



LIFE IN THE KLONDIKE GOLD FIELDS.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE FOUNDER OF DAWSON.

RECORDED BY J. LINCOLN STEFFENS.

JOE LADUE had run away from San Francisco to escape the people who wished to hear about the Klondike and his luck there; he had fallen in with a carload of Christian Endeavor tourists who were as eager as the Californians to know how gold was picked up; in Chicago he stepped off the train into a circle of questioners; hurrying on to his native Plattsburg in the Adirondacks, he met the same inquiries. Here, however, the curious were his friends; so he talked a day and a night more; then he drove out to the farmhouse that to him is home, and for a short time he felt safe. Saturday morning some of the neighbors came across the fields to see his nuggets and photographs, and to hear his good-luck story. Surely that was the end! Sunday morning he came downstairs in his slippers to have a day of rest. He had just finished breakfast and was standing idly in the farmyard with his friends of the house, when I came down upon him with my request for an account, the longest and most complete he had told yet.

"You must be tired telling about it all," I began.

He smiled faintly. "Yes, I am," he said.

He was the weariest-looking man I ever saw. I have known bankers and business men, editors and soldiers and literary men, who had the same look out of the eyes that this pioneer of the Northwest country has; they were men who had made money or a name, earned by hard labor that which others envied them. They were tired, too. Their true stories were "hard-luck" stories. The disappointments that ran before the final triumph limped in had spoiled the taste for it. None of them showed the truth so plainly as the founder of Dawson, the city of the Klondike. Joe Ladue is a sad-eyed man with a tale of years which no one thinks of, which no one wants to hear about. That is all his own. He is willing to begin where you wish him to, on the day when he "struck it rich." But when his friends and neighbors trooped in as I was leaving him that Sun-

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