

A RECENT TRIP TO THE KLONDIKE

BY DEMAR

ONLY a few years ago the names of Dawson and Klondike were entirely unknown to the outside world, and geographers were as ignorant of their existence as were at that time the less learned laity. To-day it may be questioned if any two localities of foreign and uncivilized lands are as well known, by name at least, as these that mark the approach to the Arctic realm in the north-west of the American continent. One of those periodic movements in the history of peoples, which mark epochs in the progress of the world, and have their source in a sudden or unlooked-for discovery, directed attention to this new quarter of the globe, and to it stream, and will continue to stream, thousands of the world's inhabitants. Probably not less than from thirty-five to forty thousand people, possibly even considerably more, have in the short period following the discovery of gold in the Klondike region already passed to or beyond the portals of what has not inaptly been designated the New Eldorado. To some of these a fortune has come, to many more a hope has been shattered in disappointment, and to still more the arbiter of fate, whether for good or bad, has for a time, withheld the issue.

In its simplest geographical setting, Dawson, this Mecca of the north, is a settlement of the North-West Territory of Canada, situated at a point twelve hundred miles as the crow flies north-west of Vancouver. It is close to, if not quite on, the Arctic Circle, and it lies the better part of three hundred miles nearer to the Pole than does St. Petersburg, in Russia. By its side one of the mighty rivers of the globe hurries its course to the ocean, but not too swiftly to permit of sixteen hundred miles of its lower waters being navigated by craft of the size of our ordinary river steamers, and five hundred miles above, by boats of about half their size. In its own particular world, the longest day

of the year draws itself out to twenty-two hours of sunlight, while the shortest contracts to the same length of sun absence.

During the warmer days of summer the heat feels almost tropical; the winter cold is, on the other hand, of almost the extreme Siberian rigor. Yet a beautiful vegetation smiles, not only over the valleys, but on the hilltops, and the birds sing in the thickets. For some three hundred miles farther north the hungry forest stretches out its gnarled and semi-naked arms.

Up to within a few years ago the white man was a total stranger in the land, and the Indian roamed the woods and pastures as still do the moose and caribou. To-day this is largely changed. The banks of the once silent river now give out the hum of the saw mill and click of the axe. A busy front of humanity has settled where formerly the grizzly bear snatched the stranded salmon from the shore, and where, at a still earlier period, although, perhaps, not easily associated with the history of man, the mammoth, the musk-ox and the bison were masters of the land. The red man is still there in lingering numbers, but his spirit is no longer that which dominates.

The White Pass and the Chilkoot Pass, or Dyea trails, start from points barely four miles apart, cross the summits at very nearly the same distance from each other, and virtually terminate at the same body of inland water, Lake Lindemar, the navigable head of the great Yukon River. Mountains of aspiring elevations, six to seven thousand feet, most symmetrically separated into pinnacles and knobs, and supporting enough snow to form glaciers of no mean proportions, look down upon the narrow trough, which to-day is the valley of the Skaguay River, and at the foot of this ancient fiord lies the boom town of Skaguay. Charming forests, except where the hand of man has levelled the work of nature to suit the re-