

The KLONDYKE GOLD FIELDS IN ALASKA

THE United States Government in 1867 paid Russia \$7,200,000 for Alaska. The territory has paid back her purchase money in gold four times, having produced during the time it has been a part of the United States about \$30,000,000 of the precious yellow metal.

To-day the eyes of the world are turned toward our frozen acquisition in the north, for within its borders has been discovered an Eldorado. The word Klondyke, literally translated meaning Deer River, is on every tongue and is known as the designation for a gold-bearing district greater in area and richer in character than any the world has ever known, with the possible exception of California. Klondyke is the new open sesame to Aladdin's cave; it supplants "Pike's Peak or bust" in the gold-seeker's vernacular. "The days of '97" may become as celebrated a phrase as "the days of '49," for the same fever that seized upon the people and dotted the Western prairies with emigrant trains bound for the Pacific coast is claiming victims by the thousands, all eager to brave the perils of the arctic circle and wrest a fortune from the frozen zone.

The reported gold discoveries of the present day in Alaska and the reported gold discoveries of '49 in California afford many parallels. To the average man the treasures of the coast State were seemingly as inaccessible as the riches of the Yukon and its tributaries. One was more than 2,000 miles across a trackless desert and over snow-bound mountain passes, beset by savages, whose deadly attacks marked the trail with bleaching bones across the Western States; the other is nearly 7,000 miles by water, through a rigorous climate, or almost 4,000 miles by land and water, with mountain passes to scale as dangerous as those of the Swiss Alps.

The Alaska and California gold fields are alike also in being placer mines. Placer mining is commonly called "poor man's mining," for the reason that it is done without machinery, while the implements required in the work are few and of small cost. A placer miner can get along very well with a pick, shovel and gold pan. If the dirt is not rich he can accomplish



PROSPECTING IN ALASKA.

better results by running it through a sluice box, but where the yield is in nuggets instead of fine gold he prefers to "pan" it.

The great Klondyke strike was made last year, but nothing was known of it in the United States until June 15 of the present year, when a vessel called the Excelsior arrived in San Francisco laden with miners from the Klondyke, who in turn were laden with gold. They told almost incredible tales of the richness of the newly discovered district, where fortunes had been accumulated in a few months. Experienced miners and "tenderfeet" seemed to have shared good fortune alike, and with some justice, too, for the credit of the discovery of the new gold fields is due to the inexperienced men. Another vessel brought to Seattle a sec-



STONE HOUSE AT THE FOOT OF CHILKOOT PASS.

ond party of successful prospectors and a ton and a half of gold. These men had endured peril and undergone great hardships in accumulating the fortunes they brought, and they told a story that had a dark as well as a bright side. To follow their example means a risk of wealth, health and even life, but for those who are willing to take the chances the prospect they hold out is alluring.

The Klondyke District. The richest of the mines in the Alaska region seem to be in the Klondyke, a few miles over the British border. They were discovered, as has been said, by a party



PLACER MINERS "PANNING OUT" NUGGETS IN THE KLONDYKE DISTRICT.

of "tenderfeet," who, against the advice of the old-timers in the district, wandered "over yonder in the Klondyke" and struck it rich. From Klondyke comes much of the gold and from Klondyke seems to come all the excitement. A few "tenderfeet," going it blind, have stirred up the nation. Out of the region of their discovery has come, it is estimated, \$2,000,000 worth of gold during the present summer. Nearly all of that gold has found its way into the United States.

It is hard to tell where the Alaska gold fields are located except that in a general way the best of them are along the Yukon. There are a few "lode" mines near Juneau and along the southeast coast of the territory (the most accessible part of it), but the one is of low grade and mining is made profitable only by the most careful management.

In all the immense country over which the placer mining extends it is estimated that up to last year there were 2,000 miners. The districts in which most of them worked were in a broad belt of gold producing rock, through which quartz veins carrying gold occur frequently. Through the gold-bearing rocks the streams have cut deep gullies and canyons, and in their beds the gold which was contained in the rock is concentrated. The mining of this country consists, therefore, in washing out the gravel of these beds.

To Reach the Gold Fields.

The best way to reach the Klondyke district? One goes from Seattle by ocean steamer west and a little north, and passes through Dutch Harbor, at the extreme end of the Southwest Alaskan peninsula. From there the steamer turns north and continues on to St. Michael's Island, a little above the mouth of the Yukon, in Behring Sea. At that point passengers are transferred to the river steamers to begin the long journey up the Yukon, which winds northward and eastward, and finally brings the traveler to Dawson City, now the principal town in the district, although sixty-five miles from the Klondyke fields.

The cost of the trip from Chicago this way, as prospecting miners usually travel, is \$251.50. It is divided as follows: From Chicago to Seattle (second class), \$51.50; from Seattle to Dawson City, \$200. In time the trip costs thirty days—four from Chicago to Seattle, sixteen from Seattle to St. Michael's Island, and ten up the Yukon to Dawson City by the fast

FACTS ABOUT ALASKA.

PURCHASED in 1867 from Russia for \$7,200,000; purchase negotiated by William H. Seward.

Area is square miles, 581,400. Population (census of 1890), 30,329, of whom but 4,416 were whites, 8,400 Eskimos and 13,735 Indians. Estimated present population, 40,000.

Principal cities, Sitka (the capital), Juneau, Wrangle, Circle City.

Principal rivers, the Yukon (more than 2,000 miles long), the Kuskokwim, the Colville and the Copper.

Principal mountains, Mount Logan, altitude 19,500 feet; Mount St. Elias, 18,100; Mount Wrangle, 17,400 feet.

Governor of the territory, James D. Brady; residence at Sitka.

Principal products besides gold, furs, fish and lumber.

Principal occupations of the people, hunting and fishing.

Gold first discovered in 1879. Estimated product of gold to date, \$30,000,000.

Product of gold in 1896, \$4,670,000. Klondyke in English is Deer River.

The river is so designated on the maps.

Klondyke gold fields partly in American and partly in British territory, and the product is disposed of in the United States.

Scene of the present excitement is along the Upper Yukon and its tributaries.

Distance from Chicago to the Klondyke gold fields, via the Yukon, is about 6,500 miles; via Chilkoot Pass, about 4,000 miles.

Time to make the trip by either route, thirty days.

Cost of the trip, about \$300.

Travel possible only in June, July and August.

Climate in winter severe in the extreme, winter beginning in September.

During June and July continuous daylight; during December and January continuous night.

after that point it depends somewhat on the bargain made with the Chilkoot Indians, who pack supplies through the pass, and the length of time the overland part of the journey requires; but the Indians who act as guides and pack supplies do not work without big pay.

Dawson City.

Dawson City, the center of the new mining region, although sixty-five miles distant from the Klondyke, is said to be a typical mining town—minus the guns. The British Government enforces its laws in Dawson, and those laws prohibit the use of firearms, so few men carry guns. The laws of the camp are enforced by mounted police, whose captain is a civil officer. Though there are said to be 3,000 people in Dawson, few houses have been built, for the principal reason that lumber is \$100 per 1,000 feet. The general fear is, of course, that there will be great suffering there this winter, and it will be increased, it is expected, by the rush of unprepared prospectors who sailed for the new fields immediately on learning what luck had befallen those who have but recently returned.

To give an accurate idea of the cost of living in Dawson City, the price list of a general store there is herewith given:

Flour, per 100 lbs.	\$12.00
Moose ham, per lb.	1.00
Caribou meat, per lb.	.65
Beans, per lb.	.10
Rice, per lb.	.25
Sugar, per lb.	.25
Racon, per lb.	.40
Butter, per roll.	1.50
Eggs, per dozen.	1.50
Better eggs, per dozen.	2.00
Salmon, each.	\$1.10
Potatoes, per lb.	.25
Turnips, per lb.	.15
Tea, per lb.	1.00
Coffee, per lb.	1.50
Dried fruits, per lb.	.35
Lemons, each.	.50
Oranges, each.	.50
Tobacco, per lb.	1.50
Liquors, per drink.	.50
Shovels.	2.50
Picks.	5.00
Overalls.	1.50
Underwear, per suit.	.85
Shoes.	5.00
Rubber boots.	\$10 to 15.00

Alaska and Its Resources.

In the purchase of Alaska, the United States acquired a territory more than half a million square miles in extent, a part of it within the arctic circle and in the region of everlasting ice and snow, where, during part of the summer, there is continuous day and during the winter continuous, dreary night. The Alaskan coast line is greater than our Atlantic seaboard, but the entire population of whites, Eskimos and fierce Indians who are called the Apaches of the North, is not

much more than that of a ward division in Chicago.

In acquiring the Alaskan territory, though the United States moved its center, figured in geographical mines, not in area or population, as far west as San Francisco. The country now extends from about the 65th degree of longitude up at the far east corner of Maine to the 122d degree up at the far northwest tip of the Alaskan mainland. This is taking no account of the little island of Attu, 1,000 miles out in the Pacific, beyond the Hawaiian group, which, since the purchase of Alaska, has really been our western land limit. The United States, therefore, may almost say with England that the sun never sets on its possessions.

The Great Yukon River.

The principal river in Alaska, the Yukon, up which prospectors have to work their weary way to reach the gold fields, was called by Schwatka, the Alaskan Nile. It rises a little more than 200 miles above Sitka, in the southern part of Alaska, and then strikes northward, following a broad circle to the west before it empties into Behring Sea through an extensive delta. Six hundred miles in from the coast it is more than a mile wide and the volume of its water is so great as to freshen the ocean ten miles out from land.

The principal cities of Alaska are Juneau and Sitka. They are both thriving towns, and probably they will thrive from now on, for a time at least, as they have never thrived before. Alaska is ruled by a territorial governor, who now is J. G. Brady, recently appointed by President McKinley to succeed James A. Sheakley. The Governor's residence is in Sitka.

Among the things Alaska has done for this country aside from stirring up the present gold excitement one of the most forward was to involve it in disputes with England on the boundary question and the seal fisheries business. Both of these disputes threatened war, but white-winged peace settled over the situation in each case and brought the suggestion of this newly invented English-American institution—arbitration. However, the boundary question is not settled yet.



MAP SHOWING THE ALASKA GOLD FIELDS.

The census enumeration of 1890, gave the population of the territory as 30,329, of whom 4,416 were whites, 82 blacks, 1,568 half-breed Indians and Eskimos, 13,735 natives not Eskimos (Indians), 2,125 Chinese and 8,400 Eskimos. The number of whites has probably been more than doubled since then, however, as the Alaskan gold fever set in in mid form three or four years ago. One would hardly think of going to Alaska for the social advantages of the place.

Neither could it be said that a reasonably constructed individual would go there for the climate. In winter the thermometer falls so low in places that no one will recognize it; that it goes down to 70 degrees and lower. During all this kind of winter up in the Yukon region little can be done but sit about a fire in a vain endeavor to keep warm, for darkness exists most of the time, and the life seems like that of a man uncomfortably seated at the bottom of a well.

During the summer season the days are

sometimes even a little bit hot, but not for long. In that time, too, there is almost continual day, for that end of the earth (if it may be so called) is the one that is pointed directly at the sun.

But as the summer brings warmth and daylight it also brings mosquitoes. And such mosquitoes! Creatures that buzz and bite in such a way as to make the dreaded Jersey variety seem by comparison like the silvery, angelic, sweetly humming fancies of a peaceful dream. The travelers who return from the Yukon region tell stories of how brave and strong men, courageous enough to undertake the perils a journey to that country involves, actually break down and sob in utter desperation and despair under the torments of these terrible pests. The ice and the "magnificent distances" of the country are not the only drawbacks to its exploration or to journeying to the gold fields; the mosquitoes must ever be remembered.

Of course, in the southern part of Alaska, where Juneau and Sitka are situated, the winters are not so rigorous. There the weather is comparatively mild, and in summer is said to be delightful. But Juneau and Sitka are infinitesimal as compared with the whole country, and they are not an index to what is furnished farther up and farther inland.

Industries of Alaska.

When travelers were asked as late as two or three years ago what were the principal pursuits in Alaska they replied, of course, that fishing and hunting furnished occupation for the greater part of the population. What else was to be expected from a population made up in the main of Eskimos and Indians? In the Sitka district there are magnificent forests and lumbering is an industry, but in the barren, icy north the occupation of the Indian was to shoot and trap the bear, the fox, the otter and the other animals whose fur would bring a price in the markets of the world, to catch the seals and spear the whale and catch the other fish or game that could be turned into money. Salmon canning is the great industry of the Kadiak district, and has been for years.

Of late, however, the other industries of Alaska have sunk almost out of sight because of the new gold flurry. Mining, of course, is the industry of the white man. Virgin gold might have lain in plain sight



INDIAN RIVER.

in the rocks to a limitless extent and in all probability the Indians and the Eskimos would never have touched it. Food and furs are the standard of value with them. Gold fills no Eskimo stomachs and keeps no Eskimo body warm.

Working Placer Mines.

The Klondyke mines are placers—the most easily worked mines of any, and requiring the least expenditure. The methods of washing out placer gold are known as "sluicing" and "panning." The former is employed where the yield is of ordinary value, while all old-timers prefer the latter in rich ground.

In sluicing the dirt is shoveled into the sluice box, through which water is rapidly running. The box is of varying length,

and has holes bored in the bottom. These holes are filled with quicksilver; the dirt, gravel and small bowlders are washed over the quicksilver, but the gold adheres to it. When a miner "cleans up," sometimes every night, sometimes once a week, the water is turned off and the sluice box holes are cleaned out.

In panning, the dirt is put into a gold pan—about the size of a small dishpan. This pan is made of copper. The miner squats beside a stream, dips water into the pan, oscillates it with a motion that can only be acquired by experience, and gradually sloughs out the water, dirt, gravel, etc., retaining the gold in the pan. Gold being the heaviest substance, it is of course the easiest to retain in the pan.

A pick, a shovel, a gold pan, water, and, of course, some gold are the only essentials of placer mining. Machinery is only necessary in placer mining where large areas of ground that yields only moderately are worked, and then only for hydraulic power in washing down the dirt.

So Particular. They seem quite particular in Paris, said an attaché of the state department, "about having the French language used by any representative of the United States."

"Yes," replied Miss Cayenne; "I understand they go so far as to insist on putting French labels on American wines."—Washington Star.

Getting at the Root of It. Lea (sadly)—I don't know what to do with that boy of mine. He's been years at the medical college, and he keeps at the foot of his class.

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Possibly it is the mean people who start the bad "stories," but the good people keep them going.

THE WAZIRIS.

A Wild and Warlike Tribe on the Indian Frontier.

A few weeks ago a strong body of Waziris beat back a column of British troops and native auxiliaries, on Afghan frontier of India. The Waziris are a tribe on the borders of that frontier, and are one of the wildest, most war-like tribes on the frontier. Their character has long been noted for murder and robbery.



FUTTEH KHAN, A TYPICAL WAZIRI.

have in former years received more than one exemplary lesson for the improvement of their manners. In 1857 Sir Neville Chamberlain was sent to punish them, and passed almost a year through Waziristan. It was in 1861 that they again became troublesome, and this led to General Kennedy being sent among them with a retributive force. Sir William Lockhart had been sent to Waziristan only three years ago with an expedition, and at the time he made arrangements that were expected to preserve law and order in the locality. From these previous experiences it seems likely that these nations will probably receive a severe punishment for their most recent outbreak.

TWIN ASH TREES.

They Joined Together Fifteen Feet Above the Ground.

A remarkable twin tree growth shown in the accompanying cut reproduced from the Scientific American. The original photograph was taken by Prof. William Werthner, of the Dayton high school. The tree stands at Waynesville, O. It is a very symmetrical confluence of two blue ash trees five feet apart at the ground and at ten feet above joining to form a single trunk that extends to a height of some seventy feet. Each tree is fr



TREES GROWN FAST.

fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter and each trunk, as well as the upper bole, is perfectly normal, nor does it fork show any signs of a flattened ridge or one-sided confluence. Hence the union must have taken place while the trees were saplings.

Is this a "natural graft," or did some Indian possibly use the saplings as part of his wigwam support, and tie them so tightly as to induce a confluence? The size of the trees (considering the slow rate of growth of the blue ash) seems to make them antedate the white settlers in Ohio.

State Papers Mutilated.

In the files of the House no signatures of Webster, Clay or Lincoln remain. While there should be hundreds of letters from these distinguished men in evidence, all have disappeared and there is no trace of their whereabouts. President Lincoln in the course of his official career in Washington sent hundreds of original documents bearing his signature to the House and Senate, but on all the original papers filed in the House the signatures have been cut off. The House files which have been similarly mutilated.

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