TOLD IN OLD ENGLAND

Mineral Belt of Western Canada Described, With Particular Attention to Yukon.

The Most Feasible Routes to the North and Incidents of Travellers' Life.

River Steamers and Winter Roads and Stopping Places Simplify the Journey.

(Special Correspondence London Times.)

Dawson City, July 27.—The great mineral belt of Western Canada, which is divided from the rest of the Dominion by the Rocky Mountain range, includes, as well as British Columbia, the Yukon district of the North-West Territories. These territories, it may be as well to explain, were in great part unsurveyed at the time of the federation of the Canadian provinces, and, belonging to no province, were therefore left as Crown lands of the Dominion. They have since been surveyed and divided into several portions, of which one has lately become a province possessing certain limited rights of self-government, with Regina for its capital. The other portions are still known as districts, and are mainly dependent upon the Dominion government for their administration. The districts are four in number and are known by the names of Yukon, Mackenzie, Franklin and Ungava. Of these the most westerly is the Yukon. It has an area of 192,000 square miles, or roughly of about the size of France, and it stretches due north from the northern boundary of British Columbia on the 60th parallel of north latitude to the Arctic Ocean. As a mineral field, the Yukon district and British Columbia taken together give an extent of about 1,500 miles, running mainly due north and south, with an average width of 500 to 600 miles east and west. The climate of the southern part of this strip is the climate of the south of France, the climate of the northern part is the climate of the Arctic circle tempered by the effect of the great warm current of Japan. There is as much difference between the accompanying conditions of life in the extremities of the two parts as there is between the conditions of the Riviera and St. Petersburg, but geologically they form together the great Cordilleran belt of the Canadian Pacific coast, and for purposes of convenience they may, in treating of the mineral wealth of the country, be spoken of as one.

The mountains, which run north and south in parallel ranges through this great belt, follow as a rule the general direction of the coast and are only broken irregularly into plains and valleys, which often lie at altitudes of 2,000 and 3,000 feet above the sea. Summits in nearly all the ranges attain heights of 8,000 and 9,000 feet, a few rare peaks rising through the limits of eternal snow to 14,000 and 15,000 feet. The topographical, no less than the climatic, conditions prevailing throughout great portions of this vast district have surrounded the work of exploration with so much hardship and danger that it has been as yet only very partially carried out. What has been done has, however, sufficed to demonstrate the existence of great mineral wealth in widely separated sections of the mountain belt. Gold, silver, platinum, coal, iron, lead, copper, asbestos and other minerals of value have been found over extended areas. Mining camps are established upon hillsides and rivers which have not yet advanced to the dignity of geographical names, and while individual enterprise is widely scattered, activity has on the whole tended to concentrate itself round five special centres, of which the wealth is recognized, although the extent of their mineral beds is still uncertain. These five mining centres cut the beds of the mountain belt at either end and in sections between the two extremities. They are known as Kootenay, Cariboo, Omenica, Cassiar and Klondike. Of them all Kootenay, at the southern end, lying between the international boundary and the line of the Canadian Pacific railway, and having an extensive water system draining southward from the Selkirk and the Golden ranges, may be described as that in which the variety and wealth of the mineral beds has been most clearly proved. The coal beds entered by the Crow's Nest Pass, the silver and lead of Slocan, and the gold of Rossland are well known to the mining world. Kootenay is the field to which the largest amount of capital has been directed. Smelting and refining works are there carried on upon a large scale. The enormous wealth of the district has been placed beyond question, and it is the most scientifically developed of the mineral fields of western Canada. Cariboo, Omenica and Cassiar, cutting the mountain belt at distances of several hundred miles apart, are chiefly known for the wealth of their placer gold, the existence of which is thus traced to the southern border of the Yukon district. They also give rich indications, which capital has as yet failed to develop to any great extent, of the presence of other minerals. In the Yukon district the fame of the placer finds of the Klondike have caused the name of one little stream to be generally associated with the field which stretches southwards till it touches the northern edge of Cassiar.

To visit all the mineral fields of Western Canada under present conditions of travel would be an enterprise requiring a considerable expenditure of time. In selecting one of the least developed, Klondike seems to be that which offers at the present time the most salient features of interest.

The first question which presents itself to the intending visitor to Klondike is the route by which he proposes to enter the country. So much has been heard, and so little has been known about the various ways which lead into this region of gold, that at first their number appears confusing. Upon examination they divide themselves under three heads. There is a long water route by Behring Sea and St. Michael, up the course of the Yukon through Alaska; there are long land routes by the North-West Territories and the passes of the Rocky Mountains through Canada; and there is the relatively short route by sea and river and over the passes of coast range which follows the Canadian Pacific coast and crosses the strip of Alaska where it descends the coast within the area of which the international boundary is still undetermined. The long water route by Alaska may be dismissed as taking too much time and being too uncertain for passenger traffic. It has for freight the advantage which attaches to water carriage, but the late opening and early closing of the river by frost makes the season during which this route can be used very short. Some cargoes coming in last year were caught in the ice and were upwards of ten months on the way. All being well, the trip from a port on the Pacific coast by this route to Klondike should be achieved in about two months. The long land routes so called, though the greater part of the way is done in river boats, through Canadian territory, may also in present conditions of transport be dismissed as impracticable, both for time and for expense. Thes shortest of the many ways which may be taken involve either heavy portages or much circuitous river navigation, and there exists no organized channels of transportation. The process of elimination leads to a selection of the middle route, which is neither all Canadian nor all American, but involves according to the tacitly accepted reading of the treaty of 1852 a passage across Alaskan territory and the inconvenience consequent upon the necessity for passing freight in bond through American customs houses. This way sets against the 4,400 miles round of the Alaskan water route a journey of a little over 900 miles up the coast and of about 600 miles after landing at the point of disembarcation.

In choosing this most direct way of entering the country there is still room for variation as to the point at which it may be deemed advisable to cross the mountains of the coast. Whichever point may be selected, the coast range must be crossed in order to reach the head waters of the Yukon where river navigation begins. The mountains of the range are high, and the passes extremely steep. There are glaciers in most of the mountain clefts, and for many months of the year the passes hold from 15 to 50 feet of snow.

At intervals the coast range is traversed by navigable rivers of which the course is from northeast to southwest. The Skeena, the Naas, the Stikine and the Taku are all rivers of this description. Each has its rise in the ranges of the interior, and cuts the coast range completely through, offering a waterway by means of which the difficult land passage of the mountains may be avoided. The endeavor has been made to profit by this natural feature and to find a satisfactory road leading over the uplands of the interior from the navigable headwaters of the Yukon river. The most practicable of the roads of this kind so far discovered was announced to be that of the Stickine river, which cut through the coast range to Glenora, whence a prospector's trail led by an easy slope of 150 miles to the head of Lake Teslin. Here navigation of waterways begin to flow northward to Klondike. It was thought that a wagon or rail road could without difficulty be constructed over the strip of 150 miles which intervened between the two heads of navigation. Though the Stickine runs to the ocean through territory claimed as Alaskan, rights of free navigation are reserved to Great Britain. The point of landing is in Canadian territory, and the route has the advantage of being practically an all-Canadian route. A provisional contract was signed between the Canadian government and a firm of engineers for the construction of the required railway. Unfortunately the conditions of the contract were not such as to command the approval of the Canadian senate. The contract was not ratified, the road has not been made, and attempts to pass into the country by this route have been so generally unsuccessful that for the present it may be said to stand condemned. Other attempts to enter the country by the river openings have equally failed. For the moment the only practical road into the country for those to whom time is a matter of consideration, is that which follows the coast by sea to Skagway, crosses over either of the parallel passes known as the Chilkoot Pass and the White Pass, and descending to Lake Bennett strikes the head of river navigation to Dawson City, the metropolis of the Klondike district. There is also a relatively easy route, good for the passage of cattle, but necessitating too long a land journey to be at present useful for the general transit of passengers and goods, which runs from the head of the Lynn canal by a third pass overland to Fort Selkirk. It is known as the Dalton trail.

It would be unreasonable to expect, under present conditions of development, that either the Skagway-Bennett or any other route to Klondike should present an altogether easy road of travel. The journey should be undertaken only by those persons who are willing to accept the incidents of travel through uncivilized regions, who have no solicitous to camping out, and who are prepared to dispense for a time with such luxuries of diet as fresh meat, fresh vegetables, milk, fruit and wine. The country from Skagway northward is entirely uninhabite except by a few wandering Indians. It produces no food but fish, which cannot always be caught, and a little game, which the ordinary traveller has no opportunity of seeing or of shooting. There are wild berries, and examination will doubtless bring to light wild roots and vegetables of edible varieties. Wild onions have been found, and a root resembling the potato. But at present none of these things are available for the food of the passer-by. He has to content himself with that which has been imported. Until the introduction of the present means of transportation, which were established only a few weeks ago, it was obligatory upon every one entering the country to take with him a thousand pounds weight of provisions. This was supposed to constitute supplies for a whole year, and though the obligation upon individuals has now been removed and food can be purchased all along the route, the cost of carriage is still too great for many perishable luxuries to be added to these stores. Bacon, flour, beans, evaporated fruits, and tinned provisions make up a dietary which with care may be made sufficiently wholesome and sustaining. It cannot be said to be attractive to the fastidious palate, and with carelessness and bad cookery scurvy may, and too often does, result among men who have been long exposed to the rough work of the mines. This danger can scarcely be said to affect the passing traveller, and the time will no doubt soon be past when the disease will have to be counted among the perils to be guarded against in prolonged residence upon the goldfields. Nevertheless, at present every one entering the Yukon district will do well to provide himself with such portable luxuries as may serve to make the staple food of bread and pork more palatable to him. A small tent and bedding are also an absolute necessity for any noe to whom the initial comforts of privacy and cleanliness are essential, and if it is intended to leave the beaten track of travel a camp stove and cooking utensils must be added. All that is necessary, allowing 50 pounds for personal effects, can be included within 300 pounds weight. Along the beaten track places to which transportation agents gravely give the name of hotels are established at the usual stopping points. These shelters, which are sometimes tents and sometimes log cabins, usualy consist of three compartments. One is a kitchen, one is the eating room, and one a common bedroom known by the local name of bunk-house. The bunk-house is fitted, as its name suggests, with rows of bunks or berths usually constructed out of rough pine logs and fixed round the walls in double tiers as close upon each other as they can be laid. Each bunk is provided with a blanket, and all comers sleep as they can. No invidious distinctions of sex are maintained, and if the number of guests for the night should chance to exceed the number of bunks the sleeper is lucky who obtains a whole berth to himself. Cleanliness under such circumstances is not a virtue to be looked for, but the traveller who is forewarned is also forearmed. Taking a tent with him, he has a bedroom wherever he may find himself, or in these fine summer nights his own blankets in the open will supply him with all the shelter that he needs. With the aid of a toothbrush and a piece of soap a fairly efficient toilet can always be performed at a neighboring stream. As regards food he will usually be glad to take what is provided rather than be troubled to light a fire and cook provisions for himself.

But these details are of little interest. They are evidently applicable only to temporary conditions, and a very short period of profitable developments will suffice to alter. A railway is in process of construction from Skagway which is expected to reach the summit of the White Pass this year, and if the prospects of permanent occupation of the country justify—as they are expected to justify—the further expense it will be carried to Fort Selkirk. Arrangements have also been made for the construction of a post road over the ice this winter with stopping places at intervals of 50 miles. This is of great importance, not only for the effect it will have in mitigating the hardships of the winter journey, but also because it will insure facilities for the transportation of food during all but the three weeks of the year during which the ice is jamming. Already a service of small river steamboats has been placed upon the waterways which flow from the northeastern base of the coast mountains for nearly 60 miles to Dawson. The accommodation which is offered on these boats is, of course, extremely bad, but their existence represents a plucky and successful pioneer attempt to navigate by steam a river declared at first by apparently competent authorities to be navigable only by small hand craft. Their better arrangement for the comfort of passengers is obviously a mere question of future organization. They have proved by the three or four trips which have been accomplished that it is possible to make the return trip from the head of the passes to Dawson and back in eight or nine days instead of in a time which varied from forty days to three months. The passes can be traversed in two days' portage with pack animals from the coast. Allowing the same time for the return, it is possible for the journey into Dawson and back to be made from Skagway in a fortnight. From Victoria to Skagway is a five days' journey by sea, and, assuming that there are no accidental delays, the journey from the limits of civilization at Victoria to Klondike and back can be performed within four weeks. As a matter of fact accidental delays have almost always to be reckoned with in new countries, and the traveller may have occasion to congratulate himself more than once on the possession of a tent while he is kept waiting from unavoidable reasons, at some wholly unexpected spot.

The real interest of the country is to be looked for in its permanent features. These are very striking, and during the summer months full of charm. The topography of the great gold area of the Yukon district may be readily understood if the country be thought of as a colossal cabbage leaf of which the stalk, set in a northwesterly direction, be taker. with all its minor strings and branches to represent the portion of the Yukon river which, falls within Canadian territory, with the tributary streams and waterways that make up its headwaters. The image will be more effective if for an ordinary cabbage leaf a leaf of curly kale be substituted. The curled edges on the broader end of the leaf may then be taken to represent the mountains by which on all but the northwestern side the district is surrounded. The image is only so far misleading in that the mountains, instead of running round the Yukon district in a continuous range, are composed of the northernmost spurs of the four main ranges of British Columbia, which, running up parallel with the coast here, open and gradualy die away in echelons, the extreme eastern and western ridges alone maintaining their characters, and by a slight drift westward of their northerly and southerly direction encircling the whole district with their peaks. In the coast range, Mount St. Elias, which marks the international boundary, and is nearly half as high again as Mont Blanc, is one of the best known and most conspicuous of the peaks. In the continuation of the Rocky Mountain range, which makes the northeasterly circuit of the district, the peaks grow gradually lower, and they are said to die almost away as they approach the Arctic circle. To get the full character of the district, including the continuation of the middle ranges of British Columbia, it is necessary to take in the northern extremity of Cassiar, which, lying on the southern side of the British Columbian boundary does not, politically speaking, belong to the Yukon district.

The territory thus defined has been partially surveyed for the Canadian government, and an extremely interesting report has been written upon it by Dr. Dawson. I hope not to misquote him in briefly summarizing his views as to some of the leading geological features that are presented. According to him the bed rock of the country is paleozoic, and through this paleozoic flooring there have been three—or it may be counted as four—great granitic upheavals. These granitic upheavals form the skeleton upon which the mountain ranges rest. Those of the interior, which under various names continue the ranges of the Rockies, the Selkirks and the Goldens are of an apparently older formation than the coast range. There are other subsequent volcanic indications, and it is especially to be noted that the development of quartz veins in the paleozoic rocks appears to have occurred contemporaneously with the upheaval of the granites. While cutting the stratified rocks, quartz veins, seldom or never, according to Dr. Dawson, cut the granite masses. This observation should, in his opinion, form an important clue to the the further search for auriferous ground, the placer gold so far discovered being found usually in association with the disturbance of the stratified rocks. In all the mountain ranges peaks rise to a height of 7,000 to 9,000 feet. The granite axis of the coast range measures about fifty miles through. The other ranges, though in some respects less difficult of access, are no less important in their general features. Subsidiary ranges deflected from the main direction of the rocks, and more modern in their formation, make traverse connection between the granite axis, and form of the entire area to the south and southwest entire area to the south and southeast of the Yukon district a great mountainous development. In connection with this mountainous development a very interesting theory of glaciation has been evolved.

The whole of the geological formation to which allusion has been made is preglacial in its character. The whole of the existing surface development in the lower levels of the country is postglacial. Between the formation of the original and the formation of the actual surface the country has passed through a glacial period, and all the leading features as they now present themselves are to be attributed to the action of ice. It has been long since established by the observations of Canadian and American geologists that the district of British Columbia and the neighboring states of Washington and Idaho had been at some remote period subject to the action of ice moving steadily in a southerly direction. The northern source of this glacial mass was traced to the mountainous area lying between the 55th and 50th parallel of north latitude. This is the area which has now acquired fresh interest as forming the southeastern boundary of the Yukon district. In observing the direction of the glacial action by which the present surface of the Yukon country has been formed, Dr. Dawson has been able to demonstrate that the action of ice along the valleys of the Yukon and its tributaries has been, not from north to south, but from south to north, originating in the same high levels as those to which the glaciation of the Pacific coast is traceable. That is to say, the mountainous area lying between the 55th and 50th parallels of north latitude is to be regarded as having been at some remote period the gathering ground of a great confluent glacier or glacial mass, of which the main action was, like the drainage of a watershed, in two diametrically opposite directions, southward through British Columbia to the United States and northward through the Yukon district towards the Arctic circle. It is also shown that the same glacial mass worked westward to the Pacific coast, cutting the transverse river valleys and mounatin passes, and posibly taking some part in the separation of the islands of the coast archipeligo. In this established theory of the direction of glacial movement it is the opinion of Dr. Dawson that some further indications should be obtained of the probable course of auriferous drift. As nearly as it can be collected into one sentence, his theory with regard to the gold deposits of the country would appear to be—first, that gold development is associated with the upheaval of paleozoic floor by the granitic axis of the mountain; secondly, that the whole existing surface of the country is formed of glacial detritus, ground from the rocks and granites by the action of an immense mass of moving ice pushed before it in a direction advancing from south to north. From these two main facts he would seem to suggest that some sound inference as to the direction in which gold will be most likely found may be drawn by the practical miner. How far events have already justified this theory must be a matter for subsequent consideration.

The journey from Vancouver up the coasts for the purpose of entering this region has no little interest of its own. The way taken is the navigable channel which, according to the Canadian view of the treaty of 1825, is the true line of boundary intended to be established in this part of its course between Alaska and the British territory of Western Canada. It passes along the east coast of Prince of Wales' Island through Clarence Straits, which, being the only navigable channel for vessels of any draught would appear to constitute the natural line of division between the mainland and the islands, and corresponds to the wording of the treaty by running north and south until the mainland is touched in latitude 56 degrees. According to the Canadian contention, which is supported by an old French map bearing date 1813, this strait, with its continuation of Ernest Sound, forms the Portland channel of the treaty, and is to be distinguished from the Portland canal of modern maps. After touching land at Fort Wrangel, where setriking groups of Indian totem poles still rear their quaint carved emblems of ancestral glory above the revolting dirt of an American frontier station used as the starting point for the goldfields for the Stickine route, the course of the steamer turns westwards through Summer Strait and, rounding Cape Decision, heads again northward through Chatham Straits and up the Lynn Canal. At the head of this inlet Skagway and Dyea stand on opposite sides of the shore, scarcely more than a stone's throw from each other.

The whole of the journey is interesting but in the latter part the scenery has a beauty and wildness of which little impression can be conveyed in words. For hundreds of miles the way lies through channels of which the width varies from six to twenty miles. In the Lynn Canal, of which the channel is twelve miles long, the average width is only a mile and a half. Mountains, of which the heights range from 5,000 to 6,000 feet, come sheer down to the water's edge, fir-clad upon their lower slopes, and breaking occasionally into white marble cliffs. Waterfalls leap in white streaks to the sea. As we go northward glaciers lie in almost all the higher clefts, and their characteristic features can be studied easily with agless; sometimes as many as seven glaciers are in view at once. Some of them are of unusual size, and the Muir glacier, which is seen in Icy Straits, has a breadth of twenty miles. The land is absolutely as a rule without sign of human habitation, although animal life, whales, seal, walrus, sea eagles, wild duck, geese and puffins abound. The general color is a somewhat ghostly grey. Grey, still sea, grey mountains, dark in their lower slopes, but snow-clad on their summits, pale grey sky above. At times the Aurora Borealis lights the scene with magical effect.

There is no need to be reminded that the northern portion of the journey follows the coast from the 55th to the 59th parallels, and skirts the edge of the ancient gathering ground of glaciers. Skagway and Dyea are situated almost on the limit assigned by Dr. Dawson as the northern boundary of this district, and it is through one of the principal channels carved by the descending body of ice in its progress towards the less elevataed regions of the interior that the Chilcoot and White Passes lead across the coast mountains to Lake Bennett. The passes are parallel to each other and whichever is chosen the way is practically the same. In both a canyon of surpassing loveliness leads to a barren summit, and the descent is over bare rock exposures upon which the effects of ice action may be studied at every step. The passes lead down to a system of wild mountain lakes which are believed to occupy the place of the last tongues of the great northward-moving glacier, the theory being that this in the end must have disappeared to quickly for the beds of the lakes to have become filled with detritus. A glance at the map will show a somewhat similar conformation repeating itself at the northward descent of al the principal passes leading from this mountainous region to the widespreading head waters of the Yukon river.

In entering the country by either the Chilcoot or the White Pass, Lake Bennett is the first of the important lakes which constitute links in the chain of waterways leading almost due north to Dawson. Bennett, which is reached by a two days' portage that can be done either on foot or on horseback across the mountains from the coast, is the southerly terminus of the river steamers. It is a little town of tents, which, like all canvas towns, expends and contracts with marvellous rapidity. Every newcomer sets up his tent. In one week the population may number as many as 10,000, and in the next have fallen to 200. In the spring, when men who cannot afford the luxury of packing their goods on horseback across the passes are using the snow, which at that season lies to a depth of four and five feet upon the ground, as a means of transit for sleighs that they drag by hand, Bennett becomes thickly populated. It is the custom of those who have for purposes of economy braved the hardships of the winter journey to wait here, whipsawing timber and building boats until the melting of the ice opens the waterways. This takes place towards the end of May or the first week in June, and by the second week in June Bennett is emptied of the large portion of its inhabitants. The same man who drags his goods over the snow to avoid the cost of a pack train will build his own boat and make his own way down the rivers to avoid the cost of travelling by steamer. The expenses of locomotion and carriage by any other means than those which nature has provided are heavy enough under present conditions to make this course almost obligatory upon the poor man. Goods are not freighted from the coast to Dawson for less than a shilling a pound, and when this sum comes to be added to the thousand pounds' weight of provisions which even now a miner studying economy will take in to equip himself for a year, the consideration becomes important. The cost of a return passage by river steamer from Bennett to Dawson for the individual, independently of his goods, is at present equal to about twice the cost of a first-class return passage in an Atlantic liner from England to America.

The traveller to whom time is important will gladly recognize the value of the equivalent which he receives. Taking his passage in the steamer, he may expect to be landed within a very few days at Dawson. Lakes lead in succession to the finally continuous channel of the river, and only one important rapid, necessitating a portage of five miles, interrupts the course of navigation to the lower Yukon. This portage occurs at the White Horse rapids, and the difficulty is met by a double service of steamers, one plying above the rapids to Bennett, the other below the rapids to Dawson. A failure to make connection may cause delay at this point, and, as the course of the river widens in come parts to shallow water, sand banks have also to be reckoned with. In spite of these inconveniences and of the material discomfort caused by insufficient accommodation, the journey is nevertheless one from which a fine weather great pleasure can be derived.

The scenery is extremely beautiful, having regard to the upper lakes, which are closely surrounded by rocky mountains, all the characteristics of deep sea fiords. As the river breaks out from the mountains the relatively low hills which accompany its course recall the Scotch Highlands. The slopes are covered chiefly with dark fir, and of common profusion, covering whole hillsides, with a rose-colored effect that, at a distance produces almost exactly the impression of hether in full bloom. Further north, the country tends to open on lower levels, grass-covered hills suggest a possibility of grazing areas, and it believes that on either side of the river in the interior prairies exist upon which vast herds of cariboo still feed. Very little is known with accuracy as yet of the conditions of the country outside the river valleys which have been searched for gold. The level of the country is generally above that of the water, and thew hole appears to present a great plateau sloping towards the North, through which the rivers have cut their beds. Interesting geological exposures are to be frequently noted, and in some of the terraces, formed originally by glacial action, and now overgrown, appear to be as mathematically accurate in their lines as if they had been levelled with a spirit level.

The mildness of the temperature on the northern side of the great mountain barrier which has been crossed is a first consideration of surprise. It is ascribed to the lower elevation of the country, and the climate grows not more, but less, rigorous as the head waters of the river are left behind. Inhabitants of Dawson assert that, owing to th relative absence of wind, the winter in this town is less severely felt than the winter in Manitoba. These statements must be taken in conjunction with the fact scientifically established, that the annual range of the thermometer in the Yukon district is from 80 degrees below zero to 80 degrees above. At this time of year the climate appears not unlike that of England or of Scotland. It is neither hot nor cold, nor wet nor fine, but a variable mixture of them all. The sun on hot days is perhaps hotter than the English sun, but warm blankets are always welcome at night.

The vegetation as seen from the river banks has a most familiar aspect to English eyes. Wild roses and the common English wild flowers present themselves in abundance. At Marsh lake, on a spot where some grain had been accidentally split last year, we found on July 19 wheat, barley, and oats growing in wel-filled ears, the wheat having already flowered and being quite as far advanced as it would be likely to have been in Manitoba. A bag of beans which had been spilt a little lower down the river had produced a similar result, and a bean field was spreading itself over the bank. With regard to the mosquito scourge, of which so much has been heard, it is certainly bad, but can be mitigated by using reasonable methods of protection. To encounter it at its worst it is necessary to go into the woods and creeks. The Yukon mosquito, like the African tsetse fly, appears to avoid centres of habitation, and the beaten track of travel is comparatively free.

The journey down the river from Lake Bennett does not depend exclusively for its interest upon the beauty and novelty of its scenery. It has its human touches in the numbers of little encampments that are passed upon the banks. Some of them represent solitary wayfarers sculling their goods down the stream and camping as they go each night. Some of them are the camps of prospectors already at work washing gold. Fort Selkirk, which is passed at the junction of the Lewis and the Pelly, where the river flats widen to something resembling meadows, adds even an historic note by the traditions that it recalls of the early and adventurous exploration of the country by the Hudson's Bay company. At the mouth of the Stuart river an encampment of several thousands of people has established itself, and here there were eager inquiries for news from the outer world. But along the whole stretch of this river nothing approaching to a permanent town is reached until, rounding a bend above the spot at which the Klondike empties its waters into the Yukon, Dawson City is seen rising white under canvas up wooded hills that half encircle a little bay. The body of the town, which now counts about 20,000 inhabitants, is established, with its log cabins, warehouses, and wharves, upon the swampy beach below, and a large Yukon steamer lying at the landing place serves to remind us that we have reached the point of junction with the Alaskan route.

Current Comment

FEDERAL TOLL TAKERS.

In the case of Latraverse vs. Morgan, before the Superior court, it came out that an "influential person" got some $200 for services in stopping a prosecution instituted by the officers of the inland revenue department, the offence alleged being the running of an illicit still. Has the Laurier government imitated that of Mr. Mercier, and set up a gate and toll-taker?—Montreal Gazette.

FOUR CENTS A MILE.

It is officially announced that the Northern Pacific railway company will reduce its passenger rates in Washington and Idaho from five to four cents per mile. This will be welcome news to the travelling public, as it means that the competing lines will be compelled to follow the example of the Northern Pacific, and come down to the four-cent-per-mile rate. The Great Northern, the O. R. & N., and the Canadian Pacific will be compelled to sell tickets at the four cents per mile rate to at least their coast terminal points from this section of the country. This will cut down the cost of tickets from here to the coast in the neighborhood of $4, and for the round trip to double that sum.—Rossland Miner.

PLEBISCITE'S SOLE EFFECT.

If the plebiscite carries in the affirmative, somebody in this government will have to do some resigning. Certainly, in such a case, Sidney Fisher cannot keep his seat if the government does not introduce a prohibitory measure next session; while, if it does, how can Messrs. Tarte, Joly and Geoffrion keep their places? It would look as if Sir Wilfrid is bound to miss some familiar faces at the board, if the people disregard the advice of three of his ministers and ask for prohibition. Who will be sacrificed? Will it be the one or the three? Or will it be none? It is quite possible, of course, that individual ministers can swallow their principles as readily as can an associated ministry. It is no wonder, however, in the face of this terrible dilemma, that Sir Wilfrid's more immediate colleagues in Quebec are trying all they know to keep down that vote.—Montreal Star.

SAMPLE EASTERN IGNORANCE.

The Alaskan boundary question would be best settled by a fair exchange of territory, Canada ceding as much of the Yukon district to the Alaska as was would compensate the United States for the cession to Canada of the Pacific littoral of British Columbia and of the Yukon district remaining to Canada. The deal ought to be a comparatively easy one under the present circumstances. The discovery of the extraordinary wealth of the Yukon has provided Canada with a valuable territory which she could, without any sense of national humiliation, cede to the United States. The rich Klondike district adjoins the United States territory of Alaska. The Yukon river, flowing through Alaska, is the natural approach to the Klondike district, and would doubtless be rendered easy of navigation by the United States were it interested in the development of the Klondike region. The enormous value of the Klondike region is placed beyond all doubt by the unparalleled richness of the placer diggings; only the richest districts can be profitably worked at the present cost of living, but once easy routes of communication have been established, the ten dollar a day pay dirt which is found in so many districts throughout the region will immediately become profitably productive. The development of this district, if brought about from the Alaskan side, will hasten the development of Alaska. If quartz lodes are discovered in the region, which all the indications point to, and of which the best geologists and prospectors are confident, the value of the Klondike region will be very great. It ought to be possible to arrange for the exchange of two territories. Canada will of course be making the greatest sacrifice by parting with the Klondike, for she has already greatly benefited by the discovery of the riches and development of that region. The United States would never miss the coast region, which has been of no value so far to her. Nothing except reciprocity would do away with a more serious source of irritation than an exchange of territories which would give Canada her Pacific Coast.—Montreal Witness.

EGYPT'S FIRST DYNASTIES.

W. Flinders Petrie on the Results of Recent Discoveries.

Among the many papers read to the recent session of the British Association was one by W. Flinders Petrie, the eminent Egyptologist. Its title was "Egypt Under the First Three Dynasties, in the Light of Recent Discoveries."

His object Mr. Petrie said, was to give a summary of the principal discoveries during the last five years that had revealed the rise of Egyptian civilization. It had been said that the beginning of the fourth Egyptian dynasty—the age of the pyramids, about 4,00 B.C.—was the furthest back that we could go. The puzzle was that there had been no trace of this high civilization. But now entirely new discoveries during the last three years at Koptos, Nagada, Abydos and Hieracoupolis, and various excavations had discovered remains belonging to the ages before 4000 B.C., which had hitherto been the starting point of known history. Beginning with the Libyan stock, with some negro mixture, which occupied Egypt in the earliest ages of civilization, he showed some of the objects he had found at Nagada — statuettes, games slate palettes for grinding paint, beautifully ribbed flint knives of extreme delicacy, forked lances and arrows, carved spoons of ivory and bone, harpoons, bracelets and combs.

These were at first temporarily assigned to a new race, as we knew nothing more about them; but now they could be safely assigned to the pre-dynastic stock about 5000 B.C., and even earlier. In the graves of this aboriginal race were found bowls of black clay with patterns imprinted upon them. They were of great importance in considering the relation of this civilization to that of others in the Mediterranean. In each of the countries where this had been found—Spain, Bosnia, Egypt and Hissarlik—it was contemporary with the introduction of metals. Metals had just been introduced, and therefore, in all cases this pottery was associated with the same state of civilization. The proximate date of this was the close of the Neolithic period and the introduction of metals—viz., 5000 B. C.—and that accorded very very well with the time necessary for arriving at the high culture attained by 1500 B.C. Therefore, these discoveries were of great value in giving the relative state of Egyptian civilization to that of the rest of the world at the introduction of the dynastic rule.

There was a wide difference between the people of 5000 B.C. and those of 4000 B.C., but no difference between those of the latter period and modern times. This showed that a different race entered the country about that period. Next came the earliest dynastic remains of the presumed tomb of King Mena, the founder of the dynastic history of about the date 4700 B.C., then the remains of other royal tombs, found at Abydos, belonging to the first three dynasties. The skill of flint-working had undoubtedly gone down and was fast dying out. The gradual decay of flint-working between 4500 B.C. and 1500 B.C., as metals came into use, and copper was gradually hardened into bronze, had no parallel in the world. Prof. Petrie showed diagrams of cylinderal seals as used by the kings of the three first dynasties, and impressions of such cylinders which were vastly more frequently found than the seals themselves. He then showed a vase exhibiting the earliest representation of Egyptian mythology, and other vases, tablets and slates showing animals and birds, such as the hawk, bull, lion and leopard, which manifested a well-acquired knowledge of these animals as well as of the ibex, gazelle and antelope.

Large numbers of animals, such as the calf, monkey and dog, had been found modelled in green clay, together with a model of a lion in red pottery. These finds were very important, as they showed the skill of clay modelling of the earliest dynasty, the rise of the art of modelling, and the Egyptian ideas and appreciation of the forms of animals and of the human body. These important monuments of the civil life of the early kings proved that glazing was a specialty of the original people, and that Egyptian art reached its high-water mark somewhere before B. C. 4000. Other finds showed the kings in triumph over their enemies, receiving captive kings, opening the public works, or reclaiming the marshes. Others were vessels with dedications written upon them, and stone jars with chambers as storehouses for the king's soul. The handled copper vessels showed the most advanced metal work found of the first three dynasties.

The population of the pre-dynastic age was different in type from that of historical times, and in the early monuments the presence of diverse types was very clear, some being shaven, some bearded, some long-haired. We had at last before us evidence of the close of the period previously considered prehistoric, showing the development of the art, writing and civilization of Egypt, and the composition of a race which had since maintained its character during 6,000 years. The puzzle was how this civilization arose, and we had discovered evidence to solve this puzzle. Egypt was then an originator in the arts, and not a borrower, but ever since then most of the nations of the earth had been borrowers, and not originators. Here Mr. Petrie traced the history of a country not borrowing, but developing a vast and complex civilization on its own resources.

THE ALASKAN DEAL.

Further Details of the Proposition Before the Quebec Conference.

A Quebec despatch to the Montreal Gazette dated September 27 reads as follows:

"This much is known of the work of the international commission, that two rather important questions—sealing and Canada-Alaska boundary—are practically settled. Strange as it may seem, these topics have been dovetailed, and to-day the commissioners threshed them out in conference.

"It was supposed, a few days ago, as the settlement of the Canada-Alaska boundary question was purely a legal one, that it would be referred to an independent tribunal for determination, but now it appears that the American commissioners have shifted their ground. They say that the report of Messrs. King and Mendenhall, the commissioners appointed in 1893 to procure all data necessary to the proper delimination of the boundary, is sufficient to enable the commissioners themselves to reach a conclusion, and therefore they object to the reference of the subject to any other tribunal.

"The Americans adhere to the extreme view put forward by them for years, that the boundary line follows the Portland channel, and that where mountains "parallel to the coast" are more than ten marine leagues distant therefrom, that the line shall follow the sinuosities of the coast. The effect of this contention would be to retain Dyea, Skagway and Pyramid Harbor at the head of Lynn Canal, in United States possession. The Canadian commissioners, it is said, are not going to offer much opposition to the American view, but think they can make a "trade" which will be beneficial to Canada. The sealers are to be bought out by the United States—ships and outfits,—but there is the further question involved of national right to seal in Behring sea, and for this the United States must be prepared to pay. If the right to seal in Behring sea be not legally conceded to the United States, then there would be nothing to prevent any Canadian from embarking next year in this industry. The price which Canada will demand for surrendering her right to seal in Behring sea is access to the Yukon country for all time by way of the Lynn Canal—Dyea, Skegway or Pyramid Harbor, each or all, to be administered jointly by both countries, and possibly one port handed over to Great Britain.

"Regarding the British Columbia people, who have for years contended that the American claim that the boundary line should follow the sinuosities of coast is wrong, will regard the government's surrender to the United States, remains to be seen. Friends of the federal government argue that as the coast littoral has been in possession of Russia and the United States since 1825, no independent tribunal would disturb them in possession. This, however, is mere guess-work. When a court of arbitration had so decided, it would then seem but reasonable that Canada should be prepared to saw off her sealing rights for access to the ports at the head of Lynn Canal; as it is the Canadian commissioners appear to be putting the cart before the horse.

"The United Statesers are a thoroughly business body of men. They realize that the acquirements of Canada's sealing rights along with those of Japan and Russia will put the entire monopoly of sealskins in the hands of the North American Transportation company, who are the lessees of the rookeries to-day."

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