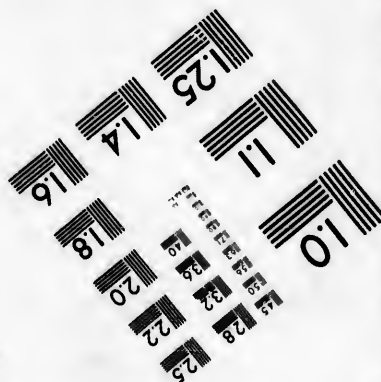
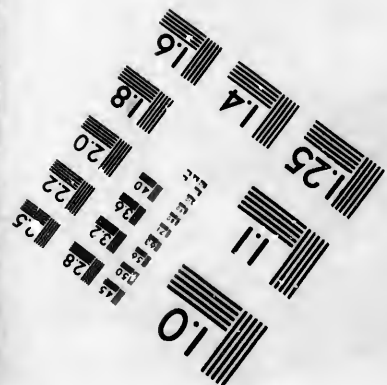
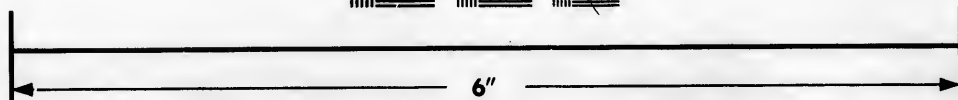
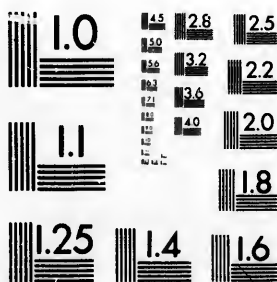


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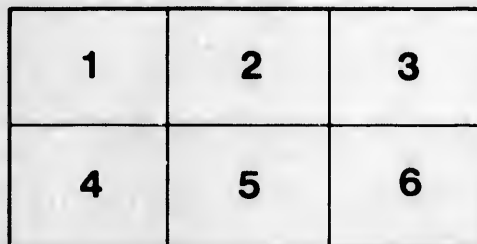
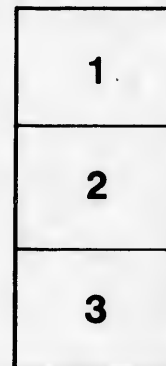
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## THE KLONDIKE GOLD REGION.

ACCOUNT OF A SIX MONTHS' TRIP THROUGH THE YUKON GOLD FIELDS.

BY ROBERT OGLESBY.

IN 1887 a miner named Williams, accompanied by a young Indian guide, reached the summit of the Chilkoot pass. Here he was overwhelmed by a snow-storm, and after several days spent in a snow hut, without a fire, and with only a little flour for food, he died from hunger

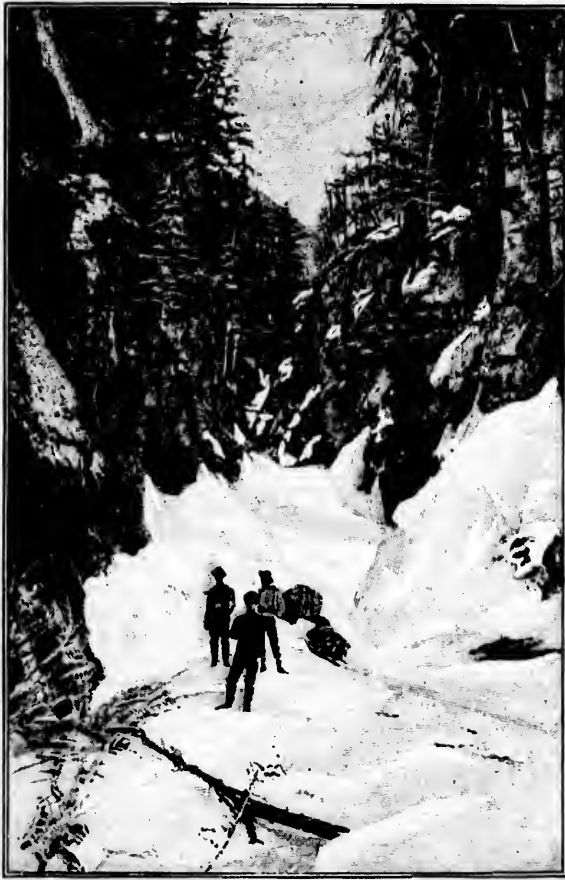
and exposure. He had traveled six hundred mile through a wilderness, in an arctic winter, to carry letters to friends in the United States and inform the outside world of the discovery of coarse gold on Forty Mile Creek. The Indian succeeded in making his way to the trading post, only fourteen miles away. For ten years previous to this it was known to the men of the far northwest that fire gold had been found along the upper Yukon and the Hootlinqua Rivers, and each

currence each winter of famine and scurvy, had prevented the prospecting and development of the country.

In making the journey to the Yukon gold fields it is best to leave Juneau, Alaska, either in March or May. The miners who start in March generally

carry their own supplies over the pass by using sleds and packing. The lakes are frozen over and can be crossed until the river is reached, which is open for the boats several weeks before the lakes are free from ice. The lakes are generally open about the first of June, and from that time the entire journey can be made by boat.

The steamer "City of Topeka," which sailed from Seattle in the latter part of May, carried thirteen men bound for the interior of Alaska. I



From a photograph. ENTRANCE TO CHILKOOT PASS.

summer small parties of miners and whiskey smugglers crossed the coast range by the Chilkoot pass, and followed the river for some distance. The dangers and hardships that were encountered, the shortness of the summer season, the excessive cost of provisions, and the re-

cast my fortune with a party of four young men from Montana, whom I met on board, and we afterwards added to our number a hardy young Swedish miner who owned a tent. Five days later we landed at Juneau, which is the outfitting point for that country; here we bought our grub stakes

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at reasonable prices. The outfit for each man consisted of one hundred pounds of flour, fifty pounds of bacon and twenty-five pounds of beans, to which was added coffee, sugar and a few pounds of dried fruit and vegetables; this we considered sufficient to last between two and three months. Two pairs of extra heavy blankets are necessary, as are rubber boots and stout climbing shoes. When we had added to this our camping utensils and our tools for boat-building and prospecting, with rifles and ammunition, the average weight of each man's outfit was three hundred pounds.

The captain and owner of a little coasting schooner, upon payment by each of us of ten dollars, agreed to carry our party to Taiya—the time of arrival not being specified.

Taiya is the Indian name of the little mountain torrent that empties into the east arm of the Lynn Canal about one hundred miles north of Juneau, and our voyage was completed, with a favorable wind, within twenty-four hours.

The little valley at the foot of the Chilkoot pass is a mere foothold in the snow-covered granite coast range. Here we found a small trading post, the last outpost of civilization.

The trader agreed to carry supplies as far as Sheep Camp by pack horses and furnish Indians to pack them over the summit to Lake Linderman at the rate of fourteen dollars for one hundred pounds. From the port to Sheep Camp the distance is said to be fourteen miles—so it may be by an air line; I will vouch we went twice that far. For the first six miles up the valley the trail is good, though the Taiya is forded four times; then the cañon is reached and trouble begins. The trail leads along the side, through thick timber, over fallen trees, up and down hill, through snow-drifts and across numerous small streams. Our party arrived after eight hours' constant work—all except myself; I arrived two hours later, after falling asleep from fatigue. A man came down the trail who roused me, placed before me a small pot of beans, handed me a bottle containing alcohol and water, lighted his pipe and turned his back.

Sheep Camp, so named because of the number of mountain sheep formerly killed

here, is a favorite camping place, just above the timber line. Near by were the shelters, made of brush and blankets, of the band of Stik Indians who were to pack our supplies over the summit. Seated on the ground around a blanket were a party of young bucks, playing poker; they used beans for chips, and occasionally wagered a little tobacco or ammunition.

The start was made at two o'clock the next morning, while the crust formed on the snow during the night was strong enough to bear our weight. The Indians fastened their packs on their backs with cloth straps, the men carrying from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds, the old squaws about seventy pounds, and even the boys bearing light loads. After three hours of hard climbing up the narrow defile, the summit of the pass was reached, about three thousand five hundred feet above the sea level. On each side were mountains rising high above us and covered with perpetual snow. Far behind could be seen the tide-water of the Pacific Ocean; close in front was the boundary line separating Alaska from the Northwest Territory, and ten miles below a streak of blue marked the mountain lake, Linderman, which forms the head-water of the Yukon.

This lake, which is fed by the melting snow from the surrounding mountains, is six miles long and one mile broad; it was filled with floating ice when we arrived, of which none remained three days later. The timber in the vicinity is spruce and pine, and does not attain any great size. We were compelled to go two miles from the lake to find any suitable for boat-building, and then could not find trees that would square more than six or eight inches.

Near us were camped several parties of men on their way to the gold fields. A party of four men from Juneau were engaged in smuggling into Alaska forty kegs of whiskey, containing ten gallons each. This whiskey, which cost them not more than four dollars a gallon, including the packing over the summit, was eventually sold to the saloon men in Forty Mile and Circle City for from eighteen to twenty dollars per gallon, and after being properly watered was retailed to the miners at fifty cents a drink.



From a photograph.

THE SUMMIT OF CHILKOOT PASS.

After eight days of very hard work we had secured four hundred and fifty feet of inch lumber; this we carried to a swift little stream and made into a raft, that we might convey it to our camp. Two minutes later the raft was wrecked on a large rock, and we were all immersed in the ice-cold water. We managed to save the precious lumber, and from it, four days later, we had constructed two boats.

These boats were eighteen feet long, flat-bottomed, sharp at one end, and three feet broad in the middle, with a depth of two and a half feet. They were strongly made, but inclined to leak freely, as we

afterwards discovered. The oars were hewn out of small trees with the axe; each boat was fitted with a mast having a small wooden pulley wheel at the top, by which a square sail could be lowered or raised. One sail was made from a canvas wagon-cover; the other from old pieces of bagging.

On the 13th of June, during a snow-storm, our party started on its journey of more than six hundred miles down the river to the gold fields. None of us had ever been in a boat where a sail was used, and these mountain lakes are frequently very rough. On our first night out we



From a photograph.

A SHORT PORTAGE.



camped at the foot of Lake Linderman, and the next morning was spent in portaging our goods to Lake Bennett.

A narrow and shallow river connects Lake Bennett with Tagish Lake. Bands of barren-land caribou cross here each year in their migrations to the south, and the river is known to the miners by the name of "Caribou Crossing."

Tagish Lake is about eighteen miles long, and Windy Arm, near its head, is always remembered by those who have crossed it. The wind which follows the course of the lakes from the Chilkoot pass is here met by a cross-current of wind coming from the coast by the White pass; we found the water too rough to risk swamping our little boats and losing our supplies. A day of very hard work was spent in getting the boats around the worst place, a distance of only three miles—one man riding in the boat kept her off the rocks with a pole, while the others towed with a long rope, wading waist-deep in the ice-cold water.

Lake Marsh, the fourth of the series, is about twenty miles long and very shallow at the lower end. A difference in scenery and temperature here begins to be quite noticeable. The timber is of a better growth, and birch and cottonwood are plentiful. While the air is cool and invigorating, the temperature is from seventy-five to eighty-five degrees under

the influence of the summer sun, which shines for twenty hours each day. On the protected banks are masses of wild roses and blue-bells, and everywhere is the wonderful arctic moss, from six inches to a foot in thickness, so delicately constructed that it appears like lacework, and of beautiful varying shades of white, pink and green. This moss, however, is always wet and very difficult to walk on, and is the home of Alaska's great pests—countless swarms of mosquitoes and gnats. The former I know can bite through a flannel shirt, and a mosquito bar is generally worn over the head as a protection against them. I caught with a troll several fish, which my companions called white-fish, and these, with some wild onions, were a pleasant change from our salt meat.

Further down the river wild blueberries and low and high bush cranberries grow in abundance, and, with salmon, form the food for the bears. I also found later in the year wild raspberries and a few strawberries.

The outlet of Lake Marsh is a broad, winding river with low banks. Here we overtook a party of four Germans, three of whom were cow-boys from Texas; their leader, from Maine, was experienced in handling boats. We continued our journey together, and soon the increased swiftness of the current and the roaring



From a photograph.

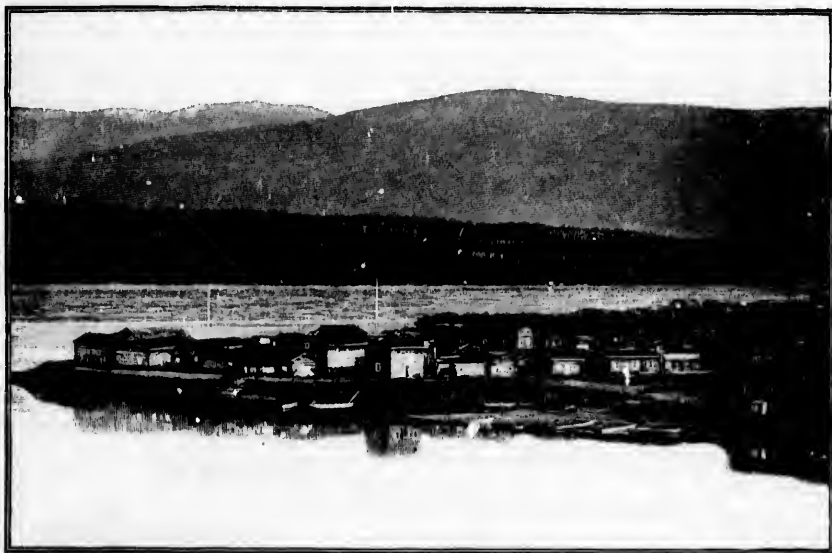
LAKE BENNETT.

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From a photograph.

FORTY MILE POST.

of the water warned us that we were nearing the Grand Cañon. We landed on the right bank, in an eddy just above the entrance.

The cañon is three-quarters of a mile long, and its perpendicular walls of rock are about one hundred feet high. The walls are not more than one hundred feet apart, but through this space the river, seven hundred feet wide, must force its way. The rush of the water forms an arch or crest in the middle, several feet higher than at the walls, and on this a boat must be kept to avoid striking the sides; should that happen, it would mean death to the occupants. The portage on the right bank is about a mile in length.

In the morning, after unloading nearly all of our supplies, three of our number undertook to run our three boats through the cañon. We removed our boots and heavy clothing, that we might make a struggle in case of accident. Our craft was shoved well out into the stream, and the men rowed fiercely to gain steerage-way and avoid a large rock near the entrance; then the current caught us, and the rush began. Through the first large breakers the boat darted, rolling and plunging, but shipping only a little water; then on to the crest beyond, into nearly absolute darkness. The black, wet, over-

hanging walls of rock darted by; the uproar was overwhelming; we could not have heard each other shout; then the walls separated, the speed slackened, the eddy was reached, and half the trip was finished. But immediately it all began again and was repeated, and then the boat rested against the bank in the sunshine and the thing was done. I realized that a close finish under the wire or the tie touch-down of the Thanksgiving game were things unworthy of attention. The second boat I timed from the rocks above with watch and revolver, and the trip was made in 2:29.

Lake Lebarge, the last of the series, is a beautiful body of water, some five miles broad and, I believe, nearly forty miles long. We rowed the entire distance and rejoiced when we reached its outlet, the Lewis River, which has a current of more than five miles an hour and follows a very crooked course.

About thirty miles below the Hootalinqua River joins the Lewis, flowing from the southeast, where it rises in Teslin Lake. It is longer than the Lewis, with its connecting chain of lakes, but does not carry so great a volume of water. Fine gold has been found along its course, but the reports from there last year were not encouraging. Several bars below this

point have yielded considerable gold in the past, particularly the Cassiar bar.

From the junction of the Pelly the river is called the Yukon, and its length from here to its mouth is over two thousand miles.

There is no administration of civil law in the interior of Alaska; miners' law prevails. Whether the title to a valuable gold claim is in question or partition proceedings are in order over a row-boat the course is the same—a miners' meeting is called, and the case is discussed and settled by vote. An excellent state of law and order has resulted. Murder has not been committed along the river for years. In the few cases of stealing that have been discovered, the culprit has been ordered to leave the country and has promptly

keeps a record of ownership and transfers.

Prospecting for coarse gold is carried on in the numerous gulches, through which flow small streams, formed from the melting snow and ice of the hills. They do not carry sufficient water for hydraulic mining, though after storms they frequently rise and wash away the dams, destroying the labor of weeks. The soil, which is glacial drift, covers the bed-rock to a depth of from five to twenty feet, and remains frozen all the year round beneath the moss covering. Prospecting is done by sinking holes to bed-rock, or by removing the moss from a narrow strip of ground that cross-cuts the claim, and turning into this shallow ditch the water of the creek, that cuts for itself, with the aid of the sun, a channel through the



*From a photograph.*

SAWMILL AT FORT CUDADY.

obeyed. Supplies, when protected from animals, can be safely left at any place; were this not so, the country could not be prospected.

When gold is found on a new creek, the first few arrivals form a mining district; the laws governing all of these are practically the same. One man can enter but one claim in the district, but the discoverer is allowed to enter two. A claim is five hundred feet long, up and down the creek, and the width of the gulch. Any number of claims can be bought, but each claim must be occupied during the season by the owner or his representative under penalty of forfeiture. The season is generally from the first of June to the middle of August. A Recorder is elected, who, for a nominal fee, measures the claims and

frozen ground to bed-rock. The ground is then tested with pick and pan until the pay streak is located. The soil above the pay streak is removed by a stream of water, and sluice boxes, made from lumber whip-sawed from the nearest suitable trees, are placed in position. Riffles collect the gold in the bottom of the sluice boxes, which is washed out from the dirt shoveled into them.

During the last two winters, miners have begun to work their claims by "burning and drifting." A fire is built in the hole or drift, and after the fire is extinguished, the thawed ground is removed and another fire built. The pay dirt is kept and washed out in the spring.

At the post I found a man with a boat who was going to Forty Mile, and he

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From a photograph.

FORT CUDADY.

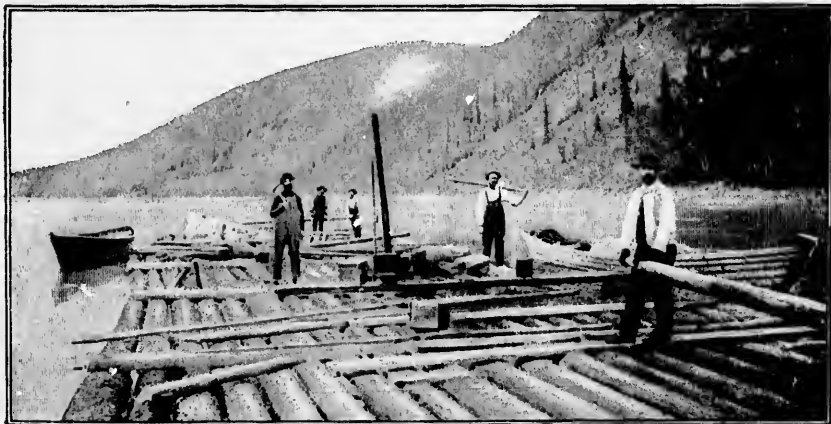
agreed to take me with him. Our cooking outfit consisted of a tin can in which to make coffee and a lard can in which sour dough bread was made and beans boiled; the top of the can was used for frying bacon.

The scenery along this part of the river journey is magnificent and surpasses that of the Danube River above the Iron Gates. At times the river broadens and is filled with numerous islands, but soon narrows and is confined by high walls of lime and sandstone, which are worn into fantastic and beautiful shapes, forming "turret, dome or battlement," and crowned by a growth of pine trees. Numerous mountain streams join the river, in which the "grayling or arctic trout" abound and are easily caught with a fly-hook. The Klondike River is notable for the salmon which frequent it, and for the number and size of the bears which come to

fish for them during the season. Quartz croppings are numerous, and there is abundant evidence of copper, iron and coal.

Near here are the ruins of Fort Reliance, and it is because of their estimated distance from this point that the creeks and rivers along the Yukon have been given their names.

My first impression of Forty Mile was that it resembled Stamboul, because of the number, hunger and fighting qualities of its dogs; my second was that I did not care to stay. It is located on a point of land formed by the junction of Forty Mile Creek and the Yukon River, and is sometimes overflowed during high-water in the Spring. Around the trading post and storehouses of the Alaska Commercial Company some two hundred log-cabins have been built; they are low and square, and made from logs with the bark left on,



From a photograph.

RAFTING ON THE YUKON.

the cracks being chinked with moss. The roof is made of poles or slabs and covered with moss, and on top of many cabins wild flowers can be seen growing during the Summer. They are easily heated, however, with the small sheet-iron stoves universally used by the miners—an important consideration in a climate where the thermometer sometimes indicates eighty degrees below zero.

The only amusements during the dark season are drinking and gambling, and there are numerous saloons, where bad whiskey is sold for fifty cents a drink and cards for one dollar a pack. There is also a bakery, where a loaf of bread costs twenty-five cents and a pie fifty cents. The price for a shave is the same as for a pie.

The Mission of the Established Church of England, built near here some years since, has lost much of its influence since the arrival of "white men and whiskey."

The dogs, which are such expert thieves and fighters, become valuable as winter arrives, and with their sleds fill the place that the boats supply during the summer. All goods are freighted with them, and when not too heavily loaded they can make considerable distance during a day. After a day of hard work they are fed a piece of dried dog salmon, and lie down in the snow to sleep during the coldest weather; they are always hungry and will eat their leather harness if given an opportunity.

Fort Cudahy takes its name from the well-known Chicago speculator, who is a member of the North American Transportation and Trading Company; it is located on higher ground than the rival post, and its warehouses and surrounding cabins are made from logs that are slabbed, which gives it a more attractive appearance. Here also is a sawmill, for which many logs are rafted down the river. Logs suitable for building cabins are worth from one to two dollars each, and lumber sells for twenty-five dollars a thousand feet.

In the latter part of August I made the journey to Circle City, accompanied by a hunch-backed Indian boy, who steered my light boat. Already the nights were growing long, and as we camped with no covering but our blankets, I was sometimes awakened by the brilliancy of the aurora borealis, though it did not

display the splendor that it attains during the winter.

Favorably located on the left bank of the Yukon, near the point where it enters the arctic circle, is Circle City. This center of population already contains three trading stores, a stove-maker's shop a restaurant, eight saloons and two hundred and twenty cabins. A Recorder has been elected, and lots fronting on the river have a value of several hundred dollars.

It is difficult to write accurately of the value of the gold production of interior Alaska; the miners are generally disposed to be secretive concerning the number of ounces that they possess. The largest "sack" that I saw taken out of the country weighed about forty pounds avoirdupois and was worth about ten thousand dollars. I heard of others worth more than thrice this amount. From men well qualified to speak on the matter, both from their position and information, I have obtained the statement that the value of last year's production was nearly one million dollars, or one-seventh of the purchase price paid by the United States to Russia for this territory; this does not include the production of the famous Douglas Island, near Juneau, or the placer mines of Cook's Inlet, and other points along the coast.

The latest newspaper reports give authentic accounts of wonderfully rich discoveries of coarse gold along the Klondike River and its tributary creeks during the past season. Many miners have returned to the States with large quantities of gold dust and nuggets which they have washed out within the last four months. A large number of the fortunes thus made amount to fifty thousand dollars or more, while several miners have brought back more than twice that sum in gold. The best informed state that between two and three million dollars in gold has been taken out of the Klondike region alone this season. In consequence there is at present a great rush of gold-seekers to the upper waters of the Yukon by both the Chilkoot pass and the river route. It is estimated that since the announcement of the rich finds was made in July, at least five thousand prospectors have entered Alaska. Thousands more are preparing to go there next spring.



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