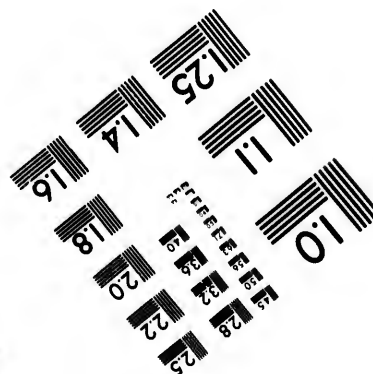
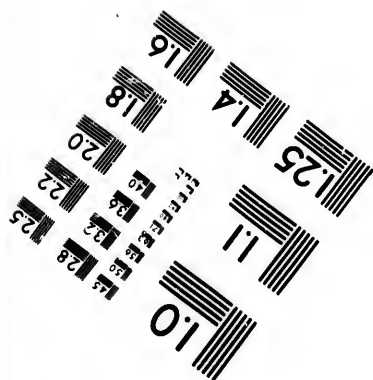
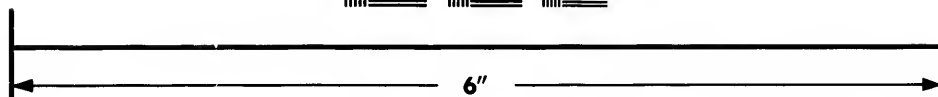
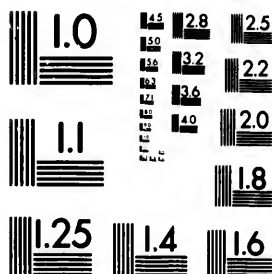


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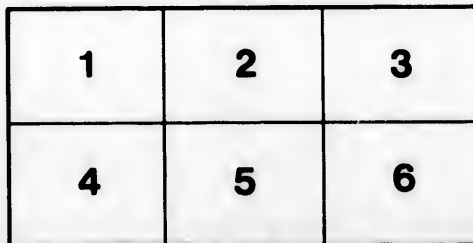
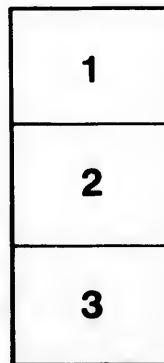
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THE NEW ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

(1299)

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.

chief "city" of the district. Unfortunately, the presence of very dangerous rapids, particularly at Whitehorse and Five Finger Rapids, as well as the impassable character of the country on both sides of the Upper Yukon, prevent all but the hardest traveller taking the same route back; for it is, of course, a very different thing going down 500 or 600 miles of very rapid water and going up it. The only outlet, therefore,

uncertain and riskful affair. This is best proved by the fact that at the present moment, according to the latest news, the seven steamers that hitherto have sufficed for the traffic are laid up by accidents, or by low water, the result being that the five or six thousand persons round Dawson City will be exposed to serious danger from starvation. Travellers anxious to reach St. Michael, the nearest port to the



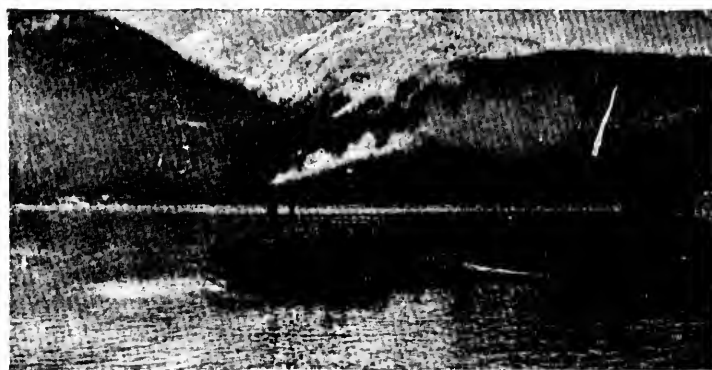
WHITEHORSE RAPIDS, LEWES RIVER.

From a Photograph by Mr. C. S. Barwell, a Member of One of the first Expeditions to reach Dawson City last Year.

for those wishing to leave the country is to follow down the Lower Yukon River for some 1500 miles to its mouth on the shore of the arctic Behring Sea. This, however, can only be done during three, or at the most four, months of the year, navigation being possible only for shallow-going, stern-wheeled steamers; and even then the treacherous nature of this waterway, ever changing its course and full of sunken snags, upon which steamers frequently impale themselves, makes navigation a most

month of the Yukon, where occasional coast-steamers pick up travellers during the summer months (the river freezes up often in September), have, therefore, to undertake a 1500 miles journey in the vilest and dirtiest little river-steamers that exist, or by following Schwatka's example, take to a raft.

A glance at the map will demonstrate that this, the only possible summer route out of the country, is more than 2500 miles longer than the route overland into the



MINERS LEAVING JUNEAU FOR THE YUKON.

country, across the coast-range to the chain of lakes which are the source of the Yukon, and thence down the 600 miles already described.*

Concerning the way into the Klondike region by the latter route, the difficulties presenting themselves to the "tenderfoot" "dumped" from the coast-steamer on the muddy foreshore of the Lynn Canal are of a formidable kind, unlike anything even the hardest old prospector had to face when wending his way towards Cariboo, Cassiar, the Kootenay camps, or the remote regions about the Big Bend. All of these "enjoyed" the reputation of trying man's pluck and endurance to an unwonted degree. Only those who have coasted along Alaska's shore-line—in ninety-nine

faintest conception of the hopeless-looking task of scaling the densely timbered, exceedingly steep chain of coast mountains that skirts the sea-coast the whole way. That it becomes an impossible task when hampered by a 1000 lb. or 1500 lb. load of provisions and tools for twelve months, does not need explaining. From the head of Lynn Canal there are three routes, via different passes, which, however, converge near the Lakes (Lindeman, Bennett, and Tagish) across the watershed from which the Yukon begins its turbulent course. According to Schwatka, a small lake about 100 acres in extent, which he called Crater Lake, is the true source; but it lies so high up on the sharp ridge forming the watershed that it was still covered with thick ice and snow when he visited the spot on June 11, 1883, and the ten-

cases out of a hundred in comfortable excursion-steamers, that make the round trip from Victoria to the head of the Lynn Canal and back in a fortnight or so—can form the

*In the act of correcting these sheets, one receives the news that the Dalton trail—a third route which parallels the Skagway for part of the way—is now the favourite winter route for men on snowshoes travelling quite "light"—i.e., with no impedimenta and the smallest possible amount of provisions. It is of about the same length as the two other routes.

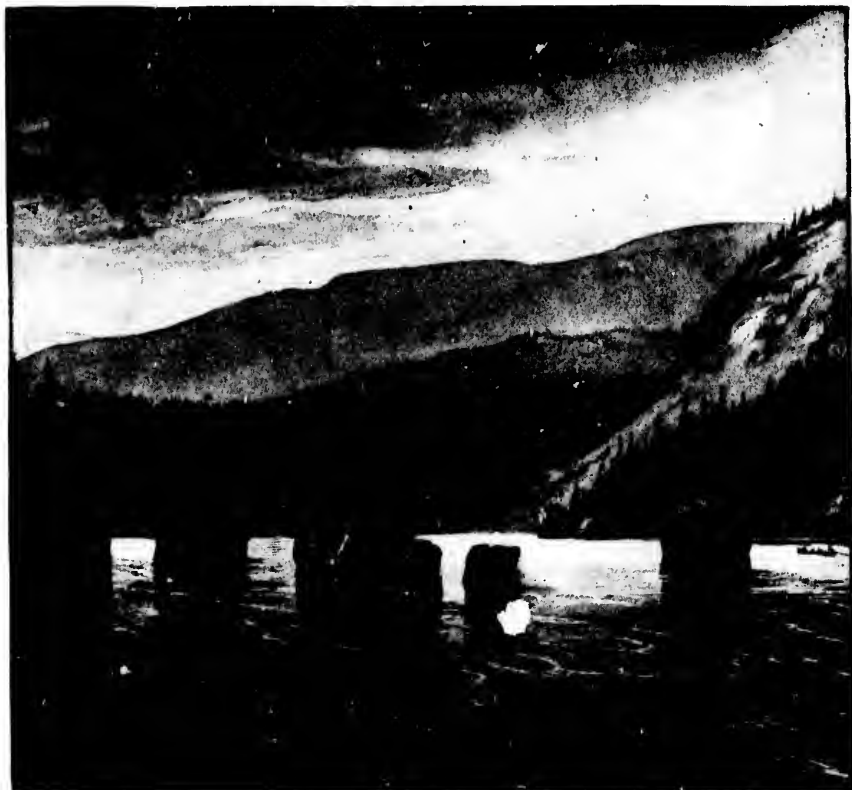


YUKONERS AT SHEEP CAMP.

miles long Lake Lindeman was the first open Yukon water he met with after crossing the watershed.

As to the latter, it is perhaps best to explain that the sixty-miles long fjord called Lynn Canal "forks" at the head, the westerly branch being called the Chilcat,

other, is less steep and lower by some 1250 feet; and thirdly, the Chilcoot Inlet route, now known as the Dyea route, which takes the traveller over the Dyea or Perrier Pass, to which Schwatka, who followed it when making his famous exploration of the Yukon River in 1883, gives a height



FIVE FINGERS RAPIDS, LEWES RIVER.

Drawn by Edward Reper.

the easterly the Chilcoot Inlet. Streams with very rapid currents put in at the head of each inlet, and the three alternate routes follow up these narrow gorges towards their sources on the steep slopes of the two or, to be quite correct, three passes: the Chilcat Inlet route, now better known as the Skagway route, so called after the "City" and landing-place of steamers; then the White Pass, which route, though some miles longer than the

over the Pacific of 4240 feet.* The three routes meet at the lakes.

The distance between Pacific water and the lakes is comparatively short, hardly more than thirty miles as the crow flies, but so impassable are many of these miles that even well-equipped outfits take three weeks to cover it, and in some cases parties were reported to have taken two

* On his map 4100 feet is marked as the altitude.

months in making Lake Lindeman. All the passes are above timber-line, and are covered all the year round with

was only when Lake Lindeman was reached that Schwatka found arboreal growth, though to judge from late accounts,



MILES CAÑON, LEWES RIVER.

From a Photograph by Mr. C. S. Barwell.

expanses of ice and snow, even Crater Lake, some distance below the height of land, has not a bush or other sign of vegetation round its Arctic shores. It

trees of sufficiently large size to whip-saw into boards for boat-building have become very scarce round that sheet of water.

This boat-building is the next thing

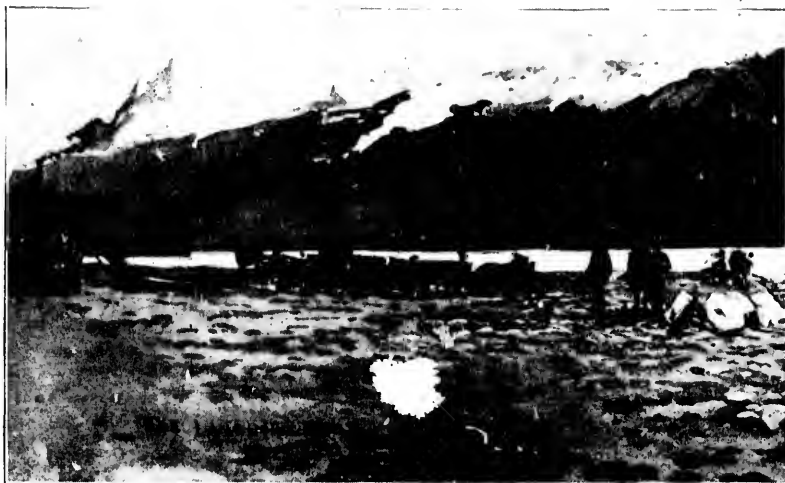


WITH SLEDGE AND CANOE ON LAKE LINDEMAN, JUNE 1897.

From a Photograph by Mr. C. S. Barwell.

that faces the unfortunate traveller when he has at last scaled the mountain barrier, and has got his provisions "packed" over by Indians or by the white packers. As not a single craft returns when once it has entered the Yukon fly-trap, each party of miners must provide for themselves a craft of some kind or other. What odd-shaped tubs hands unaccustomed to boat-building knock together out of green planks whip-sawed out of such gnarled and knotty spruce or pine as are to be found amid those Arctic surroundings, needs no further

boys and dogs. The rate they used to demand up to Lake Lindeman was from ten to twelve cents (sixpence) per pound. The immense increase in travel over these passes which has occurred this summer is, of course, far beyond what the Indians of the whole coast could tackle, and as the first few steamers in June and July unloaded hundreds of miners totally unprovided with horses and mules, the Indians not only increased their price to double, but could only handle a small portion of the thousands of tons of goods,



THE LANDING PLACE, SKAGWAY BAY.

From a Photograph by Mr. E. A. Green, Victoria, British Columbia.

description. Likewise, what great risks the navigation of "white water" by inexperienced hands in craft of that sort carries with it.

Up to this year, all the packing—across the passes—for the few score of miners who invaded the Yukon country by either of these routes was done by the Chilcat and Chilcoat Indians, who are coast tribes, as well as by the "Sticks" who live in the interior, men, women, children, and dogs pluckily shouldering packs that no white man would tackle. As much as 150 lb. is carried by the males, from 60 lb. to 75 lb. by the squaws, and from 30 lb. to 40 lb. by

provisions, tools, and equipments with which the whole shore was strewn.

The next trouble was the want of feed for the pack animals brought by the later arrivals, who had been warned by their predecessors' straits. For the supply of sour swamp grass on that inhospitable shore was soon exhausted, and oats or hay were for some time unobtainable. As a consequence, hundreds of horses starved to death at Skagway and Dyea, ere ten miles of the trail across the pass had been covered. That the ultimate fate of most of the horses taken by individual parties up to the lakes will add variety



THE FIRST ARRIVAL AT DYEA: A YEAR'S PROVISIONS.

From a Photograph by Captain A. H. Lee, R.M. College, Kingston, Ontario.

to a diet of "beans and sow-belly straight," is also a somewhat novel feature of the Klondike stampede. For, as no horses can be taken farther than the lakes, the rifle or six shooter invariably ends the toilsome days of the poor brutes. According to the programme settled for the moving in of the Mounted

Police force, all their horses were to be killed on reaching the lakes, where—that being the boundary—a custom and police post is now being erected by the men and any hired assistance they can obtain.

The subject of Custom Houses reminds one of the necessity to point out one of the drawbacks peculiar to all these Lynn



THE ONLY SALOON IN DYEA.

From a Photograph by Captain A. H. Lee.

Canal routes. For on landing there from the ocean steamer, the goods of the traveller, if bought in Canada—his horses are allowed through duty free—have to pay duty to the United States Government, or, if the quantity is large enough, the traveller can avoid paying custom charges by having his goods placed under the charge of a custom officer, who accompanies them through the narrow strip of United States territory until the Canadian boundary at the lakes is reached. The charge for this service is, I believe, seven dollars per day. On reaching the latter line, if he has bills to prove that his outfit was bought in any part of Canada, he passes through free of charge.

As it frequently happens that prospectors coming from the United States ports are literally penniless by the time they reach the Canadian line at the lakes, and cannot pay the Canadian duties, the custom officials there resort to a novel expedient of collecting the duty: they make them work on any of the numerous jobs entailed by the building of the post, crediting them with a daily wage at current rates. Though in some cases it is said the delay thus caused has prevented the men from reaching their destination before ice on the Yukon stopped their progress, thus obliging them to pass the winter in some hastily constructed river-side shelter, the plan has so far worked fairly well without causing serious friction.

There are two or three other, so-called "all Canadian," routes to Klondike from the South and from the East. Of these, by far the best is the Stikkeen route, which, as the name indicates, follows up that river for about one hundred and fifty miles to Telegraph Creek, the old starting-point for the once-famous Cassiar mines, and thence via Teslin Lake and the Hootalinqua River. This route is spoken of very favourably, and seems to present none of the bad features that caused so much misery and loss on the Lynn Canal routes during the past summer. The watersheds crossed by the trail from the Stikkeen River to Teslin Lake are not ice

and snow-covered passes, and though the transportation of goods even by that route is possible only during four or five months of the year, when the Stikkeen is navigable for light river-steamers, it looks as if that were an easier route than over the Lynn Canal passes. However, one must remember that changes in the way of improvements to trails can be carried out so quickly by the willing hands of hundreds of gold-seekers or by persons interested in attracting travel, that it is unwise to express decided opinions concerning the advantages of the several routes. The object of these pages is merely to indicate their whereabouts and to sound a note of warning to exercise care in following the advice of pecuniarily interested agents, whose object it is to attract travellers to one special route. By the time travel will be possible next spring, the Canadian Government will, no doubt, have taken steps that reliable information on this important point is made public.* Since the writer's brief visit to Alaska, many changes have occurred, and recent events will make even more sweeping and speedy alterations the rule rather than the exception.

All the news so far to hand from the Klondike and its tributaries, as well as from the Stewart River, confirms the phenomenal richness of the stream-beds, more particularly so considering the small amount of work so far expended on claims. The latter is, of course, accounted for by the extreme remoteness of the spot, the scarcity and great price of labour—men working for others obtaining £3 per day—and the costliness of all supplies, flour being sold last spring, just before the arrival of the first steamer, at the rate of £14 per sack of 50 lb. Your "old timer," the man who has knocked about all his life in the mining camps of California, Idaho, and British Columbia, loves to see "grub sky-high," for it is the surest indication that "dust" is plentiful. Diggings are rich when a bottle of beer costs a sovereign, and whisky sells at a dollar the nip. But

* The newspapers report that no fewer than seventeen railway charters over the various Yukon routes have been applied for.

up on the Yukon the difficulties of access are, as we see, of such a peculiar and unprecedented character that if any large number of men unprovided with nine months' provisions crowd into the country, the small stock of food which it will be possible to collect by the time snow flies (in consequence of the accidents to the

Robert Campbell—after whom that great river ought to have been named for he was the discoverer of its headwaters—was probably not the first human being who faced the dread foe. "We were reduced at one time to such dire straits," he writes in his journal, "that we were obliged to eat our parchment windows, and our last



A STREET IN SKAGWAY.

From a Photograph by Mr. E. A. Green, Victoria.

seven Yukon steamers) will, it is feared, not suffice to carry the crowd through the desperate, long winter. As escape during that period is nearly impossible, bad times may be in store. Starvation is an ugly death: how many have succumbed to it in those dreary wastes between the shore of the Pacific and the continental watershed will never be known. The very first explorer of the Yukon, the indomitable

meal before abandoning Dease Lake on the 8th of May, 1839, consisted of the lacing of our snowshoes." That much the same conditions prevailed recently we learn from the mouth of my friend Warburton Pike, who on one occasion sustained life by eating his moccasins, and had to forcibly restrain his native companions from feasting on a very ancient corpse they discovered in the branches of a tree, where

some of the inland tribes "bury" their dead.

The danger of starvation, it must be understood, will be one which the developments now being carried on will speedily help to remove; it threatens at present those who have reached the remote camps on the Yukon headwaters. By next summer the numerous transportation companies now being formed in England, in the Eastern States, in California, and in British Columbia, will have flooded the district, large as it is, while supplies and prices will probably come down with a run.

To hear enumerated among the real hardships which the prospector has to face in the Yukon region that caused by mosquitoes, may appear to those unacquainted with these pests of the swampy North-West as a bit of hypercritical sensitiveness. A week's—nay, an hour's acquaintance with the mosquito of the North-West will cause the tenderfoot's smile to change into a bitter wail. Born to a three-months existence as soon as the torrid sun of June has melted the snow, they drive man to the verge of, and beasts to actual, insanity.

Of the extreme cold of which one hears so much, the writer would be inclined to make far less than of the last-named scourge, and he would certainly not enumerate it among the hardships that should deter any man in robust health from turning his face Klondikewards. To a man of good constitution—and no other should venture to those remote gold-fields—the severest cold means no actual hardship, so long as he is properly equipped for it. At no time did the writer enjoy better health than when he slept without a tent on the snow, with the temperature down far below the point where the mercury in his thermometer congealed.

In certain respects this "end-of-the-century" mining stampede to the Klondike offers food for reflection anent the

disadvantages of quickly spreading news, and of rapid transit to the remotest corners of the world. In no other of the great gold crazes of Australia, Africa, or North America were the majority of persons who frantically rushed to the fields so inexperienced in the ways of the country, so little fitted by previous roughing to undergo the hardships in store for them, so little endowed with the pioneer's moral and physical fibre. The men that peopled in the first rush the mining camps of California and Australia reached their goal after a journey of many months across the plains, or came from other camps, hardy and sturdy handlers of the pick and pan. For the interval between the discovery and the news of it reaching great centres of population was sufficiently long to allow those near the spot to reap the first harvest. With Klondike, on the other hand, the flash of the discovery seems to have struck great cities with unprecedented rapidity, and scarcely a week later steamers were hurrying thither filled to the last corner with feverishly excited crowds, consisting to a greater part not of experienced old miners, but of townfolk in no way fitted for the enterprise upon which they so rashly started. For this reason, also, the number of victims will probably be greater than in any other stampede.

TABLE OF APPROXIMATE DISTANCES FROM
VICTORIA (BRITISH COLUMBIA) TO KLONDIKE.

	Miles.	Miles.
1. Route from Victoria via St. Michael and up Yukon River to Dawson, about		4400
2. Route from Victoria to head of Lynn Canal by ocean steamer.	1000	1600
From head of Lynn Canal via passes and lakes and down Yukon	600	
3. Route from Victoria to mouth of Stikkeen River	750	1670
From mouth of Stikkeen by river steamer to Telegraph Creek	150	
From Telegraph Creek to Teslin Lake by trail	120	
From Teslin Lake via Hootalinqua River by river steamer to Dawson, about	650	

W. A. BAILLIE-GROHMAN.

