The Silver Horde

By REX BEACH

Author of "The Spoilers" and "The Barrier"

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THEY COULD NOT WALK, BUT CREPT.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Boyd Emerson and "Fingerless" Fraser enter Kalvik, Alaska, and meet a young white woman, Cherry Malotte, who shelters them.

Cherry describes the salmon fisheries and Marsh, the unscrupulous head of the Kalvik canneries.

Cherry owns a cannery site. Emerson, George Balt and she go into partnership. Emerson describes his failure to "make good" in Alaska.

Emerson kisses Cherry goodby. Balt, Fraser and Emerson nearly lose their lives in Katmai pass and miss the steamer at Katmai on their way out to get capital.

Emerson stared hopelessly at the fire.

The disheartened man started at this juncture as if a sudden thought impelled him and followed Balt out into the cold. He turned down the bank to the creek, however, and made a careful examination of all the canoes that went with the village. Fifteen minutes later he had searched out the disgruntled fisherman and cried excitedly:

"I've got it! We'll catch that boat yet!"

"How?" growled the big man sourly.

"There's a large open skin boat, an oomiak, down on the beach. We'll hire a crew of Indians to put us across to Uyak."

"Can't be done," said Big George, still gruffly. "It's the wrong season. You know the Shelikof straits is a bad place even for steamships at this time of year. They're like that pass up yonder, only worse."

"But it's only fifty miles across."

"Fifty miles of that kind of water in an open canoe may be just as bad as 500—unless you're lucky. And I ain't noticed anything so darned lucky about us."

"It's our only chance. Are you game?"

"Come on," cried Big George, "let's find Petellin!"

That worthy uttered a shriek of denial.

"In summer, yes, but now—you can't do it. It has been tried too often. The straits is always rough, and the weather is too cold to sit all day in an oomiak; you'd freeze."

"We'll chance it."

"No, no, no! If it comes on to storm you'll go to sea. The tides are strong; you can't see your course and"—

"We'll use a compass. Now, you get me enough men to handle that oomiak; that's a good fellow. I'll attend to the rest."

"But they won't go," declared the little fat man. "They know what it means. Why"—

"Call them in. I'll do the talking." And accordingly the storekeeper went in search of the village chief, shaking his head and muttering at the madness of these people.

But it all proved useless. The natives would not risk it. Desperate, the three men fitted up a boat themselves and resolved to make the attempt.

CHAPTER V.

ALL three knew the desperate chance they were taking, and they spoke little as they made their way out into the straits. Their craft was strange to them, and the positions they were forced to occupy soon brought on cramped muscles. The bidarka is a frail, narrow framework over which is stretched walrus skin, and it is so fashioned that the crew sits, one behind the other, in circular openings with legs straight out in front.

Gradually, imperceptibly, the mountain shores behind them shrank down upon the gray horizon. It seemed that for once the weather was going to be kind to them, and their spirits rose in consequence. They ate frequently, food being the great fuel of the north, and midday found them well out upon the heaving bosom of the straits with the Kadiak shores plainly visible. Then, as if tired of toying with them, the wind rose. Had it sprung from the north it would have wafted them on their way, but it drew in from the Pacific, straight into their teeth, forcing them to redouble their exertions. In the hope that it would die down with the darkness the boatmen held their course, and night closed over them still paddling silently.

It was nearly noon of the following day when the watchman at the Uyak cannery beheld a native canoe creeping slowly up the bay and was astonished to find it manned by three white men in the last stages of exhaustion. One of them, in fact, was unconscious and had to be carried to the house. He did marvel, however, that another of the travelers should begin to cry weakly when told that the mail boat had sailed for Kadiak the previous evening.

"Too bad you didn't get in last night," said the caretaker sympathetically. "She won't be back now for a month or more."

"How long will she lie in Kadiak?" Big George asked.

"The captain told me he was going to spend Christmas there. Let's see—today is the 23d. She'll pull out for Juneau on the morning of the 26th, that's three days."

"We must catch her," cried Emerson quickly. "If you'll land us in Kadiak on time I'll pay you anything you ask."

"I'd like to, but I can't," the man replied. "You see, I'm here all alone, except for Johnson. He's the watchman for the other plant."

Emerson turned his eyes upon the haggard man who sprawled weakly in a chair. And Fraser, noting the appeal, answered gamely with a forced smile on his lips, though they were drawn and bloodless.

"Sure! I'll be ready to leave in the morning, pal!"

The old Russian village of Kadiak lies on the opposite side of the island from the canneries, a bleak, wind swept relic of the country's first ownership, and, although peopled largely by natives and breeds, there is also a considerable white population, to whom Christmas is a season of thanksgiving and celebration, and it caused much comment when late on Christmas afternoon an ice burdened canoe, bearing three strange white men, landed on the beach beside the dock—or were they white men, after all? Their faces were so blackened and split from the frost they seemed to be raw bleeding masks, and their hands were cracked and stiff beneath their mittens. They were hollow eyed and gaunt, their cheeks sunken away as if from a wasting illness, and they could not walk, but crept across the snow covered shingle on hands and knees, then, reaching the street, hobbled painfully, while their limbs gave way as if paralyzed.

A week later Boyd and George were watching the lights of Port Townsend blink out in the gloom astern. A quick change of boats at Juneau had raised their spirits, enabling them to complete the second stage of their journey in less than the expected time.

"I suppose a feller has got to dress pretty swell back there in Chicago," George ventured. "Full dress suits of clothes, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever wear one?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'll be"— The fisherman checked himself and gazed at his companion as if he saw him suddenly in a new light. "Right along?" he questioned incredulously.

"Why, yes; pretty steadily."

"All day at a time?"

Boyd laughed. "I haven't worn one in the daytime since I left college. They are used only at night."

"A feller told me a funny thing once," went on George. "He said them rich men back east had women come around and clean their finger nails and shine 'em up. Is that right?"

"Quite right!"

"Well, I don't suppose—you ever had 'em—shine your finger nails, did you?"

"Yes."

The big man opened his mouth to speak, then, evidently changing his mind, observed, "Seems to me I'd better stay here on the coast and wait for you."

"No, indeed!" the other answered quickly. "I will need you in raising that money. You know the practical side of the fishing business, and I don't."

Finally the steamer docked, and the three men put up at a hotel.

"You better train me up to wearing a dress suit before we get east," George warned, "or I'll make your swell friends sore and spoil the deal. I could wear it on the cars and get easy in it."

"My dear fellow, it takes more than a week to 'get easy' in a dress suit," Boyd smiled, amused at his earnestness, for the big fellow was merely a boy out on a wonderful vacation.

"Well, if there is a down east manicure woman in Seattle show her to me, and I'll practice on her," he insisted. "She can halter break me at least."

It was the labor of several hours to fit Big George's bulky frame, and when the two returned to the hotel Emerson found the representative of an afternoon newspaper anxiously awaiting him at the desk.

"Mr. Athens sent me down to get a story."

"Athens, Billy Athens?"

"Yes. He is the editor. I believe you two were college mates. He wanted to know if you are the Boyd Emerson of the Michigan football team."

"Well, well," Boyd mused. "Billy Athens was a good tackle."

"He thought you might have something interesting to tell about Alaska. Your partner has been telling me all about you and your trip and your great success."

"My partner?"

"Yes. Mr. Frobisher volunteered an interview in your name."

"Frobisher?" said Emerson.

"Sure. That's him over yonder." The reporter indicated "Fingerless" Fraser, who, having watched the interview from a distance, now solemnly closed one eye and stuck his tongue into his cheek.

"Oh, yes, yes—Frobisher!" Boyd stammered. "Certainly."

"He is a character, isn't he? He told me how you rescued that girl when she broke through the ice at Kalvik."

"He did?"

"Quite a romance, isn't it? It's a good newspaper story, and I'll play it up. He is going to let me in on that hydraulic proposition of yours too. Of course I haven't much money, but it sounds great, and"—

"How far along did you get with your negotiations about this hydraulic proposition?" Boyd asked curiously.

"Just far enough so I'm all on edge for it. I'll make up a little pool among the boys at the office and have the money shown here before you leave tonight."

"I am sorry, but Mr. Frobisher and I will have to talk it over first," said Emerson grimly. "I think we will keep that 'hydraulic proposition' in the family, so to speak."

"Then you won't let me in?"

"Not just at present."

"I'm sorry. I should like to take a chance with somebody who is really successful at mining. When a fellow drones along on a salary month after month it makes him envious to see you Klondikers hit town with satchels full of coin. Perhaps you will give me a chance later on?"

"Perhaps," acceded Boyd, but when the young man had gone he strode quickly over to Fraser.

"Look here, Mr. 'Frobisher,'" he said in a low tone, "what do you mean by mixing me up in your petty larceny frauds?"

Fraser grinned. "'Frobisher' is hot monaker, ain't it? It sounds like the money. I believe I'll stick to 'Frobisher.'"

"I spiked your miserable little scheme, and if you try anything more like that I'll have to cut you out altogether."

"Pshaw!" said the adventurer mildly. "Did you say that hydraulic mine was no good? Too bad! That reporter agreed to take some stock right away."

"Now, see here, Fraser, I want you to leave me out of your machinations absolutely. You've been very decent to me in many ways, but if I hear of anything more like this I shall hand you over to the police."

"Don't be a sucker all your life," admonished the rogue. "You stick to me and I'll make you a lot of money. I like you"—

Emerson, now seriously angry, wheeled and left him, realizing that the fellow was morally atrophied. He could not forget, however, that except for this impossible creature he himself would be lying at Petellin's store at Katmai with no faintest hope of completing his mission, wherefore he did his best to swallow his indignation.

"MR. ATHENS SENT ME DOWN TO GET A STORY."

Boyd hurried to a telegraph office and despatched two messages to Chicago, one addressed to his own tailor, the other to a number on Lake Shore drive. Over the latter he pondered long, tearing up several drafts which did not suit him, finally giving one to the operator with an odd mingling of timidity and defiance. This done, he hastened to one of the leading banks, and two hours later returned to the hotel, jubilant.

He found Big George in the lobby, staring with fascinated eyes at his finger nails, which were strangely purified and glossy.

"Look at 'em," the fisherman broke out admiringly. "They're as clean as a hound's tooth. They shine so I dassent take hold of anything."

"I have made my deal with the bank," Boyd exulted. "All I need to raise now is $100,000. The bank will advance the rest. That $100,000 makes all the difference in the world. The rest is easy now. We will make it go sure. These bankers know what that salmon business is. Why, I had no trouble at all. They say we can't lose if we have a good site on the Kalvik river."

That evening Boyd and George started east, but could not locate Fraser.

When the train pulled out a familiar voice greeted them:

"Howdy, you"—and there was Fraser, grinning.

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I'm on my way east."

"Whereabouts east?"

"Chicago, ain't it? I thought that was what you said." He seated himself and lighted another long cigar.

"Are you going to Chicago?" George asked.

"Sure, we've got to put this cannery deal over," the crook sighed luxuriously and began to blow smoke rings. "Pretty nice train, ain't it?"

"Yes," ejaculated Emerson, undecided whether to be pleased or angered at the fellow's presence. "Which is your car?"

"This one—same as yours. I've got the drawing room."

"What are you going to do in Chicago?"

"Oh, I ain't fully decided yet, but I might do a little promoting. Seattle is too full of Alaskan snares."

The younger man shook his head. "You are impossible," said he, "and yet I can't help liking you."

In Chicago, as in Seattle, Fraser accompanied his fellow travelers to their hotel and would have registered himself under some high sounding alias except for a whispered threat from Boyd.

Promptly at 4 o'clock Emerson called a cab and was driven toward the north side. As the vehicle rolled up Lake Shore drive the excitement under which he had been laboring for days increased until he tapped his feet nervously, clinched his gloved fingers and patted the cushions as if to accelerate the horse's footfalls. Would he never arrive?

The vehicle drew up at last before one of the most pretentious residences, a massive pile of stone and brick fronting the lake with what seemed to him a singularly proud and chilling aspect. During the moments that he waited he found his body pulsating to the slow, heavy thumping of his heart; then a familiar face greeted him.

"How do you do, Hawkins!" he heard himself saying as a liveried old man ushered him in. "Is Miss Wayland in?"

"Yes, sir; she is expecting you. This way, please."

Boyd followed, thankful for the subdued light which might conceal his agitation. He knew where they were going; she had always awaited him in the library, so it seemed.

Hawkins held the portieres aside, and Boyd heard their velvet swish at his back, yet for the briefest instant he did not see her, so motionless did she stand. Then he cried softly:

"My lady!" and strode forward.

"Boyd! Boyd!" she answered, and came to meet him, yielding herself to his arms. She felt his heart pounding against hers like the heart of a runner who has spent himself at the tape, felt his arms quivering as if from great fatigue. For a long time neither spoke.

(To be continued.)

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H. E. Turpin is the Bend agent for the Buckley Express Co. 2-3

Notice

Notice is hereby given that on Wednesday, the 3rd day of May, 1911, at 10 o'clock a. m. on said day, the undersigned will apply to the County Court of Crook County, Oregon for license to sell vinous and malt liquors in quantities less than one gallon on Lot 19 of Block 29 of La Pine, in said county and in support of his application will present the following petition:

LA PINE, OREGON, MARCH 15th, 1911

To the Honorable County Court of Crook County, State of Oregon:

Gentleman: We the undersigned freeholders and legal voters residing in the Precinct of Ireland hereby petition your honorable body to grant a license to G. W. Raper to sell Vinous and Malt Liquors in quantites less than one gallon on the following premises, to-wit Lot. No. 19 in Block No. 29 in the Town of La Pine, Crook County, Oregon.

	NAME	ADDRESS
1.	W. E. Bogue	La Pine, Oregon
2.	W. C. Hollinshead	"
3.	G. W. Bogue	"
4.	F. Boles	"
5.	J. N. Masten	"
6.	W. H. Hollinshead	Rosland, Oregon
7.	C. F. Frrington	"
8.	C. Y. Carmichael	La Pine Oregon
9.	J. L. Eggers	"
10.	Tom Sly	"
11.	A. H. Howard	"
12.	J. S. Carter	"
13.	L. M. Burt	"
14.	Frank Bogue	"
15.	J. W. Shultz	"
17.	R. F. Pitman	"
18.	James Black	"
19.	W. G. Fordham	Rosland, Oregon
20.	R. H. Caldwell	"
21.	Simon Carr	La Pine, Oregon
22.	A. Raper	"
23.	H. C. Hanson	"
24.	W. E. Beesley	"
25.	Owen Kenny	"
26.	I. Shintaffer	"
27.	N. K. Smith	"
28.	Fred Smith	"
29.	M. L. Karn	"
30.	C. E. Barron	"
31.	W. W. Cole	"
32.	Solomon Yohe	"

Dated this 29th day of March, 1911

3-6 G. W. RAPER.

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The Cash Store

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