



In the evening Dutch and Grace made a moose mulligan, the battered old Sourdough miner and the girl from Oregon bent together over the campfire, discussing recipes. Dutch left the next day for Fairbanks -- he and the Swedish man Pete swam the horse herd across the river, ten head of them. Fairbanks was only a day's ride or so from the Salchaket. They decided to let the water drop one more day before swimming the cattle. A big French Canadian trapper, John Ouelette, stopped by their camp. He was a friendly man, known to everyone as 'French John'. He told Grace about a blueberry patch a mile up the river. In the afternoon she rode up on Chako and picked two quarts. She also found some calla lillies. When she got back to camp Raymond showed her some golden poppies he had gathered. Grace made blueberry dumplings, thinking of the huckleberry dumplings she and Jean always made on their camping trips up in the mountains of Oregon. They were a hit with the men.

The next morning was clear, the river still falling. Grace paid a visit to the nearby mission. The missionary was a pleasant girl, and she gave Grace a big mess of lettuce to take with her. Back at camp Grace helped pack up the wagons which were sent across the river on the ferry. The flock of sheep was ferried across in one load. An Indian boy rowed Grace across in a tiny boat. She could feel how strong the current was, like something catching at them, and was glad when she could clamber out on the opposite shore. She stood on the muddy bank, watching as the cattle swam across. She could see they had to strike out hard, and their eyes rolled with fear as they struggled across. Mats swam his horse with them. His clothes were soaked when his horse staggered out of the river. At the tail end of the herd Grace spotted Raymond and Cy dipping down into the river, moving the stragglers out into the current. The last steers were swimming across when there was a commotion, a splash, Cy disappeared for an instant, and when he surfaced Raymond was gone from the saddle. Grace watched in horror, unable to move, standing frozen on the muddy bank. She knew Raymond was unable to swim.

"Cy got out where the bank dropped off suddenly into deep water and he didn't seem to know a thing about swimming but floundered around and went clear under with Raymond hanging onto his mane. The current was terribly swift and Raymond had to let go. He managed to hold his breath and keep struggling but he went down twice. He had seen a boat coming toward him before he went down the last time and he stuck his hand up out of the water. He said he knew he couldn't hold out another second when a hand grabbed his and hauled him into the boat. 'French John', a big French-Canadian, was the man who saved him and really it was marvelous the way he handled that little rowboat in that rushing torrent. He said when he saw Raymond go down the third time he didn't think he could reach him and the water was so muddy there was no finding him, but that hand came up and that saved him. Everybody watching thought he was gone -- he stayed under such an endless time. I never want to experience another moment like that. Cy managed to swim across and almost before I realized it here came Raymond riding him and whooping ..."

Letter G.C. to J.B.
July 24, 1914

Her last glimpse of him helplessly drowning was superimposed by the tall, galloping figure shouting with life, muscling his horse at a run past the cattle herd, she heard his infectious laugh, and Grace stood dazed and shivering and realizing his importance in her life.

"Cy got into swimming water and began to flounder. Was thrown off and nearly drowned. French John Ouelette caught me as I was going down for the last time. Changed my clothes at Mrs. Munson's roadhouse."
--Diary R. McK.
July 26, 1914

Relieved that the river was behind them they rode light-hearted up the trail. The next day dawned beautiful and clear. Grace rode with the cattle through the woods, happy to be useful again. Even the rain that began that evening didn't bother her. She slept through the next day in the wagon, while Mrs. Sharkey drove. She was looking forward to reaching Fairbanks, where she could get away from Mrs. Sharkey's sharp and critical tongue. The trip had been hard on Mrs. Sharkey, who made no bones about it. When Mr. Ford's driver asked her if she had been enjoying the trip she answered "Fun! My God, man, it's been hell from the start." Most of her disapproval and reprimands fell in Grace's direction; Grace learned to evade them most of the time and Raymond helped, keeping her busy with the cattle and away from camp.

Mr. Watts passed them, driving in his sputtering auto, he reported that the man at Birch Lake had sobered up, although he was still sick. They passed several freight teams along the road, one badly stuck in the mud. Billy Epley tried to pull them out, without success. The rest of the men could not be spared from the cattle.

Outside of Fairbanks they held the cattle, waiting for evening. The men all slept and Grace picked some blueberries. Dutch arrived from town all cleaned up, he'd even changed his shirt. He went back to help Nick with the sheep. Driving down the main street of Fairbanks in the evening they drew quite a crowd. The cattle were very nervous and bunched up a good deal, but they got them through town and down to the corrals by the river. Riding back they encountered the Sharkeys all dressed up. Their friend Mr. Ford invited Grace and Raymond to supper in the best hotel. They had a feast: soup, double Porterhouse steak, fresh tomatoes, shoestring potatoes, and blueberry shortcake. They found themselves back in a twenty-four-hour world; used to an erratic sleep schedule it felt strange to go to bed so early. In the morning Grace and Raymond cooked breakfast down at Dutch's cabin. The Sharkeys had moved in, with all the wagon luggage, and Grace decided to stay on at the hotel. That evening Raymond took her to the moving picture show, and as they stepped out into the street after the show they met a pleasant couple, Dr. and Mrs. Meyers. After chatting awhile they discovered that Dr. Meyers' sister married a cousin of Raymond's, and that Mrs. Meyers had once met Grace's sister Pearl. They were very interested to hear all about the adventures of the long cattle drive, and invited Raymond and Grace back to their house. They spent a pleasant evening chatting together, and Mrs. Meyers showed them her valuable furs. She had some ermine and mink and white fox.

They spent a few days negotiating the sale of the steers to the Cold Storage Meat Co. Finally, Raymond had to agree to the price of 24¢ a pound for cattle and 27¢ for sheep. It was not as high a price as he and his father had hoped to get, barely enough to pay expenses, if not a small loss. On Sunday Raymond and Grace walked together across the river to read a sermon, a habit they'd begun along the trail. They had to hurry back to get ready for an evening out with the Meyers.

They stayed in Fairbanks nine more days, waiting for the next boat to take them down the river. Raymond delivered thirty or so cattle to the slaughterhouse every day. He and Grace also took the chance to tour the local Sullivan and Oleson Mine.

"Mr. Sullivan took us down the shaft. Saw the steam drills for melting the ice. They are about three feet apart, penetrate about eight feet or more and the steam is turned on for thirty hours -- seven wheelbarrow loads of dirt required to fill each bucket."
--Diary G.C.
August 7, 1914

Fairbanks was recovering nicely from a large fire that destroyed most of the town in 1906. It was started by a candle and a lace curtain and did the most damage to three banks full of gold from the spring rush. Every year the bridge to the Garden Island settlement went out when the ice broke up. For the town folk, this officially marked the first day of Spring. Grace spent a day exploring the town with her old pardner, Bill Schnabel.



She and Raymond watched the steamer 'Yukon' come in, down the Tanana in the early morning, and dock at the edge of town. They would depart on it the next day. They were walking over on their way to breakfast at the Meyers', who had been so nice to them during their stay in Fairbanks. They had dressed up in some Alaskan Indian costumes; Grace had her picture taken standing on a stump, all in costume with bow and arrow. The Meyers brought her flowers when they embarked upon the Yukon. They were in a flurry the morning they left, packing up grips and saddles and rushing down to the stockyards to say goodbye to Cy and Chako, and Bobby, their favorite steer. The horses had to be sold, there was no way around it. Raymond even sold his saddle. A large crowd saw the boat off. Bill Schnabel and Mr. Ford were continuing on with them. The 'Yukon' steamed up the Tanana River to where it met the Yukon River. At the junction the boat got stuck on a sandbar for four hours; another boat had to pull them off, which took some maneuvering.

They were sailing under a British flag. Whenever they stopped to take on wood Grace disembarked to stretch her legs and do some exploring. She liked the flavor, a little rough and wild, of the Yukon mining settlements. The towns mostly consisted of small log buildings and lots of canvas tents. Smoke rose into the chilly air above the muddy streets, dogs yiped and muttered and howled, the Yukon River lay wide and flat as a swath of glass, reflecting a colorless sky.

UPPER LEFT EDGE JUNE 1903 7