

The New El-Dorado on the Klondike.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. HARRY DE WINDT.

BY WILLIAM G. FITZGERALD.



AN it be possible that in these prosaic days a real Tom Tiddler's ground has been found? A region 192,000 square miles in extent, where even the humblest may pick up pans full of gold? Yes, it is absolutely true. All you have to do is to get there, and then it is your own fault if you don't return a millionaire. No doubt exists in competent minds that Klondike and the Yukon district generally is the richest gold "strike" the world has ever known. We were, therefore, fortunate in securing an interview with Mr. Harry de Windt, the famous explorer, whose life has been one long pilgrimage over the face of this planet.

Mr. De Windt has taken a ride to India, through Persia and Beluchistan. He made the amazing journey from Pekin to Calais by land. He knows the prisons of Siberia almost as well as his own cosy flat in the Champs Elysées; and he all but succeeded in the virtually impossible journey *overland* from New York to Paris. This last nearly cost him his life, but it also caused him to pass through the gold-bearing regions of Alaska and the North-West Territories. The "present-day" portrait on the opposite page shows the explorer in the quaint dress he wore whilst journeying from Juneau City to the mouth of the Yukon, in Behring Sea.

"The Klondike gold fever is raging everywhere," remarked Mr. De Windt, "especially in America. In Seattle and other handy ports, the very policemen

have gone off to the gold-fields. Husbands are deserting their wives. Clerks, lawyers, doctors, merchants, shop-keepers, and others are selling all they possess to pay the high passage rates, and then have enough left for outfit and provisions. Clever fellows with no money are 'minstreling' their way to the Klondike—playing and singing as they go along. Victoria (B.C.)," continued the explorer, "may be called the British starting-point. The big shops in Government Street are advertising every imaginable requisite, from guns, boots, and gold-pans to Yukon boats. 'If there are dollars in it for us,' plead the leading grocers, 'there may be thousands in it for you.'"

The photo. here reproduced shows a number of miners leaving San Francisco for the New El-Dorado. The enthusiasm of the immense crowd is well shown. The voyagers



"OFF TO THE KLONDIKE."

From a Photo. by Charles Weidner, San Francisco.

will probably sail 2,500 miles to St. Michael's, the seaport near the mouth of the Yukon, and then travel up the river by a smaller steamer. "Cute fellows, those 'Fris-cans," remarked Mr. De Windt. "Know pretty well everything there is to be known about mining. I don't suppose a single man in that crowd forgets the return, in July last, of a band of successful miners from the Upper Yukon. There was nothing peculiar about their outfit, except the sacks they carried. Those sacks were of canvas, deer-hide, and buckskin, and every one of them was crammed with gold. There were nuggets as big as hazel-nuts, gold in grains, and fine gold, like sand or dust. The Mint had closed for the day when the *Excelsior* arrived. The gold was therefore taken to Selby's smelting-works, where it was poured out in great heaps on the counter and scooped up like sugar with big copper scoops. The

Himself a born journalist and *littérateur*, he has at his fingers' ends the details which interest.

"The cranks have put in an appearance already," he said, airily. "They tell me that a physician of St. Louis, Dr. Rufus G. Wells, proposes to get to Klondike by balloon. The venture is a big thing in many ways. It is to be a passenger balloon, carrying *fifty men*, each of whom will pay £60 for his passage. Another adventurer—a lady this time—is going to the Klondike to start the first newspaper. She is a Chicago woman, Mrs. Caroline Westcott Romney, and she is taking a small hand-press with her. Cyclists? Oh, yes; any number!"

Mr. De Windt left New York in May, 1896, his preparations having taken quite a year. He travelled to Montreal by rail, and from there to Vancouver by the C.P.R. The trip from Vancouver to Victoria, B.C., was made



From a Photo. by]

THE MUIR GLACIER, SEEN FROM A HEIGHT OF 1,800 FT.

[La Roche, Seattle, Wash.

miners' supply of sacks had given out, and some of the men carried jelly-jars and fruit-cans in their pockets, full of the precious dust, and carefully secured with twine and paper. But the queerest receptacle for Yukon gold was the hide of a favourite dog that had died."

Mr. De Windt is the delightfulest of companions—a mine of anecdote and adventure.

in a little steamer, and then there was a two days' voyage to Juneau, the metropolis of Alaska. "The traveller's first introduction to Alaska," remarked Mr. De Windt, "is inconceivably grand. Let me show you a photo. of the Muir Glacier, which will give you a capital idea of the rugged grandeur of the country."

This stupendous glacier enters the sea

with a front a mile wide, and from 200ft. to 300ft. high, probably extending twice as far below the water. From this wonderful wall of blue and white ice, huge masses frequently break off and fall into the bay with a reverberating roar, throwing up clouds of spray, and creating waves that rock big steamers like row-boats. The glacier occupies a vast amphitheatre thirty or forty miles across, and it is two miles wide where it breaks through the mountains to descend to the sea. The seaward end is so corrugated and seamed with crevasses as to be quite inaccessible. On the left side of the glacier rises a stony conical mountain, 3,000ft. high. So the journey to the Yukon gold-fields is a big undertaking. "I've made the trip over 800 miles of snow-fields and glaciers," one of the "failures" wrote home, "and all I'm bringing back is scurvy."

Juneau City is the starting-point for the Yukon miners, and here they provide themselves with all requisites. Here is Mr. De Windt's description of Juneau, taken from his diary:—

"Juneau contains about 3,000 people. It

is rare, and evil-doers are summarily dealt with. Juneau is a blaze of light from dusk till dawn, and there are plenty of sharks of both sexes to fleece the lucky digger on his way back from the diggings. The city lies on a pretty level strip between the sea and a precipitous, snow-seamed mountain, 3,300ft. high."

Mr. De Windt also notes: "Saw no carts. Portorage done by the Thlinkit Indians. My hotel not bad; made of wood; kept by a German; food rough, but decent—sixteen shillings a day."

"When you leave Juneau," Mr. De Windt said, "there is no more food for 800 miles, and gold won't buy it. Why, I heard of miners stretched on the ground dying of starvation in the camps, with a sack of gold-dust for their pillow! It is madness to think of starting, say, from England, with less than £300 capital. You've got to get yourself and perhaps half a ton of stores over thousands of miles of awful country—snow mountains, stormy lakes, and raging rapids.

"The route which I chose," pursued the explorer, "has been adopted by fully 90 per



From a Photo. by]

JUNEAU CITY, THE STARTING-POINT OF THE YUKON MINERS

[Winter & Pond.

consists of wooden houses, laid out with regularity, but the streets are generally knee-deep in mud during the summer, on account of the incessant rainfall. A busy place, with two hotels. Good shops (especially fur shops); a theatre, and electric light everywhere. Miners fit out here for the Yukon region, and houses are springing up everywhere to accommodate them. Crime

cent. of the gold-seekers. I left Juneau in June, the best season for travelling. A filthy steam launch, built to carry twenty-five, but which took fifty-seven passengers, landed me at Dyea, 100 miles distant. Dyea consists of a rude log store and a movable town of tents, occupied by diggers bound for the gold-fields. A delay of several days occurs here, while Indians are procured to carry tents and



From a Photo. by]

MINER ASCENDING THE CHILCOOT PASS.

[Winter & Pond.

baggage to the Lakes, twenty-four miles distant over the Chilcoot Pass. By the way, the Indian packers, or porters, usually carry roolb., and the cost of such a pack over the Chilcoot trail for miners used to be from nine to twelve dollars."

Dogs and sleighs are bought at Dyea. In the next photo. we see a miner and his dog team near Stone House, the first halting-place up the Chilcoot Pass. A good dog team is valued at 300 dollars. Bought singly, the dogs fetch seventy-five dollars each. They are of a greyish colour, with hair like that of a seal.

The difficulties may be said to commence at Dyea. When Mr. De Windt arrived, a bad anchorage compelled him and his fellow-passengers to wade ashore a full mile through a rough sea, much to the detriment of the bacon and beans.

"Things won't be quite so bad in the spring of '98," remarked Mr. De Windt, "for

then the recently discovered White Pass will be open. Travelling by the White Pass route, you go to Skagway Bay, at the head of the Lynn Canal. The total distance

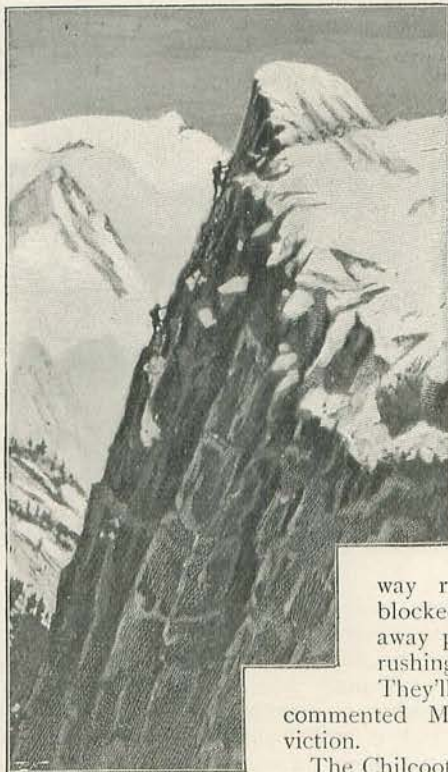
by this route from Victoria (B.C.) to the Klondike River is 1,400 miles, as against 4,000 miles by the sea route to St. Michael's. Besides, the latter is only available for three months of the year, while the White Pass is open for nine months. However, all those who have already made their fortunes on the Klondike, or are still making them, have travelled over the Chilcoot, as I did. I see, by the way, that a United States official reports: 'There are nearly 1,800 persons in the Dyea and Skag-

way routes. Both trails are blocked. People are throwing away packs and provisions, and rushing headlong to the mines.'

'They'll never get there alive,'

commented Mr. De Windt, with conviction.

The Chilcoot Pass—the gateway of the new El-Dorado—is seen in the next illustration. It lies about midway between



MR. DE WINDT CLIMBING THE CHILCOOT PASS.
From a Photograph.

Dyea and the chain of lakes. Here is Mr. De Windt's thrilling narrative of his passage of the Chilcoot, which, by the way, is 4,000ft. high:—

"The tramp from Dyea to Sheep Camp, at the foot of the pass, can be avoided by riding, but the trail is terribly rough. At Sheep Camp we stopped four days, the Indians having struck for higher wages, which we were compelled to give them. Here we passed three parties of miners who were returning to Juneau, having failed through lack of provisions to reach the Lakes. A stiff climb of two hours from Sheep Camp

brought us to Stone House, the limit of the tree line; and from here the hard work commenced in grim earnest. For the first few hours, the way lay over a succession of snowy 'plateaus,' which, broken away beneath by numberless water-courses, formed a kind of crust, 15ft. to 20ft. above the ground. The travelling here was extremely dangerous. There was absolutely no path or trail to guide one; and huge crevasses, where the snow had fallen in upon some roaring torrent, appeared here and there. There are seven or eight of these 'plateaus,' which increased in steepness until, midway up the last one, we were scrambling painfully up the slippery ice-slope on our hands and knees. Here a dense mist overtook us, and we lay shivering (at a very uncomfortable angle) for three hours, until it cleared away and disclosed the rocky, precipitous peak of the Chilcoot towering another thousand feet above us. The cold was intense, and we were not sorry to resume our journey. The last part of the ascent was terribly hard—in places literally perpendicular. There is no path of any kind, nor would it be possible to make one, for the rocks are loose and insecure, and the passage of a man will often dislodge a huge boulder, and send it crashing down, to the deadly peril of those below. The ascent of the peak occupied nearly three hours. There were two or three places where a slip must have meant certain death, notably one about

thirty yards from the summit, which we reached at about 5 a.m."

The photo. here reproduced shows Mr. De Windt and his companions on the summit of the Chilcoot Pass. All the party are wearing "goggles" to prevent snow-blindness.



MR. DE WINDT AND HIS PARTY ON THE SUMMIT OF THE CHILCOOT PASS.

From a Photo. by Winter & Pond.

"I have roughed it," said the explorer to me, "for the past fifteen years in Siberia, in Borneo, and in Chinese Tartary, but I can safely describe that climb over the Chilcoot as the severest physical experience of my life. A blinding snowstorm barred our way for nearly an hour, and we then descended a steep ice-slope of about 500ft., which brought us to Crater Lake. From here, at 7 a.m., began an exhausting tramp through deep snow-drifts, gradually thawing to half-frozen slush, knee-deep, as we gained the lower ground. A rocky ridge of hills and three small streams were then crossed. One of the latter, swollen by recent rains, carried one of our party off his feet, but he was, with some difficulty, rescued. From 10 a.m. till mid-day, heavy and incessant rain fell, but by 2 p.m. we stood dead-beat, bleeding and exhausted (but safe), on the shores of Lake Lindemann, the journey having occupied nearly fifteen hours. Then we had to wait ten hours longer, drenched with rain and perspiration, and sick with hunger, until the Indians came up with provisions."

The photo. next shown depicts the miners (Mr. De Windt in the foreground) descending to the lakes.

The head of Lake Lindemann, the first of a chain of five lakes, is about nine miles from the summit of the pass. If you think that, having regard to what you have already endured, all will now be plain sailing, you are

grievously mistaken. You must build a boat here, capable of carrying yourself and your stores hundreds of miles across lakes and through rapids. It doesn't matter if you know nothing of boat-building; you *must* build some sort of boat or raft, or else turn back over the awful Chilcoot. "Where is the wood?" you ask, in dismay. You have to *fell the trees for it*—aye, and travel miles to find a tree, so disafforested has this spot been by hundreds of eager gold-seekers. In your baggage should be not merely the tools for tree-felling and plank-sawing, but even the very pitch which is to caulk the seams of your crazy craft.

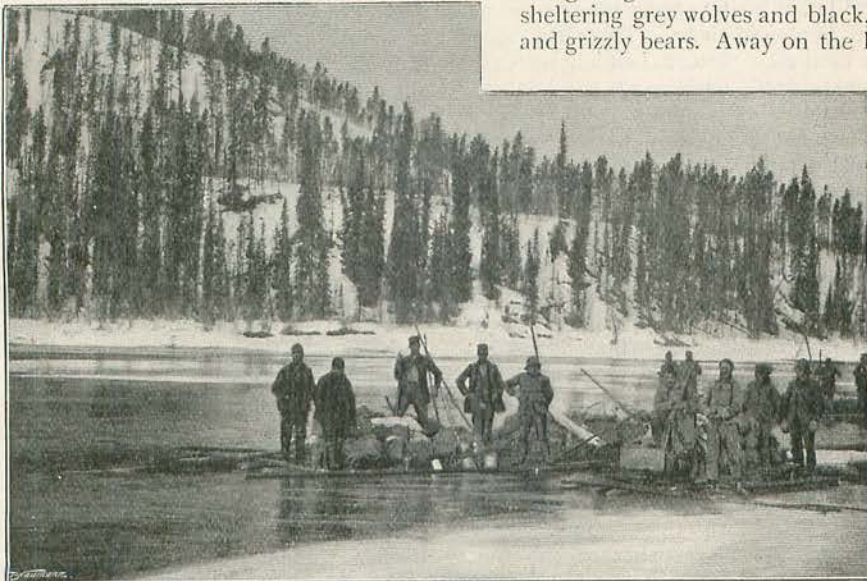
The distance across Lake Lindemann is $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Next comes Lake Bennett, $26\frac{1}{2}$ miles long.



From a] DESCENDING TO THE LAKES. [Photograph.

Here is reproduced a photo. showing Lake Bennett in spring, with a number of miners on their way to Klondike in craft of queer construction. "When I was last there the shores of this lake resembled a big ship-yard, with scores of miners at work on their boats." A woful number of these boats and rafts, built by "tenderfeet"—*i.e.*, greenhorns—merely carry their passengers to a watery grave in the rapids below.

"The journey down the Lakes," said Mr. De Windt, "occupied ten days, four of which were passed on Lake Bennett. All these Alaskan lakes are dangerous, by reason of the sudden storms that spring up. In winter, scenery is wild and beautiful, the shores being fringed with well-timbered slopes, sheltering grey wolves and black, brown, and grizzly bears. Away on the horizon,



From a]

LAKE BENNETT, IN SPRING—MINERS BOUND FOR THE KLONDIKE.

[Photograph.

snowy peaks glitter on every side, and form a picturesque background to a panorama of sunlit desolation. One could scarcely realize that a few short weeks would convert this summery landscape into an awful ice-bound waste, with the thermometer at 70deg. or 80deg. below zero."

Of course, miners who remain in these regions through the winter adopt the dress of the natives. This consists of high boots, made of seal or walrus skin; trousers of fawn or marmot, and an upper garment with a hood, which is also made of marmot, and is trimmed with long fur to protect the face.

Among the very few Englishmen who have thoroughly explored Alaska and the Yukon may be mentioned the Earl of Lonsdale, whose portrait in full travelling dress is here reproduced. "His was a magnificent journey," remarked Mr. De Windt, "from the Mackenzie River right across Alaska to the Aleutian Islands, a distance of more than 1,000 miles."

Lord Lonsdale was kind enough to lend me two interesting photos. for reproduction in this article. The first shows the noble



LORD LONSDALE IN ALASKAN DRESS.
From a Photo. by Faber, San Francisco.

explorer's halt on the Nelson River, and is an admirable illustration of travel in these regions. The second photo. Lord Lonsdale calls "My camp, close to Katmai, near Cook's Inlet." Everybody is bustling about to get a meal ready. This is by far the best photograph of a camp in Alaska that the writer has yet seen.

At the present moment there are thousands of fortune-hunters on their way to the new El-Dorado. Stories of fabulous wealth have fired the imagination of all classes, and the actual sight of it in America has driven people almost frantic.

In July the steamer *Portland* arrived at Seattle (Wash.) with the first party of successful miners. Astounding as it may seem, the vessel brought *more than a ton of gold*, valued at a million and a quarter dollars. This vast treasure was the property of sixty-eight miners, each of whom less than a year previously had been a new prospector in the Klondike region. The men proudly carried their gold down the gang-plank of the *Portland* in bags, valises, blankets, baskets, and boxes. No wonder that when the steamer sailed



From *u*
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LORD LONSDALE'S PARTY HALTING ON A FROZEN RIVER.

[Photograph.]

again she took on board men who had been waiting on the quay all night long lest the vessel should leave without them.

I asked Mr. De Windt what was the beginning of all this. "The region has been known to be auriferous for many years," he replied, "and a good few men have been at work there. The moment an exceptionally rich 'strike' was made a 'rush' followed. Men who had been working a 'grub-stake'

hired miners commanded £3 to £5 a day. How then can any city, within a thousand miles of such astounding wealth, hope to keep its firemen, its postmen, or other officials? Why, I know a stoker on a Yukon steamer who last year was only earning eight dollars a month and his board, but who went to the diggings and returned with a fortune of 170,000 dollars.

"So ingenious are the miners that they richly deserve their success. I heard of two or three who hired a little steamer for a peculiar purpose. They hauled the boat up on a bar, dragged out her engines, and then



From a]

LORD LONSDALE'S CAMP IN ALASKA.

[Photograph.

—one that barely paid—made a dash for their boats, throwing in their drunken companions *as ballast*, and then heading for the new creek. But the big boom commenced in September, 1896, when one George Cormack found gold in large quantities. Then came the inevitable rush. In the following spring, when water was available, gold was washed out in pounds' weight. Four pans went as high as 200 dollars. The washing-pan, by the way, about which one hears so much, is an ordinary sheet-iron thing for which one pays three dollars at Juneau. It is 18 in. in circumference and 4 in. or 5 in. deep. Some men made money at the rate of 17 dollars *per minute*; and fortunes of 100,000 dollars were made in less than two months, although the miners had only just commenced to work their claims.

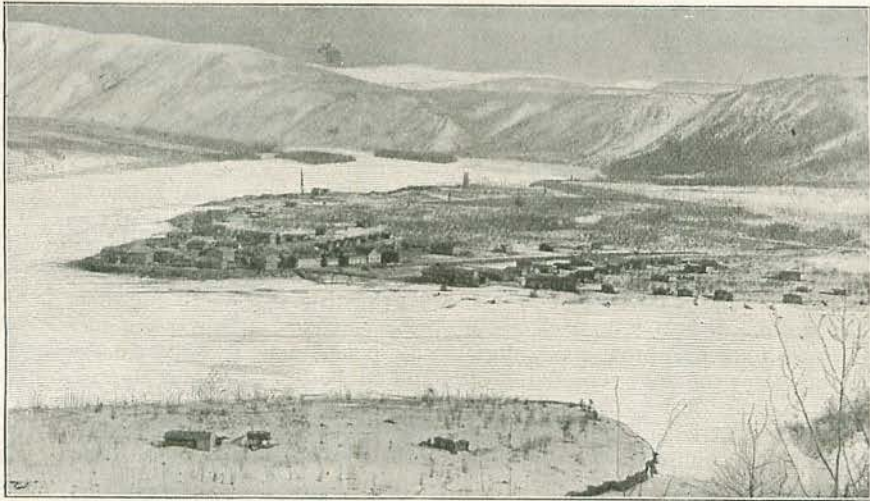
"Last year," pursued the explorer, "I stayed with Mr. Ogilvie, the Dominion Surveyor. He assured me that he knew of 204 dollars' worth of gold being washed out of one pan; and he mentioned that

made them work a set of pumps which supplied the sluicing boxes. With this crude machinery the fellows each cleared 1,000 dollars a month."

"Now let us return to the journey up the Yukon," I suggested. "We had negotiated Lake Bennett."

"Very well. Leaving the Lakes on June 26th, we entered the Lewes River, and next day reached the Grand Cañon Rapid, which is nearly a mile long, and dashes through perpendicular walls of rock from 50ft. to 100ft. high. The fall is 100ft. wide, and so swift, that the stream is 4ft. higher in the centre than at the sides!

"Next we dashed down a perfect mill-race for six miles to the White Horse Rapids—a place so fatal as to have received the name of the 'Miner's Grave.' Not a day passed that we did not see a cairn, or a rude wooden cross, marking the last resting-place of some drowned pilgrim to the land of gold. At Fort Selkirk, the Lewes River down which we journeyed from the Lakes unites with the



From a]

FORTY MILE CITY.

[Photograph.

Pelly, and the two together form the giant Yukon, which has a course of 2,044 miles.

"On the twenty-fifth day out from Juneau we reached Forty Mile City, one of two settlements on the Yukon that have sprung into existence since the gold rush; and there we beached for the last time the tiny craft that carried us safely for over 600 miles."

Forty Mile City is the central point of the new El-Dorado. It is in British territory. It was in Forty Mile Creek that the first "coarse" gold was found. "Any visions of civilized comforts inspired by the name," said Mr. De Windt, "were rudely dispelled. Forty Mile is (or was, a few months ago) a collection of eighty or ninety dismal log huts, scattered about anyhow, the marshy intervening spaces being littered with wood-shavings, empty tins, and other rubbish. Numerous tree-stumps testify to the mushroom growth of the camp. Huge placards, bearing the words 'Hotel Saloon,' and even 'Opera House' (a 'dive' of the lowest kind), adorn some of the larger buildings. Though bread is often scarce, whisky is never

lacking, and yet the place is a miracle of law and order. A detachment of the Canadian Mounted Police, under Inspector Constantine, have their barracks here, but could well be dispensed with.

"The spring of '98 will see *the* great rush," said Mr. De Windt, "but there's plenty of room. A hundred thousand miners might go prospecting in the Yukon Valley and be lost to one another. My impression is that there are streams richer even than the Klondike—the Pelly, the Lewes, the Porcupine, the Big Salmon, the Tanana, the White, the Hootalinqua, and the Stewart rivers, for example—especially the last-named. All are navigable tributaries of the Yukon."

The mode of travel in winter on the frozen



From a]

RIVER TRAVEL OVER THE FROZEN YUKON.

[Photograph.

Yukon River is shown in the next photo., which was taken near Forty Mile City. Mr. De Windt tells a tragic story in this connection. The sledge-dogs are not controlled by reins; and so intense is the cold in winter that when travellers are gliding across the frozen rivers the sledge has to be stopped at intervals, or the wind created would freeze the passengers to death. "A tenderfoot was one night travelling in a sledge with an Indian, when he (the tenderfoot) dropped his pipe. The sledge was stopped as soon as possible, and the Indian sent back about a hundred yards to recover the lost 'comfort.' While he was gone, the dogs started off on their own account. Mile after mile they sped on, and when at length they pulled up outside Joe Leduc's house, at Dawson, their solitary passenger was stiff and stark, his sightless eyes gazing straight ahead."

In addition to all the terrible hardships and dangers encountered on the journey, it seems that there is one other overwhelming curse at the Klondike and other Yukon mines. I allude to the mosquitoes, which swarm in summer.

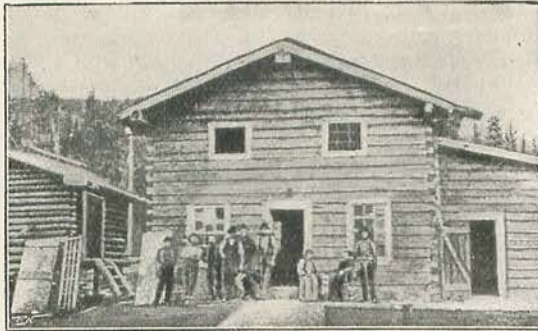
"Life is made unbearable," said Mr. De Windt. "For the first few days on the Yukon, conversation, sleep, and even eating are almost out of the question. I have camped out after a hard day's work, famished with hunger, and yet unable to raise a mouthful to my lips, owing to the persistent onslaughts of those awful mosquitoes. Dogs are tortured to death by them; deer and bear are driven into the rivers. The incessant irritation caused by the bites brings on positive illness. I shall never forget seeing ungloved and veiless 'tenderfeet,' whose faces and hands were mere masses of bleeding flesh."

We here reproduce a photograph of the Klondike cabin of Mr. Joe Leduc, one of the most persistent and successful of all the Yukon miners. As long ago as 1883, when Lieut. Schwatka, of the United States Army, was conducting his military reconnaissance from the Chilcoot Inlet to Fort Selkirk, he made the acquaintance of Joe Leduc, who was then "digging holes perseveringly and finding precious little in them." Mr. Leduc,

however, was the virtual creator of Dawson City, on the Klondike River, and is now a multi-millionaire. He will doubtless soon exchange his rough wooden cabin for a palace on Fifth Avenue.

When you reach the gold-fields, you seek out Inspector Constantine, the Government official in charge, and apply for a claim, before even commencing to prospect. "You get what is called a 'free miner's certificate.' It's called that because it isn't free; you pay five dollars a year for it, and there are several other charges. If you commence without this paper you are fined twenty-five dollars and all costs. The next step is the locating and recording of the claim you would like to work. The entry fee is twenty-five dollars for the first year, with an annual fee of 100 dollars. Dry diggings are, as nearly as possible, rectangular (100ft. square) and marked by four legal posts at the corners. Red tape is even here, you see. It is written:

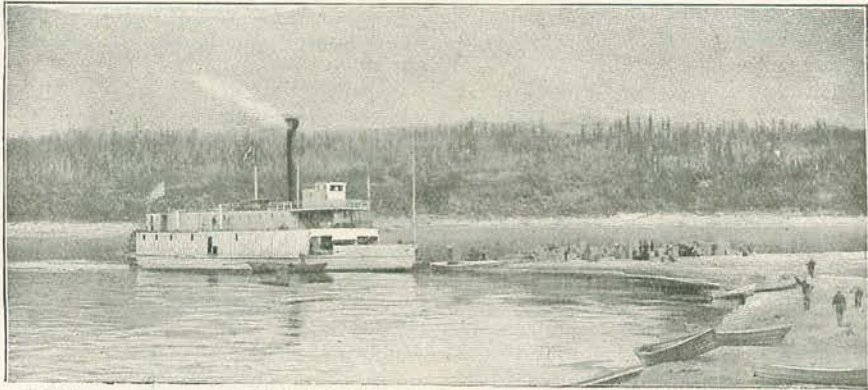
'Posts must be at least 4in. square'—as if that mattered. On one post must be written all sorts of particulars—names, dates, and the like. Creek and river claims are 500ft. long, by the way. If you leave your claim for more than seventy-two hours on end, anyone



From a] MR. JOE LEDUC'S CABIN AT DAWSON CITY. [Photograph.

may come in and take possession of it. There are quite a number of other regulations about tunnels, drains, water rights, and so forth." The miners have no great love for the Government officials, whom they do their best to baffle. The diggers are also very reticent about their earnings.

Thus there is the appalling journey, the awful cold of winter, the terrible mosquitoes in summer, and a scarcity of decent food at all times. Transportation companies are being formed, however, and doubtless things will be different next spring, when, among other things, the British Yukon Co. will place twenty stern-wheel steamers on the great river, and probably construct a narrow-gauge railway over the White Pass. But that there will be much suffering among the gold-seekers, no one doubts. When you hear of thousands of inexperienced persons, who wouldn't know iron pyrites from gold quartz,



From a

YUKON STEAMER TAKING SUPPLIES TO MINERS.

[Photograph.]

leaving all things and dashing for the formidable Chilcoot, with hundreds of tons of stores, you may be sure that many will perish on the way. The ignorance of some of the gold pilgrims is manifested in a private letter Mr. De Windt showed me. "You'd think they were off to a land flowing with milk and honey. Among their impedimenta are horses, ploughs, coops of chickens, and *mowing-machines!*"

The Alaska Commercial Company's steamer *Alice* is seen bringing her first cargo of the season to Forty Mile City, in the next illustration.

"During the summer season," Mr. De Windt told me, "one of the A. C. Co.'s steamers visits Forty Mile two or three times, on her way from St. Michael's. This is the sole fixed communication that exists between Forty Mile City and the outer world. From October till June the Yukon settlements are completely isolated by climatic conditions. The first up-river steamer, which arrives in July, after the break-up of the ice, generally finds them in a state of semi-starvation. 'For months we had a slim diet of salmon and cranberries,' wrote one American miner."

The break-up of the ice on the Yukon River is shown in the photo. here reproduced. The great sheet of ice is in places more than *thirteen feet* thick.

"Nothing will

deter the gold-seekers," said Mr. De Windt. "The regular steamers can't hold all that want to go, so special ships are being chartered, and the building-yards are overwhelmed with orders. The *Humboldt* was chartered by an astute individual, at Frisco, for 25,000 dollars, plus another 10,000 dollars for general expenses; but the speculator who hired the ship will receive at least 100,000 dollars from his passengers, his net profit on the transaction being 65,000 dollars. So, you see, the gold 'rush' brings money to adventurers other than miners."

Mr. De Windt, it is interesting to note, has been approached whilst in London by all classes seeking information about the Yukon diggings. "A titled lady wanted to set up a store at Forty Mile; and an aged clergyman said he'd like to send his sons out if there was a railway and a post-office nice and handy in the district. Letters poured in upon me at the rate of seventy a day, and when at length I protested, and said I would



From a

BREAK-UP OF ICE ON THE YUKON.

[Photograph.]

reply to no more without payment, cheques came along by every post. Truly, the gold fever is at our own doors."

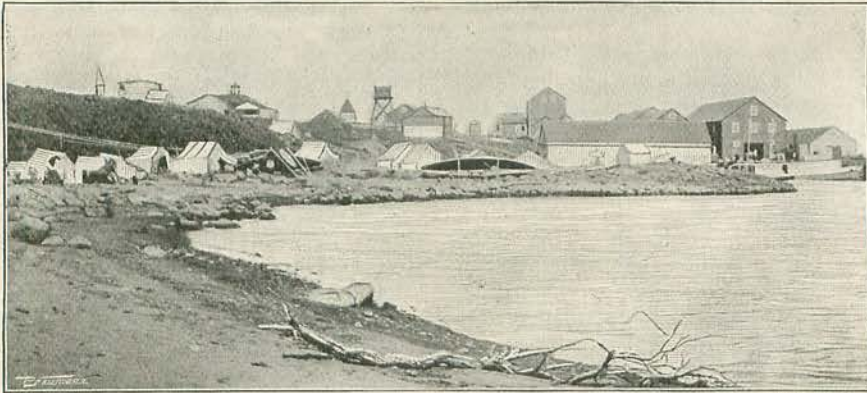
Circle City was Mr. De Windt's next stopping-place. "Last year," remarked Mr. De Windt, "Circle City contained 1,100 inhabitants, but that population might be doubled in a week. This being American territory, 'Stars and Stripes' of various sizes wave from many of the dingy camp dwellings, the drinking saloons being distinguished by banners of enormous size. The highest and lowest recorded temperature in the year here are respectively 98° in the shade and 80° below zero. I attended a ball at one of the saloons. It was a melancholy function. The long, low apartment was festooned with flags, and there was a bar at one end. The orchestra consisted of a violin and a guitar; it was almost drowned by the din at the bar and the stamping of heavy feet. Wrangles and fights took place at intervals. It was past midnight, but some guttering candles still struggled faintly with

gold-dust—a recognised form of currency on the Yukon, which fetches seventeen dollars an ounce."

Shortly after leaving Circle City, the Yukon widens into a huge lake over 100 miles in circumference, and covered with innumerable islands, which render navigation dangerous and difficult. The outlook when the river narrows again is not cheerful. A few huts line the low banks. Away to the horizon roll the vast plains of grey tundra, or moss; and on the southern bank will be noticed the dense smoke from the "Burning Mine," which was accidentally ignited by prospectors seven years ago, and has gone on burning ever since.

The mouth of the Yukon River (which is extraordinarily shallow) is reached at St. Michael's, a view whereof is here reproduced. St. Michael's is now an important place, owing to its position, and millions of dollars' worth of gold has already been shipped from it.

St. Michael's is on the island of the same



From a

ST. MICHAEL'S, AT THE MOUTH OF THE YUKON.

[Photograph.]

the Arctic twilight. The guests numbered sixty, and quite a score of dogs had strayed in through the open doorway. These latter seemed to excite no surprise or even remark, until the M.C., a giant in shirt-sleeves, proceeded to walk round and sprinkle the boards with powdered resin. He was quite unconscious of the fact that one of the hungry curs followed him closely and greedily devoured every atom as it fell! The dogs, by the way, are fed on fish, chiefly salmon. When this fails, bacon, at perhaps 5s. a pound, has literally to be 'thrown to the dogs.' A gambling saloon opened out of the ball-room, and was in full swing, poker, roulette, and faro being the favourite games. Most of the players staked little bags of

name, which is separated from the mainland of Alaska by a narrow strait. "It is a bright, clean little place," said Mr. De Windt, "contrasting with the slipshod 'cities' of the interior. The low, green hills around are dotted with the white tents of the Esquimaux, who travel here with furs. The inhabitants of St. Michael's are practically prisoners for nine months out of the year, November seeing the blue waters of Norton Sound converted into an icy desert. It was from here, in August, 1879, that the ill-fated *Jeannette* set out on a voyage destined to furnish a record of suffering unparalleled even in Arctic records.

"Of course," Mr. De Windt said, presently, "I ought to mention that the success of my

overland journey from New York to Paris virtually received its *coup de grâce* at St. Michael's, where I realized for the first time the impossibility of crossing Behring Straits on the ice. The American and Asiatic shores, however, are here only forty miles apart."

At length Mr. De Windt crossed to the Siberian coast in the U.S. Revenue cutter *Bear*, the notable vessel which rescued the Greeley Expedition. The explorer was "dumped down" at an awful place, called Oumwaidjik, a thousand miles north of Kamchatka, and peopled by the Tchuktchis—probably the most unspeakably filthy race on this earth. Here he landed on the morning of the 8th of September, 1895.

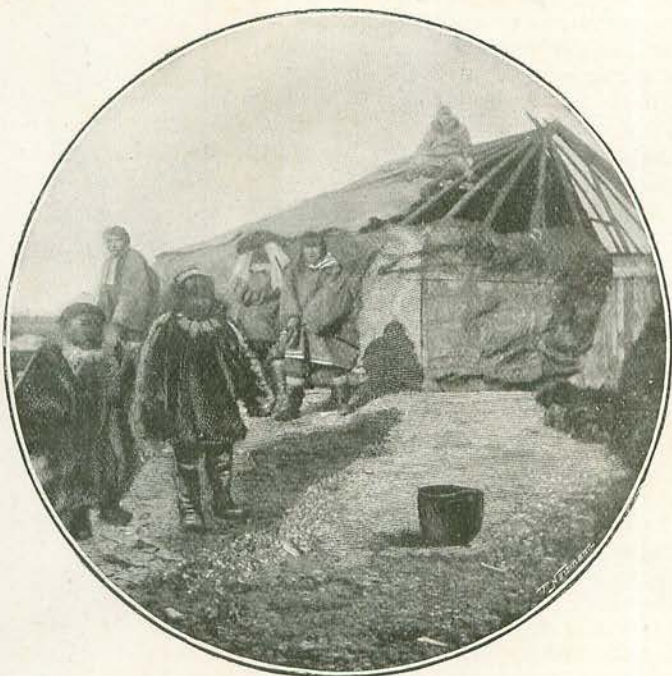
The photo. next reproduced shows the Tchuktchi hut in which Mr. De Windt lived. "There being no wood, this hut consisted of a frame-work of whale-ribs, covered with walrus hide. It was 18ft. in diameter and 10ft. high. The perpetual darkness was dimly lit by a saucer of seal-oil, which diffuses a disgusting odour."

The moment the U.S. cutter *Bear* disappeared, the Tchuktchis virtually made Mr. De Windt a prisoner, and the wonder is he escaped with his life through the many orgies indulged in by his captors. "There was nothing to be done," he told me, "but to hoist my little Union Jack on a whale-rib on the beach and hope for the best. The old folks," pursued Mr. De Windt, cheerily, "are strangled with a walrus thong, and the dogs come in for their bodies. The ceremony is enlivened with 'music' from a fish-skin tamboureen, beaten with a seal-bone."

Mr. De Windt was furnished by the Geographical Society with some hand-bills respecting Herr Andréé and his balloon. He gave the Tchuktchis some of these, and asked one of the chiefs, out of curiosity, what he would do if Andréé's balloon suddenly appeared in the sky. "Shoot it!" was the

immediate reply, which cannot fail to interest the R.G.S.

Of these and many other interesting things connected with Alaska and the North-West Territories did Mr. De Windt speak; and truly the adventures of this remarkable man would fill a library. "As to the great Klondike 'rush' next spring," he said, in conclusion, "there is no doubt it will alter the face of the entire region, the climate notwithstanding. Railways and steamships and telegraphs will soon be established. Fortunes will be made, and the unlucky forced to the wall. Sensational reports may be expected daily, for the place is a real Tom Tiddler's ground, honey-combed by rivers and creeks with sands of gold. There is plenty of room for all between the Klondike to the Cassiar. Let the



MR. DE WINDT'S HUT OF WHALE-RIBS AND WALRUS HIDE.
From a Photo. by Mr. Harry de Windt.

gold-seekers take their time and make prudent preparations. The ultimate result will doubtless be that a little-known region will be dotted with thriving cities; and the shouts of triumph from the fortunate few will drown the dying wails of the many who will fail."