

Ashridge, which overlooks the beech county, Buckinghamshire, and Lord Rothschild's park at Tring, but is itself on the opposite chalk range, on the borders of Hertfordshire. It is known as *The Queen's Beacon*, and is calculated to be 150ft. high. It is remarkable not only for its height, but for its perfect shape. The stem rises 100ft. without a single branch, and in the form of a perfect cylinder, growing very gradually less towards the top. Other beeches close by reach an equal height, but have not such perfect and symmetrical trunks. One of the finest "all round" beech trees in Scotland is at Newbattle Abbey in Midlothian. It is 95ft. high, and 37ft. in girth at the base. The branches spread over a circuit of 350ft.

The uses of beech, whether for fuel, food, or timber, are manifold, and in some ways peculiar. Beech leaves make a fragrant, soft, and wholesome mattress. They never decay if kept dry, and have some antiseptic substance in them which prevents any vermin of the leaf-eating kind from harbouring in them. The charcoal burners of the New Forest sleep on sacks of beech leaves, and are as comfortable as need be. The oil of beech nuts is pure and good, quite as serviceable for cooking as salad oil. Then the nuts, as everyone knows, are the best of food for pigs and pigeons, and the wood makes the most beautiful fire in the world. Perhaps that is why it is the favourite wood for charcoal. But it is a pity to burn it otherwise than in the natural state. I have often noticed the beautifully clean, glowing



J. T. Newman.

A WOODLAND GLADE.

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fires which the gipsies make; they will burn half the night like those of good coal. These fires are always made of beech sticks when procurable.

The wood is particularly useful for any work which has to stand the effect of water. Nearly all the wheels of the water-mills were made of beech, as well as the plates of weirs, the posts of locks, and cam-shedding. In houses it is far less durable than oak, and is not much used for that reason. Yet it makes good and durable furniture, and is still in great demand for that purpose.

C. J. CORNELL.

Winter Travelling in the Klondyke.

"We are out once more on the old trail, the long trail."

Kilgus.

PERHAPS in the years to come travellers in the Yukon district, who are whiling to Dawson by the Arctic Limited Express, will recall the stories of the long two-mile tramp behind dog sleighs over the ice, and there will be built around the memory of those days a halo of romance such as lingers still with the old coaching days; or the Lochinvar of a historical novel of the twenty-first century may distance all pursuit—with his lady love wrapped in furs on the sleigh before him—owing to the fleetness of his incomparable dog team and his own marvellous powers of endurance.

In the stern reality of the journey romance seems out of the question, nor will the word even associate with the unspeakable discomfort of some of the road-houses on the trail. It is easier to imagine such a possibility as is suggested a few years ago, when those who made the winter trip could be content on the fingers of two hands and road-houses were unknown.

The last good-byes have been said, the last letter for the outside handed to you, and you are jogging along behind the dogsleight over the hard, well-beaten trail, to the accompaniment of the jingling sleigh bells, while the noisy farewells of your friends follow you through the clear, still air. Your dog team have been in hard work and are fit for the journey.

Having crossed the river, you turn and take a last look at Dawson, that "City of Dream and Night" what merry, mad revels have these long nights seen! Looking up the Klondyke river, a blue haze covers the valley, the smoke of the night-fires from the golden ground beyond, and Dawson, just awaking from sleep, is sending skyward its thousand wreaths of white smoke, which rise far into the still morning air before they spread and drift imperceptibly across the river.

The trail is excellent, you think, for its marble hardness has not yet told on sinew and foot sole, and the day promises to be one on which it is good to be alive; there is a blue, indescribably clean sky, not a breath of wind, and the thermometer 25deg. below zero. The hills to the east have become bathed in a generous, ruddy light, and presently the sun itself appears low over the hillslopes, brilliant, but very dazzling to the eyes off the white snow.

At four o'clock you pull into a road-house, stiff, a trifle foetid, and eager for a meal and a bed—you are travelling



A KLONDYKER HAULING WOOD TO DAWSON.