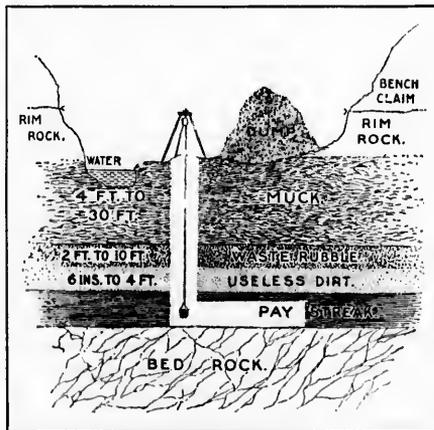


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worthy one to bear that name, is known throughout the length and breadth of the mining district as Jack McQuesten, although his name happens to be Leroy Napoleon. McQuesten has been there for over twenty-five years, engaged in trading with the Indians for furs, and keeping a store either for himself or for the Alaska Commercial Company; and as such he has come in contact with almost every man who has been in that country. He has probably supported, outfitted, and grub-staked more men, and kept them through the long cold winters when they were down on their luck and unable to obtain supplies or help from any one else, than any person knows except himself and the company. Hundreds of men today own rich claims, and are reckoning up their thousands, when, if it had not been for a credit given them and goods allowed them by Jack McQuesten, they would still be toiling amid the mosquitos for a living. He has done all this from kindness of heart, without any selfish motive whatever; for if he had been exacting, or had demanded even the share which he would have been entitled to on a grub-stake agreement, he would probably be to-day one of the richest men in that country, which means a very rich man in any country.

Above Circle City, and all the way along to Dawson, the mountains hem in the river



DRAWN BY C. S. VANOEVOORT, FROM AUTHOR'S SKETCH.

DIAGRAM OF THE STRATA ABOVE THE PAY STREAK.

with high cliffs, and here and there the cliffs come to the water's edge, and the path of the river seems to be cut out of the solid rock, forming a deep cañon. One remarkable cliff is termed «Boundary Butte,» and was

for a long time supposed to mark the line between Canada and the United States. The actual boundary was marked out by a joint survey of the United States and Canada, and the line is made very distinct by cutting away the trees for a space of six feet in width; on the river banks the line is indicated by monuments of rocks.

One thing you are almost sure to see on the river above Circle City is a moose. This animal, if frightened when it is near the water, immediately turns to the river to escape; and so when he is sighted on the banks, usually about daylight, the vigilant and sporty pilots begin to toot, the whistle making an irregular, squeaky, prolonged sound, and all hands jump out of bed, and yell, «Moose! Moose!» Every Indian has a Winchester, as also has every miner; and as the fool of a beast takes to the water, the magazines are loaded, and guns bristle all over the boat. Finally some one cannot hold in any longer, and pulls the trigger. Then sixty or seventy Winchesters pump lead into the poor beast, firing by platoon or at will, and stirring up the water about him to foam. Of course he is killed, and, owing to the scarcity of fresh meat, is eagerly converted into food.

On the morning of August 17, at about four o'clock, broad daylight, we came up to that collection of forty large log cabins and five hundred tents, sprawled at the foot of Moose-skin Mountain, named Dawson City. Helter-skelter, in a marsh, lies this collection of odds and ends of houses and habitations, the warehouses of the two companies cheek by jowl with cabins and tents. A row of bar-rooms called Front street; the side streets deep in mud; the river-bank a mass of miners' boats, Indian canoes, and logs; the screeching of the sawmill; the dismal, tuneless scraping of the violin of the dance-halls, still wide open; the dogs everywhere, fighting and snarling; the men either «whooping it up» or working with the greatest rapidity to unload the precious freight we had brought—all of this rustling and hustling made the scene more like the outside of a circus-tent, including the smell of the sawdust, than anything else in the world.

This, then, is the real El Dorado! One wonders where they all live. One wonders, in amazement, where they are all going to live through the awful winter that is approaching. Here is the true pinch of the situation. It is not a question of food; it is a question of shelter. There are no logs fit to make a cabin to be found on the river within thirty miles of Dawson City. To wait