.

It was a half mile hard run down the sled trail to the Klondike—then not any trail at all, only the icy river, with its great uplands of blocks and dips and spurs and angles of broken ice. The lion was asleep, so fast asleep! This stormy and swift little river that has shaken the whole world for a year, as the roar of a lion might startle the Arabs of the desert, was as utterly dead as if this snow to your waist was its shroud and the granite walls of the cañon its coffin. Not a ripple of water in the ice, under the ice, or anywhere. These strange rivers freeze from the bottom, not from the top, like other well-regulated rivers. They freeze first at the mouth, gorge and block up there first, not at the source, as other rivers. This is because the whole under world here is solid ice all summer and all winter—all the year.

I climbed from ice-point to ice-point. The winds had blown the highest bare. In some places the snow was solid as a floor; in others, soft and dusty, up to the waist. But it was great fun to wallow through this from point to point till the further shore of this dead river in its shroud and coffin was reached, and then the climb! (The Klondike is wide but not deep. I waded it in topboots, dry-footed, many times last summer.) The snowshoes had not been thought of this winter day. What could anybody think of but the new-born baby sunlight and the hope of standing once more with the sun on the mountain top! The climb was hard and steep and hazardous.

I made my way up from one clump of trees to another. The snow is not deep under the trees. I took off my fur coat, unbuttoned my skin vest, tightened my belt, and at last, breathless, wet all over, I stood—stood where the sun had been. Away over yonder, down the Yukon, on the topmost peak of a far out-reaching spur of the Rocky Mountains, where the snow is always, there my great golden eagle rested. His plumes were folded, fading, and he was gone in a sudden swoop before the pursuing night.

Ever thus! This is the story of life. We may climb from peak to peak, and still the golden sunlight goes ever on before, a pillar of fire that we may never lay hands upon. And who would have it otherwise? A savage, a dog, may await for the sun to come to him, and bask in it, but he will still be a savage, a dog. It is the endeavor, the aspiration, that makes manhood. Better to be beaten in any battle of life than never to have lifted your face to combat at all. Ay, ever have I dared do just such foolish ventures, if you choose to call them foolish, looking for the light, the high, bright light above, rather than the blackness below. And this has kept me young and strong and exultant. And my mother, even younger than I at this hour, has ever looked and is still up with the morning, lifting her face to the peaks for the first sunlight; and after her day in the garden looking for the last ray of fading sunlight above and about her while the world below is drowsily waiting for the gathering darkness. May it ever be so with us both to the end! May she, especially, be ever to the end a lover of the light on the mountain top, ever climbing to attain it! For it seems to me the final step may not be far for such a soul from the peak in its halo of gold to some sweet star outheld to her in the hollow of His hand.

Thus much for the day, one day, at least, when a man is all alone in a Klondike cabin. Ah, but you would have gone and got down in a hole and looked for gold there? Perhaps not. Six months of that sort of work makes you want a change. Five months of candlelight and camplight, and you want a little sunlight. I find others here, strong, good, gold-heaping fellows, so much like myself in these things that they surprise me; only they are not confiding enough, afraid you will laugh at them, to tell you what they really do and want to do and what they think about these long, long nights. You think you would go out and look up at the great, big, buxom moon, in her white evening dress, as she walks around and around in low neck all the long night over your head? No! you would, like the rest of us, get very tired of her constant familiarity, and almost despise her. The Northern Lights? I had thirty-five days, or rather nights, of flitting, floating, cold and ghostly light as if from some fearful graveyard. Grateful I am for having seen the sudden changes, the floods of light that might fill a world, the blackness, the amber, the gold, the ruby, the great cathedral stars of gold, the jasper walls about and the seas of blood above, where the vast white moon waded through; but I could never see these things any more as I saw them those unutterable days of storm and counter elements, those thirty-five nights with scarce a wedge of sunlight driven between the color, the polished light, the awe of it all. I shall never look to these again, for never again might they be seen so divinely terrible.

But what do we think about? I said to Adney, of the London *Graphic*, a little time ago, at midnight, "You are thinking of the gold, moon, stars, North Pole, Polar bears—or what, these long, black nights?"

He smiled pleasantly, and at last said, "No; I think most about the birds along the St. Lawrence—the birds, and some pretty little Indian children that I used to play with when a lad."

"What was her name, Adney?"

He drew back a little, looked me in the face and said, "You tell me what you think about first, and what your first little sweetheart's name was, and then maybe I will tell you. But I am not thinking all the time about birds and a little brown sweetheart. I am thinking a great deal about building a home far away where there is no snow. I thought of California first, but now I have got far on down the line, to Nicaragua, for I hear you have snow sometimes in California."

And that is about all the heart I could, without being too familiar, dig out of this very thoughtful and earnest man of art and letters. But it is enough. We are none of us thinking, these long nights, of the gold underfoot, or the moon overhead, or the North Pole at our backs, but sweethearts, birds and kindly climes—all things of life and love and beauty, far, far away.

A gentle, good man whom the world knows and respects, said to me, a month ago, "I think of things at night when alone that I have not thought of for forty years. The other night I got to thinking and thinking, and that night I dreamed of my first school. I had utterly forgotten all about that first time I went to school; yet now I can call the names of at least a dozen of my little schoolmates."

"Tell me the name of the one particular one."

"Her name is sacred, sir; and all the sweet little story of her is sacred. Besides, these things would be nothing to you. Almost anybody would laugh at me for telling any of it, but it is all very dear to me, and I will never forget one hour of it any more."

Now this man thinks he is alone in his pilgrimage back to the buried past. He is, so far as I can find out, no better, no worse, than the rest of us. And let it not be said of us, in the language of Holy Writ, "The eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth." I have never seen such home-sickness as here. It is more than home-sickness; it is heart-sickness. It is a sighing for and a crying out for sunlight, warmth, birds, children, the touch of a woman's hand, the sound of a human-woman's voice. Little wonder we go away back in our dreams and look up our lost and long-forgotten little sweethearts of the time when we first began to learn the alphabet.

May I diverge here to note three little signs of life that have in the last hour broken the monotony of night? In the first place, a midge, or gnat, tried to crawl across my paper, till he drowned in the ink—and the mercury at 51° below out-side! Then, a few minutes later, I heard a buzz in a big block of wood—a log that stood at my side, by the stove, to rest the bread-pan on while the yeast was raising—and soon a big bluebottle fly crawled out of a hole in the log. Now we know where these ugly flies hide and hibernate. And now, mice! First, a noiseless little thing, no bigger than a big cricket,

came timidly out from among the meal bags under the bunks; then another, then another, all white, very small and timid. I think they have pink eyes, but am not certain. They all got under cover as I moved to try and find out. In line with this I may mention that we have a little bird here, about the size of the robin, that chirps very like a robin, only not so cheerfully, at night. It is colored a little like the wood dove, and is very tame, and is omniverous. I took one in my hand—one that has been about the door all along—and it readily ate whatever I gave it. The Indians call it the moose bird. The miners call these birds camp robbers. I have seen them in Canadian logging camps, where they are called whiskey jacks. They are always in pairs, like doves, and if one is killed the other is soon found dead near the spot. This makes them more or less sacred, and their rare loyalty keeps them untouched. That, maybe, is why they are so tame. And this little round of insect and animal life is all the showing that this vast, lone land has to offer. Little wonder that, wearying of gold, and cold, and snow, and these endless rounds of the moon, the mind of the exile, when alone in his cabin, will go back—far back—even to babyhood. We have absolutely next to no diversion at all. Yet I should add that we did have three pretty little brown hillside Douglass squirrels, that used to chatter and cheer us from under their tossing tails up in the tree tops; but they suddenly disappeared, hibernating like bears, we hope. When the sun comes this way once more, and reaches out his sword of gold to strike us on the shoulder, and knight us and ennoble us for the battle of life, let us hope the little squirrels will rise up, knighted and ennobled also. A big raven still blows over us regularly each morning on his way to Dawson, and each evening he drops the same deep, dolorous and cold croak—so cold and hard and heavy that you can almost hear it fall on the cabin roof as he passes. And that is all—quite all of life, action, utterance, that a lone man sees, hears or hears of in any way in a Klondike cabin for more than half the year.

As I write, a young poet of New York City, Howard Hall, drops in to warm his fingers. A heavy pack is on his shoulders; he is on his way, at night, to "stake" on Dominion—a bold thing for a comparative boy, this fronting of a sixty mile tramp through the snow to his hips, and over mountain peaks that companion with the stars! And he knows it, and is, of course, serious as a man who goes into battle knowing the burthen of it.

"What do you find to think about, Howard, with no mail, and few congenial men to talk with?"

"Home—home and early childhood. It seems to me that this is a good thing in here to develop and refine the affections. This is a hard venture in here, but I shall be the better for it. I am remembering little things of my early life that I had forgotten long ago. There is, or was, a little girl—she is an old woman now, almost—that I am going to remember in a substantial way if I ever get back with gold enough."

He said much more in his good, sweet way, of home, heart, sweet remembrances of child life, and of later life, too; but perhaps that is all I should print of a man with his future not behind him, as mine is mainly. But the man who is most responsible for this sketch lives in Dawson, is rich, rugged,

OUTDOORS IN ALASKA—WINTER-TIME.

and has lived—a man of the world, and who is most widely known. He houses alone, but has a sharer in a "roustabout," who goes from cabin to cabin, makes fires, brings water, sweeps floors and sees to the wood pile.

"How long do you sleep, colonel?"

"'Bout seven hours, but stay in bed sixteen or twenty; for wood is forty dollars a cord, and candles cost just about their weight in silver, and as there is nothing to read, why, I just lie in bed and think."

"Now, man to man," and I laid a hand forth on his as we sat sipping his fragrant coffee with a dash of brandy in it, "would you mind telling me, fair, square and fully, what you find to think about?"

He pushed out both feet under the table till they touched mine; he threw back his big, bushy iron-gray head, laid his arms out right and left along the edge of the table and laughed—laughed like a giant. He protested. I would put it in the papers? Yes; but not his name, and not her name. Here he laughed and laughed again.

"Not her name? No, I should think not. Her name would fill a bigger paper than yours. But that's just what I think about, old boy, and I am glad I have been driven to it—glad there is no mail, no telegraph, telephone, nothing, not even a dog-fight in Dawson to keep one from remembering the good and the bad. Lots of bad, old boy, but that's past praying for now. I shall be a different man when I get out of this. And let me tell you something right here. These daily papers, hourly telegrams and five-minute telephones are going to take us right to the dogs. We can't keep up this speed. We are going to explode or go to Gehenna. A man don't have time to think of a thing. His childhood is lost to him; his own mother and her sweet lessons are lost; his manhood is lost to him, and an old drivel like myself remembers only the battle and bother of the day before, and at the midnight club dinner is sad because he knows that he can't eat and frolic and flirt as he used to, and that at best the most of to-morrow will taste of to-night."

"But tell me about her, if only just one of her."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Let me see—how many rooms has the Vatican? Fifteen hundred or fifteen thousand? Well, no matter; my Vatican, in the corner of my own dead and buried old Rome, is full—full from cellar to dome. And I go through it every night, a sort of mental Turk; it is my spiritual harem, and it is a great thing; keeps me out of mischief. Why, these poor, skimpy, gold-hunting harpies come here and I give them coffee; and I would give them gold, too, if I had it to throw at birds. Yes, I have money to throw at birds, but not at that sort of birds. I can only pity them. I think, maybe, my dead people, my poor little dead playmates, keep me all right. You see, there was one of them in our miserable, poverty-stricken neck of the woods who was lame. I used to pack her on my back to school. Once I took her some ginger cake; told mother I was sick and couldn't eat it. She cried as she ate it—cried for joy, but ate it through her tears, for she was hungry. She was not pretty, except her great, sad eyes. She was a hunchback, and died before I left there; fell away to be only skin and bone. But do you know who is the queen of my immense harem? That little lame girl of the backwoods. And I had almost forgotten her—in fact, quite forgotten her for more than forty years; but now, every night, she is the first one I call upon. I enter my harem by her door, and I sometimes sit with her a whole hour. I was not very good to anybody after her, as a rule, except to myself; but I believe, as firmly as I believe I am looking you in the face, that she is good to me now. And, oh, yes! you want to see the beauties, eh? Well, there is one who loves sandal wood, silks, satins, carpets that seem to be in billows. Like all most beautiful women, she could not talk very well, and, unlike nearly all most beautiful women, had the good sense to be very quiet. And because she is quiet I like to sit down there a

little time now and then. But, as a rule, I run through the whole harem in a short time, and then get back to my childhood of poverty, mother and my little cripple. I go to school, swinging my little dinner basket, looking back at mother on the porch, and remembering each name now."

Of course, the colonel said ever so much more, but not right to the purpose, as this I have here set down almost exactly as it fell from his lips. Dear, honest, frank old scamp and scapegrace of the world! he has no idea that he is only one of a thousand, of five thousand, of us in here.

And now, shall I tell you of my own sweetheart? Well, there was a little girl—all our old sweethearts were little, or should have been—by the name of Harriet Jacobs. Her father had a mill on the waters of the Wabash, and she was with mother much to help along with us three little boys. Papa was the squire, and used to marry people, and perhaps that is what first put it into my mind to marry Harriet Jacobs. She was small and sickly, always shaking with the ague. I was seven years old. "Seven years old, a-goin' on eight," is the way they used to put it in dear old Indiana, and, in fact, do still, as I observed when there a few years ago. She was perhaps twenty. Maybe she was twenty, a-goin' on twenty-one. But if anybody had told me I should not marry Harriet Jacobs it would have broken my heart of hearts. Mother says that I was always doing foolish things. I was, in my boyhood, a very gushing, awkward and ungainly lad, with bristling, yellow hair, that looked like a little brush heap on fire when I was excited; and I remember now, here on the Klondike, although I had forgotten, that I used to comb and comb at that hair, but the more I combed the worse it got. One day, having seen how the lather made papa's beard and hair stick to his face and temples, I stole his cake of castile soap from his shaving box and went to the branch and pasted my hair all down solid. Then I ran to the house and showed it to Harriet. Mother got sight of it, then she took down the stick, a little tough hickory which she always kept for me, and I was made a wailing threshing floor. For I had also lost papa's soap in the branch. The next day that hair was worse than ever, and I went to the wagon wheels and got tar. Tar held it down all right, but when mother tucked us three little boys down in the trundle bed and put her face down she drew it back from me; and then I heard her tell papa she was going to whip me if I didn't stop playing about that old wagon.

Three days I stood the agony of that tar on my head, and then I went to mother, laid my head in her lap and made a howling confession. It was pulling my very boots off by the hair of my aching head. She did not whip me half to death, as I expected, but almost laughed at me, for she knew all about it. And now, after these more than forty years, I can see that my dear older brother, whom I had taken tearfully into my confidence, had told mother and had her promise not to whip me. I was turned over to Harriet Jacobs and sent down to the branch, where some Indians were camped and catching fish. On the way, and while she gently cut away the hair and dug at the tar, while the Indians looked on, she told me that my hair was very pretty, if I would only let it alone; that it made a sort of halo in the sun, and was not red, but a sort of Titian and old-gold tint. Harriet

had helped papa at his school, and that evening when papa went to feed the hogs I asked him about Titian tints, and he was greatly pleased and told me all about the old Venetian painter who had come down from the Alps to be the lion of Venice. And now I was more certain than ever I should marry poor, sickly little Harriet Jacobs.

A few days later, my elder brother and she sat together on the shady side of a big walnut stump that stood in the garden before the door. Now, I was not jealous. To this day, I hardly know what jealousy is, except from books, and then I loved my gentle, manly little brother dearly. But I saw some big, yellow ripe cucumbers lying on that stump, and I thought to slip up from the other side and push one of them down on their heads and scare them. But after I crept up there I found these were rotten, and so I thought instead to push off a stone that papa had laid there when planting the garden. I could not see where it would fall, but I was so full of laugh at what I was doing that I gave it a shove, and then ran away with a shout. Mother heard me and came to the door. Then she ran to Harriet, and she and my brother helped her into the house and to bed, and tied up her head in vinegar. Goodness gracious! How all these things come back to me now, as distinctly as if yesterday! Mother took me behind the smoke-house. She had her right hand behind her till she got out of Harriet's hearing, then out came the hand and the hickory. There was a blotch of blood on my little home-made tow shirt when I got to the branch and jerked it and my other things off to drown myself. Oh, I was going to die right there. I had nearly killed Harriet and she never, never would marry me now, anyhow. And, then, that thrashing! That thrashing was really terrible, and was all wrong, too. I can say this truly, after all these years, that this ungainly gosling of mother's got thrashed when he did not deserve it many times when he was little. But, on the other hand, let it be as frankly admitted that he deserved many a thrashing when he got big that he did not get. So the thing is about even. Anyhow, mother did what she thought was her duty, and she always told me that the whipping hurt her more than it did me. And after all these years, as I sit here by the frozen Klondike bank, I know it was true; but I didn't believe a word of it then.

I rushed out to the willows where the Indians camped, and was going to throw myself into the water far out, in a most dramatic fashion, after my last words of farewell to Harriet and mother, which I hoped the Indians would hear and take to them along with my clothes and my dead and dripping body. But I fell in over my head before I got to my last words, and an Indian squaw swam in, laughing gleefully, and took me down to where her children were at play in the water. The naked, brown children laughed and played and tried to make me swim. But I was so shy and naked that I had only one use for my two hands. Then a pretty little girl pulled me into the water with her and almost drowned me till I had to swim. And then, what fun! We swam, we dived, we laughed, we flirted. I forgot Harriet. I was in love, my second love, in less than an hour. The little black-eyed red Indian girl was really very, very pretty. She is at this hour the queen of all my early memories. I was so happy I pulled some wild

flowers for mother on my way to the house, and she took my head in her lap with the flowers and we kissed and made up. I was never—as I remember it now—I have never been so happy as I was that day when I rolled a big stone down from that stump on the head of my first love. I wanted to tell mother all about the Indian girl, but I was afraid she would tell Harriet, and that she might be jealous and miserable, and also try to drown herself.

I was often and often in the water with the Indian children, and so became a famous swimmer and lover of streams. Some days I went in quite another direction and got wild flowers and fruit for mother, fearing she might follow me and find out about my sweetheart, with whom I was determined to elope and marry and die. And this it was that got me to loving the woods, wild flowers, birds, solitude, song. But the Indians folded their tents at last and suddenly went, I never knew where.

Would it seem silly if I should write it down here on the Klondike banks as a cold, frozen truth, that the unkind and thoughtless rolling of that stone made me to love the wilderness, solitude, savages and savage life—made me, good or bad, what I am? Why, but for that, I should have gone to town, as other boys, stood on street corners, talked politics, attended conventions, kept with the crowd, made speeches, kept on and on in my low ways, getting lower and lower, till at last, possibly, I should have found myself in the lower House of Congress.

THE VOYAGE.

By William Hamilton Hayne.

THERE is a voyage that all men make,
Rounding the capes of Time—
But never a chart can seaman take,
Bound to an unknown clime.
Whether the heaven is dark or blue,
Ships of the world must float,
But every man as a single crew
Sails in his own lifeboat.

And some go down when the waves are high,
Some when the tide is low,
And some o'er the heaving billows fly,
Heedless of winds that blow.
And some are wrecked on the shoals of Time,
Near to a mist-bound lee,
And some with a faith we call sublime
Sink in an oarless sea.

All of the ships as they come and go,
Ships of the changeful deep—
Whether their voyage be swift or slow,
Enter the straits of Sleep.
All of the seamen shall drown at last—
Lusty, or scant of breath—
For never a beacon light is cast
Over the reefs of Death.