

way, this time on the ice, to Fort Yukon, and in the following summer pushed on to Fort Selkirk, more than four hundred miles farther up the river, and the highest point yet reached by explorers from the coast. These gentlemen have published no account of their adventures. I have, however, had the pleasure of traveling a considerable distance on the Yukon River with Mr. Michael Labarge. Since the year 1866 he has been almost constantly upon the river, and is well informed concerning its topography and the manners and customs of the native tribes which inhabit its banks. I am indebted to him for a large amount of valuable information, which I could not otherwise have obtained.

The next expedition up the river to Fort Yukon was made by Messrs. William H. Dall and Frederick Whymper, the former director of the scientific corps of the telegraph company, the latter likewise an officer of the company and an artist. In the autumn of 1866 these gentlemen crossed the portage from Unalakleet to Nulato, where they wintered, and started early in the spring of 1867 for Fort Yukon. Making their way with considerable difficulty in "baidarras," or skin-boats, they finally reached their destination in the latter part of June, after traveling almost constantly, day and night, for twenty-nine days. They remained at Fort Yukon for about two weeks, and then, reëmbarking in their light boats, started down the river. Traveling night and day, and aided by the rapid current, they arrived at St. Michael's Island after a journey of fifteen days and a half, which Mr. Whymper terms a mere holiday excursion. To this exploration we are indebted for a large amount of reliable information concerning the Yukon. In 1869 Mr. Whymper published his "Travels in Alaska and on the Yukon," which gives a pleasant account, accompanied with excellent illustrations of this and other explorations, and conveys a clear and truthful idea of the regions which it describes. After this journey, Mr. Dall remained for more than a year on the lower part of the river. He was able to collect from the Russians and English a vast amount of information, and he seems to have combined with these advantages great energy and a special fitness for the work. In 1870 he published a large volume, entitled "Alaska and its Resources," which is filled with information concerning the Territory, gathered not only from his own experiences, but from every other available source, and which will, I am confident, long remain our best authority on many points of interest regarding Alaska.

The upper portion of the river, between Fort Yukon and Fort Selkirk, has been known for many years to the traders of the Hudson Bay Company. Above the latter point the river was partially explored in 1867 by Michael Byrnes, an employé of the telegraph company. The remaining portion is only known from the reports of Indians.

In the spring of 1869 it was thought desirable that an officer should be sent to Northeastern Alaska for the purpose of ascertaining the geographical position of Fort Yukon. Having offered my services in the performance of this duty, I was ordered to report to Major General H. W. Halleck, then commanding the Military Division of the Pacific, and I received from him the order and instructions which are prefixed to this report.

In this place it seems proper that I should briefly state the circumstances which led to the expedition.

Fort Yukon, situated at the most northerly point of the Yukon River, had been for the past twenty years the extreme western trading-station of the Hudson Bay Company. It was supposed to be west of the boundary between Russian and British America, (although its position