



Very good
Kate Ryan

S. S. PRINCE RUPERT

Monday Afternoon

19th Nov 1923

My dearest Lois

I have just come down from playing shuffle-board. We have had a beautiful sunshiny day - almost the first since leaving Vancouver two weeks ago today. A couple of days ago at Stewart we were in the mountains in 18" of ~~shad~~ snow and we walked down seventeen miles because we thought at the first part of our journey that a motor car could not navigate. Half way down we found the snow practically gone but as we had nothing else to do we thought we would walk the balance of the way which we did.

At the Premier Mine they have an extraordinary snow fall - about 40 to 42 feet in a season - which means between 10 and 15 feet on the level when it is packed down.

In the little river beside which we walked the salmon come up so thick

that their backs appear practically solid on the surface and as the water recedes it leaves thousands of dead ones on the ~~banks~~ banks and hanging in the alder bushes beside the river. I saw a few right up as high as the road but nearly all of them had been eaten by gulls and had disappeared.

In Vancouver I was in a packing factory where I saw them handled by hundreds with pitch forks.

I met quite a famous character named Kate Ryan and played cards with her one evening at Stewart. She left her home in Fredericton N.B. when she was a girl of 14 and made her way until eventually she got to Seattle, where she was at the time of the Yukon gold rush in '98. She had apparently saved a little money and fitted out a dog team and was the only woman to go in over what was called the all Canadian route. She and about 300 men found themselves

stranded at a place ~~called~~ called Teslin where they were obliged to winter she built a small cabin and the men called her the Queen and were so jealous of her that no one could show her any favours. As many as could crowd into her hut would do so and often many would come and have to be told there was no more room. When the time came to go everyone had to go at once.

Eventually they all decided that an old Frenchman 62 years of age - who could not speak a word of English - was harmless and she got him to do her chores. Previous to that she had to cut all her own wood and draw all her own water.

At Christmas time the old Frenchman was the one chosen to draw a toboggan load of presents to her but he was not permitted to say where any of the articles came from. The most important was a bag of flour and six real potatoes.

When the time came to set out for Atlin, there was a puzzle. She would not go with a large party for fear of delaying them and she could not go with a small party on account of jealousy. So again they hit on the old Frenchman and sent him with her to Atlin with instructions to either get her safe through or else never show his face to any of them again.

Unknown to anyone the old Frenchman got a bottle of Hudson's Bay rum and when they stopped at a camp the first thing he did was to melt some snow and make her a hot toddy. As she is a teetotaler and as she could not speak a word of French nor English she was obliged to pour the cupful down between the spruce boughs of her couch in order not to hurt his feelings. And so, ^{after reaching Atlin in 10 days} the old man went back to Teslin to bring on her other belongings and he told all the men



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through an interpreter⁵ how the rum had been responsible for the ease and speed with which they had made the journey. Although they all knew she must have fooled the old men no one ever told ~~the old men~~ him.

Later on at Dawson the old Frenchmen accumulated a fortune $\$50,000$ by always being ready to do odd jobs for other people.

One day a hunter came in to Atlin and reported that a man was sick a hundred miles away. Miss Ryan had the only dog team and as it was necessary to travel light in case the sick man had to be brought back she had to start out by herself. After nursing him for 3 days he was well enough to travel so she put him on the sled

and by going ahead to break trail she brought him back to the hospital in a week or ten days time.

She never had any success panning gold herself and she objected on principle to a woman employing men to work for her. Consequently she made her living buying and selling property and doing nursing in between times.

At one time either in Atlin or Dawson she told me she was the only woman of her kind - the good kind - in a camp of over three thousand men so she had ample scope for her ability as a nurse.

Many men in outlying points died of scurvy. One day a ~~was~~ very unpractical Englishman who went by the very blasphemous name of "creeping Jesus" came exhausted to a hut eight miles from town. Delighted with the prospect of warmth and comfort he went in. Going to the centre of the room to light the stove he became conscious of a man in a bunk on his left and looking more closely - to his horror he

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discovered that he was dead. Starting
back in fright he discovered a second
dead man in a raised bunk on the
right and rushing to the door he came
on still a third lying on the floor.

The Englishman remembered
nothing more until he found himself
in town eight miles away where he
collapsed. The more hardened fellows
including Miss Ryan to whom he told
his tale were so amused at his
fright that they could not help
laughing at his experience especially
as they knew that the three men
had probably been frozen for several
months. They sent out a crew and
buried them and found a diary which
had been kept by one of the men right
up until the ~~fire~~ other two had gone
and the fire went out. It was not
until the following year that it
became known that boiled ~~spruce~~
green spruce would stop and cure
scurvy.

Miss Ryan is typically Irish in her ability to see a joke and to use her tongue.

Bruce Clegg and I had been walking in a ditch where one of our friends was working and we had got our boots dirty. When I came in I rubbed mine off but Bruce did not bother and he was apologising. I said "Heavens, mine were just as bad but I wiped them off with the tail of my shirt. Miss Ryan looked me over admiringly and said in her downright way "You must be some athlete".

She came down yesterday to see us off at the dock and made me promise faithfully to ask Pat Holden if he knows her people in Fredrickton and particularly Father "Mickey" Ryan whom she wants me to look up.

With best love

Yours affectly

Edward.