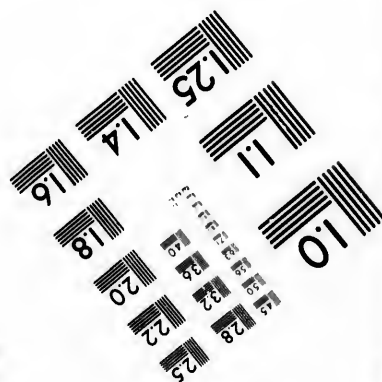
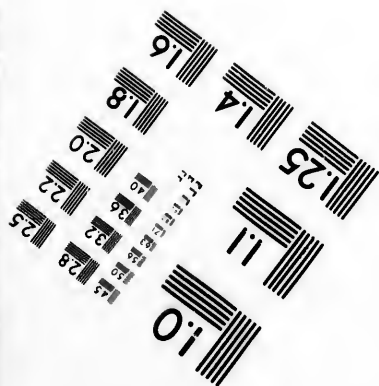
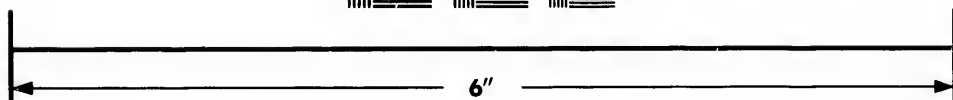
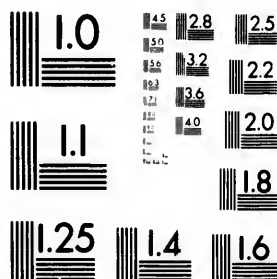


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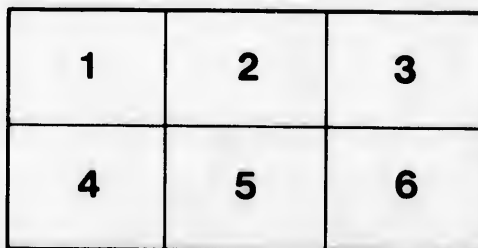
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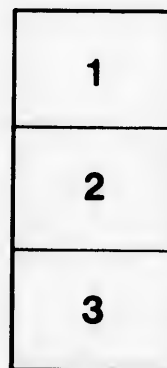
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THE RIVER TRIP TO THE KLONDIKE.

BY JOHN SIDNEY WEBB.

WITH PICTURES REDRAWN FROM PHOTOGRAPHS FOR THE MOST PART TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR.



IN behalf of the Alaska Commercial Company, which had been carrying mails free of charge for years, I applied to the Postmaster-General for the establishment of a postal route along the Yukon River; and as the department, preliminary to deciding the question, asked for information on the subject of population and other points, it was decided by the company to send me over the route. The trip included the whole coast of Alaska, where is to be found the grandest scenery in the world, including glaciers, mountains, volcanoes, peaks, cañons, and fiords, in bewildering profusion.

We arrived at the island of St. Michael, in Norton Sound, on June 26, 1897, and, much to our delight, were not hindered by the ice, which, however, lay in dangerous-looking fields to the westward. The year before, the first boat had bumped about until the 7th of July, hemmed in by the masses of ice which filled Norton Sound. St. Michael is a curious old Russian station, built in the days of the fur-trade of the patriarchal Russian-American Company, to the entire plant and wide-spread business of which the Alaska Commercial Company of San Francisco succeeded some thirty years ago. It is a clean, bright little town, a cheerful, bustling place, where one sees a painted house for the last time in the trip up the Yukon. Traces of the Russian occupation remain in the fort, the language, and the church, which still controls the natives. The houses of the post are built upon a hill and about the edge of a small bay, along the shore of which the Eskimos pitch their tents, and beach their kayaks and bidarkees, in picturesque confusion.

The natives are interesting to watch, and "sure-enough" Eskimos. They do all the labor in unloading the vessels, moving cargoes, and getting the goods in and out of the huge warehouses. Whenever a native has got the particular thing he came for, be it a tin can or a rifle, he quits work. Even under the stress of his extreme desire for tobacco or

tea, nothing can induce him to work more than every other day. The majority are packed in badly set up huts, surrounded by their dogs. An Eskimo has more dogs than a Virginia negro. They never bark, but howl, day and night, in a sad, disheartening way.

About St. Michael, and covering the country inland, is found a spongy, springy species of moss, notable chiefly as a habitation for mosquitos. The nearer you get to the arctic circle, the hungrier the mosquitos become; and when you cross the circle and reach Fort Yukon, these pests are to be reckoned by millions, and no one dares expose himself unless protected by nets and gloves.

The visitor at St. Michael is impressed by the number of the officers and employees of the company. It is hard to realize that such a large plant is needed to handle the business of three short months. The shortness of the season is one of the things which the companies now being formed all over the land for transportation and trading in the Yukon River region must take account of; for it is a most serious item in any calculation in regard to the cost of carrying on business. All the employees, officers, and mechanics must be engaged by the year, but for all practical purposes their active service lasts for only four months. The new companies will find themselves seriously hampered, also, by the inability of human nature, however strongly fortified by good resolutions, to resist the temptation to rush to the gold-fields, the crews leaving ships and boats to destruction, and enterprises stranded. This was an old story in the days of '49 in California, and has been repeated to some extent in Alaska during the past season.

For many years there was little else to be done at St. Michael but to gather in the furs, send out the few trade goods to the store-houses along the river, and transport the supplies for the various missions; but of late years the miners have been pouring into the country in larger numbers, usually coming in by way of the mountain trails from Dyea, and rarely resorting to the river route. In this way men crowded into the country without



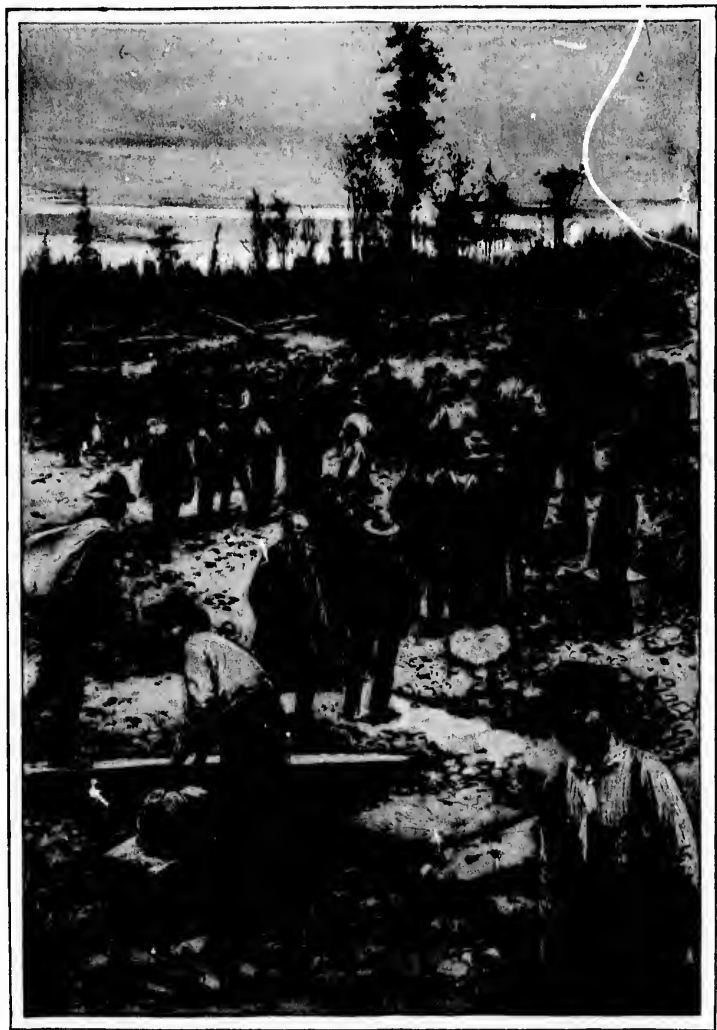
DRIFT BY C. M. RILEY.

THE RIVER BARGE THAT WAS PUSHED UP THE YUKON BY THE STEAMER *BELLA*.

their numbers being known to the companies. The first ocean steamer reaches St. Michael about the end of June or the middle of July, and awaits the return of the river boats, which have made one trip up after having wintered in the river, loaded with provisions, for the breaking up of the river ice takes place before the sea is open. It is too late then, after receiving the report of the steamers from up river, to build additional boats for that season; and even after the new North American Company was established, so rapid has been the rush of

miners that both companies have not been able to overstock the river markets.

This last year, hearing of the stampede to Dawson, the Alaska Commercial Company sent its steamer *Arctic* through the floating ice, and landed the first load of provisions at that now famous creek which the miners and all the world call Klondike. The result of this piece of enterprise was the loss of the steamer, which was wrecked by being closed in by the ice before reaching a safe winter berth. Following that disaster, the North American Company had its steamer



DRAWN BY C. M. RELYEA.

VIEW OF RAMPART CITY, WHERE THE MENOOK JOINS THE YUKON.

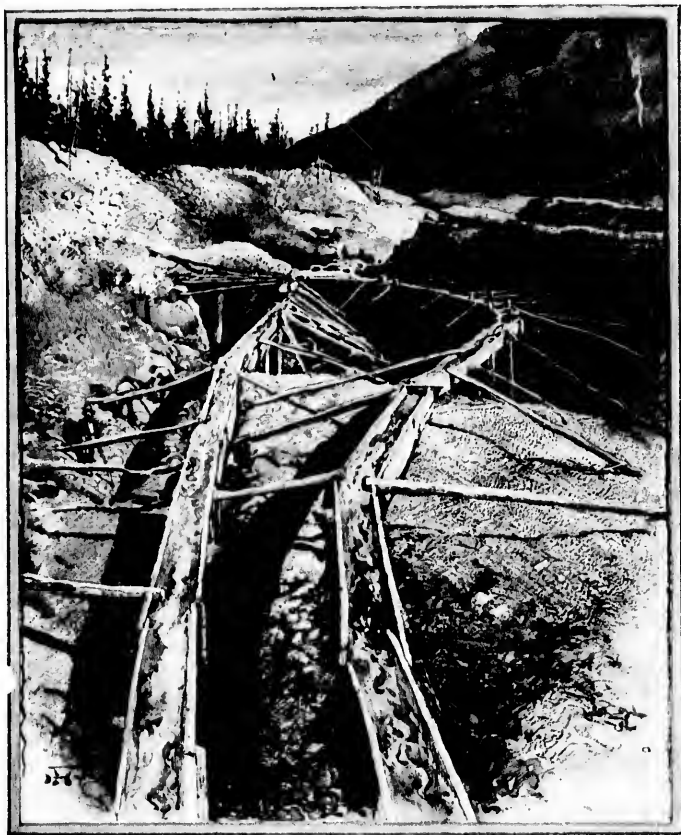
We are fast on a bar for twenty-odd days; and, owing to the fall of the water, its new steamer *Hamilton* was unable to get above Fort Yukon.

Between St. Michael and the mouth of the Yukon there is a stretch of sixty-odd miles of sea, a ticklish cruise for a flat-bottomed, stern-wheel steamer. Once the whole country was brought to the verge of famine on account of the wreck of the old *Arctic* while crossing this strip of sea. This was in 1889, a famous year in Yukon history, and it serves to show how well the men in that country

have stood by one another. As the result of the wreck no provisions could reach the men at Forty Mile and the other creeks. Indian runners were sent eighteen hundred miles up the river to warn the miners of the disaster, and to add that to insure their safety they must come out on the return voyage of the little steamer *New Racket*, then up the river. Word was passed along to every outlying creek, volunteers conveying the news; and such as chose to come in assembled to await the boat. Some remained behind from choice. One of these told me that for nine months he

lived on flapjacks alone; it was needless for him to add, «An' if ye 've niver tried it, ye niver want to.» As this crowd came down the river, wherever provisions were found men

the possible exception of the *Hamilton*, which made but one trip last year, has been built with a view to accommodate passengers. Men took what they could get with cheer-



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

MINE SLUICES AT FORTY MILE, ON THE UPPER YUKON

were left behind of their own choice, and eighty-five of them wintered at St. Michael. This is an indication of what will happen this year. All will help one another to an extent little dreamed of in the East.

The boats on the river are built on the familiar stern-wheel, flat-bottomed model of the Mississippi, and sometimes push, trussed and harnessed in front, a barge loaded with provisions and merchandise of all kinds. Passengers upon the river boats heretofore have been persons prepared to rough it, or men who were coming out of the country, whose prior experience was such that the limited accommodations offered them seemed like luxuries. In fact, none of the boats, with

fulness; and I have seen a bishop of the Episcopal Church making what he called a comfortable bed—for he knows that country well—upon the floor of the barge, wrapped in his blanket, with his head upon his traveling-bag.

Alaska is a country of more square miles than square meals, and the legendary governor of North Carolina would have found little else but muddy Yukon water, assaying fifty per cent. solids to the liquid ton, in which to quench his celebrated thirst. «Do as you please,» is the motto. In civilization coats are worn for various reasons; «on the Yukon,» because it blows up cold, or rains. Napkins, table-cloths, sheets, and pillows do



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

THE STEAMER *BELLA* AND BARGE TAKING ON WOOD
ONE MILE BELOW FORT YUKON.

not "go" on the Yukon, or have not heretofore. Even the Klondike millionaire packs his blankets, and takes what he can get.

The mouth of the Yukon is about a hundred miles broad—that is, from one side to the other side; but there is nothing to suggest a river about it—nothing but small streams, sloughs, islands, innumerable and disconcerting. It is like being brought face to face with a hundred gates, only one of which opens the way which you are seeking, while the others lead to destruction. This is the difficulty in navigation at the starting-point, and the sort of thing encountered all the way to Circle City. It is touch and go, or touch and not go; and you may get through, or may stick on a bar and not budge an inch for many weary days or weeks. Eighteen hundred and fifty miles of river are before you on your way up to Dawson; and it takes about fifteen days, if you meet with no accidents—days of vast, wonderful, and ever-changing scenery; nights of silent grandeur, when you seem to be all alone, surrounded by an untrodden wilderness, silent, awesome, mysterious.

The crews of the vessels are composed of the river Indians from Nulato, Anvik, and the other stations along the stream, and, taken as a whole, are a fine-looking body of men, entirely ignorant of soap, and ready at all times to shirk. In fact, they seem to regard the whole journey as a huge joke,

the principal job imposed on them being to avoid work. The successful dodger tells his less fortunate comrade, in high glee, how it was that he was asleep while the other one was perhaps hard at work carrying wood or moving cargo. I have seen a crew of thirty natives melt away into a possible half-dozen at the moment the steamer was tied up to a bank upon which lay wood, piled cord upon cord. This wood, by the way, has to be cut and stacked in measured cords during the winter, at various convenient points along the bank.

The settlements along the Yukon are few and far between, and consist, for the most part, of the same elements. There are the company's store; the huts and tents of the natives; the crowd of howling dogs; salmon hanging in red strips, burnished with copper tinges in the sun; little tots of children; chattering women offering baskets, moccasins, and trinkets for sale; and here and there perhaps a squad of uniformed children, marking the work of some mission—good-looking, clean-looking children, but, whether Christianized or not, spoiled for living like natives again. The problem is, What is to become of them?

Along the banks are occasionally met the rude huts and tents of small parties of Indians come hither to cut wood for the boats or to fish; but, however simple the habita-



DRAWN BY FRANCIS DAY.

JACK MCQUESTEN. (SEE PAGE 683.)

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tion, it must always have the cache, or storehouse, propped upon posts to keep the supplies out of reach of the dogs; for these dogs can bite through a tin can and almost climb a greased pole in search of food. The cache should have a place on the coat of arms of Alaska; it is universal. As you push up along this never-ending river, and pass Fort Yukon, you come to a stretch of over two hundred miles where the river spreads out over the surrounding flat country for twenty-five miles: four feet draft to a vessel is perilous; anything over that is fatal. In place of a river there is a lake of oozy mud and shifting sand. Innumerable islands surround you on all sides, cutting the water here and there into blind sloughs; the swift current turns and eddies about, the whole forming a perfect maze. The Indian pilots are at fault, and no channel has been found that "handles the water," as the river-men express it; but another year may lead to the discovery of a passage sufficiently safe to do away with this obstruction and furnish a channel to the deeper river beyond. There we spent seven weary days, and not until the draft of barge and steamer was reduced to about three feet did we get away. The water fell after we passed on, and since our time reports show that steamer after steamer got this far, only to stop, fast bound, unable to push over the mud, and utterly powerless to carry on its precious freight to the hungry souls beyond. On account of low water, the *Hamilton* unloaded her cargo at Fort Yukon and returned to St. Michael. Afterward the water rose sufficiently to allow the *Weare* and the *Bella* to get through to Dawson, according to advices from there dated October 15.

The first river bearing gold encountered on the way up the Yukon is the Kuikuk. This stream has been prospected for gold five hundred miles to the forks, and also along the forks for a short distance. As much as one hundred dollars a day has been made on the bars of the river by using a rocker, a hand-washer about the size of an ordinary cradle. The gold found was coarse gold, indicating that there must be creeks near by

in which gold in large quantities might be found, for the gold found in rivers is always very fine gold. Very little prospecting has been done on this river so far, and nothing whatever was done until within the last three years. Then the steamer *New Racket*, which was brought into the country originally by the Schieffels, who founded Tombstone, Arizona, carried a party of miners up to the



DRAWN BY C. M. RELYEA.

JACK McQUESTEN'S STORE AT CIRCLE CITY.

forks. This year two men named Holly and Folger are in there, and several of the miners who have been in that country expect to hear of rich strikes. The Kuikuk River is shallow, with low water at its mouth, and for a long distance up the river is very similar to the Yukon and the Tanana. For the first hundred miles the river has low, swampy flats; but above and beyond this the mountains begin to approach the water, and gradually the banks grow more and more precipitous, and approach nearer and nearer to the river's edge, until at length you pass up a succession of cañons. This river is navigable for



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

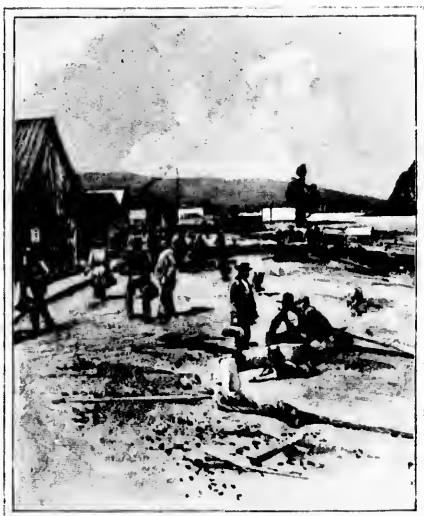
THE ALASKA COMMERCIAL COMPANY'S STORE AT DAWSON CITY, WHICH COST \$50,000 TO BUILD.

five hundred miles by steamboat, which makes it easy of access to prospectors; and as the forks run parallel with the Yukon, extending beyond Fort Hamlin, it brings this district within the gold belt, in which are contained the diggings at Forty Mile, Circle City, and Dawson. Up to the present time only one creek has been worked. At first only eight dollars a day were taken out; but the work was not done in the thorough manner now in use, and there is no telling what this region may produce. As yet there has been no systematic working or prospecting along the stream. It requires an expensive outfit to carry men to those diggings, and to keep them there without any other provisions or necessities than what they can carry with them; in fact, it is a dangerous task, and so far no one has attempted it. But old miners shake their heads, and say, "You'll hear from the Kuikuk yet."

The next river is the Tanana, which enters the Yukon from the south; and it will be noticed from the map that it heads up directly into the territory of the gold diggings about Forty Mile, Circle City, and Dawson. This river is navigable for steamers for one hundred and fifty or two hundred miles. The water is slack for the first two hundred miles, and after that it is very swift, with mountains on the left hand from the mouth up; on the right hand the mountains

are far off in the distance. The water is rough and swift, and the creeks entering it have glaciers at their sources. Colors of gold are found on all the creeks, but no prospects have yet been found to amount to anything; no holes have been sunk to bed-rock. Some of the creeks which enter the river on the left hand, heading up toward Forty Mile and Seventy Mile, seem to promise better results. It is curious to notice that toward Circle City, in the direction that we are now following, the creeks do not freeze in winter. The only hot springs ever found in that country are in a gulch near Circle City. One of the creeks leading into the Tanana from the Circle City district has open water about two thirds of the way up through the winter. This creek is full of ducks and geese, in spite of the temperature of 65° below zero.

The next tributary that we meet going up the river is Menook Creek. The discovery of gold was made on this creek in August, 1896, by Menook, a Russian-American half-breed Indian; but at that time the excitement in regard to the mines at Circle City was on at its topmost rush, and later on came the excitement of the findings about the Klondike, in August, 1896. So the findings of Menook were neglected until last year, when a great many miners came down to the creek after putting in their summer's work, or the required work on the claims which they had staked out in other places. It was reported at St. Michael that a camp of about one



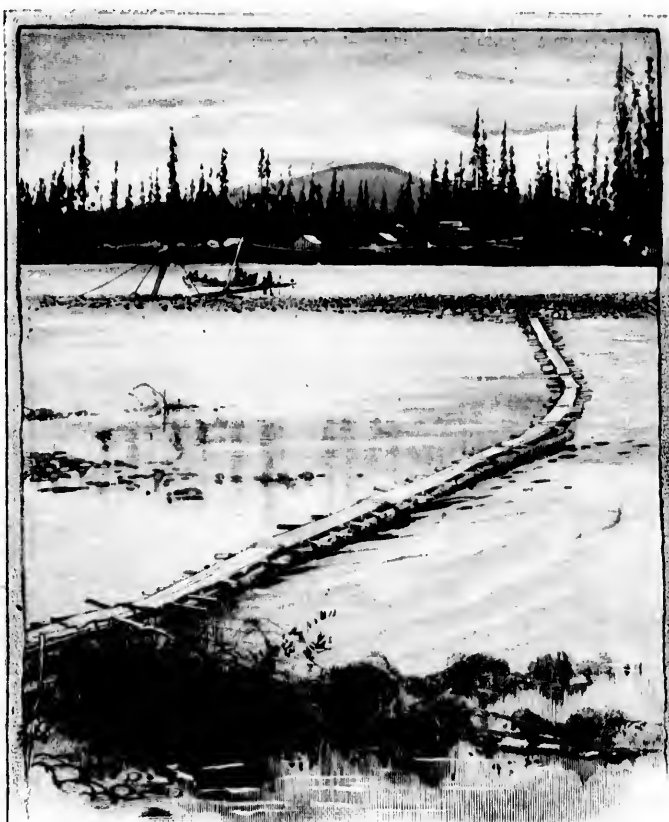
DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

A STREET IN DAWSON CITY.

the water is entering it. Colors of gold no prospects to anything; rock. Some river on the Forty Mile and better results. Circle City, now following, winter. The that country One of the a from the water about the winter. These, in spite zero.

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hundred men would winter there this year, and the Alaska Commercial Company made preparations to supply them with food. But, according to the last reports, there will be five hundred or one thousand men there this winter. This stream is situated about one hundred miles below Fort Hamlin, on the river, and is, according to the prospects already discovered, full of rich and attractive opportunities for those who desire to work upon claims which cannot, of course, be expected to be as rich as some upon the Klondike. On bed-rock two and four dollars to the pan has been discovered, and nuggets worth ten and twelve dollars have been taken out. As we journeyed up the Yukon we got a fair idea of how Dawson, Circle City, and Forty Mile grew; for a town was in course of erection near the mouth of Menook Creek, called Rampart City. The log storehouse of the company was already built, and the men were burning away the brush to clear the ground for cabins, living in tents in the meantime. Judging of the future by the past, and by the recent finds reported here on Menook, Little Menook, and Hunter creeks, we may hear of Rampart City next year as this year we hear of Dawson. As we came down the river, one month later, some cabins were up, the tents had increased in numbers, and the town was started, needing only a saloon to give it an air of completeness. Many of the gold-hunters will get no farther this year, and will winter at this place.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

WIRE FERRY ACROSS THE KLONDIKE RIVER.

The next tributary is Beaver Creek, a stream which flows into the Yukon on the south bank. This creek has been the scene of one of the stampedes so familiar to those who know about a mining country; but the excitement proved to be vain, and passed away, and the miners returned to Forty Mile and to Circle City. These stampedes occur so often that old miners who have been through several of them are wary. This accounts for the fact that so many of the *Cheecharkas*, as the Indians term newcomers,—the Alaskan term for «tenderfoot»—got in, as the phrase is, upon the strikes on the Klondike, because when the report was first brought to them the veterans thought of how often they had been deceived in days gone by, and turned a deaf ear, and would not believe the reported finds by George Cormack, or «Stick George», or «Siwash George», as he is known

up there, and so lost their chance of rich stakes. Several men have been up to the head of Beaver Creek, one hundred and fifty miles, but did not succeed in finding anything of importance; in fact, on every tributary of the Yukon, from the head of the Pelley River to the mouth of the Yukon, colors are found

have had in use a pump of the hydraulic kind, driven by a steam-engine, carried along by the steamboat *New Racket*, and have prospected industriously in every place which promised good results; but in no case have they found anything which paid for the outlay of money and the time spent on it.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

MINING OPERATIONS AT "49 BELOW" ON BONANZA CREEK.

upon every bar; but these diggings are soon washed out. The bars are irregular in formation, anywhere from one to ten feet in width, and from two to forty or fifty feet in length. The gold is deposited in the top gravel, not more than one foot or a foot and a half in depth, and when this is washed out there is nothing left for the prospector to do but to pick up his traps, get into his boat, and hunt for another bar. It is just possible, of course, that in the bottom of the Yukon itself the pay-dirt may be reached by some of the many schemes that are now being formed for dredging or using some process for cleaning up the river. But old prospectors doubt very much the success of these efforts, because for some years past they

The next stream encountered is the Chandalar River, about thirty miles below the Porcupine River, and a little way below Birch Creek, on the north bank of the Yukon. Several parties have been up this creek, but not to its head, and very good-looking quartz has been found, but no pay placer ground, although colors show. The river has been prospected for the last two years without much result. As for the Porcupine River, which is large and stretches up toward the north, very little is known. Several parties have been up there in the endeavor to find gold, but no good results have been obtained. Nothing, in fact, is known of this river at all promising for prospectors. Seventy Mile, which is seventy

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miles from Forty Mile, is a big creek of which the bars have been worked, and paid as high as from three to four ounces per day (seventeen dollars to the ounce) to the rocker, a very good pay indeed for bars. But on the creek itself only one bench claim has been worked, which paid but six dollars per day. The ditch, however, was not large enough, and there was not water enough there to ground-sluice in good shape. As yet no winter diggings have been struck. One creek below the cañon of Seventy Mile Creek had been worked last summer which paid twenty-five dollars to the man per day.

American Creek, which is fifty miles below Forty Mile, on the south bank of the Yukon, has twenty claims staked out, and very good ground has been struck. Claims, in fact, sold as high as three and four thousand dollars. Coarse gold is found, and some big prospects have been struck; but the ground is good only in spots, and the claims do not last as evenly as they do in other places. The claims are being worked, and as the creek is a large one, about thirty miles long, there is a great deal of ground that is not taken up or prospected. This is a good creek for winter digging; and as the grade is good and water plentiful, the summer work can be carried on very readily.

The best placer claims in Alaska found before Bonanza and El Dorado were at Circle City. This town was built up in a few months, and last August, at the date of the strike which has now been made famous by the reports from the Klondike, was a large, flourishing town of over a thousand inhabitants. It stands to-day almost deserted,—in fact, it may be said to be entirely deserted during the summer months,—on account of the enormous finds farther up the river on Bonanza and El Dorado creeks. The main creek in the diggings at Circle City is called Birch Creek, and the gold is found upon its branches. The diggings are located about sixty miles from Circle City, and are reached by a very difficult trail.

On Mastodon Creek, near Circle City, in the spring of 1893, a discovery was made, and the stampede began. Claims were taken up on Mammoth, Miller, Independence, Porcupine, Deadwood, Hoggum, and Harrison creeks. All of them were thriving. The claims were averaging from ten to forty dollars per day to the man, and over. Wages were reckoned at ten dollars per day, and some men were working as many as twenty men; but when the large stories were told of the Bonanza

and El Dorado, all hands and the cook dropped work and put out for the new diggings.

Circle City is close to the boundary between the British Northwest Territory and Alaska. As I have said, this was the boom town in August, 1896, and the mines about there, and also at Forty Mile, were paying well, and saloons and dance-halls, giving signs of mining prosperity, were wide open. The games of faro and stud poker never closed. If the whisky gave out, there was "Hoochanoo"—a deadly intoxicant distilled from black molasses or sawdust sugar, as the yellowest of the yellow is called, boiled in kerosene oil cans, and distilled on a rude worm. Here came such men as "Swiftwater Bill," "Salt-water Jack," "Big Dick," "Squaw-tamer," "Jimmy the Pirate," "Big Aleck," "Skookum Jim," "Jimmy the Tough," "Pete the Pig" and "Buckskin Miller," "Nigger Jim," and many others. There was also "Old Maiden," who always packed forty or fifty pounds of newspapers along with him over the roughest country, 'cause they 's handy ter refer ter whin ye gits inter a' argymint." "Shoemaker Brown" was another frontier character. He sold his claim on Forty Mile for one hundred and twenty dollars and a Winchester rifle. The man who bought it washed out four ounces (sixty-eight dollars) in one day, and wanted to know why Brown sold such a claim as that for so little. "Oh," said Brown, "they 's gittin' too thick for me round here." This was in 1887, and there were then only sixty-five men in the whole country.

The only society or order in this whole country is the Order of Yukon Pioneers, which was started in 1890, and is composed of men who had been in the country prior to 1887; but later the qualifications were extended to make eligible men who had come into the country as late as 1892. They have two lodges, one at Circle City and one at Forty Mile, and meetings are held every Thursday night. The society also has established a lodge at Dawson City, but the organization is not yet perfected. The total membership is about one hundred and forty-five. The badge or insignia is a pin with the device of a golden rule and wreath, and the letters "O. O. Y. P." The society levies on its members for sick benefits, care of widows, and for the sending out of the country of any of the members who become broken down by the life, and is one of the most powerful influences for good order in the country.

It was a great night at Circle City when the gold watch and chain bearing the insignia

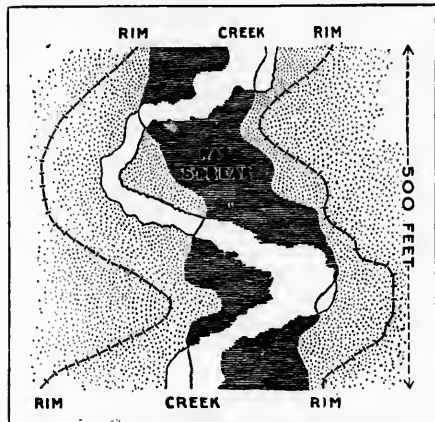
of the order was presented to Jack McQuesten, the president of the society. It had cost five hundred dollars; but no one knows what Jack's bar bill amounted to that night, at four bits (fifty-cents) a drink.

At Forty Mile a thousand men have been successful in making good wages; but the phenomenal strikes on Bonanza set men crazy, and good-paying claims were bartered

and no one would touch it. In fact, a state of things exists to-day without parallel to those accustomed to the methods in vogue in the East; for the principal place of deposit for gold-dust is on a shelf behind the bars or counters, everywhere in the bar-rooms, where the precious metal lies in buckskin sacks, tied up, bearing the owner's name. No one thinks of disturbing them, and no losses have been sustained, so far as known. A sample of confidence and trust in one another was shown some years ago, when a cargo of goods was sent to Harper and Ladue, at Sixty Mile. The men were impatient for their outfits, and Harper told them to "sail in" and help themselves, and keep an account of what they took, and hand it in to him. There was a discrepancy of only six cans of condensed milk between the sum total of the taking of individuals and the entire amount of provisions called for by the manifest of the boat, and this might have been a mistake of the shipping-clerk.

Disputes, whether of contract or tort, miners' rights, claims, or what not, were, in the absence of any civil government, settled by miners' meetings. The aggrieved person called a miners' meeting, a chairman was appointed, and the grievance set forth. If the meeting saw fit to consider the question, it formed itself into a court by the appointment of a judge and a marshal, by the summoning of a jury, and by following out the forms of a court of law, so far as they knew them, and some of them were experienced men. The parties and their witnesses were heard, arguments were made, the jury were instructed, and departed to make up their verdict. This verdict was absolutely conclusive upon all the parties concerned; and in some instances judgments have been rendered for several thousands of dollars, which have always been paid. Whatever men learned in the law may think of such tribunals, the result undoubtedly has been that even-handed justice has been dealt out, without fear or favor, and a community liable to the most violent passions has been conducted without serious disturbances of the peace or infringement of the rights of others. No shooting scrape has occurred, except in a single instance, in which a man crazed with liquor, after a prolonged debauch, attempted to kill a saloon-keeper who refused any longer to sell him liquor. This disturber, after firing two shots, was killed by the saloon-keeper in self-defense. The latter was tried and promptly acquitted.

The "Father of the Country," and a very



DRAWN BY C. S. VANDEVOORT, FROM AUTHOR'S SKETCH.

SAMPLE DIAGRAM OF THE PAY STREAK
UNDER A STREAM.

for anything to get to the new diggings. But Forty Mile and Circle City, although today deserted and dubbed silent cities, will return to their own again. The "stuff," as the miners say, is there. It is "pay," and big pay, and all the world cannot have a big-paying claim on El Dorado, and so the rush will turn to the next best thing. The best claims about Circle City and Forty Mile are far better than the poorest about Dawson; they rank second to El Dorado and Bonanza, which means that they are far above the average of placer mines elsewhere. Many will come back to these places for this winter,—back to the cabins and safely cached food which they had abandoned,—and Circle City and Forty Mile will boom again.

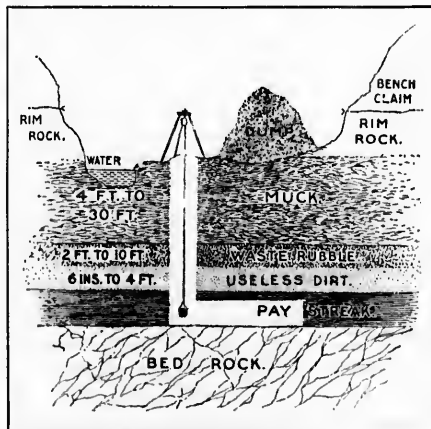
Owing perhaps to the isolation of the country, and to the class of men who have come in, up to the present moment the miners' relations with one another have been marked by the most rigid honesty and fair dealing; and this is all the more remarkable when it is borne in mind that they represent an aggregation of almost every nationality and condition in life. The old-timers say that a man might leave his "grub" scattered along the trail to the mines for months and months,

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worthy one to bear that name, is known throughout the length and breadth of the mining district as Jack McQuesten, although his name happens to be Leroy Napoleon. McQuesten has been there for over twenty-five years, engaged in trading with the Indians for furs, and keeping a store either for himself or for the Alaska Commercial Company; and as such he has come in contact with almost every man who has been in that country. He has probably supported, outfitted, and grub-staked more men, and kept them through the long cold winters when they were down on their luck and unable to obtain supplies or help from any one else, than any person knows except himself and the company. Hundreds of men today own rich claims, and are reckoning up their thousands, when, if it had not been for a credit given them and goods allowed them by Jack McQuesten, they would still be toiling amid the mosquitos for a living. He has done all this from kindness of heart, without any selfish motive whatever; for if he had been exacting, or had demanded even the share which he would have been entitled to on a grub-stake agreement, he would probably be to-day one of the richest men in that country, which means a very rich man in any country.

Above Circle City, and all the way along to Dawson, the mountains hem in the river



DRAWN BY C. S. VANDEVOORT, FROM AUTHOR'S SKETCH.

DIAGRAM OF THE STRATA ABOVE THE PAY STREAK.

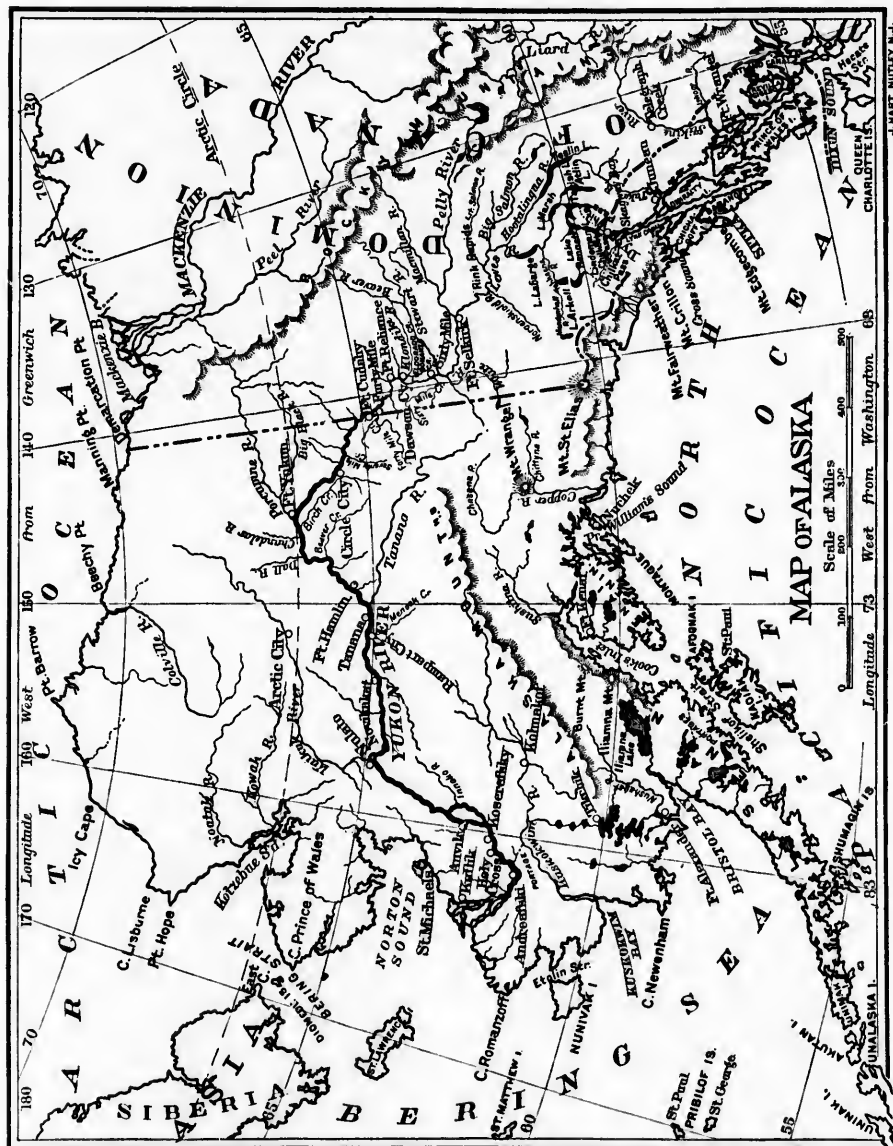
with high cliffs, and here and there the cliffs come to the water's edge, and the path of the river seems to be cut out of the solid rock, forming a deep cañon. One remarkable cliff is termed «Boundary Butte,» and was

for a long time supposed to mark the line between Canada and the United States. The actual boundary was marked out by a joint survey of the United States and Canada, and the line is made very distinct by cutting away the trees for a space of six feet in width; on the river banks the line is indicated by monuments of rocks.

One thing you are almost sure to see on the river above Circle City is a moose. This animal, if frightened when it is near the water, immediately turns to the river to escape; and so when he is sighted on the banks, usually about daylight, the vigilant and sporty pilots begin to toot, the whistle making an irregular, squeaky, prolonged sound, and all hands jump out of bed, and yell, «Moose! Moose!» Every Indian has a Winchester, as also has every miner; and as the fool of a beast takes to the water, the magazines are loaded, and guns bristle all over the boat. Finally some one cannot hold in any longer, and pulls the trigger. Then sixty or seventy Winchesters pump lead into the poor beast, firing by platoon or at will, and stirring up the water about him to foam. Of course he is killed, and, owing to the scarcity of fresh meat, is eagerly converted into food.

On the morning of August 17, at about four o'clock, broad daylight, we came up to that collection of forty large log cabins and five hundred tents, sprawled at the foot of Moose-skin Mountain, named Dawson City. Helter-skelter, in a marsh, lies this collection of odds and ends of houses and habitations, the warehouses of the two companies cheek by jowl with cabins and tents. A row of bar-rooms called Front street; the side streets deep in mud; the river-bank a mass of miners' boats, Indian canoes, and logs; the screeching of the sawmill; the dismal, tuneless scraping of the violin of the dance-halls, still wide open; the dogs everywhere, fighting and snarling; the men either «whooping it up» or working with the greatest rapidity to unload the precious freight we had brought—all of this rustling and hustling made the scene more like the outside of a circus-tent, including the smell of the sawdust, than anything else in the world.

This, then, is the real El Dorado! One wonders where they all live. One wonders, in amazement, where they are all going to live through the awful winter that is approaching. Here is the true pinch of the situation. It is not a question of food; it is a question of shelter. There are no logs fit to make a cabin to be found on the river within thirty miles of Dawson City. To wait



for winter means that it will be too late to build a cabin, because the moss which is used to fill the chinks between the logs by that time will be frozen solid, and be useless unless thawed out over a fire, a very wearisome job. The old-timers have got used to 70° below zero in tents; and even if the robe over them freezes solid, a match is smuggled from under the bedclothes, the fire somehow lighted

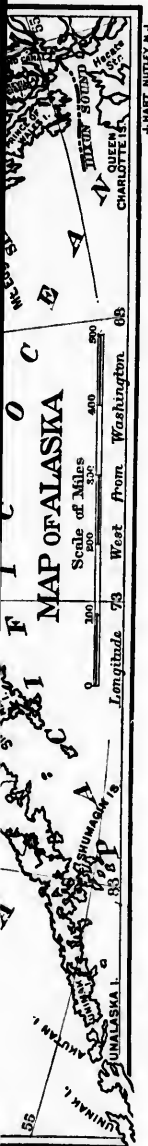
in the sheet-iron stove, and there they lie until the stove is red-hot before they dare emerge from under the skin rugs. But how are the newcomers to survive the cruel exposure—the lawyers, clerks, doctors, and mechanics?

Dawson City seems like a joke. Eighteen hundred and fifty miles from St. Michael Island—this is where they have gold, millions of gold, and nothing better than a muddy

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swamp to live in; gold-dust and nuggets in profusion, and yet the negroes in the cabins of a Southern plantation live better than the richest man in the country. Our arrival at Dawson was at a very critical time. We had brought with us nearly four hundred tons of provisions, and this fact served to allay the anxious fears of many who were becoming panic-stricken at the idea that there would be a scarcity of food during the winter. No news had come to us by way of the ocean of later date than June 10, but newspapers had been received over the summit at Dawson of date as late as July 26; and so the report that crowds were swarming into the gold-fields had reached them, but was news to us. The town was thoroughly scared, and was over-run with men who had come down from the diggings, often twenty and twenty-five miles, to make sure of their outfits for the winter; and so determined were they to procure them that they sat themselves down calmly in line, like men waiting to buy seats at a first-night performance, determined to wait until the goods were put up and set aside in their names. An outfit for a miner means everything that he uses during the winter, and this, being reduced to its lowest terms, means bacon and beans. There are other things, of course, in tins and in gunnysacks,—flour, sugar, salt, pickles, dried fruits, desiccated potatoes,—to suit the taste; but the work is done, and the gold is found and cleaned up, and miles and miles of the wilderness conquered, and cold weather and wintry winds withstood, on bacon and beans. It is the easiest food to pack, the quickest to prepare, and the most lasting and sustaining. The miner usually reckons on getting his outfit in November, because he can carry on a sledge, after the snow has set in, four times as much as he can pack on his back, and if he is fortunate enough to have dogs he can draw much more.

From Dawson the trail to the mines leads over a steep hill to the creek made so famous by its tributaries; for there is not a single mine on the principal stream, which in the miners' slang is called Klondike. And yet this stream does in reality bear a characteristic name given it by the Indians, which is utterly murdered by this pronunciation, now so common.

The Indians name the creeks throughout the country from some characteristic in connection with the stream itself; and as this one is so swift that in order to set their salmon-traps or -nets they were obliged to use a hammer to drive the stakes to anchor them,

the creek was named by them Hammer Creek, or, in their language, phonetically, *Troan-Dik*. The spelling Klondike means absolutely nothing, but has been accepted, so I learn, by the Board of Geographical Names of the United States. On going down the hill you come to the Klondike; and here there are two ferries, run by means of wire cable, and worked by hand. You are carried across this swift stream, and on the opposite bank you come to a little town formed about the ferry. You pay the ferryman, as you pay up there for everything you get, in gold-dust. Neither coin nor currency is known, but in all dealings the miner's pocket-book is his sack of buckskin containing the dust. This is handed over, scales are produced, and the dust to the required amount weighed out. Then the sack is tied up and handed back to the owner. Some strange things happen in the weighing of the dust. One man told me that he carefully weighed out his dust before starting out on a tour, and found he had sixty dollars. On his return, after purchasing eleven dollars' worth of various things, he was two dollars and forty cents short.

Gold-dust, with iron, quartz, or sand mixed in small proportion, passes at seventeen dollars for the ounce. A friend of mine once handed over his sack to pay for his breakfast at the Dawson restaurant, and the young woman in charge emptied some of his dust into the blower, as the receptacle on the scales is called, intending to weigh it, but she spilled it on the sawdust floor. «How unfortunate!» she said; then she deliberately weighed out the price of the meal from his sack a second time! On the next day the proprietor of the restaurant paid to the victim of this carelessness fifteen dollars in dust, assuring him that she had washed out the sawdust about the scales, and found this amount. The boot-blacks at Dawson make upward of two dollars every morning by washing out the sawdust from under the weighing-scales. In some places the salesman turns his back on you when he weighs out the price of anything, leaving you to guess how much he takes. But everything «goes» on the Yukon.

Across the ferry one encounters a notorious Alaska product known as «sour-dough» beer. I do not know how or of what they make it, but I have no wish to come across it again.

The trail, as it was called, was a miserable excuse for a path, leading over rough hummocks, up hills and over bogs, through sticky, oozy muck, by brambles and bushes, across creeks and corduroy paths. The charge for

packing is thirty cents a pound to No. 1 El Dorado, about fifteen miles from Dawson.

And here let me make a confession: I, with others, rode a horse. No one can imagine what a sensation this created along the creek. No one had ever indulged in such extravagance before. Though a man should wash out twenty thousand dollars in a day, he would be content to walk. But I rode at thirty cents per pound to El Dorado, and thirty cents to return, or 186 pounds for \$111.60. They did not, however, put me on the scales like a sack of gold-dust. Still, it was cheap, according to an Irishman coming over the summit, who remarked that he had had his goods packed over by Indians. "An' I got it chape," said he. "How much did you pay?" some one inquired. "I don't know," said he. "Then how do you know it was cheap?" "Oh, anything would be chape over that place!" he replied.

The famous Bonanza Creek and the more famous El Dorado Creek are very like ordinary, every-day creeks in appearance—a little less civilized, perhaps, than creeks to be met with in the East. There are men living in Alaska to-day who have hunted moose over these creeks dozens of times; but, as the old miners say, there were no surface indications to lead any one to suppose that gold might be found in them, so hundreds of miners passed by in their boats, going to Forty Mile and Circle City. The finding of such gold is always an accident, and the old hands are usually the last to realize the truth. "Stick George" Cormack and his squaw's relatives camped on the creek for dinner one day, and somehow got to digging, and washed out some gold. He went to Forty Mile and made claim for discovery, and soon the news spread like wild-fire.

Keeping the trail which leads along the hillside, you soon come upon the mines. Cabins are scattered here and there; and in trying to discover how far you have gone you call out, "What number is that?" "Fifty-two below," is the reply. You puzzle a little at first over this, and are informed that the claims are numbered either above or below the point called "Discovery," where gold was first found. But you soon learn to talk of "twenty above" and "fifty below" like an old-timer.

The claims succeed one another on Bonanza Creek at the rate of about ten claims to the mile, beginning somewhere in the nineties below, on Bonanza, and reaching up to Discovery, and then on for miles above. The numbers far below are not considered of

much account, and it is only the claims between the forties "below" and the forties "above" that are supposed to contain great wealth. On El Dorado Creek, which empties into Bonanza, there was no discovery claim, and the miners began at the mouth and staked straight up. Claims are staked, measured, and registered, the length allowed each claimant being five hundred feet along the bed of the stream. It is easy enough to settle the base and top lines of a claim, and not difficult to measure out the five hundred feet; but the side lines are troublesome. The side limits of a placer or creek claim begin where the side of a hill or rim rock leaves off. It is the edge of the hill or the beginning of the creek, or *vice versa*. This matter becomes important when a neighbor has a bench claim up the hill, his line beginning where the creek claim leaves off. The gold commissioner will have several knotty points between the bench claims and the creek claims to decide this year.

Sluicing for gold, the only method used, requires a good supply of water with a sufficient head or fall and conveniently near to the spot where the arduous and expensive preliminary work is done. The miner is at the mercy of the season. If the water comes down in sufficient quantities, he wins; but if, for some reason, the elements withhold the needed water, he loses the fruits of his winter labor.

The sluice-boxes are made of boards, machine or whip sawed, and roughly nailed up into troughs or boxes, and fitted together like stovepipes. Cleats are nailed into the last boxes, called "rifles," or, in some instances, shallow auger-holes are bored into the bottom boards. The boxes are then set up in line on a gentle slope, and the pay-dirt is shoveled in at the top, and a stream of water, controlled by a dam, sluices over the dirt and gold. The weight of gold is so great that it falls, and the dirt and useless gravel washes off, the gold being caught upon the cleats or in the holes scattered about. In the last boxes quicksilver is put in to catch the very fine gold. When the gold is taken from the boxes it is called a "clean-up."

On the day I was there (August 17), at No. 30 El Dorado twenty thousand dollars was "cleaned up" in twenty-four hours, with only one man shoveling in the dirt. Such wonderful results may mean, however, months of expensive work; but "when it comes, it comes quick," as the saying is among the miners.

In the diagrams (see pages 682 and 683) I

the claims bend the forties contain great which empties discovery claim, the mouth and the staked, meadowed each feet along the easy enough to of a claim, and the five hundred useless. The claim begins in rock leaves at the beginning of this matter neighbor has a line beginning off. The gold knotty points the creek claims

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have made an attempt to show how the "pay streak" runs through a claim, and the probable conditions underground. The paystreak, which is probably the bed of an old glacier that carried the gold down the gulch, pursues its own course, widening, deepening, or sweeping from left to right, totally regardless of the rim-rock and the present bed of the stream. In fact, in some places the pay streak goes clear out of the confines of the creek, and turns off under the hills, which have evidently been pushed bodily out over the old course of the stream, and dumped by some convulsion of nature across the path of the water, forcing it into a new channel. The bench claim, therefore, may cover a turn of the pay streak. A bench claim is one hundred feet square, whereas a placer or creek claim is bound by the present hill-sides, and not by the banks of the prehistoric glacier.

The gold is deep down under hard, frozen muck, rubble, and useless dirt, and often nothing is found until just over bed-rock; and on some claims of El Dorado Creek four inches above bed-rock there is found a layer of clay, and between this clay and bed-rock are found nuggets and flakes of gold, packed so closely that, as they say, "you have to mix dirt with it to sluice it."

Sometimes the method of opening up a claim is like digging a cellar. An excavation is dug; but if this method is tried, and the claim is at all deep, the dirt has to be handled twice—that is, shoveled up to a scaffold, and thence into the sluice-boxes; an expensive and slow process.

A claim, when "opened up" and shoveling in is going on, is an active little community of about twenty persons—a cluster of cabins and tents, a cheerful, happy, working lot. The latch-string is hanging out, if the owner boasts a door, for doors and window-sashes are rare; and the proprietor will cheerfully share his bacon and beans, or anything else he may have.

In the summer-time the prospectors load their provisions and supplies into the boats, which they make after crossing the mountains in order to come down the river. They drop down the current to some place, load on their backs as much of their outfit as they can carry, and proceed into the unbroken wilderness, there forming a rough camp on the banks of the creek which they intend to prospect. They usually go in parties of two, three, or four, and divide up among themselves the burdens of the tools and camp outfit, in addition to the provisions. Their

time for prospecting is short, because of the difficulty of transporting provisions inland. Often five hundred miles intervene between two storehouses, and in order to get additional supplies of provisions they must either drop down the river to a storehouse, and pole back,—very laborious work with the swift current of the Yukon, which runs from three to eight miles an hour,—or pole up against the current, and drop back.

The prospector sinks a hole or shaft through the muck, useless gravel, and stone until he reaches the pay streak. There are instances where men have sunk over twenty feet in this way, and have discovered nothing to reward them—in fact, not having even penetrated through the muck. Whether they sink these holes in winter or summer, they must build fires on the surface, and thaw the ground as they go down.

A great deal of prospecting is done in winter, for the reason that men can transport so much more in the way of supplies upon their sledges, drawn either by the miners themselves or by their dogs, of which there is no great number to be had, and also because when the water is frozen there is no danger of its breaking in and filling up the prospect-hole. In winter-time they build a camp as substantial as possible, and, with supplies to last till warm weather, they have a longer time in which to sink down to bed-rock than the summer season affords.

When a gold-bearing creek is discovered, the man who makes the discovery is entitled to the usual five hundred feet, and an additional five hundred feet by the right of discovery. He proceeds to the nearest gold commissioner to record his discovery. Then the news spreads like wild-fire, and a stampede begins. A whole creek has been known to have been staked out in twenty-four hours.

By the Canadian mining regulations, each tributary of the Yukon, with its creeks, forms one mining district, and no one besides a discoverer may stake more than one claim in a district. According to the American regulations, a man may stake a claim on every creek. A great many miners, following the American rule, staked out claims last year upon the various creeks of the Klondike, such as Bonanza, El Dorado, Bear, Last Chance, Gold Bottom, and Too Much Gold, but were obliged by the gold commissioner to choose which claim they would keep, and abandon the others. The presence of the gold commissioner, who has the authority of a magistrate, has a very good influence, undoubtedly, in regulating mining claims; but

heretofore the system in vogue on American territory has worked very satisfactorily. It is done by the miners themselves, who form a mining district, appoint one of their number recorder; and all the records are kept and straightened out as they go along, any dispute being settled by a miners' meeting of the men present on the creek.

The same conditions confront the man who has located a claim as exist in the case of the prospector, except that the latter has already ascertained that there is gold upon his claim. In making his application he is obliged to swear that he found gold in the ground himself. He and his partners, by themselves or with others whom they hire, set to work to open up the claim by sinking shafts and burning drifts into the pay streak. This is done by building fires, which thaw the frozen ground about a foot in depth a day. This labor is very hard, and in cases where there is a heavy deposit of muck, rubble, or useless stone over the pay streak the cost of opening up a claim is very great. I know of one claim that is said to have been opened up as cheaply as any on El Dorado or Bonanza, and the owner told me that it cost him \$8750. In other instances men have spent \$15,000 and over before a cent has come out of the claim. This means that the expenses for cabins, tools, and supplies, for wages, wood, and burning, have amounted to that sum before anything has been taken out to repay the owners. For this reason it is the custom to hire men "on bed-rock," as it is called. The owners of claims agree to pay the men wages at so much per day, but payment is postponed until bed-rock has been reached, and the gold actually gotten out of the claim.

Another method is to let "lays" on the claim; that is, an agreement is entered into between the claim-owner and the workman that the workman shall give the owner fifty per cent. of the amount of gold taken out by him. In some instances, last year, men working on lays received between ten and fifteen thousand dollars apiece for their winter's work.

The Canadian law requires that work shall be continuous on a claim, and any lapse of seventy-two hours works a forfeiture. The American miners agree that claims in their districts must be "represented,"—that is, worked during certain months of the year,—and if so represented may be left idle during the rest of the year without working a forfeiture or making them liable to be jumped.

It is largely due to this regulation of the Canadian law that "lays" are let upon claims, for the reason that the men working the ground prevent a lapse of the claim, while the owner may leave the country or go prospecting on other creeks. This method, however, is detrimental to the best interests of the claim-owners, because the men working on "lays" often turn their backs on dirt which would be considered handsome pay anywhere else, and put in all their time on the richest ground. In this way claims have been gutted, and in many instances the large returns upon claims reported mean, not that the claim is proportionately so rich, but that the best part of the claim has been exhausted, and that the rest has been left in such a condition that to work it further becomes an engineering problem.

The result of a winter's work is a pile or dump of "pay" gravel, placed alongside the shaft. It has been brought there by the process of burning or thawing, digging out, and carrying to the surface by means of a rude windlass, worked by hand, to await the coming of the water in the spring. Dams are built in the meantime, and sluice-boxes constructed, and all is made ready for the spring freshet. It is then that the largest clean-ups are made, and it will be on the first steamers next year that the largest quantity of gold will be brought out. A conservative estimate of the amount of gold brought out this year puts the total from this region at three million dollars; but unless the scarcity of provisions seriously interferes, the amount will reach ten times this sum next year. One serious drawback to be feared is a lack of candles, without which it is impossible to work in the shafts and drifts during the winter.

A large amount of speculation was carried on in 1896-97 by purchasing claims on the payment of a certain sum down, the remainder to be paid at a time agreed on, always subsequent to the time of the anticipated spring freshet. The men who bought these claims were usually experienced miners who had arrived in the district too late to locate or stake a claim, either because they had heard the cry of "Wolf!" so often that they turned a deaf ear to the reports of big strikes on the Klondike, or else they were far away from the scene, prospecting on their own account, and had heard of the strike only on coming to the storehouse for winter supplies.

The history of some of these claims is interesting. Number 31 El Dorado was bought



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

WATCHING THE DEPARTURE DOWN-STREAM OF THE *BELLA* AT DAWSON CITY, AUGUST 18, 1897.

by a man named Bell for \$85 in September, 1896. He sold the claim for \$31,000 to two men named Leake and Ashby, in March, 1897. They paid \$2000 cash, and the remainder was to be paid in August; but without waiting for the freshet to come and wash out the gold in the sluice-boxes, they went to work with a hand-rocker, and paid off the money in June. It is this claim for which it was said the agent of wealthy bankers in August offered \$125,000, and the offer was refused.

Number 13 El Dorado was bought on an agreement by a party of eight men to pay \$5000 down, and the remainder in August. They washed out \$45,000 in one month, and are now the owners of the claim. These and like stories are told of many other claims, and they are true stories, to the credit of our countrymen's grit and enterprise.

The «Napoleon of finance» of the region, and certainly the richest man there, is a brawny Scotchman known as «Big Aleck» Macdonald. He managed to make a large clean-up on his claim,—said to be \$90,000,—and invested every dollar of it in other claims in the manner I have indicated—part payment down, the remainder when the water came in the spring. Every one about the camp

knew of Macdonald's speculations, and all were wondering whether he would become a bankrupt or a multimillionaire. The water did not come down early in 1897, and in some instances the clean-ups on the claims he had bought on speculation came so close to the day of payment that, as the story goes, the gold was paid over «before it was dry.» The death of two brothers to whom he owed \$40,000 on a claim is said to have been his financial salvation, because the time of payment of a debt to a decedent's estate is extended one year by law, the gold commissioner acting as judge of probate for the time being. Macdonald is probably owner of an interest in about twenty-odd claims, bought on his mining knowledge and his wonderful nerve. He paid enormous interest on the money he

borrowed, took tremendous risks, and finally won. In some instances during the winter of 1896-97 money was loaned at ten per cent. for ten days.



DRAWN BY HARRY FENN.

MINERS' RESORTS ON MAIN STREET, DAWSON CITY.



DRAWN BY C. W. RELYEA.

ARRIVAL AT FORTY MILE OF PROSPECTORS IN BOATS BUILT BY THEM AFTER CROSSING THE MOUNTAINS TO THE HEAD WATERS.

Claims are staked by the miners themselves, after a rough measurement of the ground; and of course when the survey is made accurately by the land-surveyor, "fractions," as they are called, are discovered where men overmeasure their claims, and these fractions are immediately pounced upon by men who follow the surveyor about. In some cases the fractions are very large, varying from one at the mouth of El Dorado Creek of 420-odd feet to one 200 feet in size; and once a man insisted upon laying claim to a fraction which was measured off and found to be precisely nine inches in length! He is now known as "Fraction" White, or "Nine-inch Jim." In one instance a man's whole winter's work, which was contained in the dump, was discovered to be outside his own lines; and if it had not been that he found a friend who consented to take up this fraction for him,—for he himself had exhausted his own rights in this district,—he would have lost a very large sum of money, for he washed out of that dump \$130,000.

As the creek is all laid out as accurately as city lots, it becomes very familiar to the men who are passing up and down the trail from day to day, and the knowledge of what is going on in one claim is known to all. Any statement that a man was offered half a million dollars for his claim on Bonanza or El Dorado is very likely to be untrue, unless

the number of the claim is given. Men who have been there know the value of these claims, just as a real-estate agent knows the value of lots in a city, and in the majority of cases can make a very accurate estimate of the amount of gold that has already been taken out of each claim.

I passed along by claim after claim, all in full working order; and sometimes we were recognized and called to a halt by the owner of a claim, and requested to come and see what he had struck. It was marvelous to watch the dirt being shoveled in and washed out, and see the gold caught on the cleats of the sluice-boxes. Sometimes they would give me a big iron pan,—the miner's pan,—holding about two shovelfuls, and ask me to pan it out. After the whirling motion was once caught, it was easy. Little by little, bits of gold began to appear in the whirling mass like flashes of light, and the worthless mud and stuff passed off, and then came the realization of the wish of Midas: it had turned to gold in my hands—gold in little flakes, gold in coarse lumps, gold in fine-sifting flour-like dust—yellow gold!

I spent a night at No. 1 El Dorado, which is just above the junction of the creek with Bonanza, and in the richest district there. What lies under the ground no one can tell. Within a stone's throw of us, Phisicator had taken out \$90,000 from perhaps

forty square feet of his claim. Above us Berry and his partners had washed out \$130,000 in one winter's work.

Americans have flattered themselves that Yankee industry has done it all; but the surnames met with show that all nations have had a share in the work, although undoubtedly Americans are ahead. Knutson, Olsen, Alstein, and Silene are on 36 and 37 El Dorado; Berry and Antone Stander now hold 4, 5, and 6 on El Dorado; John Zarnowsky holds No. 30 El Dorado; and "Targish Jim" No. 1 above on Bonanza. Aleck Macdonald, Tom O'Brien, and Frank Dinsmore are names that one constantly hears. All are straightforward and unassuming; and, take them all in all, better men are not to be found anywhere.

The way back to Dawson over the trail was not so easy, but I got there soon after the town had celebrated the first anniversary of its discovery, on August 17, 1896. The saloons were crowded. Such signs as, "This game never closes," "\$25 and \$50 limit," "Straights barred," "Flush beats three of a kind," indicated the drift of the miners' amusements. It is worth noting that in all of the stories about great fortunes made in this country, no one speaks of the man who "took out" \$90,000, and the only gold-mine he had was a saloon and dance-house.

We started down the river from Dawson in the afternoon, and carried with us over seventy miners. Some of them carried heavy sacks in traveling-grips, which they guarded very closely. In one instance four of them relieved one another in regular watches, day and night. These men had come in over the

Chilkoot Pass, and floated down in their boats to Dawson or Forty Mile, arriving in the spring. Some of them had been in the country for years, some only for months; but all had worked hard, suffered much, and were now bound for civilization, with varying fortunes, but with an intention of enjoying life.

The trip down the Yukon, with the swift current rushing the unloaded steambot along, is in delightful contrast with the laborious journey up-stream. At many of the missions along the river, and at Forty Mile and Circle City, I saw gardens of turnips, radishes, and lettuce. The plowing is done with dog-teams, and the rich black soil, even in the short summer, yields wonderful results. Undoubtedly much can be done to improve the condition of the inhabitants by systematic cultivation of the soil.

Returning to St. Michael, we found the harbor crowded with ocean-steamers and a variety of craft of all sorts and conditions. Men and boys thronged the usually quiet streets. It was sad to contemplate this eager crowd of men from all classes of life, who had been deluded by false reports, entrapped by speculators, and hurried on in a mad rush for something they could never grasp, and were destined to die by inches in this far-away land. Old miners took them aside and sought to dissuade them, telling them of the dangers and hardships before them; but it was in vain. Some acknowledged that they were ashamed to go back; but most refused to believe the truth, and even retorted that the miners were trying to keep them out so that they could get it all themselves.



DRAWN BY C. M. KELVEA.

PLOWING WITH A DOG-TEAM.

