

MISSION FIELD.

"A GLIMPSE OF THE TRAIL."

BY H. M. DICKY.

In order to avoid the rush, we start away long before daylight, and reach the mouth of the canon by 8 o'clock. We have been travelling fairly rapidly over pretty good ice, riding where the trail is good, or where it passes through water, and helping the horse in the hard places. Reaching "the forks," where the Skagway and Porcupine rivers meet, we turn abruptly to the left, and the canon opens to our view—a canvas city—an army of gold-seekers in possession.

The narrow pass literally swarms with human life; the eyes are greeted by every imaginable sight, but no sound meets the ear—silence reigns supreme. Men are full of activity, but it is noiseless activity. When my companion speaks it is in a whisper. The grandeur of the scene has commanded the awe-stricken admiration even of this maddened crowd thirsting for gold.

On either side stand the mighty precipitous walls, scarce one hundred yards apart, bleak and uninviting, bearing still the scars of conflict in the great convulsions of nature many centuries ago. Away through the gorge a glimpse is caught of the snow-capped peaks, brilliant with a tinge of the morning sun, which has not yet penetrated with warmth and light this deep recess.

Through this canon in the spring and summer the Porcupine river madly rushes, sweeping before it trees, rocks, everything that opposes its mad race towards the sea. But now it is frozen for the most part. Here and there the strong current forces a passage out through the ice, or the continuous travel above wears it away and gives a glimpse of the sparkling water below rushing towards the bay.

The trail lies along the centre of the deep valley, and has on either side a continuous row of tents and piles of provisions that would feed an army. These tents are motley. From the little 6x8, into which three or four men crawl to sleep, up to the 20x30, with the brazen sign "Saloon." Think of it! Three saloons and gambling tents in that canon running full blast night and day without hindrance and no effort made to counteract the evil or to remind the people that they owe allegiance to God, the Great Creator!

At the people a glimpse. They are all moving on, impatient at the delay. Many of them are provided with horses, and pull ten hundred pounds on two sleds tied together. The clumsy ox, slow but sure, does good work. A continuous procession is formed as far as we can see, and we who are behind wonder why the long delay. By and bye those in front move on; we follow and see the cause. The ice has given away—a deep hole is formed. The poor animals have to plunge down into the hole and scramble up the opposite bank of ice. It is a terrible sight. Men seem to lose their humanity and abuse both their animals and one another. The silence is somewhat broken, but even yet streams of foul language flow in an undertone. "Move on, there, or let me pass," shouts one fellow. "No; but come here and take your coat off, and I'll teach you a little manners," is the reply. And "tell it not in Gath," the second speaker is a minister. The dangerous holes passed, I stroll back a little to view the procession. There comes a mule pack team. They do not kick any one while I am looking, but they seem to live and move on their reputation, for no one disputes their right of way. Everyone gives them as much room as possible, and so they pass on and leave the struggling horses far behind. A poor little donkey struggles on with his heavy load and needs to be reminded very frequently that he has not yet reached his destination. The driver seems to lose courage and to have come to an end of his profane vocabulary. Another remarks to him: "Friend, your donkey seems a little tired." "Tired? Well, I should smile!" he replied, and he stood in a contemplative attitude. Then added: "But stranger, what bothers me is this—I used to believe the Bible, but I can't see how old man Christ ever got to Jerusalem riding on an animal like that." So, away here on the trail men are finding Biblical difficulties that critics never dreamed of, and that it would be well for our Society to solve.

The dog teams are numerous. They travel very rapidly, pass and re-pass the horses, travelling over places where horses would break their necks. The reindeer are scarce and are so hard to manage that one is not much encouraged to think of the success of the American relief expedition. But, perhaps the saddest sight of all is the poor fellows who are try to pull their own sleds. With 200 lbs. on a sled, their shirt fronts open to the breeze, their heads bent, their teeth set, they struggle on, lured by the greed of gold. Is it any wonder they contract disease, toiling thus all day, sleeping in cold tents at night, often too weary to cook themselves a palatable supper? No king, no tyrant, ever compelled his slaves

to work as these men toil for King Gold. And, like all tyrants, he may richly reward the favored few, but for the rank and file I fear there is but disappointment or death.

There are not many women on the trail, but they are able to hold their own. One is driving a team of dogs to break them in. A big burly fellow grabs the chain, and says, "That is my team." The woman quietly lifts a heavy stick and gives him three or four arguments over the head with it, and replies, "Is it your team?" "No, ma'am," he says; "I made a mistake." And he evidently had.

Every nationality is represented. The Jews are much in evidence, and seem to make money on the trail, as everywhere, buying and selling. The Americans are in the majority, and can be heard assuring those who will listen of how they will deal with the Canadian police when they reach the summit. There, however, their better sense guides them, and they settle up their duties like men. The German and French blend with Italian and Spanish in ordinary conversation, but when it comes to swearing, they can all use the English very fluently.

What surprises me perhaps most of all is the large number of the boys who know me. One after another has a cheery word, and they seem pleased to meet some one who has the time and inclination to shake hands with them and enquire after their welfare. Few of them are personally known to me. They must have been among the crowd that usually stands at the back of the church Sunday nights, being new-comers and unused to the Klondike garb, they are diffident about coming up to the front. They load me with many commissions. One, a Salvation Army man, has a partner sick in a bunk-house, and he want him looked after. Another has a brother dangerously ill in the hospital. Another wants me to get mail for him, and that is no easy matter in Skagway. A line stands at the post-office wicket all day. A man can only get mail for one at a time. He must go back again to the end of the line for each man's mail for which he enquires and take his turn. I have usually a list of half a dozen, and to watch a chance when the line is short.

And so, with many good wishes and hopes to meet again on the other side, I wend my homeward way, humbled to think how little after all we are doing for this gold-maddened crowd rushing to the Klondike. For all the gold in those vast regions I would not advise a friend to undertake the peril. But should the voice of our King and Head call for more men, my earnest hope and prayer is that the men of the summer session of 1898 will one and another say, "Here am I, send me."—*Manitoba College Journal*.

HOME MISSION LIFE.

For the Review.

Manitoba missionaries experience getting a boarding place—purloined from a student's note book: "I took the train to within eight miles of my appointment where I was met by the Secretary-Treasurer of the field, whom I had already apprized of my coming. He was very glad to see me and to keep my spirits up, told me innumerable anecdotes of my predecessor. It seems my predecessor was a wonderful man. His preaching ability was away and beyond any preacher that had ever been heard of in this part of the world before. It seems he was also a noted man for preaching on anything outside of the Bible. He announced his subjects and gave them flaming titles: 'Falling from a hay-mow,'—'How I caught a Manitoba tartar'—'When to tell a lie'—and such grand and thrilling titles. For three or four miles we had been driving over a fairly respectable prairie road. Now we reached a very boggy part of the road and it appears that last year my predecessor happened to come into the country under exactly similar circumstances and he was such a joker the Secretary-Treasurer said, 'Why, he even got off a joke about getting out and walking so as to make it lighter.' He was a great joker. 'Did he do it?' I asked. 'O no,' said my Secretary-Treasurer, 'Oh no—it was a joke, see.' At last we reached our destination and I started out to find a boarding-house. One man couldn't, he was a store-keeper and sold a little fresh cider on the side, he said he couldn't. Some of the more charitably inclined neighbours explained to me how ever that sometimes the cider acted queerly on the heads of the customers and they desired to buy, or to sell, or to fight, or to do something desperate. A boarding house offered me accommodation, but the dirt, and the bare lonely looking rooms, and the card-playing and swearing in the room below me, beside the smell of smoke soon decided me that I could not endure the thought of writing sermons in that atmosphere. At last, as hope was almost deserting me I received a note to call at a little house on the banks of a little stream and there a sick lady gave me a shelter and gave me a room. It would be too long a story to tell of all my ups and downs but that boarding-house still lives in my heart for the kindness, attention and thoughtfulness for my wants and needs. Often