

KLONDIKE GOLD FIELDS.

Written expressly for the Klondike Nugget by E. Leroy Pelletier.

A little over 25 months have elapsed since the Western world was thrown into a state of great excitement by the reports of the discovery of rich placer gold fields on the Yukon.

The miners returning to their various homes with big sacks of the precious dust and with still bigger stories, lent assurance to these reports, and the conditions of the financial world being peculiarly favorable, one of the greatest "stampedes" known in history resulted.

Homes were mortgaged, properties of all kinds sold at a sacrifice, and fortunes great and small—even lives—were risked in the endeavor to reach the place where gold was to be found in such quantities.

It is interesting, after this lapse of time to read the stories which caused people to tear themselves from home and all its associations and take up a life to which not one in twenty had been used, and, while most of them consist mainly of ridiculous exaggerations, yet each day brings us nearer to a realization of the fact that after all they missed the mark only a little.

THE TRUTH GOOD ENOUGH.

And it is gratifying to know that, stripped of its filmy vestments woven from fabrications invented by returning miners whose quick transitions from poverty to opulence had turned their heads, stories manufactured by more experienced word-carpenters for the benefit of readers of sensational newspapers, willful falsehoods told for a more serious purpose by the boomer of "wild-cat" claims—to say nothing of the "official reports" of "the man who happened to be there," and who was supposed to know all about it—it is most gratifying to know that when all such delusions have been set aside and the mists have been cleared away by the rigors of two arctic winters, together with all the incidentals and ups and downs experienced by the average man who participated in that memorable stampede for a fortune, the hopes and disappointments, visions of wealth and hard rubs with cruel poverty, and, taking into consideration all the difficulties and hardships under which the pursuit of a paystreak must ever be made in this country—in other words, seen as it actually is, this district is considered by those best acquainted with it and most capable of judging, one of the greatest mining camps of modern times.

The writers of the articles above referred to made the most of the material at their disposal and many elaborate stories were built on a very light foundation. And yet, had the authors known, they might have told a better story, and have based it on truth.

These tales tell of pans of dirt yielding hundreds, and sometimes thousands of dollars in gold, but they fail to tell of the miles and miles of ground that will pay handsomely when worked by improved methods. They tell of Eldorado creek, but other creeks have since been discovered the aggregate output of which will far surpass that of the world famous gulch. They tell of the richness of the creek claims, but their authors cannot foresee that within two years miles of bench claims will have been located along the banks of these same creeks, beside which, for richness, the adjoining creek claims will not compare at all. They tell of pay streaks hundreds of feet in width the average pan from which staggers the credulity of the most gullible, but they are silent about the immense deposits of gravel every cubic yard of which will pay enormously as soon as hydraulic methods are well introduced.

CHANGES HAVE COME RAPIDLY.

And, as the sensational writer never exaggerates on one side of a question only, they told of the terrible hardships

which one must face, not stating how incredibly soon enterprise would reduce these to a minimum; how transportation facilities would be increased until it was more than adequate to the requirements of the community; how methods of mining then so costly and laborious would so soon be succeeded by other methods infinitely less so; how even the terrible mosquito which flaunted a challenge in the faces of all others in the world, the Jersey breed preferred, would vanish before the numerous fires left burning by careless prospectors!

They told how the gold was "held in the relentless grasp of everlasting frost," but they did not know at that time that that same frost would relent to such an extent that it would melt and vanish before a good head of water, leaving as little trace as if it had never been, and that the pay gravel thus frozen was, by the use of hydraulic methods of mining rendered more easily worked than the cement gravel beds of California and Cariboo, and less expensive than most of the "dredging propositions" in the river beds of New Zealand.

BIG YIELDS.

There are single claims in this district which will yield from first to last over \$1,000,000 in gold—in some cases more, notably Nos. 13 and 16 Eldorado, and Nos. 2 and 26 above on Bonanza, each of which will, I believe, produce the magnificent sum of \$1,500,000 in gold. There are probably others which will reach this figure but the writer is not well enough acquainted with them to be sure.

I have seen many pans of dirt that yielded from \$200 to \$500, and some that went over \$1000, but I realize that these indicate practically nothing, for they are always obtained under extraordinary circumstances. Usually, of course, these pans are the result of scraping the bedrock in a particularly rich spot.

But a matter of much greater importance and which influences knowing ones far more than rich pockets is the great extent of gravel which will pay handsomely to work, even by the methods in vogue at present.

Eldorados are of little interest to the poor prospector, for he knows that, in the very nature of things we cannot hope that many such creeks will be found in any one district, and they are of as little interest to the capitalist, for he also knows that the present owner fully appreciates the value of the ground of which he is the fortunate possessor, and the price he will set on it will be fully as much as it is worth—so it is not to be bought. But both are interested in knowing where they may secure, each in his own way, a piece of ground which will yield him a competence, if not a fortune.

The season just past has been rich in results along that line.

During that period an immense amount of ground which 12 months ago was classed as "wild-cat," and which was for sale at prices which indicated that the owners had absolutely no faith in it at all, has been prospected, and the results have far surpassed the expectations of the most sanguine.

A CONTINUOUS GRAVEL BED.

Gold Hill, which 12 months ago could have been purchased entire for \$50,000, has been developed and single claims have produced that amount in gold, and it has, in the words of the miner, "hardly been prospected yet." And, more encouraging still, we now know that this famous hill, the output of which from first to last exceeds \$3,000,000, is but a portion of a continuous bed of gravel which extends, so far as known at present, from French Hill on Eldorado, to No. 49 below on Bonanza, on the left limit, a distance of over sev-

en miles, and uniformly rich. At No. 49 above mentioned, this gravel bed is lost, but another appears at No. 76 below on Bonanza, on the right limit, which many claim is a continuation of the one first described. Be that as it may, the writer will venture the assertion that for the full distance of seven miles this "white pay streak" (so-called from the fact that it is composed almost entirely of white quartz gravel, boulders and ground up quartz of the variety known to Colorado miners as "bull quartz") will average \$1000 per lineal foot.

This sounds very much exaggerated no doubt to those who are unfamiliar with the ground in question, but it is fully borne out by the prospecting that has been done and the results thereof. At Gold Hill, this pay streak is about 200 feet in width, while at Monte Cristo gulch it is fully 750 feet in width, and while it may not be so rich in spots as Gold Hill, it shows as much gold per running foot at the lower end as at either Gold Hill or French Hill, while that portion of it lying between Little Skookum gulch and Adams creek, and known as Chechahko Hill, has so far proven the richest portion of it.

OTHER CHANNELS.

Now, when we remember that we have similar channels on Hunker, Dominion and Quartz creeks, that on Dominion having been proven up for a distance of over 15 miles, it will be seen that nature has been most considerate of the poor prospector and has distributed her treasure not only lavishly but impartially.

There are those, of course, who will take issue with me on many of the above points—many who, through some unfortunate circumstance and probably through no fault of their own, have been unsuccessful, and who are consequently discouraged and somewhat pessimistic. And these men have my most sincere sympathy. In many cases they have been the victims of the unjust legislation with which this country has been cursed and whose "restrictive legislation" has proven a greater drawback and hardship on the prospector than any or all of the natural disadvantages of the country.

CONCERNING THE OUTPUT.

From the foregoing, the average reader will no doubt expect me to estimate the current season's output at something like \$25,000,000. Not at all. I hold that the truth about this country is the greatest story that can be told about it, and while told in that way the story may lack some of the elements which certain persons believe to be essential in order to "boom the camp," I am convinced that a "plain, unvarnished tale" will carry more weight with those whose opinion we most value than one embellished with statements which will not bear the closest investigation. If I underestimate a little it will do no harm, for the investigator always likes to find a little more than he expected, besides, exaggerations are always so palpable to the astute reader that he at once decides that the story must be taken "with a grain of salt" and he is apt to season it so much that it will not appeal to his taste at all.

So I mean to give facts as nearly as my knowledge of the country and the prevailing conditions will enable me to do, and if I err it will be in judgment and not in intent.

An attempt to estimate the output of the Klondike and Indian River districts for the season beginning October 1st, 1898, and ending October 1st, 1899, must be based on a shrewd guess at best. And everyone has a right to guess. From the best information at my disposal I have estimated the present season's output at between \$10,000,000 and \$12,000,000.

And this is a remarkable showing when all things are considered.

First, most of this gold comes from new ground—ground which one year ago was either totally unknown or only supposed to be rich. Our richest bench claims were, as I have shown before, almost unknown a year ago, while at

least two creeks which have added very materially to the gross output—Hunker and Dominion—were very uncertain quantities 12 months ago. True, claims on these creeks were sold for large sums—more in some cases than they would bring now—but that price was not based on the showing that the creek had made, but was simply the result of the inflation of values caused by the belief and expectation that the coming "chechahkos" would have more money than sense, and would buy anything at any price. But, while in individual cases these prices were actually paid, other incidents show that the owners of the property in question did not really have so much faith in it. Alex McDonald made some of his best buys on Dominion not much over a year ago, and the prices ranged from \$500 to \$3500 for his choicest properties on Dominion, while in one case at least, a half interest in one of the best claims on Dominion was exchanged for a half of No. 7 above discovery on Moosehide.

WHY CLAIMS ARE NOT WORKED.

Last season's output was somewhere about \$8,000,000, and it came almost entirely from the creek claims on Bonanza and Eldorado creeks. Had these same claims been worked to the same extent this season, the output would have been nearly if not quite double what it is, for the pay had been located on all of them—an item which occupied more than half the working season last year. But the imposition of the exorbitant, and in many cases prohibitive, royalty caused many of these heavy producers to be closed down this season, the owners hoping that within a reasonable time the "powers that be" would come to a sensible understanding of the situation and either materially reduce or altogether abolish this "source of revenue" which is having the opposite effect to that which it was expected to produce by those who are responsible for it.

When it is remembered too, that on most of the claims which have made up this sum, the pay had not been located until very late in the season, and that all the "dead work" which will ever be necessary to work these claims out had to be done the first season, and the many privations and hardships under which the men worked who produced the gold, a production of \$10,000,000 is a really remarkable showing.

OUR PRINCIPAL CREEKS.

Bonanza creek, originally the Discovery creek of the Klondike district and its famous tributary, Eldorado, still hold the lead. George Carmack was the discoverer of Bonanza creek and discovery claim is located above midway between the mouth and the source. There are about 100 creek claims on Bonanza creek proper above discovery and 105 claims below. Of these 12 claims below, and 22 above were worked this season. About 329 hillsides and bench claims out of a total of over 1500 were worked. Total output, about \$4,000,000.

Eldorado has 80 creek and about 1000 bench claims (mostly located under the old regulations, and therefore only 100 feet square) of which about 30 creek claims and 100 bench claims produced gold. Total, about \$3,500,000.

Hunker creek, running about parallel with Bonanza and entering the Klondike about 10 miles from the mouth, is about the same length as Bonanza creek, having 60 claims in all above discovery—right and left forks included—and 81 claims below discovery and above the mouth of Last Chance. A government concession, three miles in length, extends from Last Chance to the mouth of Hunker which would, if staked in 500-foot claims, make the total number of creek claims below discovery 111. Of these about 20 above and 12 below were worked. About 600 hillside and bench claims have been located on Hunker creek and its principal tributary, Last Chance, of which nearly 200 produced gold this season. Total output, about \$1,500,000.

Of the tributaries of the above mentioned creeks, but few produced any

amount worth gulch, at No. creek, has several and a few have Ready Bullion, above. Skookum Magnet (19), Monte Cristo (2 Gulch" 49, and have from one to the mouth, which streak" crosses, produced any value season owing to all indifferently values will make next season no doubt.

On Hunker true. Last Chance the latter being Klondike district actually sluiced, Robert Henderson the distinction. "The Discoverer" the only creeks been uncovered so fine claims on Gold Within the pay channel has been covered on Hunker all the way down other from about to the mouth on Chance.

The claims on streaks are being and next season those on the White. The old channel above the creek 1, than that of Bonanza being about 300 above, while the rock of Gold Hill but 175 feet above creek level. T gravel on the Bonanza bed is 115 feet depth in the deep places, while that Hunker and Chance seldom exceeds 60 feet. Hunker channel while very rich, is so rich as that of Bonanza nor is the streak of such extent in width.

Hunker is developing several benches of the later formation and at an elevation from 40 to 60 above creek level which compare very favorably with the best on Bonanza, while in the still later formation of "sliver benches and hillsides" claims, she promises. In all honesty, Dominion creek expectations of her. This was not because was not an exception but because too much.

Dominion is a of the richest creek of the course of the discovery in this ground, and even handsome sum, being shallow, and to bedrock, and wash, it is perhaps we have in the work. Scarcity of the lack of enough sluice lumber is the it is with all creek side of the divide.

We hear a good of pay" on Dominion to find it. In fact ed to a very thin section on bedrock, and common than for time the pay is through this strip will average fully between discoveries and