

THE ENGINEER AND THE ROAD TO THE GOLD FIELDS.

By Harrington Emerson.

HE who leaves Seattle for the Klondike and the Alaskan gold fields, enters another world when he boards the north-bound steamer. It is not that the vessel differs from steamers of the same tonnage on the Atlantic Coast, for the engineer's handiwork must be more perfect for voyages to the outlying places of the earth where there are no repair shops. It is the passengers who make a different world, or perhaps it is fairer to say that among them the conventions of civilized life lose their force, and the sordidness and other elemental and unlovely instincts which civilization hides but does not eradicate, crop up unblushingly.

A good part of the men northward bound are miners, animated not by patriotism nor hope of homestead, not by dream of glory nor love of science, not by pride of conquest nor religious enthusiasm, not even by the pleasure of adventure, but impelled northwards solely by lust of gold. Dogging the footsteps of these pioneers is the motley horde of human parasites and beasts of prey, both male and female, and these and their ways emphasize the difference between the lust for gold and the pursuit of immaterial riches. No one tries to rob Dewey of his laurels nor Nansen of the honor due his adventures and discoveries, but if a man has secured an ounce of gold a thousand rise up in his path and try to take it away from him.

Owing to the absence of parasites, industrial, criminal, and governmental, it was cheaper and safer to go to the Yukon ten years ago than it was when the great work was on, and were it not for the works of the engineer, the passage down or up the Yukon would to-day be lined with as many robber roosts, levying blackmail, euphemiously called toll, on all the travel and traffic, as was the Rhine in the Middle Ages.

But the engineer, with his ocean steamers, wharves, railroads, aerial cableways, riverboats, etc., came and converted what was once an expedition of extreme physical danger and hardship, and what next became a journey of extreme pecuniary danger and expense, into a rapid, safe, convenient and also cheap trip to the Arctic Circle. It is this cheapness that above all else will develop the resources of that