

up the River Yukon, from its outlet to the beginning of its headwaters, some fifteen hundred miles; or land at some point on the Pacific, cross the head of land, and tap the headwaters of the Yukon at their source.

In either event the journey must be completed before September, when the Yukon freezes, and Alaska's arctic winter of the utmost rigor sets in and grips its vise.

Yet the possible novelties which the country offered, both from a scientific and from a personal standpoint, were so great that the opportunity was quickly accepted.

river as a highway, making such excursions from it as became necessary.

Alaska is a most difficult country for traveling, even in the only available short season of its arctic summer, there being no roads; and even Indian trails, on account of the small number of natives, are very rare. The surface is rough, being traversed by many ranges of mountains. Even in the more level portions travel is hindered in the summer by the wet moss which grows knee-deep, and by the insect pests; in the winter it is made impossible by the intense cold. In view of all these difficulties, the peculiar relation of the



TAGISH LAKE.

The time for preparation was very short, but when we left Washington at the end of May we carried with us so many good wishes that our spirits rose accordingly—for such good wishes from such good hearts carry with them actual influence over evil material things, I hope and half believe.

From Seattle we took passage on a steamer for the southern coast of Alaska.

At the little town of Juneau we left the steamer, and made preparations to turn our backs for good upon civilization. Our proposed route lay across the coast mountains to the headwaters of the Yukon, and thence down that

Yukon River to the coast is such that one might fancy Nature had arranged it especially for a highway through this inaccessible interior, in partial compensation to man for the obstacles she has put in his way.

The headwaters of the network of streams that ultimately drain into the Yukon River fortunately lie within about thirty miles of the sea, just on the northern or inland side of a range of mountains which runs along the southern coast of Alaska. From this point the river flows north, away from the sea, far toward the Arctic Ocean; then, suddenly changing its mind, turns