

that "land of the midnight sun" promulgated. Many will remember the long and fierce debates, both in the Senate and Congress, upon the wisdom of paying to Russia the sum of \$7,200,000 for that north land. The opponents of the purchase characterised the country as a "useless pile of mountains and glaciers which possibly might, at some future day, supply the United States with ice quarries." However, that far seeing statesman, Secretary Seward, secured for Uncle Sam that valuable tract of country, which, from its position, ought to belong to the Dominion of Canada, and by many termed "Seward's folly." There are living to-day some of his brother legislators who are ready to acknowledge that, at least, there was "wisdom in his madness." Take, for instance, into consideration the acquisition of the valuable sealing grounds leased from the Government by the Alaska Commercial Company for \$350,000 per annum, a sum sufficient to pay interest and contribute towards the Government of the territory. Then again there is valuable mining interests being developed. At present one of the largest and most complete quartz mills to be found on the continent is there in successful operation—both mechanically and financially. And it is gratifying to the inhabitants of that new country to be able to point to developments which prove that there is scope for many more.

Although many exploring parties have, from time to time, been fitted out and sent by the United States Government, yet but little of a valuable character had been collected up to the time that "the special agent," Ivan Petroff, made his report in August, 1882. That gentleman has given a deal of information in regard to Alaska and its people. But when we take into consideration the extent of country drained by the great Yukon, it can be at once understood that one or two parties can do but little in a year or so in the way of giving the public a correct topographical description of that far distant country. Since Petroff's time Lieut. Schwatka and latterly Lieut. Stoney have done much, coupled with the expeditions under them, to furnish desired information. These travellers and explorers have received from private sources—gentlemen, resident in the interior of the country for a number of years—much detail of a valuable and practical nature.

A few traders have established a trading post at the confluence of the Stewart and Yukon which they have named Fort Nelson. No doubt the advent of quite a number of miners, and the amount of gold which they were obtaining from the bars on the Stewart River induced the establishment of this trading post, which is about 70 miles east from the Alaska boundary. In order that the reader may better understand the relative positions and distances of points of importance along the mighty drainage artery, flowing at least 1,000 miles in British Territory, thence 1,000 miles through Alaska, with in places of 20 miles, embouching by a number of mouths into Norton Sound, a part of Behring Sea. As few facts regarding its mightiness may be mentioned. It has been stated, and it may appear incredible to those who have been taught to believe that the Mississippi is the father of waters, to be told that the Yukon River discharges every hour one-third more water than rolls by New Orleans during the same time. Strange as it may appear sea-going vessels cannot get nearer the mouth of the river than some 50 miles, on account of the immense quantities of silt carried down by the freshets. The port of St. Michael, situated some 60 miles north from the river, is the depot for the Yukon River and

Arctic Trade, and is visited by the Alaska Commercial Company's steamers two or three times during the summer. At this point the company's river steamer loads cargo for the interior, taking on board 40 axe men to cut fuel on the trip up, whose mission it is, as soon as the steamer touches the bank, to rush, axe in hand, to the nearest drift pile, so that the craft may be detained as short a time as possible. Reaching Fort Yukon, a distance of about 1,200 miles from Saint Michael, in 22 or 23 days, and Fort Reliance, 400 miles further up the stream, in 6 or 8 days more, makes the length of the average trip 30 days. Notwithstanding the number of hands employed, and the length of time occupied in delivering goods at Fort Reliance, the freight rate charged is remarkably low, viz.: \$80 per ton, so that Harper & Co. are supplying provisions to the miners at Fort Nelson at a very reasonable price. There are about 70 wintering at and near that point at present. Last fall flour was sold at \$14 per 100 lbs., bacon at 30 cents per lb. and other staples in proportion. By the aid of a small steamer, which Harper & Co. bought from Scheffel Bros., who took it from San Francisco to Yukon for the purpose of using it in prospecting for gold, the owners are thus enabled to distribute and furnish supplies to miners at considerable distances from their depot.

It is scarcely creditable to our Federal and Provincial Governments to have to depend upon the exploration pushed forward by a foreign power to obtain information of one's own country; but so it is. It may be asked what is the country good for if explored tomorrow and a topographical description published? Commencing some six years ago a small stream of gold hunters flowed into the north-west portion of the Yukon country, and every summer since miners have visited it in search of the precious metal with more or less success. During the early part of last spring and summer over 200 miners purchased supplies in Alaska and went by way of Chilkoot to different streams where gold had been discovered, but principally to the Stewart River where the best pay had been found. For a portion of last summer Harper & Co.'s steamer, *New Bickell*, was used in raising water for a mining claim situated on this stream, and although tailings were being worked a third time, by the aid of sluices over \$20 per day to the hand for all employed was the result up to the end of the season. Others were mining on the Salmon below Lake Lelarge, while it is reported that on the Lewis River there were but few flanks drawn in that camp during last season. Some 70 men took up winter quarters at Fort Nelson and Stewart River, expecting to take out gold in the fall and early spring. The writer was informed by several gentlemen who had examined a very large bar of about four miles in length, some 30 feet deep and of considerable width, that it prospected throughout the whole gravel from 1 to 5 cents to the pan. This bar is on the main Yukon below the mouth of Stewart River, but the difficulty of working is the lack of water. That necessary agent can be obtained some 25 miles distant at a large outlay, but as wood is plentiful it might be less expensive to employ steam power to raise the required water. At any rate it is agreed that there is a big thing in the bar if water was only brought upon it. It is said that there are many other bars that prospect well, and that at no distant date will be worked profitably. It is believed that inside of the next two years over 1,000 men will be mining and doing well on White River. A great mining future is predicted for this great unknown land.

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