



THE CABIN IN THE KLONDIKE.

the Klondike, and, forgive my folly, I started to try and reach it. Silly? Of course; that is conceded. But, frankly, I would have gone through fire, floods, anything that man might pass, at almost any price, to feel, to touch, to make familiar with once more a little bit of real, solid sunlight.

It was a half mile hard run down the sled trail to the Klondike—then not any trail at all, only the icy river, with its great uplands of blocks and dips and spurs and angles of broken ice. The lion was asleep, so fast asleep! This stormy and swift little river that has shaken the whole world for a year, as the roar of a lion might startle the Arabs of the desert, was as utterly dead as if this snow to your waist was its shroud and the granite walls of the cañon its coffin. Not a ripple of water in the ice, under the ice, or anywhere. These strange rivers freeze from the bottom, not from the top, like other well-regulated rivers. They freeze first at the mouth, gorge and block up there first, not at the source, as other rivers. This is because the whole under world here is solid ice all summer and all winter—all the year.

I climbed from ice-point to ice-point. The winds had blown the highest bare. In some places the snow was solid as a floor; in others, soft and dusty, up to the waist. But it was great fun to wallow through this from point to point till the further shore of this dead river in its shroud and coffin was reached, and then the climb! (The Klondike is wide but not deep. I waded it in topboots, dry-footed, many times last summer.) The snowshoes had not been thought of this winter day. What could anybody think of but the new-born baby sunlight and the hope of standing once more with the sun on the mountain top! The climb was hard and steep and hazardous.