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HOW TO REACH KLONDIKE.

BY ONE WHO HAS BEEN FIFTEEN TIMES TO THE PACIFIC SLOPE.

IF ever Nature set herself the task of constructing an escapeless fly-trap wherein to catch curiously deluded specimens of the human race, she achieved that feat when, by a crafty disposal of her mightiest forces—volcanic, glacial, and erosion—she baited a nameless tributary of the Yukon River, in the most inaccessible corner of North-Western America, with the lure now attracting thousands of feverishly excited goldseekers from all parts of the globe.

It is quite safe to say that no gold-mining district ever before discovered is so unapproachable and so beset with dangers. The first stroke of the discoverer's pick, it is said, laid bare a nugget of virgin gold, but it also started a gigantic "God's Acre." * Even if the prediction that hundreds, if not thousands, will starve to death this winter does not become fulfilled, owing to the reported impossibility of any considerable number of men reaching the spot, it is quite certain that scores upon scores of prospectors inexperienced in the dangers peculiar to travel in this region, and as ill-provided

with the means of withstanding cold and hunger as they are physically unfit to cope with the extreme hardships of that vocation, will leave their bones in nameless graves, or be dashed to pieces in the gloomy cañons and terrific rapids of the Upper Yukon.

A brief topographical explanation is necessary in order to understand why it is that the invader of the Klondike has to face quite unusual dangers and risks. The stream† after which the new discoveries have been named is a tributary of the Yukon, and joins it between five and six hundred miles from the Yukon's source. A few miles down stream from where they meet is Fort Reliance, below which, again, the 141st meridian, which here forms the boundary between Alaska and Canada, separates British possessions from the happy purchase made a generation ago by the United States of America from Russia. Consequently, Klondike and its several rich tributaries are well on English soil, a fact American papers like to forget. A glance at the map will show that by far the shortest way to Klondike is to take steamer at Victoria, proceed along the much indented Pacific littoral to the fjord called Lynn Canal, at the extreme point of which an overland journey of forty miles brings one to a chain of lakes which are the source of the Yukon. From there a journey of nearly six hundred miles down the swift Yukon lands you at Dawson City, on the Klondike River, the

* Curiously enough, a question has already arisen concerning the person or persons who first discovered the Klondike gold-field. According to the best possible authority, William Ogilvie, F.R.G.S., the famous Canadian surveyor of the Alaskan boundary line, and who, if he did not actually discover this auriferous river, was certainly the man whose astronomical observation definitely settled that Klondike is on British soil, states that the discoverers were three miners, Henderson, Swanson, and Morrison, who washed the first pan on what is now Gold Bottom in July 1896. According to other information, a man called Cormack was the miner who first stumbled upon the diggings in August 1896.

† On Schwatka's map the Klondike or Klondyke is called Deer River.