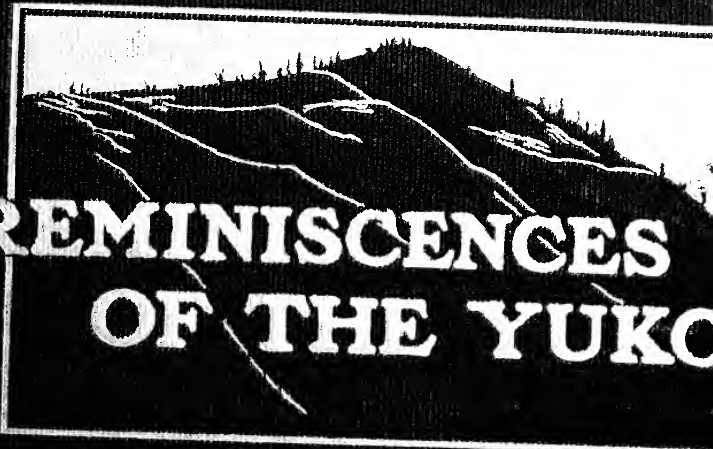

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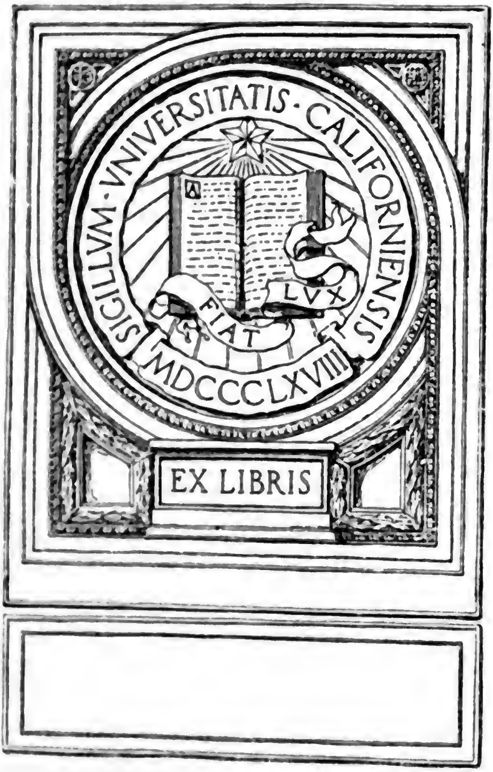

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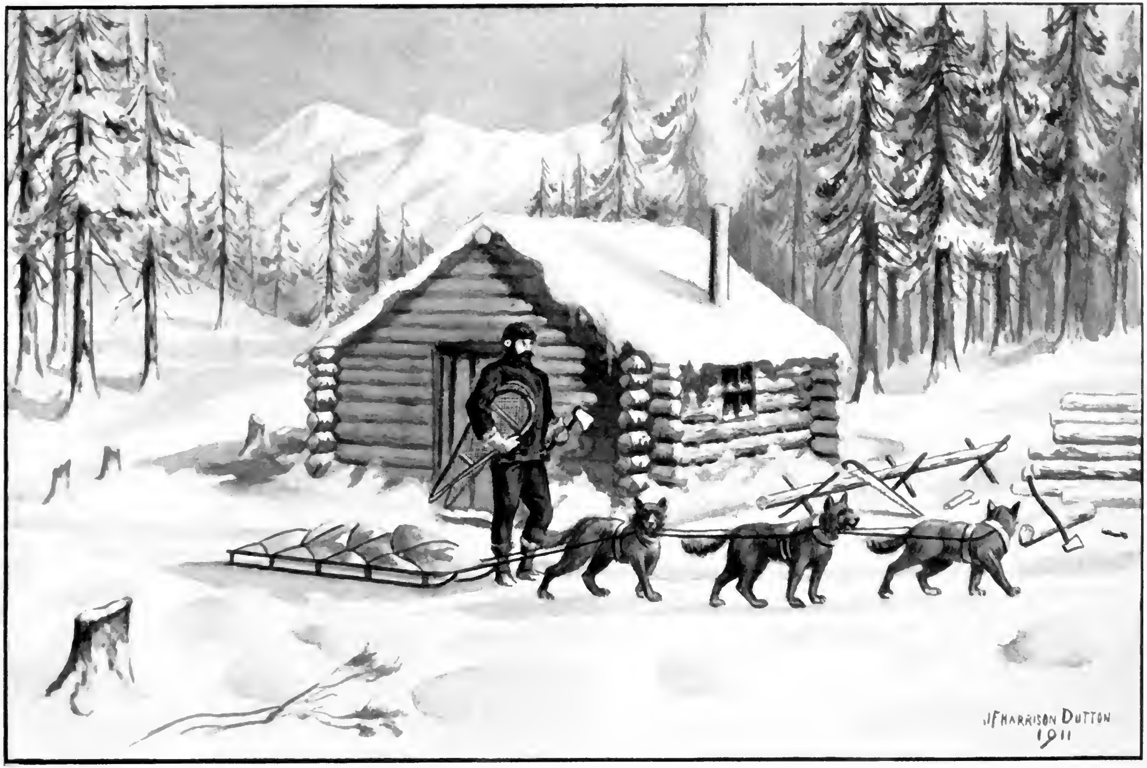
J. F. HARRISON DUTTON
1911

THE TRAPPER'S CABIN.

REMINISCENCES OF THE YUKON

BY THE HON.
STRATFORD TOLLEMACHE

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EDWARD ARNOLD
1912

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PREFACE

THE following chapters relate to my experiences in the Yukon from the spring of 1898 until the autumn of 1909, comprising a period of over eleven consecutive years. The first three years were employed principally in mining in the Yukon district, but owing to a severe accident, which resulted in permanent lameness, I was obliged to abandon mining altogether. For the next two years I was confined to Dawson, but when my foot became rather stronger I moved to the Pelly River, a tributary of the Yukon, and remained in the vicinity for about six years, where I gained my experience in fur and trapping.

So many books have appeared on the Yukon and northern regions that the subject has possibly become rather hackneyed. At the same time, I became acquainted with incidents and methods of life in those regions which I have not seen printed in other volumes, and which to a few people may possibly be of some interest.

As creeks are frequently alluded to in this volume, it may be explained that the term involves a different significance in Canada and the

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United States to what it implies in England. While in England the term is applied to small bays, in Canada and America the word is used for denoting a stream, such as Bonanza Creek or Eldorado Creek.

The sketches contained in this volume were drawn by Mr. Dutton of Chester.

STRATFORD TOLLEMACHE.

December 29, 1911.

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REMINISCENCES OF THE YUKON

CHAPTER I

THE YUKON VALLEY

If you examine a map of the north-western part of North America, you will find that the territory called Alaska not only comprises the large tract of country adjoining Behring Strait, but also a thin strip of coast-line extending down to about the fifty-third parallel of latitude, all of which belongs to the United States. This thin strip of coast-line proved for several years a source of contention between Canada and the United States, the Canadians residing in the Yukon being naturally annoyed that their outlet to the sea was cut off by it, especially as considerable doubt existed as to whom it legally belonged. The dispute was eventually referred to England for arbitration, and as the United States won practically every point, a valuable tract of country was, consequently, lost to Canada.

Alaska originally belonged to Russia. In Alaska and the lower parts of the Yukon River places are still called by Russian names, old

Russian families still exist, while the orthodox Greek Church is prevalent. The United States purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867 for the absurdly small figure of £1,440,000. Besides possessing valuable gold-mining properties, the country contains copper, fur, timber, and coal, while it has also developed an enormous trade in canning salmon. In 1909, the output from Alaska in gold and fish amounted to £6,000,000, while its total cash trade with the United States amounted to more than £10,000,000. This valuable tract of territory is equal in extent to Great Britain and Ireland, France and Spain combined, so that Russia, by disposing of the country for such an absurdly small figure, became a heavy loser by the transaction.

The Yukon River rises in the mountains close to the Alaskan coast, at about the sixtieth parallel of latitude. It flows north-west as far as Fort Yukon, which is just inside the Arctic Circle, and then turns south-west and eventually flows into Behring Strait. The total length of the river is rather over 2000 miles long, of which the upper part (called by various names) flows for about 700 miles through Canadian territory, while the lower part flows through Alaskan territory. Dawson City, at the mouth of the river Klondyke, a tributary of the Yukon, is in Canadian territory, and about 60 miles from the Alaskan boundary. The town is situated on about the sixty-fourth parallel of latitude which would make it about 150 miles from the Arctic Circle.

The scenery on the Yukon is striking at first, but eventually becomes monotonous. The country is entirely mountainous and densely wooded with spruce trees, intermingled with birch and poplar.[1] The whole of that northern part of Canada, for hundreds of square miles, forms practically one dense forest, almost entirely of spruce, and composed of mountains and valleys, rivers, streams, and lakes full of fish. The only highways consist of the main rivers and their affluents, so the scanty population is necessarily confined to their banks. To penetrate for any considerable distance into this dense forest, conveying provisions and necessary outfit through the bush, over mountains and across valleys, proves too difficult and hazardous a task for many people to undertake, and there must be hundreds of square miles in that northern region practically unexplored.

The Yukon River is navigable for fairly large steamers for a distance of about 2000 miles from the mouth, but above that point steamers are unable to ascend, owing to some bad rapids called the Whitehorse Rapids. The small town of Whitehorse is situated at the head of navigation, and is connected by a railway, 110 miles long, with a town called Skagway, on the Alaskan coast. The trains on this railway do not travel at express speed, as they require nine hours to accomplish the 110 miles, and although there is only one class—and that one practically "third"—the exorbitant price of £4 is charged for the journey.

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[1] The poplars in the Yukon are analogous to the cotton-wood trees, so prevalent in Canada and the United States, and are quite different to the tall poplars encountered in England.

The scenery on the route is very striking, the line being blasted out of the side of the mountain, and winding along the valley with waterfalls and mountain streams dashing down beside it. Any one acquainted with Skagway, who keeps a sharp look out of the carriage window, will notice lying near the line a bare flat rock, on which a black cross has been erected. The rock is about 7 feet square and about 3 feet thick, and is now lying on its face, although at one time it was standing upright on its end. During the construction of the line, two men who were engaged in blasting had lighted a fuse and crouched behind the rock for shelter. The vibration of the blast overturned the rock, which must have been lightly balanced, and it fell over on its face flat on the two men. Their bodies were never recovered, and they still rest under the rock with the black cross surmounting it.

Skagway, at the time of the Klondyke boom in 1898, when people were pouring into the country by the thousand, was a thriving place, composed of the "toughest" element, a term which can be appreciated by those acquainted with the ruffianism and lawlessness that usually predominated in Western American mining camps. Skagway was then practically controlled by a gang of roughs headed by a gentleman named Soapy ~~Bill~~ Smith. They all, of course, carried revolvers, and knew how to use them, and proceeded to enrich themselves by holding up and robbing people in the calmest manner possible. This continued for a considerable time, until eventually a man named Read, who was evidently a fine character, was appointed sheriff of Skagway, and determined to break up the Soapy Bill gang. In Western American mining camps it is often a difficult matter to induce the sheriff, who is responsible for law and order, to take strong measures against ruffians of this class, for the simple reason that he is usually a "sleeping partner" with the gang, and receives a share of the loot. Soapy Bill became aware of ~~Read~~'s Reed intentions, and when they next encountered one another in the street, both drew their revolvers and commenced firing, and both were killed.

The Aurora Borealis, generally called in the Yukon the Northern Lights, is of course a well-known phenomenon, but it forms such a characteristic feature of the North, that a short description may not be out of place here. It usually consists of a broad white band across the sky, which constantly alters in shape and appearance. Long streamers will dart out, and it will suddenly flash from one part of the sky to another. The phenomenon is striking to watch, and is generally more brilliant in very cold weather, probably because the atmosphere is then clearer. The reflection of the snow is the usual explanation for it in the

Yukon; but this does not appear very plausible, as the Northern Lights rarely occur in temperate latitudes, and as snow would be reflected from the surface, the depth would make no difference in the reflection.

I remember reading an explanation several years ago, which connected the Northern Lights with the Rontgen or X-rays. The X-rays, as is well known, are produced by forcing electricity through a vacuum, and a Crooke's vacuum tube, when electricity has been forced into it, bears a strong resemblance to the Northern Lights. According to the explanation, the earth receives from the sun a vast amount of electricity, which has travelled through the intermediate vacuum of space; space, in spite of the ether, being a more perfect vacuum than can be produced in a laboratory. The electricity is composed of positive and negative poles, of which one set is drawn towards the poles of the earth, and produces the Northern and Southern Lights, while the other set is drawn towards the Equator, and accounts for the magnetic storms in the tropics.

The ice in the Yukon generally jams or becomes solid about the end of October, although different winters vary considerably in severity. Thin films of ice will first be noticed floating on the surface of the water, and these will gradually become larger and thicker, until eventually they form great solid cakes of ice, which crash and grind against each other as they float down with the current. At the same time, ice called "shore-ice" is formed along the banks, which gradually extends further and further into the river. Boats sometimes cross the river under these conditions, although rowing is of course impossible, the boat being worked across by degrees, the man pushing with the oar or paddle against the ice-cakes, and guiding the boat between them. Care must be taken to prevent the boat or canoe from becoming jammed between two ice-cakes, as it might crumple up like paper, especially where the current is strong and the ice-cakes are moving with considerable force. I have occasionally been obliged to cross the river under these conditions, when the ice is what is called "running thick," and although some people do not appear to mind it, I do not personally consider it a very safe performance.

Several years ago, three men were proceeding down the Yukon in a small boat when the ice was running thick, intending to land at Dawson, but when close to the bank their boat became jammed between an ice-cake and the shore-ice, and was forced into such a position that it came sideways to the current. The side of the boat was broken in by the pressure of the ice-cake, and the boat quickly swamped by the force of the current, and although several people were standing on the bank within a few yards of the accident, the three men were swept by the current under the shore-ice, and disappeared before assistance could be rendered.

The river eventually becomes so full of ice that the water is quite concealed, except for occasional holes scattered about, and these huge ice-cakes afford a fine spectacle, floating down the river and grinding against each other and the shore-ice, making a loud, grinding noise somewhat resembling that of a saw-mill. As they increase in size and thickness and become more firmly wedged together, their motion becomes slower and slower, till eventually they cease moving, and the river is said to be jammed. People can walk across the river almost immediately after the ice has jammed, but considerable nerve is required, except to those accustomed to it, as many weak spots exist between the ice-cakes, so that a pole must be carried to test the ice in front. Except in eddies and places where the current is slack, the ice is by no means smooth when the river is frozen over, as the ice-cakes are piled up in hummocks, and a road must be cut through them before teams can be driven over.

The ice in the spring becomes rotten and honeycombed, until eventually it is broken up by the force of the current. This is sometimes a magnificent spectacle, when enormous blocks of ice, which have reached a thickness of several feet during the past winter, are banged together by the current, and turn over and over, while others come crashing down and pile on the top of them. On these occasions the river sometimes rises very rapidly. The current becomes blocked by an ice jam across a narrow place in the river, and it will then occasionally rise 8 or

9 feet, and perhaps more, within a few hours. When the current has forced away the jam the river will fall again just as rapidly, leaving the banks lined with huge blocks of ice.

On these occasions the river will sometimes overflow its banks, which may be exceedingly unpleasant for people residing in the vicinity. The blocks of ice sweeping over the banks are liable to demolish any cabin with which they may come in contact. Near the mouth of the Pelly River, an affluent of the Yukon, a road-house, or way-side inn, is situated, and during one of these ice jams the occupants were forced to retreat hurriedly up the mountain side. The ice was fortunately obstructed by a clump of trees in the vicinity, but the cabin was partly submerged by the current before the river had subsided to its normal level.

In the Yukon there is a complete absence of those singing birds which so greatly enliven the woods in England, and when travelling through the forest one is struck by the dead silence that always prevails, and this, combined with the dreariness of almost perpetual spruce trees, produces rather a depressing effect. The most common companion in the woods consists of a bird with a grey plumage about the size of a jay, which appears to be ubiquitous in the Yukon and other parts of Canada, and as soon as a camp is pitched one or more of these birds is sure to appear. The bird is a very bold and determined thief, and goes by the name of the "camp-robber."

No crows exist in the Yukon, but ravens of a large size are very prevalent, especially about Dawson, where they feed on the garbage, and, as they are useful as scavengers, the penalty of a fine is imposed for killing them. They are extremely hardy, and can be seen perched on an ice-cake on the river, when the temperature is 50° or more below zero, with complete unconcern. In the spring of the year some flocks of birds about the size of sparrows appear, called snow-birds owing to their white plumage. In the summer they change their plumage and resemble sparrows, and during the spring, when their colour commences to change, they assume a curious mottled appearance, like sparrows with white splodges.

Except the "camp-robber," only one species of small bird remains in the Yukon during the winter. It resembles a tomtit, and retains its summer colouring throughout the winter, instead of assuming a white plumage like the snow-bird and the ptarmigan. This variety is not very common, but can occasionally be observed flitting about in the coldest weather, and as no berries or insects exist during the long winter months, I cannot imagine what it feeds on unless it be the spruce brush. A large species of hawk is fairly common in the Yukon, while the beautiful large silver owl is also occasionally encountered.

In some parts of the Yukon and its tributaries the abundance of wild berries is extraordinary, and forms a most useful substitute for fresh fruit, of which only imported oranges and apples are obtainable, and these can only be purchased at exorbitant prices at Dawson and a few trading posts on the Yukon. The principal wild berries consist of strawberries, raspberries, cranberries, and black and red currants, while on the higher slopes blueberries, which are analogous to the English bilberries, are found in abundance. They do not become ripe before the middle of August, so the season for gathering them does not last very long. When travelling during the summer or autumn to my winter quarters, I generally supplied myself with an extra amount of sugar, and if situated in a favourable locality, I was able to make enough jams and preserves out of wild berries to last during the ensuing winter.

During my last spring in the Yukon the ice in the river broke up about the middle of May, and as it was freezing hard about the middle of September, we were only just over four months without ice or snow. The summers in the Yukon are to a great extent spoilt by the mosquitoes, and although in a town like Dawson they may not be so numerous, when travelling up the river or through the woods they attack you in shoals. I have experienced mosquitoes in India, Burmah, and the Malay Peninsula, but in the tropics they do not compare in numbers to the masses that are encountered in Arctic regions, while their eggs must possess extraordinary vitality, as they remain frozen solid for about six months of the year. Whether the mosquito responsible for malaria exists in the Yukon I am not aware, but such a dry, bracing atmosphere would afford no foothold for such a disease, and its non-existence there is due probably more to the climate than to the possible absence of any particular mosquito.

The Yukon is situated too far north to be of much value for agricultural purposes, but in the vicinity of Dawson and elsewhere several ranches exist, while certain products like oats, potatoes, and cabbages mature and become ripe. Unfortunately the prevalence of summer frosts, although varying in severity in different years, are a handicap to farming. A person might wake up in Dawson in the middle of July and find the ground outside the cabin frozen solid, with the thermometer registering perhaps 20° or more below freezing point. When the sun rises the temperature becomes warm again, and although these summer frosts only last for three or four days, they are quite sufficient seriously to affect the crops.

The temperature during the winter varies greatly in different years, and out of my eleven consecutive winters in the Yukon, the winter of 1908 was the coldest experienced. For over two months the temperature was seldom above 50° below zero Fahr., for a long time it was down to 60° below zero, and occasionally it dropped to 75° below zero, while even up to the middle of April the temperature fell to 30° below zero, although during the middle of the day it became warmer. These temperatures were taken from a Negretti and Zambra thermometer at Fort Selkirk. The climate in the Yukon is, however, exceedingly dry, and a dry cold is far less trying than a damp cold would be of the same temperature. Except early in the winter or late in the spring, when the climate is warmer and more damp, it would be impossible to make snowballs, as the snow is too dry to stick together, so that if a handful of snow is taken up and pressed, it will not congeal, but simply crumbles away like dry sand. I have never come across the Esquimaux who make snow-houses, but they may live nearer the coast, where the climate is damper and the snow more adhesive.

In 1898 thousands of people poured into the Yukon, and as but few of them had ever experienced an Arctic winter, it was natural that numerous accidents should occur. The following incident was related to me by an acquaintance at Fort Selkirk, who formerly conveyed the mails between Circle City and Fort Yukon, and possessed a dog-team for the purpose. He was travelling with the mails one evening, when he came across a tent near the trail with a stovepipe projecting from the roof, and on looking into the tent perceived a man kneeling down facing the stove. He made some remark, but not receiving any answer he touched the man on the shoulder, and discovered that he was dead and frozen stiff. He looked into the stove, where he found two candles with some partly burnt shavings under them, while some sticks had been placed on the top. The man had managed to erect the tent and fix the stove, and, as he was probably cold and exhausted, he had evidently put in two candles in order to accelerate the fire. Other matches were found in his pocket, but his strength must have given out or the cold made him drowsy, probably both, so he knelt before the stove, waiting to receive the warmth, and when the candles failed to light he was frozen in that position.

Nearly every winter a chenook or warm wind suddenly springs up, which may last for three or four days, and during that period the temperature will rise above zero, or even sometimes above freezing point, so that a shower of rain has occasionally been known to occur about Christmas time. When the temperature rises in the winter to zero Fahr. the climate is by no means pleasant, as the air becomes damp and feels muggy and relaxing. A temperature of 25° below zero is invigorating and pleasant for travelling, provided there is no wind. Forty degrees below zero feels decidedly chilly, while 50° below zero is extremely cold, and it is not then pleasant to be out of doors for very long. This extreme cold, which generally comes in snaps, does not usually last more than about a week or ten days at a time, and although the winter of 1908 was exceptionally severe, these very cold snaps do not generally occur more than two or three times during the winter. Some people in the Yukon try to pretend that they do not mind this extreme cold—50° or more below zero—but I have always noticed that they are extremely glad to enter a warm cabin when the opportunity occurs.

Thank heaven, in the Yukon we are not troubled often with those blizzards so prevalent in Manitoba and the prairie parts of Canada. When the temperature is very low the air is usually perfectly still, the atmosphere clear, and the moon and stars brilliant. It is never cloudy, and never snows when very cold, but only when the temperature has moderated.

Personally I have never been seriously frozen, although my face and fingers have occasionally been more or less frost-bitten. When frost-bitten, or frozen as it is generally called in the Yukon, a small patch as white as a table-cloth will appear, and unless remedies are at once applied, the frozen part will extend and the white patch with it. It is not easy to ascertain when the face becomes frozen, as the white patch cannot be discerned, while the face will naturally feel numb from cold before freezing commences. When travelling, I would sometimes encounter men with a white patch on their face showing frost-bite, and would always inform them of the fact, so that precautions could be taken, while occasionally I have been given the same information myself.

A common remedy consists in rubbing the infected part with snow, but the rubbing must be very gentle, as the skin when frozen easily rubs off, and matters will then be considerably worse. If a cabin is near, cold water will draw out the frost, although in very severe cases coal-oil is more effective. Cold and not warm water must invariably be used for the purpose, while a person when frost-bitten should not approach too near a fire, as the frost must be drawn out gradually, or blood poisoning will ensue. If a badly frozen hand is placed in a basin of cold water, a film of ice, produced from the frost drawn out of the hand, will gradually appear on the surface of the water.

Several years ago, while I was laid up in the Dawson Hospital with a broken ankle, a man was brought in one night with his fingers badly frozen. The temperature was about 50° below zero, and the man, who had been spending a convivial evening, had become rather intoxicated. He managed somehow to return to his cabin, and had taken off his mitts to unlock the door, when the cold combined with the whisky overpowered him, and he fell down insensible on the snow. Luckily, a man soon afterwards passed by with a dog team, and observing him lying on the snow with his mitts off, in a temperature of 50° below zero, he promptly placed him on the sleigh and drove to the hospital. The doctor was in bed at the time, and the night attendant, who ought to have known better, bathed his hands with warm water, which was the worst remedy possible. The result was that blood poisoning shortly intervened, so that all his fingers and both thumbs had to be amputated. Later on another operation was performed, as the blood poison had extended to one of his hands, and about half of it was amputated. I never heard what became of him afterwards, but as he was a man of between fifty and sixty years of age, who depended on manual labour for his livelihood, his convivial evening had proved a costly experience.

It may here be mentioned that gloves with separate partitions for the fingers are never worn in cold climates, except during the summer, as the fingers, if exposed on all sides to the air, would soon begin to freeze. Coverings called mitts are always worn in northern regions during the winter, containing a separate partition for the thumb only, the fingers being all enclosed together in a kind of bag.

Being frost-bitten causes no pain whatever, as the part frozen simply becomes numb and loses all sense of feeling, but thawing out again is a very different experience, and resembles the application of a hot iron. A slight frost-bite will be sore for perhaps a week, the skin peels off, and the part affected must not be exposed too much to the cold, which might cause erysipelas to set in. Being actually frozen to death is a most painless operation, as a person overcome by the cold simply becomes drowsy, and feels an intense desire to lie down and sleep. If this feeling prevails the only remedy is to fight against it, because if once any one gives way to this condition and lies down, he will go straight to sleep, and the chances of his ever waking up again are extremely remote.

An acquaintance in the Yukon related to me a very unpleasant experience of this description, although fortunately attended with no fatal results. He was travelling during the winter with a companion on the Stuart River, a tributary of the Yukon. They had already undergone a long tramp in severe weather, and his companion, gradually overcome with exhaustion and the cold, became drowsy and felt an intense desire to lie down and sleep. As this would have been fatal, he took his companion's arm, and by this means managed to proceed for a considerable distance, although he was obliged to shake him continually in order to keep him awake. Fortunately a cabin was now within a reasonable distance, but he was himself exhausted from dragging his friend along after a hard day's tramp, and realised that it would be impossible to arrive at the cabin by this means. He, therefore, placed the man down with his back against a tree, and after making a camp fire started off to the cabin for assistance. Two men were working there, who, on hearing his story, promptly hitched up a dog team and started off for his companion. They found him fast asleep on the snow, but as the camp fire was still burning they were in time to save his life, and after placing him on the sleigh conveyed him back to the cabin.

In some places on the Yukon and its tributaries, the presence of warm springs produces holes in the ice, which may remain entirely open, or be covered with a thin layer of ice and snow, and consequently a person travelling on the river may walk into one unexpectedly. This may only result in a wetting, but in cold weather the wet feet will quickly freeze and the damp clothes become solid with ice. When travelling during the winter, people generally carry a light axe and matches in case of necessity, so that when an occasion like this arises the only alternative, unless a cabin is near, is to proceed to the bank, and light a camp fire to dry the wet clothes.

During the winter of 1898, a man was frozen to death through walking into a hole on the Klondyke River. The hole was situated near the bank where the water was not very deep, so he was soon able to scramble out, but his wet trousers and moccasins quickly froze solid and became like bars of iron. He endeavoured to light a camp fire, but a slight breeze must have prevailed at the time, as, although he had plenty of matches, he was unable to start the fire. He was probably aware of his danger and lost his head, which made him bungle, and as match after match failed, so would his nervousness increase. His mitts had been taken off to light the matches, so unless the fire was started quickly, his fingers would soon begin to freeze and become numb and useless. He was eventually found on the snow, frozen stiff as a board, while the shavings for the fire, with his mitts and axe, were lying near him, and matches strewn about.

It may here be mentioned that leather boots cannot be worn during the winter, as the feet in consequence would soon become cold, so the usual footwear consists of Indian moccasins, made of cariboo or moose hide without any soles, and tanned soft, while three pairs of woollen socks are usually worn inside them.

Another man was frozen to death in the Yukon through getting his clothes wet, although in this case the cause was sheer carelessness. While resting in a cabin on his way to Fort Yukon, he had walked down to the river in the evening and fallen into a water hole, getting wet nearly up to his waist. He scrambled out and returned to the cabin to dry his wet clothes, but being in a great hurry to reach Port Yukon, he put them on again before they were thoroughly dry. Another man in the cabin advised him to make certain they were thoroughly dry, but he insisted on starting, and his frozen body was afterwards discovered on the trail, not very far from the cabin which he had just left, and heading towards it. It was noticed from his tracks that he had crawled the latter part of his journey on his hands and knees. He had evidently found his damp clothes beginning to freeze on him, and must have decided that his only chance was to retrace his steps and regain the cabin in time. When he was no longer able to walk, with his stiffened clothes and numbed limbs, he had still made a desperate effort to regain the cabin by crawling.

In a country like the Yukon it is often difficult to ascertain the proper temperature, owing to the absence of accurate thermometers; and when I was living in Dawson, several years ago, there were dozens of thermometers in the place, but very few were reliable. A mercury thermometer becomes of course useless, as mercury freezes at a temperature of about 40° below zero, so the spirit thermometer is the only one employed, and these vary to a large extent. Thermometers by Negretti and Zambra and other well-known firms can, of course, be relied on, but these are expensive and are rarely used in Dawson. The cheaper class of thermometers were generally employed, which were fairly accurate until the temperature dropped to about 30° below zero; but below that temperature the alcohol, probably owing to its impurity, appeared to congeal, so that they recorded temperatures far colder than the actual conditions.

It is curious what an effect can be produced on the feelings by imagination. A man might stroll down the street in Dawson, not feeling particularly cold, until he happened to see a thermometer, probably a cheap one, which recorded a temperature of perhaps 50° or 60° below zero, upon which he would immediately begin to shiver and imagine he was freezing. Later on he might meet a policeman and inquire the temperature at the barracks, where they have a Negretti and

Zambra thermometer. The policeman would probably mention that it was about 30° below zero, upon which he would give a sigh of relief and feel comparatively warm again. This may appear an exaggeration, but many people—most inhabitants of the Yukon, indeed—have experienced the same sort of sensation, only they do not care to own it.

CHAPTER II

MY TRIP TO THE KLONDYKE IN 1898

About sixty miles below Dawson a river called Forty Mile Creek, about 150 miles long, flows into the Yukon. For many years Forty Mile Creek had been the centre of the mining district in that part of the Yukon, and a number of miners were congregated on the river, working their different claims. In 1896 a miner started from Forty Mile Creek on an exploring expedition, and worked his way up the Yukon, until he arrived at the mouth of the Klondyke River. He proceeded up the Klondyke River for about five miles, when he arrived at the mouth of a small affluent flowing into it, which was afterwards called Bonanza Creek. About ten miles up Bonanza Creek he examined the gravel, and, on discovering rich indications of gold, promptly staked a claim and returned to Forty Mile Creek, where he reported the matter. On hearing the news, the people at Forty Mile Creek immediately rushed, or stampeded, as it is generally called in the Yukon, to Bonanza Creek, each one being eager to arrive in time to choose his ground and stake a claim.

"Staking a claim" consists in cutting a stake about four feet long and about four inches in diameter, and driving it into the ground where the claim is required. The top of the stake is squared with an axe, and the miner writes on its face, "I claim 500 feet up stream," adding the date with his name. He then paces 500 feet up stream, drives in another stake, and claims 500 feet down stream in the same manner, after which he proceeds to the nearest mining or recording office, where he pays a fee and records his claim. This gives him the sole right to mine the ground between his stakes, on payment each year of a certain fee and a percentage of the gold excavated, while no one else is allowed to interfere, or to mine the ground on his particular claim.

The size of claims have varied at different periods, but when gold on Bonanza Creek was first discovered, each person possessing a mining licence was entitled to stake a claim of 500 feet up or down stream, the breadth of the valley between his stakes being also included as part of the claim. A mining licence, which could be obtained at the mining office, cost at that time £2, and lasted for one year. When a discovery of gold on a creek has been reported, there may be three times as many people stampeding to the spot as there are claims available, so that the same ground during the excitement may be staked three or four times over by different people. Of course, the person who stakes first is properly speaking entitled to the ground, but this is often a difficult matter to prove, and, consequently, there is not only a stampede to the creek, but after the claims have been staked, another stampede occurs back to the recording office. This may be situated a long distance from the locality, and the person who is able to record the claim first will probably be the one who obtains the ground.

About ten miles up Bonanza Creek a small stream flows into it, which was afterwards called Eldorado Creek. The first batch of stampeders ignored Eldorado Creek, and chose their ground on Bonanza Creek, but others who arrived afterwards, on finding that Bonanza Creek was already taken up, staked their claims on Eldorado Creek, which turned out to be the richer of the two. Some parts of Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks were undoubtedly enormously rich, and the usual exaggerated reports eventually reached the outside world. A perfect fever of excitement prevailed, in consequence, both in Canada and America, while the contagion spread to a large extent even to Europe. Comparatively few of those infected with the gold craze knew anything about mining, while many even imagined that on arriving at the Klondyke, they would promptly proceed to dig up gold nuggets like potatoes. The result was that numbers of people gave up lucrative professions or sold their farms, in order to enable them to reach this extraordinary country, where, according to their ideas, fortunes could be obtained without any trouble and within a few weeks.

The difficulties of getting into the country, which entailed transporting an outfit and provisions, were considerable, while the journey as far as Dawson could only be completed during the summer months, when the Yukon was open for navigation. A certain number of people managed to arrive at the Klondyke in 1897, but by far the majority made up their minds too late to attempt the journey that summer, and consequently the great stampede into the country occurred in 1898.

At the time of the boom I was staying at Victoria, on Vancouver Island, and when marvellous reports were continually arriving and being circulated, Victoria, like every other place, naturally became infected with the gold fever. There is no doubt that these exaggerated reports did not all originate in the Klondyke, as in many other places people were indirectly interested in booming the country. The stores in Vancouver, Seattle, and other Pacific towns procured large extra supplies in provisions and outfits, and depended on the extent of the boom to enable them to dispose of their goods. The steamboat companies also chartered extra steamers in anticipation of a huge influx of passengers for the Alaskan coast, and consequently all sorts of glowing reports were manufactured in the towns on the Pacific coast and circulated amongst the people, which were utterly at variance with the facts.

I had resided off and on in British Columbia for many years before the Klondyke boom, and had, therefore, experienced enough mining to know that the reports must be greatly exaggerated. At the same time, opportunities for making money might possibly exist, and accordingly I started off with two companions in 1898. There were three or four routes available for getting into the country, and the one we chose was considerably advertised as being the best, although it turned out to be about the worst. It was very much longer than another route which we might have taken, while it presented greater difficulties.

After purchasing an outfit in Victoria, together with three sleighs and twelve dogs, we proceeded in a small and very dirty steamer to a place called Wrangle, on the Alaskan coast, near the mouth of the river Stickene. The journey took about four or five days to accomplish, and as the steamer was frightfully overcrowded with excited stampeders, we were simply packed like sardines. We reached Wrangle about the beginning of March, and here we hired a small boat to convey ourselves and the outfit to the Stickene River. This was still frozen over, so we pitched our camp on the river bank near the ice.

Our intention was to travel with the sleighs up the Stickene, till we arrived at a place called Telegraph Creek, about 250 miles from the mouth of the river. The trail here branched off from the Stickene River and struck across country for about 150 miles, till it eventually arrived at a small stream, which formed the head waters of one of the branches of the Yukon. This small stream is an affluent of the Teslin River, which flows into the upper end of a large lake called Teslin Lake, about 100 miles long, while at the lower end of the lake the Hootalinqua River rises, which flows into the Yukon. On arriving at the small stream a boat would be built, so that when the rivers were open for navigation, we could row down the stream into the Teslin River and down the river to Teslin Lake. After crossing the lake we would row down the Hootalinqua River into the Yukon, and then down the Yukon till we eventually arrived at Dawson, the total boat journey comprising a distance of about seven hundred miles. The commencement of the spring is generally a good time for travelling with sleighs, as the sun then rises well above the horizon and thaws the surface of the snow. This freezes again at night, forming a hard crust, which is slippery and perfect for travelling over early in the morning.

On arriving at the mouth of the Stickene, we found over a thousand people already encamped there, while fresh parties were continually appearing. Tents were pitched among the spruce trees by the dozen, a heterogeneous mass of articles were strewed all over the place, while dogs tied up near their masters' tents were barking and howling in hundreds. It was interesting to watch the different parties and their various methods of preparing for the journey. Many were evidently old campers, probably old stampeders, who regarded everything with perfect composure and were thoroughly acquainted with the business. To a vast number, fresh from the cities, camp life and dogs and sleighs formed an entirely new experience, so that they neither knew what to do nor where to begin. Everything appeared to be in a muddle, altercations and brawls were occasionally intermingled with free fights, and these, mixed with the howling of the dogs, created a perfect pandemonium.

It required about a day to complete our preparations, the outfit being divided into three loads and distributed amongst the three sleighs. Four dogs were attached to each sleigh, and they were required to draw about 550 lbs., or about 40 stone per sleigh, which, on a trail in good condition, would be considered a fair load. Our journey commenced each day at two o'clock in the morning, which gave us the advantage of the hard crust on the snow, so that we were able to proceed for a considerable distance before the sun's heat was strong enough to melt it. There was always a considerable number travelling together and camping in the same locality, so that each night the camp would appear like a small city of tents. We were no longer bothered by howling and barking from the dogs. After their heavy day's work they had neither bark nor howl left in them, and when their supper was completed they were glad enough to curl up in the snow and sleep.

For about a week progress was fairly satisfactory, but unfortunately the spring this year happened to arrive extraordinarily early, the warm weather breaking upon us about three weeks sooner than was anticipated, and we consequently commenced the sleigh journey just about the time when we ought to have been completing it. The last two or three days had been cloudy and rather sultry, which made people anxious, but the change came very suddenly, and one day to everybody's disgust it began to rain heavily, which turned all the snow into slush, while at the same time it ceased to freeze at night.

The difficulty of dragging the sleighs through the heavy slush enormously increased the work, and we were obliged to keep pushing the sleighs with all our strength behind, while the dogs pulled and tugged in front. Under such conditions progress was necessarily slow, especially as we were repeatedly obliged to stop in order to rest both ourselves and the dogs. After toiling along for two days, it became apparent that to accomplish the journey in this manner was absolutely hopeless. There were still about 300 miles of sleighing before us, and at this rate we would have exhausted ourselves and our dogs and provisions before we had accomplished half of it.

The only means of completing the journey was to lighten the loads, so we accordingly dispensed with everything except the barest necessities, including a blanket apiece and nearly all our clothes, except what we stood up in, while we reduced the provisions both for ourselves and our dogs to the smallest dimensions. All these were left on the Stickene, and, consequently, their original cost was absolutely wasted. The amount of merchandise abandoned on the Stickene River must have been very large, the principal part being eventually appropriated by the Stickene Indians, who, as events turned out, were on the whole the principal gainers from the Klondyke boom.

Of the other parties travelling with us, some retraced their steps and struggled back to Wrangle, others lightened their loads by abandoning part of their outfits and continued the journey, while the remainder camped on the bank and waited for a steamer to convey them to Telegraph Creek after the river was open for navigation. Of course, a considerable number who had started up the Stickene, earlier in the winter, had managed to accomplish the journey without much difficulty, but of the crowds that camped with us at the mouth of the river only a very small proportion succeeded in accomplishing the journey on the winter trail.

After lightening the sleighs our progress improved considerably, but travelling through slush is anything but pleasant, while even with lightened sleighs the journey entailed much labour. Eventually we arrived at Telegraph Creek, which is a very old trading-post, and does a considerable business in trading for fur with the Indians. At that time the place was crowded with people who had journeyed up the Stickene, while sleighs and dogs were to be seen scattered about in all directions.

The trail now diverged from the river, and there still remained a journey before us of 150 miles across country before reaching the head waters of the Yukon. A certain number intended to continue the journey on the winter trail, but the majority, on observing the rapidly melting snow, had temporarily abandoned the enterprise and decided to wait for the summer, so that they could continue their journey with pack-horses. This could only be accomplished during the summer when the young grass had sprung up, as it would be impossible for horses to carry the outfit and their own food in addition. The trip involved a by no means easy task, as the melting snow transformed the country into a marsh, while even late in the summer there was much marsh land to be traversed. I met people afterwards who had accomplished the journey and described their difficulties, the horses floundering in the mud, and the men tormented with swarms of mosquitoes.

We remained two days at Telegraph Creek, resting ourselves and the dogs, and then resumed our journey, but the trail was daily becoming worse, the snow all slush and rapidly disappearing. Although on the river the soft snow and slush made travelling more difficult; at all events there was ice underneath which the sleigh could slide over; but now that we were no longer on the river, the soft snow was sometimes churned up with mud which acted like a drag. In many places where the snow was all melted, we harnessed all the dogs on to one sleigh, and dragged them over the bare spots separately, ourselves pushing and tugging at the same time. Often the bare spots were so muddy that to drag the loaded sleighs over them would be too exhausting, so it was easier to unload the sleighs and carry the packs on our backs to where the snow recommenced. The dogs could drag the empty sleighs over the bare ground, and on reaching the snow again the sleighs would be reloaded. This necessarily involved the expenditure of considerable time, as so many trips were required before all the supplies were carried across, besides the time spent in unloading and reloading the sleighs.

Several other parties were travelling with us, struggling along in the same manner, and each night numerous tents would be pitched in our vicinity. It is difficult to be jovial when travelling under such conditions, and during the evenings, when the camps had been pitched, conviviality or conversation was seldom heard in the different tents. Provisions had to be most carefully economised both for ourselves and the dogs, so the meals were always scanty considering the work we were undergoing, and every night both men and dogs were completely exhausted.

People in this sort of predicament, when enduring a hard time themselves, are not apt to be considerate towards animals, so the dogs, underfed and overworked, became utterly worn out. It was impossible to stop, as the provisions would soon come to an end, so all had to struggle on to the best of their ability, while the wretched animals were beaten and urged along till they dropped in their tracks from sheer exhaustion, and were then killed and boiled and given to the other dogs. When our sleigh journey terminated, out of twelve dogs which had started with us up the Stickene River only two survived; the remainder, after succumbing to fatigue, had been eaten by the survivors.

On one occasion, while we were toiling with our sleighs along a place where the ground was almost bare, rather a curious incident occurred. A man travelling behind with a sleigh drawn by a white horse appeared, and, as he was evidently in a desperate hurry, he soon caught us up. Owing to a clump of trees on each side of the trail he was unable to pass, so, in order to accelerate our progress, he unhitched his horse and fastened it to the leading dog, and by this means our sleighs were soon dragged over the bad place to a point where he could get by. After reharnessing his horse he passed our sleighs and gave us a friendly "Good-bye," while we expressed our thanks for the trouble he had saved us.

Later on in the day two policemen who had come from Telegraph Creek overtook us, and inquired after the man with the white horse. We informed them of what had occurred, and were then told that he was wanted for murder. He had murdered his partner on the Stickene with an axe, robbed him of his money and possessions, and had then concealed his body amongst some brush near the river bank. A man happened to camp near the spot soon afterwards, and noticing some clothes in the brush, proceeded to investigate, and discovered the body.

The policemen were soon out of sight, and the next day we met them returning with the horse and sleigh and the man handcuffed. Later on, when in Dawson, I inquired from a policeman what became of the man, and was informed that he was taken to Vancouver Island, where he was tried and condemned to death. The evening before his execution his wife came to the jail and asked permission to cook his last supper. The request was granted, and he died from poison. No proceedings were taken against the wife, although no doubt was entertained that she had administered the poison in order to save her husband from the gallows.

As provisions were continually consumed the loads every day became lighter; but the snow was daily disappearing till eventually the ground was entirely bare, except in occasional spots, so that very little sleighing was possible. However, we were within a few miles of a creek which would be still frozen over, so we struggled along, packing the supplies over the bare ground and placing them on the sleighs where patches of snow existed. This packing was particularly trying, because so little progress was made in proportion to the labour expended. Four trips were necessary before all the supplies could be transported in this manner, so that in order to convey our supplies for three miles the distance had to be traversed four times with a load and three times back for a fresh load. This entailed a journey of 21 miles, a fairly heavy load being carried over bad and muddy ground for twelve of them, and when all this was accomplished we had only advanced three miles on our journey.

Eventually we reached the creek, which was covered with perfectly clear ice as the snow was all melted, and the outfit was now so much reduced that we discarded one of the sleighs and loaded the supplies on the other two. Only four dogs now remained, but two were harnessed to each sleigh, which they had no difficulty in dragging over the clear ice. The creek led down to a chain of small lakes covered with clear ice, which helped us enormously; but the *portages* between them were entirely devoid of snow. There were about a dozen of these lakes, which varied in length from a few hundred yards to a couple of miles, with the distances between them about the same. Dragging the loads across the lakes was an easy matter; but the *portages* between presented the usual difficulties, and trip after trip had to be made before all the supplies were conveyed from one lake to another.

Eventually we arrived at a lake called Long Lake, which was the last stage of our sleigh journey. It was about six miles long, and at the other end was the creek we were aiming for, where the boat journey would commence. We had only two dogs left, but one was harnessed to each sleigh, which were now so lightly loaded that there was no difficulty in dragging them over the smooth ice to the other end of the lake. The fact that the hard part of the journey was now completed afforded us intense relief, as we were as thin as skeletons and all considerably worn out. Two months had elapsed since we left the mouth of the Stickene River, although the latter part of the journey had, of course, taken by far the longest time.

About 300 people were camped here, all of whom were busily engaged in building their boats so as to be ready when the ice in the creek broke up. They had all arrived from the mouth of the Stickene; but most of them had started before the snow began to melt, and consequently had not experienced the same difficulties. One man arrived at the lake with four goats harnessed to his sleigh instead of dogs, and judging from his account they appear to have accomplished the journey remarkably well. They pulled just as heavy loads as dogs, while as it was not necessary to carry large supplies of food for them, he was able to load his sleigh almost entirely with his own requirements. He said that his goats would nibble at the brush alongside the trail, and as they would eat almost anything, they were able to feed themselves as they went along. They were hard and sinewy, as was natural after their long journey, but they appeared to be in fair condition, very different from that of most of the dogs.

There were plenty of spruce trees in the vicinity suitable for making boards, and we had brought a whip-saw for sawing logs, besides oakum, while pitch could be obtained from the trees; and by the time the boat was completed the ice in the rivers had broken up, so that the creek was ready for navigation. The rivers, owing to the force of the current, are open for navigation about three weeks earlier than the lakes. The lakes always commence by opening round the shore, leaving a cake of ice in the centre, and as the ice continues to melt the open channel becomes gradually wider. Boats can row along this open channel, but it is dangerous to do so unless the channel is fairly wide, as a wind might suddenly spring up which would jam the ice-cake against the shore and crumple a boat to pieces.

Among the people collected here was a party of three Englishmen, who had just arrived from England and were now engaged in building a cabin, as they intended to remain here for the winter. They were young and jovial and full of bright expectations, and little anticipated that none of the three would survive the ensuing winter.

The creek was difficult to navigate, being narrow and crooked and very rapid, besides having numerous riffles and overhanging sweepers. Many of the people who had come straight from the cities had never experienced mountain rivers, so it was natural that accidents should occur, some of the boats being swamped and the supplies lost. Our boat floated down safely, and we soon came into the Teslin River, which is wider and easier to navigate, and eventually arrived at Teslin Lake. Quite a number of people were collected here, some of whom had started by the Stickene earlier in the winter, before the snow had begun to melt; while others had arrived from another point called Taku Inlet, higher up the Alaskan coast, which involved a much shorter journey.

A trading post had been constructed here, and during the summer a train of about forty pack animals, consisting of mules and horses, arrived from Telegraph Creek, conveying supplies for the trading post. To buy a large outfit at Teslin Lake would have been an expensive undertaking, as the cheapest article was flour, which cost 2s. 6d. a pound, while sugar, rice, beans, &c., all cost 4s. a pound. A two-pound tin of butter, probably two months old, could be obtained for five dollars or a sovereign, while boots, blankets, clothes, and other articles were all priced proportionately.

I decided to remain part of the summer at the lake, which is about 100 miles long and the largest lake in that part of the country. My two companions departed in the boat to the lower end of the lake, then journeyed down the Hootalinqua River till they joined the Yukon, and, rowing down the Yukon, eventually reached Dawson. People arriving at Dawson quickly discovered that gold could not be obtained in the Klondyke so easily as was anticipated. My companions soon became discouraged, and, after remaining at Dawson for about a week, purchased some supplies, and then rowed down in their boat to the mouth of the Yukon, about 1600 miles below Dawson. There they embarked on a steamer and returned to Victoria, Vancouver Island, a distance of about 3000 miles. One of them was killed a few years afterwards in a quartz mine on Vancouver Island while engaged in blasting.

A number of people arrived at the lake during the summer, several of whom began building cabins, intending to pass the winter there. Two men who were together building a cabin for the winter I became fairly well acquainted with. About two and a half years afterwards, I made a trip during the winter with a dog team from Dawson to Forty Mile Creek, about 60 miles down the Yukon, and was surprised to meet one of these men working a claim there. We recalled our sojourn at Teslin Lake, upon which he narrated rather a gruesome story about the three young Englishmen, who, as mentioned before, were building a cabin for the winter at Long Lake where we built the boat.

During that winter he made a trip from Teslin Lake to Telegraph Creek, and as the trail passed the Englishmen's cabin, he intended to spend the night there. On arriving at their cabin in the evening, he noticed that no light was inside, so he entered the cabin and lit the stove, meaning to await their return. He also lighted a candle on the table, when he suddenly noticed that one of the men was lying in his bunk with his face towards him. He thought this extraordinary, but on approaching the bunk he discovered that the man was dead and frozen stiff. He examined the other bunks and found the two other men lying in them, also dead and frozen, so he hastily extinguished the fire before the heat would thaw out the bodies, and then camped outside for the night. The next morning he returned to Teslin Lake, where he reported the matter, and afterwards returned to their cabin with a party and buried the bodies. They had all three died of scurvy, which was very prevalent in the Yukon in those days and caused a number of deaths. One of them had kept a diary in which he had described their illness, his last entry recording that his brother had died the day before.

Amongst others who arrived at the lake during the summer was a man with a bullock which had conveyed his outfit from Telegraph Creek, and which he now killed and sold. Meat was very scarce at the lake so it was eagerly purchased, but as the bullock had recently carried the man's supplies for about 200 miles, it must have been all sinew and muscle and not very appetising.

After remaining at the lake for about two months, I decided to make an expedition up a river called the Naskutla River, which flows into Teslin Lake about 40 miles down. My intention was to proceed for about 100 miles up the Naskutla River, and then to make a *portage* of about 7 miles across country, which would bring me to a lake called Quiet Lake. The Big Salmon River, 180 miles long and a tributary of the Yukon, flows out of Quiet Lake, so on arriving at the lake I could row down the Big Salmon River into the Yukon, and then proceed down the Yukon to Dawson.

Another river which is difficult to navigate, being very swift and full of bad rapids, flows into Teslin Lake about five miles above the Naskutla River. Two Swedes who had decided on making the same journey, unfortunately proceeded up the wrong river under the impression that they were on the Naskutla. After struggling up for about 100 miles, according to their calculations, they struck across country in order to find Quiet Lake, but instead of that arrived at the Naskutla River. They then concluded that they had travelled too high up the river, and had, consequently, missed Quiet Lake and were now on the Big Salmon River. They accordingly proceeded to haul their boat and transport their supplies over several miles of very rough ground, until they eventually embarked on the Naskutla River, which they started down under the impression that they would soon arrive at the Yukon. The natural result was that after all their labour they eventually arrived, to their surprise and disgust, back at Teslin Lake about five miles from the place they had started from, and were then obliged to return to the trading post for fresh supplies.

As the Naskutla and Big Salmon rivers flow in almost opposite directions, it may appear remarkable that they should have made this mistake, but a large number of Swedes are living in the Yukon who, although good workers, are not noted for being particularly intelligent. Also, these rivers twist about so much that it would be difficult to ascertain their general direction, especially without a compass.

Two men accompanied me on the expedition, and after building a boat and purchasing supplies from the trading post, we started off for the Naskutla River. Beans formed an important item of our provisions, and in the early days of the Klondyke boom, with the exception of bread, beans comprised the principal article of food in the Yukon, and to a large extent took the place of meat. The usual beans consumed were the brown variety, which exactly resemble the ordinary beans supplied to horses, and require boiling for about three hours before they become sufficiently soft. They possess strong nutritive and heating properties, and in those days, when meat could only be obtained at fabulous prices, were consumed in enormous quantities. They were not unpleasant to eat when there was nothing else, and went by the name of the "Yukon strawberry."

The Naskutla River is not difficult to navigate, although occasionally the current is swift, especially in the upper reaches. We walked along the bank and towed the boat up, except where the bank was too much encumbered with bushes, when we resorted to poling. The scenery on the Naskutla River much resembles that of other rivers in the Yukon valley. The stream is extremely crooked, winding about in every direction, and sometimes forming loops, so that we would occasionally be travelling in a direction exactly opposite to our destination. In places the mountains on both sides approach right up to the banks of the river, forming a cañon, and then widen out again till the valley might be over a mile wide. The whole country is densely wooded, principally with spruce trees intermingled with patches of birch and poplar, while the valley is studded with numerous marshes fringed with grass and surrounded with willows.[1] The country was thickly populated with moose, and we saw several on our way up the river, while their tracks could be noticed constantly.

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[1] These consist of the bush-willows, which average about 4 feet in height, and exist in great profusion throughout parts of Canada. They are quite different to the willow trees, which are confined to the banks of streams and rivers.

In the evening after camp was pitched, as we had no fresh meat, I strolled with my rifle up the mountain side and looked over the valley. A small cow moose was feeding on some willows not very far off, which I managed to shoot, and the meat was extremely acceptable, as, with the exception of some fish occasionally purchased at Teslin Lake, we had been living almost entirely on bacon and horse-beans for over four months. After travelling up the Naskutla River for about a week, we arrived at our destination, where the *portage* commenced over to Quiet Lake. There was no difficulty in recognising the place, as some trees had been blazed in the vicinity to mark the spot; so we pitched the camp, and proceeded next day to pack our supplies over the seven-mile *portage.* The lake, which is called Quiet Lake owing to the shelter afforded by mountains, extends for about 20 miles in length, and forms the prettiest piece of water that I have seen in the Yukon district. High mountains rise steep up from the shore, densely wooded with spruce, birches, and poplar. At that time it was a most out-of-the-way place, and few people except Indians had ever seen it.

On the fourth day after our arrival at the *portage*, we had carried over the usual loads and were resting by the lake, when three men suddenly appeared on the shore about two miles off. They approached us, and on their arrival related a doleful story about their boat having been upset and swamped a short distance down the

Big Salmon River. They had managed to save themselves, but their whole outfit was lost; and when they eventually succeeded in scrambling out on the bank, they possessed nothing but the wet clothes that they stood up in. They had since been working their way back to the *portage* in the hope of meeting somebody, and as they had been living for the last three days on wild berries, which were not then ripe, they were in a semi-starving condition.

All three were natives of Scotland, where one held a good position as schoolmaster in Edinburgh, but on hearing the glowing accounts from the Yukon they had all abandoned their jobs, and had journeyed out to this country expecting to make their fortunes without difficulty. The schoolmaster informed me that he had left a wife and family in Scotland, and before his departure had provided her with some money for present necessities, saying that he would send her some more from the proceeds of his gold-mine. Needless to say, neither of them knew anything about the subject, and their chances of acquiring a gold-mine of any value were infinitesimal. Later on, when in Dawson, I met numbers of others who had started out with the same expectations and were then in a similar predicament.

Provisions at Teslin Lake cost such fabulous prices that we had only purchased just sufficient for our own necessities, and the sudden arrival of three hungry men placed us in rather an awkward dilemma. However, about two days afterwards the difficulty was solved in a very simple manner. The men had partly recovered their strength, and, by way of paying for their meals, had carried a load across the *portage* with my companions. I remained that afternoon at the camp, and while sitting by the door of the tent a large bull moose suddenly emerged from the bush and began swimming across the river about 150 yards distant. My rifle was lying handy, so I waited till he had landed on the opposite bank, and then shot him from the tent door. He was a huge animal, as large as a big bullock, with beautiful horns, although they were still in the velvet. All we required for our own use was a hind leg, as meat will not keep very long during the summer months, so the rest we gave to the three men. A certain amount was retained fresh for present necessities, while the remainder was cut up into slices, which they hung upon poles in the air to dry, a small fire of partly rotten wood being kept burning underneath, in order to furnish smoke to keep the flies away.

The Indians dry a large quantity of deer meat, and as fresh meat contains about 70 or 80 per cent. of water, when this has evaporated it becomes a highly concentrated form of food. Its weight and the space it occupies are very slight in comparison to fresh meat, a fact which proves of great convenience in a country where transportation is often so difficult. Personally, I cannot describe dried meat as appetising, being something like shoe leather, although such a highly concentrated food is very sustaining, and is therefore useful to carry in one's pocket to chew at occasionally during a long tramp.

All our supplies were now conveyed to Quiet Lake except the camp and the boat, and although its length was only 16 feet, a boat built of one-inch boards in a green condition is not a light article to drag up and down hill for seven miles over rough ground. The three new arrivals were by this time strong enough to help, so we accordingly dragged the boat about half-way across the *portage* to where there was a small stream, also conveying and pitching the camp there for the night. The next morning we dragged the boat over the remainder of the *portage*, and after re-caulking and pitching it, launched it on Quiet Lake, and returned to the stream in the afternoon for the tent and the remainder of the supplies.

While consuming our lunch by the lake, one of the men happened to look back and saw a dense column of smoke rising up, showing that a forest fire had been started, and as a breeze was then blowing, it had already assumed considerable proportions. We hurried back towards the stream, but the nearer we approached the more alarming the situation appeared, as the fire was close to our camp, and, fanned by the breeze, was rapidly approaching it. A small marsh was fortunately situated a short distance away, covered with a weed called goose-grass, which grows in damp places, so we tore down the tent, picked up our blankets, tools, provisions, sacks, &c., and rapidly conveyed them to a place of safety on the other side of the marsh, and were considerably relieved as we watched the fire sweep past the spot which our camp had occupied only a few minutes previously. Later on we experienced another fire which we did not escape so easily.

Two Americans who had arrived at the *portage* a couple of days previously were transporting their supplies to the lake, and having made a camp-fire to cook their midday meal had omitted to extinguish it before leaving the place. The fire must have spread to some dry brush, and as practically no rain had fallen for a considerable period, the brush had become as inflammable as tinder, so that forest fires would commence very easily.

Our boat and supplies had now all been conveyed to the lake, so we parted with the schoolmaster and his two companions. During their stay they had constructed a raft at the *portage* on the Naskutla River, which would enable them to reach the trading post on Teslin Lake.

The next morning we packed our supplies in the boat and started down Quiet Lake. The fire, which had spread rapidly during the night, now extended over a considerable area, and was blazing and roaring and crackling, the sky being shrouded with a dense smoke. One of the men had brought a spoon bait, which we attached to a line and towed behind the boat, and by this means we were able to obtain all the lake trout we required. After reaching the lower end of the lake we proceeded down the river for about a couple of miles, and then reached another lake nearly as large as Quiet Lake. After crossing this we came to the river again, and in a short distance arrived at a third and smaller lake, which was the last we encountered.

The Big Salmon is much more difficult to navigate than the Naskutla, the current being very swift and the river encumbered with overhanging sweepers; and although no bad rapids were encountered, strong riffles were numerous. The salmon were then swimming up the river, so that numbers could be seen in places where the water was shallow. Moose were not nearly so plentiful as on the Naskutla, but bears were several times observed on the river bank, and as they are exceedingly partial to fish, the presence of the salmon in the river had probably attracted them to the vicinity.

Numerous streams flow into the Big Salmon; so after travelling for about thirty miles down the river, we walked a few miles up one of these creeks and noticed the bed strewn with quartz boulders, which is supposed to be a favourable indication of the presence of gold. We therefore decided to camp for a few days and sink a shaft on the creek bank; but after excavating to a depth of about fifteen feet we were obliged to abandon the work owing to an influx of water. We proceeded for about another fifty miles down the river and then attempted to prospect another creek, but this time our prospecting was brought to an abrupt termination. We were working about two miles up the stream, the camp being pitched near the river bank. After working at the shaft we were returning home one evening at about six o'clock, and on our arrival discovered that the camp had taken fire, and was now entirely burnt away, except some smouldering cinders here and there.

This particular spot happened to be covered with deep moss, which is always very treacherous, as a fire will occasionally work along under the moss in a smouldering condition, without showing any indication on the surface, and may break out again some distance away. In northern regions the moss is extremely abundant and may extend for a couple of feet or more in depth. In this case we had apparently extinguished the camp fire by pouring water over the spot, but some sparks must have been smouldering underneath, and had gradually extended until they reached the tent and supplies. As the sacks had been all burnt away, the flour, sugar, beans, &c., were all mixed up together, intermingled with the charred remains of sacks and canvas. After separating what was eatable, we could only collect enough for about three meals, the remainder being too burnt and scorched for purposes of food, while our tent, blankets, spare clothes, &c., had all gone up in smoke.

The nearest trading post was Fort Selkirk on the Yukon River, about 250 miles distant, and our only resource was to arrive there as quickly as possible; so after raking out from amongst the embers a dilapidated-looking frying pan, we instantly cooked some supper, and then adjourned to the boat and started off for Selkirk. At that season of the year there is no real darkness, so travelling day and night, sleeping in turns and only stopping to cook our meals, we rowed down the Big Salmon River into the Yukon, and then proceeded down the Yukon until we arrived at Selkirk. Here we purchased some supplies from the trading post, and then resumed our journey. Eventually we arrived without further mishap at Dawson, 180 miles below Selkirk, and, including the expedition up the Naskutla River, about 1200 miles from the mouth of the river Stickene.

CHAPTER III

FIRST EXPERIENCES OF DAWSON

Dawson in the summer of 1898 consisted of about 30,000 inhabitants, nearly all of whom were living in tents, and presented an extraordinary appearance. The main street on my arrival was already lined with shops and restaurants, installed in rough wooden cabins. Public-houses, or saloons as they are called in Canada and America, were numerous and densely thronged, the bar-tenders busily engaged in serving out very bad whisky at 50 cents (or 2s.) a drink, while behind the saloons was a large room where poker, faro, roulette, and other gambling games were in full swing. The roulette tables all contained two zeros, which gave the bank a great advantage over the players.

There were several dance-halls in the place, all of which were well patronised, each dance-hall possessing a primitive sort of band and from ten to twenty girls. Dancing commenced at about eight P.M. and continued till about six o'clock in the morning. Waltzes interspersed with "kitchen lancers" were usually played, while $1 (or 4s.) was the recognised price for each dance, the owner of the hall taking care that the dances were extremely short, so that as many dollars as possible could be collected. A drinking-bar was attached to the place, and after each dance the man was expected to escort his partner to the bar, and buy a drink for her and for himself, which cost $1 more.

The girls were paid $50 or £10 a week by the owner of the dance-hall, while many of them received valuable presents in the shape of gold nuggets from different admirers. Introductions were unnecessary, as any one was entitled to ask a girl for a dance who was not engaged, and she was not allowed by the management to refuse. All drinks were 50 cents, or 2s., apiece, and, as they principally consisted of cheap adulterated whisky manufactured on the premises from a concoction of fusel-oil, the profits to the bar must have been enormous.

These dance-halls presented a striking, though not an edifying spectacle towards the early hours of the morning, men being congregated there in all sorts of wild outlandish costumes, some engaged in dancing, others standing about watching and smoking pipes, filling the room with fumes of bad tobacco, while at the one end of the hall was the bar, where men and girls were toasting each other and calling for more drinks.

Tragedies, although rare, occasionally occurred. I remember one of these dance-hall girls had some quarrel over a love affair, and after one of the dances she calmly walked round and said "Good-bye" to her friends, as she intended to commit suicide. Nobody imagined that she was in earnest, but she went straight up to her room and poisoned herself with strychnine. An Englishman with whom I was acquainted was employed in charge of a mine owned by a company in London. He arrived one evening in Dawson with the proceeds from the mine, amounting to several thousand dollars, which he intended to deposit in the bank the following morning. That evening he met numerous acquaintances, which in Dawson generally involved numerous libations, and the result was that he became intoxicated, and dissipated the whole of the proceeds from the mine in one of the gambling saloons. The next morning, when he had become sober and realised his position, he blew out his brains with a revolver.

Of course, many of the inhabitants of Dawson, especially the women, had not experienced when coming into the country the rough trip described in the previous chapter. Many of them had taken their passage by steamer from Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle, and other towns on the Pacific coast to the mouth of the Yukon in Behring Strait, and there embarked on flat-bottomed river steamers, which conveyed them up the Yukon to Dawson. As this entailed a journey of 1600 miles against the current of the Yukon, besides the ocean journey to Behring Strait, a considerable time was required to accomplish the voyage. However, a large number travelled to Dawson by this route, and except for the discomfort of being pent up for a considerable period on overcrowded steamers, there was no great hardship to be endured.

Numerous steamers had been conveying supplies to Dawson during the summer months, so no real scarcity existed, although, owing to the cost of transportation, meals at restaurants were both primitive and expensive. Eggs brought in from the outside could be obtained, although probably several months old, and as eggs can only be poached when reasonably fresh, the Dawson variety had always to be either boiled or fried. One enterprising person managed to bring in some chickens the ensuing summer, and was consequently able to provide really fresh eggs. A restaurant keeper bought him out, and produced a large sign outside his place announcing the fact to the Dawson public. His customers were, however, expected to pay handsomely for the luxury, as two poached eggs, with some potatoes, tea, and bread cost $1½ or 6s.

In later years, after the White Pass railway from Skagway to Whitehorse had been constructed, transportation became very much facilitated, and provisions became, therefore, considerably cheaper. There are now several chicken ranches in the vicinity of Dawson, although fresh eggs are still very expensive. During my last summer in Dawson (1909) eggs brought in from the Pacific coast cost from 2s. to 3s. a dozen, although two or three out of the dozen would probably be too bad even to boil, while fresh eggs from the chicken ranches near Dawson cost a shilling apiece.

During the autumn of 1898 a report was circulated in the outside world that supplies in Dawson were extremely scarce, and that unless relief was obtained during the winter a famine in the Yukon would prevail. Quite a panic was created in the towns on the Pacific coast, where numbers of people had friends and relations in the Yukon, so a subscription was started and a large sum collected for sending supplies to the starving inhabitants of Dawson. It was then too late in the year to send supplies into the Yukon by steamer, so a scheme was propounded to purchase reindeer and sleighs, and to send them loaded with provisions to Dawson after the Yukon was frozen over. This scheme was considered exceptionally clever, because the reindeer, besides conveying provisions, could themselves be killed for food on their arrival at Dawson.

No possibility of a famine really existed in Dawson, as supplies were amply sufficient for the ensuing winter, and the whole scheme from the very commencement was simply a fraud concocted by the promoters. Some reindeer and drivers were obtained, who started off to the Yukon, but most of them turned back before they had proceeded far, while a very few ultimately arrived at Dawson in a semi-starving condition, and just in time to be relieved by the people who were supposed to be starving.

Later on I happened to be shown a copy of a London newspaper which described that expedition. The reindeer, like the cariboo, which is almost identically the same animal, possesses a peculiar flat palmated horn about 18 inches long, which commences from the base of the large horn and projects right over the forehead. According to the London newspaper, this horn is described as a "plough," and is used by the intelligent animal for shovelling away the deep snow, so as to enable it to obtain the food underneath. I have met a number of people who firmly believe in this theory, but the idea is, of course, absurd on the face of it, because reindeer, like all other deer, shed their horns at the commencement of the winter, and, consequently, they would not possess the "plough" during the very season that they were in need of it.

In Canada and the United States, whenever a new town springs up, a local newspaper is promptly started, even though the town may be what in England we would term a mere village. Dawson in 1898 possessed three local newspapers, one of which published rather an amusing though slightly exaggerated cartoon called "the relief of Dawson." A party of men and reindeer were standing on the frozen Yukon in a frightfully emaciated condition, representing the relief party having just arrived at Dawson. On the bank of the river a number of enormously fat men were congregated, looking very hale and hearty and extremely amused at the new arrivals. These were supposed to represent the starving inhabitants of Dawson, while other very fat men were hurrying down to the river, conveying provisions to the starving relief party.

Money in those days was plentiful in Dawson, which accounted for the dance-halls and saloons being so freely patronised. The mines were producing large quantities of gold, while nearly all who had arrived at Dawson from the outside possessed more or less money to spend. A large number, who seemed bent on enjoying themselves, were throwing away their money in the most reckless manner possible, and, consequently, Dawson during that first season was fairly lively. In those days nothing could be purchased for less than 25 cents or 1s., so that no currency of less than that amount existed in Dawson.

Gold dust was accepted as currency at the rate of $16 (or £3, 4s.) an ounce, and every dance-hall, saloon, and store had its gold scales on the counter, where the prices of dances, drinks, provisions, clothes, &c., could be weighed out and paid for in gold dust. The gold dust was carried in small sacks made of soft leather or moose hide, called "pokes," and a man from the mines would walk into a saloon, and drawing his "poke" out of his pocket would throw it on the counter, calling for drinks for his friends and acquaintances. The barman would pour out on the scales sufficient gold dust to cover the price, and the poke with the balance would then be returned to the owner.

A valuable commodity like gold dust must be weighed with extreme care, as a very slight difference in the scales will make a very large difference in the result. This style of payment must, therefore, have resulted in enormous profits to the saloons, as the men were often too careless or too intoxicated to observe if their gold dust was being accurately weighed, and the same drinks must have been constantly paid for several times over.

The gold when extracted from the ground is by no means in a pure state, but is mixed up with silver and other ingredients, while the different creeks vary to a large extent in the purity of the gold contained in them. The gold dust accepted as currency in the Yukon at $16 per ounce was styled "commercial gold," and was supposed to represent the average value of the gold dust in the country. The quality of the gold extracted from Bonanza and Eldorado creeks assays extremely low, namely $13 (or £2, 12s.) per ounce, while other creeks contain gold assaying as high as nearly £4 to the ounce. However, the amount of gold extracted from Bonanza and Eldorado creeks was so enormous that it fully counterbalanced the poorness of its quality.

Rain had been falling for the last few days since my arrival, so the main street was several inches deep in mud, while it contained no pavements for people to walk along. The place was crowded with people standing about in groups in the mud or wandering in or out of the different drinking saloons. From the interior of the saloons, where men were thronged against the bar busily engaged in tossing for drinks, the clatter of the dice-boxes could be heard continuously.

Real estate agents were doing a thriving business, selling town lots at fabulous prices, and mining claims on creeks which few people had ever seen or knew anything about. Two of the affluents of the Klondyke are named All Gold Creek and Too Much Gold Creek, which proved quite an incentive in booming the country and attracting people to the vicinity. These creeks are really by no means rich, but their beds contain a considerable proportion of mica schist, which was mistaken by the Indians for gold, so they christened them by the above names.

Numerous speculators, engaged by syndicates and companies in Europe and America, were wandering through the town and up the creeks, making eager inquiries about mining properties for sale. During the boom in the early years of Dawson, the general public imagined that any mining ground in the Klondyke, especially if situated on Bonanza and Eldorado creeks, must necessarily be fabulously rich. Numbers of worthless claims were, consequently, purchased, which were floated as companies in Europe and America, and the shares palmed off on a gullible public at ridiculous prices. This naturally resulted in a violent reaction, and the public, after having been constantly swindled over Klondyke mining properties, began eventually to regard mines in that quarter with extreme suspicion, so that companies found great difficulty in obtaining money in London, even for legitimate enterprises.

The population in the Yukon consisted principally of Americans, although nearly every nation would be represented, including quite a number of English. All sorts of languages were heard in the street, and the town presented a most cosmopolitan appearance. A considerable number of the North-West Mounted Police had been drafted into the Yukon, so that crime was comparatively slight, although the population was of the roughest description imaginable.

The Royal North-West Mounted Police, generally styled the R.N.W.M.P., forms a conspicuous feature in north-western Canada, their headquarters being at Regina in the province of Assiniboia, the prairie part of Canada. They patrol and keep order over enormous tracts of country, and occasionally when some trouble occurs will penetrate into the most out-of-the-way localities. A strong bump of topography is required to ride long distances over the prairie, when scarcely a tree can be discerned ; while to patrol large tracts of country during the intense cold of the winter months, accompanied with occasional blizzards, entails a considerable amount of endurance. A notice appeared lately in a London newspaper that four of the North-West Mounted Police were discovered frozen to death while working their way overland from Fort M'Pherson to Dawson. The R.N.W.M.P. are principally picked men and noted for their efficiency, and the Cape Mounted Police of South Africa were organised on the same basis.

It is remarkable, although a well-known fact, that none of that lawlessness prevails in the Canadian mining camps which forms so conspicuous a feature in mining camps in the western portion of the United States. The Soapy Bill gang, described in the first chapter, would never have pursued such tactics in any town in Canada, as the R.N.W.M.P. would have promptly settled the matter. Whenever a new gold strike is proclaimed in Canada, the toughest characters from America pour into the country. The average American entertains, however, a wholesome dread of Canadian law, as he is thoroughly aware that it will be rigidly upheld; so he finds it better policy to leave his revolver behind when entering Canadian territory.

Many years ago I visited a place called Juneau, a mining town in American territory situated on the Alaskan coast. Shortly before my arrival a fire had broken out in the town, and while the citizens were engaged in extinguishing the fire a prominent member of the community sat upon a wall busily employed in issuing directions to everybody else. Later on the local newspaper, when referring to the incident, suggested in sarcastic tones that if the individual had done some work himself instead of giving directions to other people, he might perhaps have been of some practical utility. By way of retaliating for the sarcasm, he proceeded next day to the newspaper office, walked into the editor's room, where he found him sitting in an armchair, and promptly fired two shots at him with a revolver. One bullet lodged in the editor's thigh and the other in his head, and for some time his case was considered hopeless. Luckily, he made an extraordinary recovery, and when I arrived at Juneau about a month later, he was then walking about the street, although a handkerchief was still tied round his head.

His assailant was tried for attempted murder and sentenced to six years' imprisonment; but as he possessed a certain amount of influence, which in a place like Juneau would naturally entail a certain amount of money, at the expiration of four years he was released.

A crime of that description, if perpetrated in Canadian territory, would have been treated very differently. About the winter of 1899 two Americans armed with rifles entered a saloon in Dawson and forced the person in charge to deliver up the proceeds of the till. They were apprehended and tried, and sentenced to penal servitude for life. Their sentence was received with considerable surprise by their compatriots in the Yukon; but it acted as a powerful deterrent on the tough characters over the boundary, and no subsequent offence of that description was perpetrated in Dawson.

Soon after my arrival I wandered down to the post-office, composed of a ramshackle log building, with clerks who were entirely inexperienced in the business. A long line of people were waiting to obtain admittance, so I took up my position at the back, and was soon wedged in with people pressing behind. A dreary two hours elapsed before I reached the door. A man would sometimes arrive and secure a position near the door by paying an occupant for his place; but as five dollars, or a sovereign, was the fee usually charged, this expedient was only occasionally resorted to. On approaching the door I could occasionally hear lively altercations between the clerks and customers expecting letters, which further increased the delay. The postal arrangements appeared in a hopeless muddle, while the office was not nearly large enough for the population. After a two or three hours' wait one would often be disappointed by being told that no letters had arrived for one, when the letters would, perhaps, be all the time lying unobserved in the post-office.

The mining or recording office was in the same state of confusion, and was daily thronged with people waiting to record or transfer their claims. The officials in Dawson were not, however, usually averse to earning something extra "on the side." The recording office, therefore, contained a side entrance called the "five dollar door," where those who were willing to pay the amount received better attention.

The town of Dawson was built on a tract of level ground at the junction of the Klondyke River and the Yukon, while the lower end of the town is terminated by a high mountain with a steep bluff. At a former period an Indian village was situated at the foot of this bluff; but one night a heavy slide occurred, which destroyed the village and buried a large number of the inhabitants, so the survivors migrated to a safer locality, about four miles down the river. The town forms the base whence supplies for the mines were transported to the different creeks, as the Klondyke River is not navigable for steamers. The locality of the town was the most convenient position, being the nearest point of distribution; but in the summer of 1898 a more unhealthy situation could not well have been imagined. The site was composed to a large extent of swamp, so that the mud in the street became several inches deep; and as no proper system of sanitation existed, the refuse of the town was eventually washed by the summer rains into the Yukon.

Typhoid fever was the natural result and became rampant. A cemetery had been marked out at the back of the town, and funeral processions of the most primitive description were constantly wending their way to the locality, followed by a few friends in their rough, mining, weather-beaten costumes. In civilised towns a vast amount of the mortality occurs amongst infants and old or decrepit people, but in Dawson in those days these were almost non-existent. The coffins winding daily to the cemetery contained, almost without exception, able-bodied men in the prime of life, although their constitutions may have been impaired by over-exposure and bad food, combined with the effects of the vile, adulterated whisky so freely consumed in Dawson.

In later years sanitation was improved and the town placed on a more healthy basis. Many people now bring their wives and families into the Yukon, while there is a public school at Dawson for boys and girls, who are conspicuous for their rosy cheeks, and form a striking testimony to the dry, bracing atmosphere of the Yukon.

Soon after my arrival in Dawson I was introduced to a man owning a claim on Bonanza Creek, who invited me to pay him a visit. One morning I accordingly strapped a blanket on my back and, after crossing the Klondyke by a rickety foot-bridge, for which a toll of twenty-five cents, or a shilling, was charged, started off for Bonanza. The walk up the creek was not an enjoyable one, as the lower part of Bonanza is principally composed of swamp, so that one had to wade above the ankles through soft mud, or step along on " niggerheads " wherever patches of them existed. These are round tufts of grass and moss appearing above the water, and by taking fairly long strides, one can step from one to another. Their tops are wet and slippery, which makes it difficult to preserve one's balance, while sliding off them entails sinking above the knees in mud and water.

Strings of men were travelling up and down the creek, some returning to Dawson for fresh supplies, others with heavy loads upon their backs toiling painfully through the mire or amongst the niggerheads. Although a certain proportion of the population were amusing themselves in the gambling saloons of Dawson, many had arrived with the fixed purpose of making their "pile" and returning home to their families. Their minds were intent upon their future prospects, which were too serious to allow them to indulge in diversions, so they staggered without complaint through the mud, toiling under heavy loads, determined to endure any amount of hardship and discomfort in their efforts to achieve success.

Eventually I arrived at the junction of Bonanza and Eldorado creeks, where the richest mines were situated. The locality presented a most animated appearance, crowds of men being busily employed up and down the creeks, excavating the gravel and washing it in the sluice-boxes.

Owing to the enormous expense of labour and supplies, only very rich ground could at that time be operated successfully. Labourers for pick and shovel work were then paid as much as $15, or £3, a day, besides board and lodging, which cost about $5 a day per man in addition. Ten hours were considered the usual day's work, and although the wages were excessive, the men were expected to earn it by working as hard as possible in excavating and washing the gravel, so as to enable the gold to be extracted as rapidly as possible. Characters or testimonials, so often required in England, were, of course, totally unknown, and among the rough characters congregated in the Yukon they would probably have been difficult to obtain. A strong, able-bodied man would be engaged without any questions regarding his character or previous position, which would be considered matters of no concern to the employer. The law of observing the Sabbath was not enforced during the earlier years in the Klondyke, as the mine-owners were much too busy scooping in gold to enable them to afford a weekly day of rest to the labourers, so the work continued on Sundays exactly the same as on week-days.

After hunting about for a short period I eventually found my acquaintance busily engaged on his claim. A large stack of firewood was lying in the vicinity, ready to provide fuel for thawing out the gravel. In the Klondyke the gravel is frozen continually into a solid mass, and must be thawed out before it can be excavated. During the summer months the surface of the ground becomes thawed by the heat of the sun for a depth of about 3 or 4 feet, but below that depth the ground is frozen solid perpetually, both summer and winter.

The gravel was formerly thawed by throwing hot rocks into the hole, or large fires would be lighted in the evening at the bottom of the shaft, and the gravel thawed out by the heat would be excavated the following morning. Bonanza and Eldorado creeks after dark presented quite an imposing sight, with the sky lighted up by huge fires blazing away from the different holes. When the thawed-out gravel had been excavated a fresh fire would be lighted, and the process continued until the bottom of the shaft was attained. This naturally involved extremely slow progress, but in later years, when transport became cheaper and boilers were brought into the country, the ground could be thawed out much more rapidly by means of steam forced through iron tubes, called "points," which were driven into the frozen ground.

The gold-mining in the Yukon is confined entirely to placer formations, a term implying particles of gold found scattered loosely about amongst alluvial deposits of gravel, which form the bed either of an existing creek or an old river channel. The valley of a river may possess, in addition to the existing stream, one or more old channels, according to the different courses pursued by the river in former ages, and in a gold-bearing country each of these old river channels may contain deposits of gold disseminated through the gravel.

In some river valleys, like that of the Fraser River in British Columbia, these old channels become very apparent, as they form terraces or benches, showing the different levels of the river at various periods. The creeks in the vicinity of the Klondyke, however, generally contain no surface indications of old channels, and these can only be discovered by sinking holes down to the bed-rock at intervals across the valley of the creek. The gravel excavated is carefully tested, and when the presence of gold indicates that an old channel has been discovered, it is called the "pay-streak."

The shafts were sunk right through the gravel, until they reached the solid rock lying underneath, which is called the "bed-rock." In former ages, when the old river channels formed running streams, the gold washed down with the gravel would, owing to its heavy specific gravity, gradually work its way through the gravel until it eventually rested on the solid rock beneath. The upper portion of the gravel would, therefore, generally be devoid of gold, while the lower portion containing the gold and forming the pay-streak would seldom average more than about 3 or 4 feet in depth above the bed-rock. The upper portion of the pay-streak would contain the lighter and finer particles of gold, while the lower portion adjoining the bed-rock would prove far the richer, and contain the heavier gold and the nuggets.

Mammoth tusks and teeth, besides bones of other animals, have on several occasions been excavated from the mines, buried in the frozen gravel far below the surface of the ground. I once arrived at a claim when the horns and part of the head of what appeared to be a bull, with some skin attached, had recently been excavated from the shaft, about 25 feet below the surface, and when thawed out it emitted quite a strong odour, so that a dog in the vicinity began eagerly to gnaw at it.

My host escorted me over his claim and down the drift, where he tested some of the gravel to show its richness, and then we adjourned to his cabin for lunch. He was dressed in a greasy old shirt and trousers, freely splashed with mud, and wore a soft felt hat with a very wide brim, which had evidently seen better days. He spoke with a strong nasal twang, with no pretence at grammar, and without an H in his vocabulary, while his face was partly concealed with a rough shaggy beard. One would have hardly imagined from his appearance that he was worth a large fortune, and was what in America they would term a "capitalist."

His cabin, roughly constructed of logs, was about 12 feet square, and just high enough to stand up in. The logs inside were almost black with dirt and smoke, and freely interspersed with cobwebs, and as the window was composed of soda-water bottles fixed into a hole in the wall, the place was in semi-darkness. The floor, composed of poles squared with an axe, had evidently not been swept for weeks, while in the corner were deposited some unwashed plates and dirty cooking pots.

In spite of his uncouth appearance, which very much resembled my own, he proved very hospitable and entertaining. After lighting a small stove to prepare some lunch, he placed a couple of steaks in a dirty frying-pan, and, while the meal was cooking, he produced some "pokes," or small leather sacks, containing several thousand dollars in gold dust, while from an empty tin, which formerly contained preserved tomatoes, he poured on to the small greasy table by the window a large number of selected nuggets. In answer to my inquiry, he informed me that he had not yet thought of selling his claim, but if he were offered a quarter of a million dollars he might, perhaps, consider the matter, and judging from the prices that were then being paid for claims in that locality he was not over-estimating its value.

He was an old timer in the Yukon, even in those days, as he had been mining on Forty Mile Creek before Dawson ever existed, so when the discovery of gold on Bonanza Creek was first reported, he took part in the stampede that resulted, and fortunately succeeded in staking a claim in a favourable locality.

He told me of an extraordinary instance of fortune that occurred to a man when the claims on Eldorado Creek were first staked. Two men were talking and drinking whisky in a cabin, one of whom happened to have just staked a claim on Eldorado Creek. The creek was then entirely unprospected, so when the glow of excitement resulting from the stampede had evaporated, he entertained grave doubts as to whether his claim would eventually prove of any value. He accordingly induced his companion, who was rather intoxicated, to purchase his claim for $300. The next morning, on becoming sober, his companion was very dissatisfied with the purchase, and wished to have his $300 returned, but as the other man refused to refund the amount, he was obliged to stick to his bargain and keep the claim. Later on, when the creek became thoroughly prospected, the property which he had purchased for $300 when intoxicated, and against his will when he became sober, proved to be worth about a quarter of a million.

Parties occasionally worked their way with dog teams from Dawson to Skagway during the winter of 1898, although a journey of 600 miles up the frozen Yukon and over the White Pass involved a considerable amount of hardship and endurance. Very few road-houses or wayside inns then existed along the Yukon, while camping out in severe weather was not an enjoyable occupation. Few people cared to undertake the journey, which required from a month to six weeks to accomplish, according to the condition of the trail and the physical capabilities of the travellers.

About the winter of 1900, a murder was committed on the winter trail to the Alaskan coast, which occasioned considerable excitement in the Yukon. A large number of additional road-houses had by that time been constructed along the route, so that travellers could usually avail themselves of one for the night, and camping out was resorted to comparatively seldom. A party of three men who were travelling from Dawson to the coast arrived on Christmas Eve at a road-house called Minto, about 20 miles from Selkirk. The next morning they proceeded on their journey, intending to arrive that evening at the next road-house, but between the two places all three mysteriously disappeared. Relations on the Pacific coast being aware of their departure from Dawson were surprised at their non-arrival, so, as Dawson was now in telegraphic communication, inquiries were instituted. Some members of the North-West Mounted Police were despatched from Dawson to investigate the matter, and soon discovered that the missing people had spent Christmas Eve at Minto, but had never arrived at the road-house adjoining, according to their intentions.

About 400 miles above Selkirk the trail crosses Lake Bennett, at the head of which a road-house and a police-station had been established, and one evening a man travelling with a horse-sleigh arrived at the Lake Bennett road-house to pass the night. Several police-stations had now been established at different points along the Yukon, and after the disappearance of the three men, all were on the alert for suspicious characters. A man travelling with a horse-sleigh was an unusual occurrence in those days, as not many people could afford to maintain a horse.

His replies to questions were considered unsatisfactory, so he was conducted to the police-station pending further inquiries, while a large number of bank notes found concealed in his boots aroused suspicion.

The telegraph line was set in operation, and it was soon discovered that his name was O'Brien, and that he had employed part of the winter with a partner named Graves in a tent not far above Minto, with the avowed object of cutting wood to sell to the steamers in the ensuing summer. Their tent, which had been abandoned, was discovered by the police concealed from the trail by a clump of trees, but the recently fallen snow had effectually obliterated any traces of a possible crime.

The mystery was solved by one of the police dogs, which suddenly commenced digging into the snow, until a large patch of frozen blood was eventually disclosed. The freshly fallen snow was then carefully removed round the vicinity of the tent, with the result that other patches of frozen blood were found scattered about, while articles belonging to the missing people were also discovered. All three had been murdered and robbed, and their bodies thrown into the Yukon through a hole cut in the ice, and the ensuing summer the three bodies were all discovered stranded on sand bars in the river, showing evidence of bullet wounds.

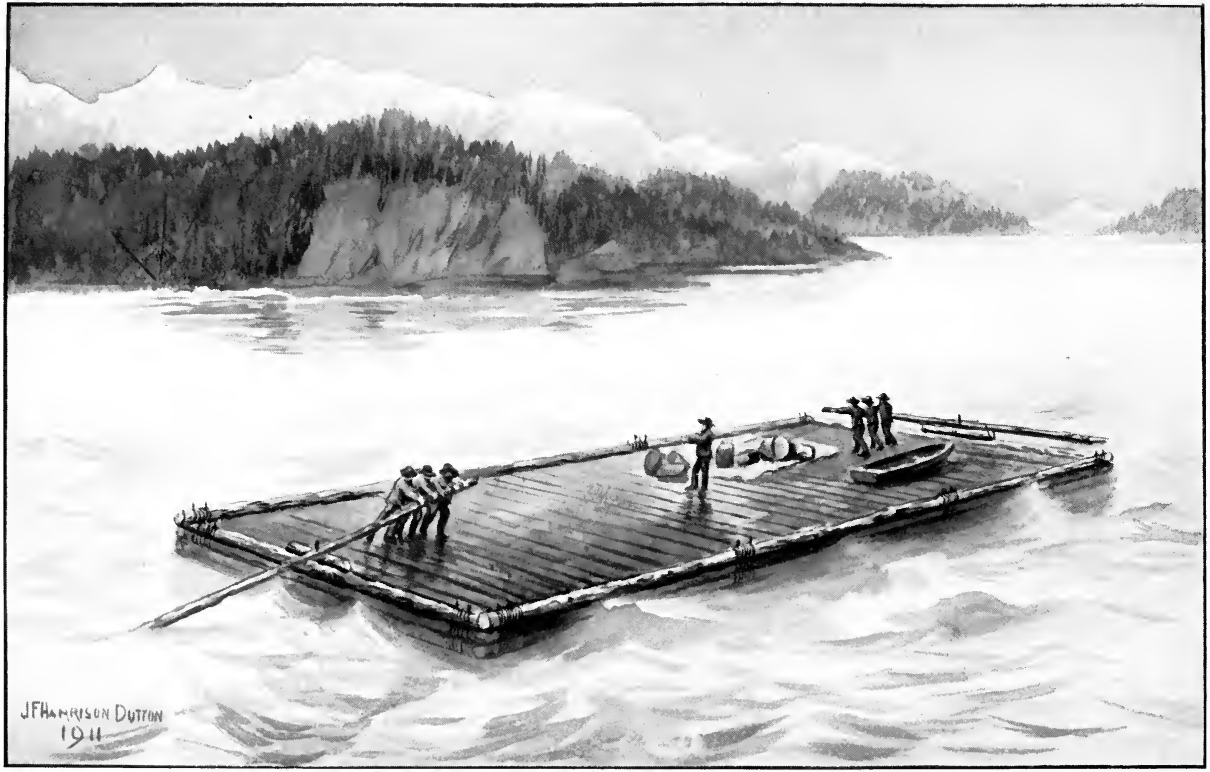
O'Brien was tried for murder in Dawson and hanged, but his partner Graves completely disappeared. For over a year, with the aid of the Government at Ottawa, he was searched for all over the world; but, although his appearance, his home, and his family were all known to the police, not a trace of him was ever discovered. It is generally supposed by the police that O'Brien had completed his career by murdering his partner. They may have quarrelled over the division of the spoils from their victims, and the large number of bank notes found on O'Brien when he was arrested lends colour to the suspicion that his partner Graves had been effectually disposed of.

Road-houses are now obliged to keep a book in which travellers are required to register their names, showing the place they started from and their destination, so that, in the event of their disappearance, it may perhaps be possible to trace them. In Dawson there is a perpetual list of people missing in the Yukon, whose friends or relations at home have been inquiring about them. Many have been missing for several years who were known to have been living in the Yukon, but whose letters have suddenly ceased, and not a trace of whom can be discovered.

The summer in the Yukon is soon over, and at about the end of August the leaves commence to assume their autumn tints. During the month of September the vast expanse of forest provides a lovely spectacle, when the willows, poplars, and birches present a mass of golden colour, variegated with the dark green spruces, which form such a striking contrast. The commencement of cold weather warned the inhabitants of Dawson that it was time to prepare for the long winter months. Tents were beginning to feel uncomfortably cold and draughty, so rough wooden cabins made of logs were springing up in all directions.

Most of the trees in the vicinity of Dawson had already been used up, but many men were employed during the summer months in cutting down clumps of trees in different parts of the Yukon. These were hauled to the bank and large rafts constructed, which were floated down the river to Dawson. People in the Yukon were permitted to cut down on Government land, without charge, all the trees they required for their own use, either for building cabins or for purposes of firewood, but they were not allowed to cut wood for purposes of sale without a licence from the authorities.

Floating a large raft down the Yukon for, perhaps, 200 miles or more demands a considerable amount of skill. Huge oars about thirty feet long, called "sweepers," are attached to each end of the raft and balanced on pivots, so that each sweeper can be operated by two or three men. Great care is required in guiding the raft past the different sand-bars on the river, and comparatively few men are capable of handling a heavy raft with safety. The approach to Dawson involves an especially anxious moment for the owners. A small rowing-boat with a heavy rope is carried on the raft, which when close to Dawson


J F Harrison Dutton
1911

Guiding a Raft down the Yukon.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

is guided as near to the shore as possible. One end of the rope is attached to the raft, and at the right moment a man pushes off in the boat and rows rapidly to the shore, dragging with him the other end of the rope, which he ties round one of the posts driven into the bank at intervals. Mishaps, however, often occur. Those on the raft may be unable to guide it sufficiently close to the shore, or the enormous force of its momentum may cause the rope to break, and the raft will then float down the current below Dawson, and may proceed for a considerable distance before being finally stopped and secured to the bank. If not too far away, the logs can be piled on the bank and drawn back to Dawson on sleighs during the winter; but all this entails a heavy expense, which would probably absorb the whole of the profits.

A heavy raft approaching Dawson affords quite an impressive spectacle, the men labouring with all their strength on the huge sweepers, and the pilot standing in the centre issuing directions. It would probably consist of about a thousand trees, which for purposes of rafting are generally cut into 16-foot lengths. All this entails heavy labour, as the trees when chopped down must be stripped of their branches, and cut into lengths suitable for the purpose. They may be situated some distance from the river, and after being hauled to the bank by horses, are made into a raft and guided down to Dawson. The owners depend on the sale for their summer wages, and perhaps to enable them to purchase provisions for the ensuing winter. It forms a depressing, though not an unusual spectacle, when through some mischance the rope has broken or failed to reach the bank, and the raft with its precious burden floats placidly past Dawson down the current, the men standing disconsolate upon it, knowing that their hard summer's labour has been practically wasted.

About the first week in October the last steamer left Dawson for the outside world, its decks crowded with disheartened passengers. After all their trials and expense in getting to the Klondyke, they were now only bent on getting back while the opportunity existed, and felt no inclination to face a winter in the Yukon. When eventually the ice in the river jammed and formed a solid mass from bank to bank, a noticeable feeling of depression pervaded the town. The majority had never before experienced an Arctic winter, but had passed their lives in civilised localities, where railways, telegraphs, and newspapers had kept them in constant communication. Many had left wives and families behind, and, when the Yukon finally became frozen, all realised that for the next six or seven months a 600-mile barrier of ice and snow would intervene between themselves and the outside world.

In later years the communication during the winter became vastly improved. Dawson was connected with the outside world by telegraph, the railway was completed between Whitehorse and the Pacific coast, a waggon-road was constructed across country from Dawson to Whitehorse, which considerably shortened the route, while regular stages consisting of four-horse sleighs made the journey two or three times a week, conveying mails and passengers. During the winter of 1898 there was no telegraph line, no railway and no waggon-road, while the mails were conveyed for the 600 miles at uncertain intervals by dog teams driven by the R.N.W.M.P.

However, the feeling of depression in Dawson soon disappeared. Some settled down to mining or other business, while others repaired to the drinking saloons and the dance-halls, where the combined effects of dance-girls and bad whisky soon obliterated any feelings of regret for their wives and families on the outside.

CHAPTER IV

THE WINTER OF 1898

By the commencement of October the weather in the Yukon becomes exceedingly cold, so another man and myself who occupied tents in Dawson in 1898, not far distant apart, decided to abandon them and inquire for a cabin. Numerous cabins had been erected in Dawson, for sale or hire during the winter months, so we eventually hired a small one about 14 feet square, which was sufficiently large for two people. It consisted of one room, the walls constructed with logs containing one very small window, as glass in those days was an expensive luxury. A window sash with six panes of glass, six inches by eight, could be purchased in 1898 for £4, so that in many of the cabins in the Yukon the windows were constructed by inserting empty bottles in the wall in the place of window panes. Another common device consisted in soaking some thin linen in melted candle grease, and this attached to an opening in the wall would allow a feeble light to penetrate, while preventing the cold atmosphere from entering the cabin.

Our furniture consisted of a rough table and two wooden bunks fixed against the wall, on which we spread some hay purchased at an enormous price from a neighbouring stable, while two empty boxes were substituted for chairs. Sheets in the Yukon were, of course, practically unknown, but blankets feel much more cosy and comfortable when one gets accustomed to them. We washed our own clothes and did our own cooking, which neither knew much about; however, the class of cooking required for that style of life requires very little knowledge, and can be acquired without much experience.

Beef had been landed in Dawson from the steamers, while moose and cariboo meat brought in by Indians and white men could occasionally be purchased, but all were exceedingly expensive. Bakeries had also been established in the town, so that bread could be purchased at a shilling a pound. No cows existed in the place, so fresh milk or cream were, of course, unobtainable, although tins of condensed milk and evaporated cream could be purchased at the stores.

Water was obtained from the Yukon during the winter by cutting a hole through the ice, the same water-hole being used every day to prevent the ice becoming too thick, although in cold weather a considerable amount of chopping was required in the morning before water could be obtained. Boards were sometimes placed across the water-hole and a blanket thrown over them, which, to a certain extent, assisted to keep away the frost, so that less chopping was required in the morning. The water-hole would eventually freeze up at the bottom, when a fresh one had then to be cut; and as the ice during the winter attained a thickness of about 5 feet, the making of a fresh water-hole entailed a considerable amount of labour. When the hole penetrated the ice, the water, owing to the pressure underneath, would immediately bubble up until it reached the surface.

Logs for furnishing fuel for the stove were delivered at the cabins in Dawson in 16-foot lengths, and had then to be sawn up into lengths suitable for the stove, and split into smaller pieces with an axe. In very cold weather the stove had to be kept at full blaze to preserve warmth inside the cabin, so that it consumed a large amount of wood in the course of the day. These roughly-built cabins, composed of one room enclosed by four outside walls, have numerous weak places through which the cold atmosphere can penetrate; and in very cold weather, when the thermometer registers 50° or 60° below zero, the temperature inside our cabin in the morning, when the stove had been extinguished for several hours, would be about 15° below zero. Emerging from a warm bed under such conditions in order to light the stove in the morning forms one of the most unpleasant features of the day's routine. In cold climates like the Yukon, cabins would be difficult to keep warm with merely open fireplaces, which allow most of the heat to escape up the chimney, so that stoves invariably take their place.

During the winter fur robes were generally used instead of blankets, but as the best ones, made of fox or lynx skins, are very expensive, cheaper robes made of wombat, an Australian fur, or mountain goat were usually purchased. These answer the purpose fairly well, though they are not so warm and very much heavier than fox or lynx robes. They are generally made 8 feet square, which enables the wearer to be completely enveloped, while they are also sufficiently long to cover both head and feet. In cold weather, to prevent the face becoming frost-bitten, the head must be completely covered with the robe before going to sleep, leaving only a small air-hole by the mouth for purposes of breathing; and this air-hole becomes fringed with a coating of ice, owing to the breath condensing and freezing on the robe.

This description covers 80 per cent. of the cabins in the Yukon, although some, especially in latter years, were more elaborately constructed and protected to withstand almost any cold. They would be provided with double doors and double windows, while the crevices between the logs would be hermetically sealed with cement. In addition to the cook-stove, they would contain one or more "heaters," which are air-tight stoves large enough to hold a considerable amount of wood, and when the draught is shut off these will continue to smoulder all through the night, so that the cabin remains continually warm.

My partner and myself were both spending our first winter in the Yukon, and being new to the business, foolishly hired a cabin built of green logs, which we soon discovered to be a fatal mistake. The heat from the stove during the day drew the moisture out of the green logs, so that the walls inside the cabin became saturated with moisture, which during the night would freeze into solid ice when the stove was extinguished and the cabin became cold. The result was that the inside of the cabin became eventually lined with a coating of ice, which every night became thicker, while during the daytime the surface of the ice would melt and trickle on to the floor. The floor is always the coldest part of a cabin, and this deposit would quickly freeze, and so, besides the coating of ice round the walls, a sort of skating-rink was formed round the floor, which every day became wider. We therefore searched about until we eventually secured a fresh cabin constructed of dry logs, and were much relieved when our goods and chattels had been removed from the iceberg to our new abode.

Typhoid fever, which was raging during the summer months, quickly vanished when the winter had commenced and the ground became thoroughly frozen. Scurvy now appeared in its place, and became very prevalent during the winter, numerous deaths resulting from it. The epidemic was assigned to various causes, according to the opinions of different people; some attributing the disease to the scarcity of fresh vegetables, others to the lack of fresh meat and insufficient exercise. Probably all these reasons contributed to it to a certain extent, though cases occasionally occurred most unexpectedly. An acquaintance of mine was engaged in mining up the Pelly River, where any amount of fresh moose meat could be obtained. Working his claim entailed a lot of exercise, and although he possessed no fresh vegetables, during the autumn an abundance of fresh fruit in the shape of wild berries could be gathered. In spite of this he was attacked with scurvy, but quickly embarked in his boat and proceeded down the Yukon to Dawson, where he was treated in the hospital and recovered.

Many people without employment were too indolent to take proper exercise, and passed the winter in stuffy cabins heated by an unhealthy stove and with practically no ventilation. They possessed neither fresh meat nor fresh vegetables, and as their diet consisted principally of bacon and boiled horse-beans, it is not surprising that scurvy resulted. The first symptom of the disease is a swelling under the arms and knees, while the gums bleed easily. The skin also loses its elasticity, so that a dent formed by pressing the finger against it remains open, instead of closing at once. The remedy is practically a matter of diet, and fresh potatoes eaten raw, which will cure almost any scurvy, are invariably given in the hospitals, while spruce tea, which is made by boiling spruce brush in water, is also to be recommended. The disease is not dangerous, provided proper remedies can be applied ; but many people living away in the woods possessed neither the knowledge of how to treat the disease nor the proper diet, and consequently died in their cabins.

The road from Dawson to the Klondyke River and up Bonanza Creek, during the winter of 1898, presented quite a busy appearance, people continually arriving and departing with the necessary supplies to the different creeks, where their mining claims were situated. Dog sleighs were travelling to and fro perpetually, some with heavy loads toiling at a slow walk, while others dragging only their masters would be trotting or galloping gaily along with sleigh-bells ringing. Many who possessed no dogs and could not afford to buy them, were dragging their loaded sleighs themselves, one man pulling with a rope in front, while his partner would be pushing behind with a pole.

Comparatively few horses were then in the country, owing to the scarcity of roads and the enormous expense of buying food to maintain them during the winter. A certain number were employed in Dawson; and the cost of hiring a team of two horses with driver and waggon for the day amounted to between £20 and £30. Dogs were almost universally employed by those who possessed them; and there is nothing more exhilarating and enjoyable than driving in a sleigh behind a fast dog team over a hard trail. The dogs in the Yukon can be divided into two main classes, namely, "inside dogs," which comprise those born and bred in the country, and "outside dogs," which have been brought into the Yukon from the towns on the Pacific coast, or from other parts of Canada.

The inside dogs, which are called Malamutes or Huskies, resemble in appearance the Esquimaux dogs, so well known from the illustrations in books of Arctic travel. They are great fighters amongst themselves, but almost invariably good tempered towards human beings. The malamutes possess a strong strain of wolf, and resemble wolves in many respects, as they never bark like an outside dog, but invariably howl. A trapper of my acquaintance owned a dog which was half malamute and half wolf; it exactly resembled a wolf, was perfectly good tempered, and made a good sleigh dog. The outside dogs and the inside dogs each have certain advantages, as the malamutes, being born and bred in the country, can withstand the cold better and require less food to keep them in condition, while the outside dogs are generally faster. Although a matter of opinion, many people prefer a cross between the two, which appears on the whole to afford the most satisfaction.

Their sleigh harness consists of a collar with traces attached, and a strap round the body to keep the traces in position. They are harnessed one in front of the other, while each have buckles behind the collar to which the traces of the dog in front are attached; the traces of the rear dog being, of course, attached to the sleigh. By this system a considerable amount of power is wasted, as the leading dogs are pulling at the dogs behind them, instead of exerting a direct pull on the sleigh. In the lower Yukon a long rope is attached to the sleigh and the dogs are harnessed to the rope. This system affords each dog a more direct pull on the sleigh, although, I think, the best method prevails in Eastern Canada, where each dog is harnessed direct to the sleigh by separate ropes of different lengths. It is important for dog collars, like horse collars, to be well stuffed and the proper size, otherwise the dogs' shoulders will become sore.

Reins are not required when driving dogs, as they are trained to recognise certain words of command. "Mush," a corruption of the French-Canadian "marche," implies "go on," and "Woh" is used for "stop," while "Gee" means "go to the right" and "Haw" means "go to the left." Some people, of course, are naturally cruel and make frequent use of the dog-whip, but a willing dog does not require to be beaten at all, while a dog that is naturally lazy is not worth the expense of feeding. An unwilling dog becomes exceedingly sly, and will often learn to keep his collar just tight against his shoulder, so as to put on an appearance of working when he is really not pulling a pound. A dog accustomed to being beaten can generally be detected, as, instead of keeping his attention concentrated on his work, he will be continually looking round to ascertain if the dog-whip is uplifted.

The first cold snap during the winter made its appearance early. On emerging from my bed one morning to start the stove, the temperature in the room appeared unusually chilly, so I lighted a candle and donned some clothes as rapidly as possible, and on glancing at a thermometer hanging against the wall discovered that it registered 15° below zero. The crevices between the logs were in places coated with large patches of white frost, showing where the outside air had penetrated through the moss, while the water in the galvanised pail was frozen into a solid mass, so that it was necessary to place the pail on the stove, and wait until sufficient ice was melted for the purposes of washing and cooking. On opening the cabin door, a thick white freezing fog rushed into the room from the outside.

After breakfast was finished, I wrapped myself up and wandered down the town. The temperature was over 50° below zero, with the atmosphere perfectly still, while a dense mist prevailed, reminding one of the thick fogs which occasionally visit the streets in London. In certain places on the Yukon and its tributaries open spots occur in the river, which remain unfrozen during the winter owing to the presence of warm springs. During very cold weather a thick vapour arises from these open spots, produced by the contact of the cold atmosphere with the water, and the colder the weather the thicker becomes the vapour. Some of these open places are situated near Dawson, so that when the temperature drops to 50° or more below zero the town becomes enveloped in a thick fog.

Not many people were to be seen in the streets. When the temperature is very cold, people prefer not to remain longer than is necessary out of doors, and spend most of their time in the cabins sitting round the stove. The stoves must be kept in full blaze to maintain warmth within the cabins, and consume a large amount of wood, so from the different cabins the noise of large saws employed in sawing up the logs, and the axes splitting them into smaller pieces, would be heard unceasingly.

Occasionally a raven would be indistinctly observed flying overhead, its size greatly magnified by the dense mist, so that it resembled a large black kite floating through the still atmosphere. Men could be dimly observed gliding through the fog, well muffled up in furs; many of them having coverings across their faces to protect them from the freezing atmosphere. This, combined with their fur caps and mitts, and their fur coats with the fur worn on the outside, which is the custom in Canada, gave them a grotesque appearance, so that the town resembled a menagerie of bears walking on their hind legs.

It entailed only a few minutes' walk from my cabin to the nearest saloon, where I could enter to warm myself, but on my arrival at the door my moustache was already thickly coated with ice, caused by my breath congealing and becoming frozen. The saloons during those cold snaps were always crowded with human beings, some standing at the bar, busily employed in tossing with dice for hot drinks, while others were congregated round a giant circular stove like a miniature boiler. This would be kept blazing, and required continual stoking from a pile of logs lying in the vicinity.

In those days the saloons were never closed during the twenty-four hours, so that a man might enter at any time during the night and would find the dice-boxes still rattling, and the gambling games in full swing. On Sundays they were supposed by law to be closed, but they all possessed a back entrance, where customers could freely enter to procure libations. These very cold snaps would usually only last for a week or ten days at a time, and when the weather had moderated my cabin partner and myself fastened our sleeping robes, some provisions, &c., on a sleigh, and after harnessing up some dogs started off on a tour of inspection round the creeks.

The temperature was just pleasant for travelling, about 25° below zero, and the dogs trotted gaily through the town, and then dropped down the steep incline on to the Klondyke River. The trail was smooth and hard and slippery from constant use, so the dogs experienced no difficulty in dragging the load, one of us riding on the sleigh while the other ran behind. Strings of people were met travelling to and fro, some at a brisk walk, others running behind or riding on their dog sleighs. When the weather has moderated after a severe snap, there is always a noticeable feeling of gaiety and relief amongst the inhabitants, and the people then emerge from their cabins, like bears from their winter dens. The dense fog which prevailed during the cold weather had now entirely disappeared, and the clear, crisp, invigorating atmosphere makes every one feel hale and hearty and good-tempered.

After proceeding for two miles up the Klondyke River, a trail branched off to the right, leading to the mouths of the Bonanza and Eldorado creeks. Our destination was Hunker Creek, so we followed along the trail leading up the broad valley of the Klondyke, where, owing to its exposed position, a slight breeze was perceptible, which necessitated our continually rubbing our cheeks and noses with our fur mitts.

Eventually we passed a trail leading to a small creek called Bear Creek, where some rich claims have been located near the mouth. About two miles above Bear Creek the trail diverged to the right, leading to the mouth of Hunker Creek, which, next to Bonanza and Eldorado, forms the most important creek in the Klondyke district.

We soon entered the valley of Hunker Creek, and finding shelter here from the cold breeze on the Klondyke, we stopped to give the dogs a rest and started a camp fire for lunch. Travelling in that cold crisp atmosphere develops a marvellous appetite, and by the time the moose steaks were cooked and the tea water boiling we were both simply ravenous. After lunch and a short smoke we continued our journey up the creek, the trail winding along the valley, sometimes traversing the frozen bed of the creek and sometimes cut out amongst the adjoining bushes and spruce trees. Eventually we arrived at a road-house or wayside inn, and as daylight only lasts for a short interval during the winter months and we had been travelling through the darkness for the last two hours, we decided to put up here for the night.

These road-houses, where travellers can be provided with meals or pass the night, are established at various points along the different trails. In 1898 they were of a most primitive description, consisting of rough log cabins with wooden sleeping bunks ranged round the walls, one above the other in tiers, like third-class berths on board ship; while in the centre was the stove, with perhaps a wooden bench on each side of it. Blankets were occasionally, though not always, provided; but it was preferable to bring one's own, as road-house blankets were not often washed, and had probably been slept in by dozens of people, who in the Yukon are not remarkable for cleanliness.

The heat inside was usually oppressive, and the room had no proper ventilation; and as fifteen or twenty people, who seldom, if ever, indulged in a bath, might be congregated round the stove or reclining in their bunks, smoking pipes and chewing tobacco, the atmosphere can be more easily imagined than described. When travelling during the winter we found lodging in road-houses preferable to camping out of doors; but as they were almost invariably infested with lice, they did not form pleasant habitations.

The next morning after breakfast we hitched up the dogs, and after paying our bill, which amounted to $1 (or 4s.) apiece for our bunks, besides another $4 (or 16s.) each for a very primitive supper and breakfast, we resumed our journey up the creek. The valley had now become quite narrow, the mountain sides rising steep up from the creek valley. The upper slopes were still thickly wooded with spruces, intermingled with birch and poplar; but the lower slopes and the creek valley were almost bare, the trees having been principally used up in the mines. In some places long slides had been constructed up the mountain side, and logs would be tumbled down the steep and slippery decline into the valley below, where the mines were situated.

Some rich discoveries had been made on this part of the creek, so it was thickly studded with miners' cabins, and claims were being worked at high pressure. Below in the drift men were excavating the gravel and wheeling it to the shaft. Others were standing at the mouths of the shafts hauling up the loaded buckets with a windlass, and depositing the gravel in a huge mound on the ground adjoining. In the spring, when the creek is clear of ice, this mound of gold-bearing gravel, called the dump, is put through a process of washing and the gold extracted.

The men continued their labours unceasingly through severe snaps, standing stolidly by the shaft for hours in temperatures of 50 and 60° below zero, a great part of the time in darkness except for the light of a small lamp. They certainly deserved success for their perseverance. The arrival of spring, when the dumps were washed and the gold extracted, was an exciting period for the miners, who were eager to ascertain the results of their labours during the long trying winter. The gold was by no means uniformly disseminated through the gravel, so that the amount contained in the dumps formed to a large extent a matter of speculation. When the dumps were eventually washed disappointments were frequent, and the gold extracted proved often insufficient to recoup the mining expenses.

This method of mining necessitated handling the gravel twice over, which considerably increased the expense; and in more recent years the mining has been conducted principally during the summer, when the gravel can be excavated and washed at the same time. Some of the creeks become so low in the summer that they hardly contain enough water for mining purposes, and during exceptionally dry summers the mines have been considerably hampered, while in many instances they have been obliged to stop working owing to lack of water.

Several years ago, during one of those dry summers, when the miners were unable to wash their gravel and were all grumbling at the scarcity of rain, an enterprising Yankee arrived in Dawson and volunteered, in return for a considerable sum, to produce rain by a chemical process. The municipal government gave him $2000 or £400, to perform the operation; upon which he fired off some squibs into a cloudless sky, which, needless to remark, remained equally cloudless, the squibs producing no effect whatever. He then decamped with the $2000, no doubt remarkably pleased at having obtained such a large sum so extremely easily. The confidence trick, of course, assumes various forms; but it appears surprising that a municipal government should have allowed themselves to be inveigled by such transparent quackery.

Our dogs trotted gaily along the trail as it twisted about among the dumps and the shafts, some of which were belching forth great volumes of smoke from the fires blazing within, thawing out the frozen gravel. About noon we arrived at Hunker's claim, where we stopped for lunch. Hunker was the first discoverer of gold in the creek, from whom it derives its name. He was a typical example of a rough old miner, and was working a claim on Forty Mile Creek when the stampede to Bonanza first occurred. As, however, he was too late to stake a claim on Bonanza and Eldorado in a favourable position, he travelled up the Klondyke until he struck the mouth of Hunker, and staked a claim near the head of the creek. He eventually sold his claim for about $150,000, so he did not fare badly for an old miner, who, before his arrival at the Klondyke, was worth practically nothing.

A man named M'Donald, who gained the title of the "King of the Klondyke," was at that period by far the largest owner of mining properties in the district. He was fortunate enough to acquire an interest in a valuable claim on Eldorado when Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks were first staked. This was afterwards sold for a large sum in London during the boom, and formed into a company, but as the principal proportion of the gold had already been extracted by the original owners, the investment did not prove remunerative for the shareholders in London.

M'Donald invested the proceeds of the sale by purchasing a large number of mining claims on different creeks in the vicinity, and as they were all practically unprospected, and therefore sheer speculations, he was able to acquire them for a comparatively low figure. At that time he professed to be worth $20,000,000, or £4,000,000, and although this amount was no doubt greatly exaggerated, he must have possessed an enormous fortune, considering that he was an ordinary labouring man who, before his arrival in Dawson, was worth practically nothing. Instead of being satisfied with his good luck he attempted to increase his fortune by speculation, but being totally uneducated and unaccustomed to business he became entangled in all sorts of wild-cat schemes, and when he died, about eight years later, the King of the Klondyke's fortune had practically disappeared, and his assets barely covered his liabilities.

After lunch we continued our journey up the creek until we arrived at a steep pass which divides Hunker from Dominion Creek. The ascent was almost precipitous for about 1000 feet, but an enterprising person had arranged a windlass and a long rope at the top, operated by a small boiler and engine, and on payment of a dollar and a half our sleigh was hauled up to the summit, while we clambered up the steep mountain side to the best of our ability.

The scenery obtained from these mountain summits in the Yukon is always entrancing. The Rocky Mountains can be plainly discerned in the far distance, with bare rugged peaks towering towards the sky, while the nearer view comprises endless mountain ranges densely wooded with snow-clad spruces, and interspersed with valleys and their frozen creeks. On looking back we could trace Hunker Creek twisting and turning till it joined the valley of the Klondyke, and the snow-covered cabins looking like toys in the

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distance, with miniature men and dog teams travelling to and fro along the trail.

After crossing the divide the valley of Dominion Creek spread out below us with its frozen stream twisting about, until we could just discern in the distance where it eventually flowed into the Indian River, a tributary of the Yukon. The trail leading down to the creek was decidedly steep, but not so precipitous as the ascent from Hunker Creek to the summit, so we fastened a dog chain round one of the runners of the sleigh, which acted as a drag, and by that means were able to make the descent without difficulty.

Dominion forms a large creek with some good claims in the upper part, but does not possess such a high reputation as Hunker Creek, nor one, of course, approaching to that of Bonanza and Eldorado. Darkness had now come on, so after travelling down the creek for a short distance we came across a road-house where we decided to spend the night. An influx of travellers, lately arrived from Dawson, completely filled the road-house, and as bunks were unobtainable, we spread our sleeping-robes in a spare corner on the floor. The heat inside was as usual oppressive, while a large number of men were smoking and chewing bad tobacco and spitting on the floor, which made the atmosphere anything but agreeable.

The next morning we continued our journey to the lower part of Dominion Creek. The claims here are nothing like so rich as in the

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upper part, and comparatively little mining was in progress. Although no road-house had been established down here, towards evening we discovered a cabin with a light burning inside, where we obtained permission to pass the night. The owner was very cordial, and as at that time there was very little travel down Lower Dominion, he appeared quite glad to receive visitors and learn the news from Dawson.

His log cabin was a tiny little dingy hovel, with a piece of linen soaked in candle grease fixed into the wall in place of window panes. We had brought provisions with us in case of necessity, but he insisted on opening a can of preserved tomatoes in our honour. He had previously staked a claim in the vicinity, and the next morning he brought up from the bottom of his shaft some gravel frozen in hard lumps, and these he placed in a gold pan on the stove to thaw out.

A gold pan consists of an iron dish which will contain about a shovelful of gravel, and this is washed in a stream or large bucket filled with water. During the operation the pan is constantly shaken, so that the particles of gold, owing to their heavy specific gravity, fall to the bottom of the pan, while the gravel and stones are washed away with the water. Gold-panning requires considerable practice before proficiency is attained, and if skilfully performed the smallest particles of gold will all be separated from the gravel, and remain in the pan when all the gravel has been washed away. When the gravel on the stove was thawed out, our host, with the aid of a candle, proceeded to wash it in a bucket filled with melted snow. A few particles of fine gold were ultimately recovered in the pan, but the amount was not sufficient to be very proud about.

After hitching up the dogs, we proceeded down the creek till we joined the trail turning into Gold Run Creek, which flows into Dominion. A quartz ledge had been discovered on this creek which created quite an excitement in Dawson, so that a company was promptly floated. I myself amongst others was persuaded to buy shares in the enterprise, which turned out a complete fiasco.

The trail proceeded up Gold Run Creek for a short distance, and then branched on to the side hill and followed a zigzag course, until it reached the summit. Here we made a camp fire for lunch, and then followed along the trail until we eventually arrived at a road-house. We were now off the line of the most frequented trails, so that the arrival of travellers was a comparatively rare event.

The man in charge of the road-house when we arrived was lying on a bunk perfectly drunk, while the place was swarming with lice, and had no pretensions to cleanliness. However, when living continually in the Yukon, one gradually develops a habit of "pigging it," because most of one's associates have never done anything else, and one naturally becomes habituated to one's surroundings. The next morning we harnessed up the dogs and proceeded on our journey, till we eventually struck the main trail leading down to the head of Bonanza Creek.

The descent was fairly steep, so my companion lay down on the sleigh with his feet pressed against the snow on each side, acting as a drag, while I further assisted in checking the sleigh by holding on to a rope trailing behind. By this means we slid rapidly along with the dogs galloping down the steep incline, until, on turning a corner, we suddenly encountered a glacier of clear ice extending across the trail. There was no time to stop, the sleigh promptly shot forward over the clear ice, landing right amongst the dogs, which were rolled over and dragged along, becoming tangled up in their harness in hopeless confusion, until eventually we all landed in a confused heap in the deep snow at the side of the trail.

After regaining our composure we soon scrambled to our feet and shook the snow off our garments, and when we had disentangled the dogs and extricated the sleigh, which was completely buried in the deep snow, we proceeded to drag it back on to the trail. We then fastened a dog-chain round one of the runners as a further precaution, and proceeded without mishap down the trail to Bonanza Creek. On arriving at the forks of Bonanza and Eldorado we hunted up my former friend, whom I had visited the previous summer. He was busily engaged on his claim, scooping in gold by the ounces, and paying frequent visits to Dawson, where his gold dust was rapidly dissipated in the drinking saloons and dance-halls.

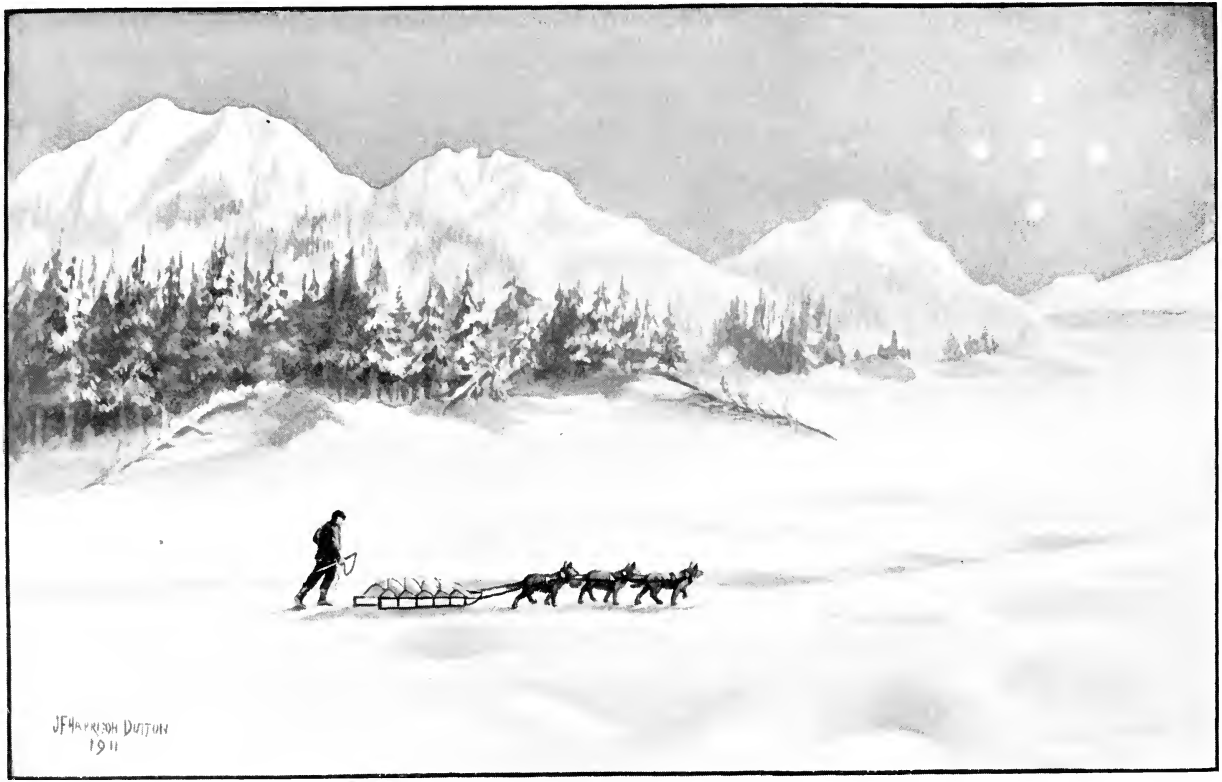
We lunched at his cabin, and after a chat and a smoke proceeded down to the foot of Bonanza. As we slid smoothly and rapidly along the trail, with the dogs increasing their pace as we were nearing home, I thought of the vast contrast between travelling at this period of the year and travelling during the summer time. Now we were gliding swiftly along over a snow trail hard and slippery from constant use, while the preceding summer I was struggling hot and weary up Bonanza, through the mire and the niggerheads, amidst the continual buzzing of mosquitoes. On reaching the mouth of Bonanza we joined the trail on the Klondyke, and after gliding down the frozen river for a couple of miles the dogs quickly dragged the sleigh up the steep bank of the river and through the streets of Dawson until we arrived at our cabin.

During the winter we made several excursions, either alone or together, to the different creeks. A moment would, if possible, be chosen when the weather was moderate, but cold snaps occur very suddenly, so that we would occasionally be caught by one, and travelling in severe weather is not an enjoyable occupation.

On one occasion during the following winter I experienced quite a ducking, although attended with no serious results. I was then travelling by myself to visit an acquaintance, who was mining on Forty Mile Creek, about 80 miles from Dawson. This was towards the spring, when the sun's warmth begins to exert an appreciable effect, and travelling with a dog team is delightful. The mouth of Forty Mile Creek, about 60 miles below Dawson, was formerly an important town, as it formed the base of distribution for the mines in the district. The Klondyke boom had, however, denuded the creek of a large proportion of its inhabitants, and on the occasion of my visit the town was undergoing a general slump, and deserted cabins were dotted about in all directions.

After proceeding up the creek for a few miles, a cabin appeared with a tall flagstaff in front flying the Stars and Stripes, while an official in uniform, who was standing by, informed me that I was now entering the American territory of Alaska, so that it was necessary to examine my baggage. However, my small outfit did not require examination, and the official, after inquiring about the news from Dawson and recounting all the gossip on Forty Mile Creek, allowed me to proceed on my journey.

Occasionally through an opening in the mountains I obtained a glimpse of the dog-suns; a feature of the North, which is not so often observed as the Northern Lights, though I have occasionally seen them towards the spring when the sun is well above the horizon. They consist


J F Harrison Dutton
1911

THE DOG-SUNS.

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of four sham suns, one above and one below the real sun, and one on each side, the five suns forming a cross. Two of the sham suns are usually very distinct and two rather indistinct. The phenomenon is rather striking to watch, and I have not heard any explanation of it.

One afternoon, while progressing up the creek, I came upon a weak spot in the ice, probably owing to the presence of a warm spring. The dogs and the sleigh had passed over safely, but I happened to be running just behind the sleigh when suddenly both my feet broke through the ice into the river. Fortunately a rope was always trailing behind the sleigh, which I held on to when descending steep grades, so as to prevent the sleigh from running on to the dogs. On this occasion the rope came in extremely handy, as I quickly threw myself forward on my chest and clutched tight hold of the rope, at the same time yelling to the dogs to "mush." The dogs promptly exerted an extra strain, and pulled me out of the hole and along the trail until the firm ice recommenced. The trails on the creeks often have to be changed, especially towards the spring, so as to avoid treacherous places which occasionally appear.

I was, of course, soaked nearly up to the waist, but the weather was not then very cold, about 20° below zero, so I promptly proceeded to the bank and lighted a camp fire while I changed my wet things. I had brought some extra socks and moccasins, but possessed no other trousers, so after tying my wet clothes on the sleigh, I lay down on it wrapped up in my sleeping robe, until I arrived at the cabin.

On reaching my destination, I found my acquaintance hobbling about on a crutch in a very bad humour, as he had frozen one of his feet badly about three weeks previously. He had broken through a weak spot on the ice, and having omitted to bring any matches was unable to light a camp fire, so that his foot had become badly frozen before his arrival at his cabin. The frozen flesh had partly sloughed away, and as he anticipated not being able to work for another six weeks, his mining prospects had been considerably damaged.

On my return journey, I travelled down to the mouth of Forty Mile Creek, where I joined the trail up the Yukon on my way to Dawson. When about 12 miles from Dawson, I stopped at a road-house for some lunch, leaving the dogs to wait for me outside. Dogs do not require, like horses, to be tied up when left alone, but will lie down in the snow and wait patiently until their master is ready to proceed. At the same time, when headed towards home, they will occasionally become impatient and suddenly start off, which may prove extremely inconvenient. On this occasion, having completed my lunch and a smoke, I emerged from the road-house to continue my journey, but discovered that the dogs had already started for home, and could just be discerned trotting gaily along the trail in the distance, and I never saw them again until my arrival at the cabin in Dawson.

A town like Dawson, constructed entirely of wood, was particularly susceptible to fires, and during its early years a winter seldom passed without the town being devastated by fire, and a large portion of it destroyed. Fires usually occurred in the winter months, when so many oil lamps were employed during the long winter evenings, and stoves were kept continually burning to counteract the cold outside. In the large stores and saloons the stoves were never extinguished day or night, so that the interior fittings became so dried up and inflammable from the constant heat, that when once alight they burned like tinder.

During the summer of 1899 a fire-engine was imported into Dawson at a large expense, while a special staff of firemen were engaged, so as to be ready in case of emergency. The first fire-engine in Dawson received quite an ovation on its arrival, as it was now anticipated that the fires in future would be attended with less disastrous results. When the Yukon was frozen over, the engine was placed under shelter on the ice, while a large hole was continually kept open, so that water, when required, could be obtained without delay.

The firemen's services were soon put to the test. One cold winter night, at about ten o'clock, a cry of "fire" was raised, and flames were seen to shoot up from a building about the centre of the main street, in the busiest part of the town. The street was quickly crowded with people muffled up in their winter garments and fur caps, who came scrambling out of the drinking saloons, gambling places, and dance-halls, some sober, others more or less intoxicated. They were thoroughly well aware of the inflammable nature of the buildings and how rapidly a fire would spread, and not knowing where it had originated or how soon it might envelop them, all were bent on escaping from the buildings as rapidly as possible. Those possessing cabins in the vicinity immediately rushed off in the hope of saving their effects before it was too late, while others lent willing hands in removing articles from the buildings adjacent to the fire.

Anxious eyes were now directed towards the fire-engine which had been brought into Dawson at so much expense and received with so much applause, but, although every moment was so important, the expected stream of water failed to appear. No one could imagine the cause of the delay, until it eventually transpired that the firemen, who had been detailed to be ready for any emergency, had recently gone "on strike" owing to arrears of wages, so that by the time negotiations with them had been hurriedly completed, the houses were in full blaze and the fire had already gained considerable ascendency. However, no time was now lost in getting to work, several hundred feet of hose being quickly dragged by numbers of willing hands along the street, and when the steam was applied, those in the vicinity eagerly watched the hose expanding under the pressure of the water.

The nozzle was directed towards the flames, but, instead of a strong stream issuing from it, the steam applied had been insufficient for the purpose, so that only a feeble splutter appeared, which in a few minutes ceased altogether. As the temperature was about 40° below zero Fahr., the water in the hose, when its force had slackened, quickly froze solid, so that before sufficient steam could be obtained, the interior of the hose became a mass of solid ice from end to end. The expanding force of the ice soon broke through the hose, and great rents suddenly burst forth with a loud crackling noise in all directions.

Now that the fire-brigade was *hors de combat*, the flames simply swept from house to house, until eventually the whole of that portion of the town became a huge blazing mass. It was certainly a magnificent spectacle, the flames roaring and blazing and crackling amongst a pile of dry wooden tenements that burnt like matchwood. Men were working like bees in the bitter cold, rushing in and out of the houses which the flames had not yet reached, and conveying what they had time to save to a place of safety. The heat from the fire, coming into contact with the cold atmosphere, had shrouded the street and vicinity in a dense mist, imparting a weird and ghostly aspect to the flames and surrounding objects.

The Bank of British North America was

situated not very far distant, and as the fire rapidly approached it the officials became more and more alarmed, while the manager was offering $1000 to any one who would save the building. The progress of the fire continued unchecked, so the bank was soon afterwards enveloped in flames, and being, like the rest of the town, constructed of wood, it was completely consumed. The safe, containing a large amount of gold dust, had burst open from the heat expanding within, scattering the gold dust far and wide. Later on, when the fire had died down, a police guard was placed over the premises of the late bank, and for the next few days an interested crowd of spectators resorted to the spot, and watched the bank officials scraping the ashes, gravel, and cinders together, and collecting the débris, so that it might be washed with water and the gold dust recovered.

Of course, a number of cabins situated in more remote places had escaped the flames; but a large area in the central and busiest part of the town had been reduced to ashes. A vast amount of stores had also been burnt up with the blazing houses, the total loss being estimated at over £500,000. The next morning the fire, owing to lack of further material to feed upon, had died away, except for smouldering logs scattered about; and the large area of blackened logs and smoking embers presented a striking contrast to the collection of saloons, trading stores, and restaurants which had occupied the spot a day before.

The river bank was littered with bedding, clothes, provisions, and articles of every description, which the owners had been able to save before the fire had reached them. Muffled up people were busily employed in searching about for fresh premises, while others were hastily loading horse-sleighs and dog-sleighs with their belongings and transporting them to their new abodes, or to warehouses where they could be temporarily stored. The saw-mill was fortunately not involved in the disaster, and although the price of boards promptly rose enormously, the task of rebuilding the burnt-out area was immediately commenced. Wooden houses do not require long to construct, while the town was composed almost entirely of active and able-bodied men; so that the charred logs and débris were rapidly removed, fresh premises erected, and within a surprisingly short period the town had resumed its normal appearance, and one could hardly have realised that a fire so disastrous had occurred so recently.

During the earlier years of Dawson a conflagration consuming a portion of the town took place almost every winter; but latterly the fire brigade was placed on a more satisfactory basis, while the firemen received their wages regularly, so that the danger of a strike at critical moments was eliminated. A number of the wooden structures were also in later years replaced by galvanised iron buildings, and consequently the danger to property arising from fires became greatly minimised.

The winter in the Yukon possesses one great advantage, as certain provisions can then be kept indefinitely in a frozen state without spoiling, which proves often of great convenience. In a temperature far below zero there is no difficulty in freezing articles, and anything kept in a shed where there is no fire will freeze solid in a very short time. A supply of meat or fish can be laid in and kept in a frozen state during the winter, and thawed out for consumption as required. Bread will also keep indefinitely in a frozen state, and when thawed out will be perfectly fresh. Most of the berries lose their flavour after being frozen; but cranberries can be kept frozen solid for months, and when thawed out will still retain their original flavour.

Hunters, during the winter, worked their way far up towards the source of the Klondyke, and returned with their sleighs laden with moose and cariboo. The butchers' shops in Dawson displayed frozen carcases of beef, cariboo, moose, and occasionally mountain sheep; besides frozen grayling and trout procured from the lakes. In 1898 all meat was retailed at 50 cents, or 2s. a pound.

About the middle of April the sun rises high above the horizon, and its warm rays are highly appreciated after the long cold winter. The snow then begins to melt, and people can be seen on the tops of their cabins busily employed in shovelling the snow off the mud roofs so as to prevent the melted snow from penetrating the interior. The spring forms a most unpleasant time for travelling, as the melting snow transforms the country into a marsh, while the streets in Dawson become a mass of deep and sticky mud.

During the third week in May the ice in the river began to move, at first very slowly; but presently the ice broke up into huge blocks, which turned over and over and crashed and ground against each other as they swept rapidly past the town in the swirl of the current. About a week later a long shrill whistle echoed through the town, and the excited inhabitants promptly came pouring out of the saloons and the cabins and hurriedly lined the bank of the river.

For the last seven months the inhabitants of Dawson had been practically shut out, like a beleaguered garrison, from the outside world; while the mails had been conveyed to the coast over the 600 miles of ice and snow at long and uncertain intervals by dog teams. Consequently, after the lengthy period of isolation in a semi-barbarous locality the sight of a steamer appeared as an emblem of civilisation. Many were waiting eagerly for the opportunity of rejoining their families on the outside, while all were anxious to hear the latest news and enjoy the novelty of examining fresh faces. The appearance of the first steamer during the season, therefore, occasioned quite a respectable amount of enthusiasm, and as it swept rapidly down the current towards Dawson loud cheers were raised by the inhabitants along the river bank to welcome its arrival.

CHAPTER V

STAMPEDES

AMONG the crowds who arrived at Dawson in 1898, only a very small proportion were able to secure claims which appeared from their positions likely to become valuable, as the ground in the vicinity of Bonanza, Eldorado, and neighbouring creeks had already been taken up. A certain number of the inhabitants had migrated to Dawson for the purpose of establishing stores or engaging in trade; but these constituted only a small minority. By far the greater proportion of the population had become fascinated with the glamour of digging up gold, and had started for the Klondyke purely for that purpose, so that having now reached their destination, after considerable trials and expense, their main ambition was to acquire a claim and become the owners of gold-mines. People were loitering about, constantly on the *qui vive*, in the hope of obtaining information of some fresh locality where gold had been discovered; and whenever a report was circulated of a new gold strike in some remote spot, a fever of excitement would ensue, and a rush or stampede would promptly occur to the vicinity, which might be situated 100 miles or more from Dawson.

Stampeding is not a particularly enjoyable occupation; and as the number of people engaged were usually far in excess of the claims available, the stampede would devolve into a race, each striving to be amongst the foremost to secure a claim in the most favourable locality. Supplies for double the distance would generally have to be transported, as provisions would probably be unobtainable before returning to Dawson. A few people might be able to employ pack-horses during the summer, but the majority would have to convey the supplies on their backs. Only the barest necessities could by this means be taken, as the loads must necessarily be reduced to the smallest possible dimensions; and engaging in a race under such conditions, packing supplies day after day, up hill and down dale, through thick brush or marshy ground, clambering over fallen timber, and tormented all the time by swarms of mosquitoes, involves a considerable amount of endurance and determination. During the winter the circumstances would, of course, be different. Blankets or a fur robe would be necessary, and supplies would probably be conveyed by means of dog teams; but freshly broken winter trails are not often easy to travel over, while the temperature may be 50° or more below zero.

During the first two or three years of Dawson's existence any report, however vague or unreliable, would be sufficient to start a crowd of people rushing off to the locality, so that stampedes were constantly occurring, of which only a very small proportion proved ultimately of any value. By far the majority of stampedes resulted in a row of claims being staked which would turn out to be utterly useless, and were, consequently, soon abandoned. In the earlier years, when supplies were so expensive, only very rich ground would prove remunerative, and therefore numbers of claims were staked and abandoned, which in later years, when mining operations became cheaper, were re-staked by other people and worked at a profit.

Many of these stampedes were arrant swindles, some of them being termed road-house stampedes and steamboat stampedes. In the former instance, a road-house keeper situated in some remote locality, perhaps several days' journey from Dawson, on finding trade rather dull, would bribe somebody in Dawson to circulate a report that a rich gold strike had been recently discovered in the vicinity of his road-house. This report would be invented and circulated during the cold winter months, while the road-house keeper would be careful to procure an extra stock of supplies, so as to be ready for the excited crowd which he knew would shortly arrive.

In a temperature of 40° or more below zero, people prefer passing the night in a warm cabin to camping outside in the cold, especially as on their arrival they are probably hungry and exhausted; so the road-house keeper would provide very indifferent meals for 6s. or 8s. apiece, and wooden bunks placed one above the other in tiers for another 4s., and when the bunks were all occupied he would allow people to sleep on the floor, without providing any mattress, for another 2s. A row of claims might be staked which would naturally turn out to be perfectly useless, and although the labour, privations, and expense incurred by a number of people had been absolutely wasted, the road-house keeper would have the satisfaction of deriving a handsome profit from the transaction.

Steamboat stampedes, which occur during the summer, are started on much the same principle. The mines are worked principally during the summer months, so that a large number of people leave Dawson late in the autumn, and spend the winter at their homes on the outside, returning to Dawson in the spring when the Yukon is clear of ice. The middle of the summer, therefore, constitutes the slack period for passenger traffic on the Yukon, and by way of compensating for the deficiency, a report would be spread about Dawson that a man had just arrived from some place far away up the Yukon, or probably one of its tributaries, and had reported a rich discovery of gold. A special steamer would undertake to convey passengers to the locality, and although the report would probably be a pure invention, a large crowd of excited people would promptly engage passages, to the great advantage of the owner of the steamer.

During the winter of 1898 a celebrated stampede occurred, which originated from the report of a well-known character in Dawson, who indulged in the pseudonym of Nigger Jim, although he really possessed no nigger blood whatever. Nigger Jim was an old timer, who had mined in the Yukon before Dawson ever existed, and was, consequently, regarded as a great authority on the subject; so when rumours floated about that he had secretly departed with a party of friends for some recently discovered diggings down the Yukon, people imagined that such an old miner would never be involved in a wild-goose chase, and that his source of information was therefore probably reliable.

Nigger Jim and his party had expected, by slipping away quietly in the evening, to escape observation, but his dog team had been detected gliding silently down the bank on to the Yukon, and swiftly disappearing in the darkness. In those days suspicions were easily aroused, and the fact of well-known miners like Nigger Jim and his party disappearing so mysteriously was sufficient evidence for people to conclude that something exceptionally rich had been discovered.

My cabin partner and myself became aware of his departure a few hours later, so we loaded the sleigh with our sleeping robes, some provisions, cooking-pots, and necessary supplies, and after harnessing up four dogs, started off in pursuit. The temperature was about 50° below zero Fahr., but when indulging in a stampede people are too much excited to wait till moderate weather intervenes, as in order to arrive in time to stake a claim one must start off promptly, however low may be the temperature. It was then about nine o'clock in the evening, but in spite of the darkness the trail could easily be distinguished in that cold clear atmosphere, with the stars shining brilliantly and the Northern Lights flashing. It is never cloudy in the Yukon when very cold, but only when the temperature has moderated.

The sleigh was lightly loaded for four dogs, so they travelled at a good swinging trot, while we kept ourselves warm by running behind. Occasionally one of us would jump on the moving sleigh to regain our breath, and lie down on the canvas sheet which covered the supplies, our hands enveloped in fur mitts clutching tightly at the sides of the sleigh, while it bumped over the uneven places and twisted round the sharp curves, as the trail wound amongst the ice cakes on the frozen river. The temperature only permitted riding on the sleigh for short intervals, so when the limbs commenced to feel numb we would roll off into the snow on the side of the trail, and a sharp run to overtake the dogs soon restored the circulation. There was no danger of becoming wet when rolling in the snow, as in severe weather the snow is perfectly dry, and shakes off one like dry sand.

The trail constituted the only highway to Forty Mile Creek, Circle City, and other communities down the Yukon, so the snow was well beaten down, and the track, which was in hard condition through being frequently travelled over, avoided when possible the rougher portions of the river. As we sped along through the night, voices both behind and in front could be distinguished in the darkness urging along their dogs, indicating that other parties had also joined in the pursuit of Nigger Jim, in the hopes of acquiring a share in the new diggings.

Hour after hour we travelled through the night, our fur caps just above the eyes, with the flaps drawn over the neck and ears, until eventually a bend in the river disclosed the glare from numerous camp fires illuminating the sky in front. On reaching the vicinity, about forty miles from Dawson, we found Nigger Jim and numerous others encamped among the spruce trees on the river bank, some comfortably ensconced within their tents with a warm stove inside, while the majority who, like ourselves, were unprovided with tents or stoves, were sitting in the open before their camp fires.

After selecting our camping ground we cleared away the snow with our snow-shoes, cut down some dry trees, and soon had a camp fire blazing. A green spruce tree was then felled and stripped of the green brush, which we spread in a thick layer before the camp-fire, and our sleeping-robes were then laid on the spruce brush, which forms a warm protection from the frozen ground. Supper quickly cooked is essential when travelling, so we had brought some frozen cooked beans which were always kept in a shed near the cabin, so as to be ready for emergencies. Beans require boiling for about three hours, so during the winter we were accustomed to boil a large quantity in the cabin, and when cooked they were spread outside on a canvas sheet to freeze. They soon become frozen solid, and can then be carried about in a sack like marbles, and when placed in a frying-pan over the fire quickly thaw out and become warm, so that supper is ready in a few minutes.

Numbers of dogs were scattered about, but there was no barking or fighting after their forty-mile journey, and when their supper was concluded they buried themselves deep in the snow, which formed a shield between their bodies and the freezing atmosphere. Our sleeping-robes of mountain goat were not so warm as fox or lynx robes, and hardly suitable for sleeping out of doors in a temperature of 50° below zero, as the part of the body turned away from the fire soon became cold, which necessitated continually turning round. However, numerous other parties were in the same situation, and as it was too cold for much sleep, the remainder of the night was principally passed in receiving and returning the visits of our fellow-travellers. We would sit round the different camp fires and smoke while we discussed where Nigger Jim was leading us, and whether after all this bother the new diggings would be likely to prove of any value. People under these conditions are generally sociable, and on approaching a camp fire, although a perfect stranger, a cordial invitation would be extended to join the party, where all sorts of anecdotes and strange adventures would be related.

Eventually a lighted candle was noticed in Nigger Jim's tent, so we promptly cooked some breakfast and loaded up the sleighs, and then sat patiently round the camp fires and smoked, waiting to follow Nigger Jim as soon as he was ready to proceed. The weather showed no indications of moderating, the atmosphere remaining as clear as ever. The climate in the Yukon sometimes changes very rapidly, while the appearance of a small cloud on the horizon provides a sure indication that the weather will shortly moderate. A small cloud discerned in cold clear weather will invariably extend; and as it gradually expands over the sky the thermometer will gradually rise, so that a temperature of 50° or 60° below zero may change to one of 10° or 15° below zero within a few hours, when it will generally commence to snow.

Nigger Jim now diverged from the main trail down the Yukon, and headed for the mouth of a tributary on the other side of the river, which necessitated breaking an entirely fresh trail, involving heavier travelling and harder work. Several of the parties now abandoned the expedition and returned to Dawson, having no relish for sitting all night before camp fires in a temperature of 50° below zero, especially as no one was aware of Nigger Jim's destination, or for how many days this might continue. The remainder proceeded towards the tributary, some walking in front to break the trail with snow-shoes, while the remainder with the dog-sleighs followed in their tracks.

Breaking a fresh trail through deep snow involves considerable labour, especially for the man walking in front; so when several are travelling together they relieve each other in turns, the man in front when fatigued dropping behind where the trail is already broken, while another takes his place. To those following behind, walking entails no difficulty if provided with snow-shoes, but a freshly broken trail must be travelled over frequently before the snow becomes sufficiently hard to enable snow-shoes to be comfortably dispensed with.

After proceeding up the tributary for several miles, we diverged into the woods and headed for a mountain some miles distant. Our progress was now encumbered by thick patches of willows and alder, so that axes were busily employed cutting out a passage for the sleighs, though as we receded farther from the creek the alders disappeared, and young spruce trees intermingled with fallen timber predominated. The fallen timber presented no great obstacle, as the deep snow enabled the sleighs to be dragged over without much difficulty; but the young spruces growing close together in bunches had to be felled by dozens, the dogs lying patiently in the snow till the axes had hewn out a track sufficiently wide for the sleighs to traverse.

Eventually we camped near the foot of the mountains, the night being passed as before, occasionally in drowsing, but principally in smoking and chatting beside the different camp fires.

We were now informed that our destination was a creek on the farther side of the mountain, so the next morning the dogs were left tied up in camp, while we carried with us some lunch, a tea-kettle and frying-pan, besides an axe and our snow-shoes. Nigger Jim now entered a gulch on the side of the mountain, which, although full of drifted snow, slightly lessened the declivity of the ascent. We staggered up the gulch, following each other's tracks, while the drifted snow formed a steep bank on either side, which in its dry powdery state kept tumbling back on us almost as fast as the snow-shoes trampled it down.

The summit of the mountain was eventually gained, and consisted of a bare plateau about a mile and a half wide. Owing to the exposed position a slight breeze was very perceptible, which made the crossing rather disagreeable, and resulted in several faces becoming frost-bitten. As we trudged across in single file, one hand was held across the face on the windward side to protect it from the cold breeze, while occasionally, when a frost-bite appeared, the affected part would be rubbed gently with the fur mitt or with a handful of snow.

On arriving at the other side of the plateau the valley with its frozen creek spread out like a panorama below us, and as all were anxious to escape from the cold breeze which kept freezing our faces, no time was lost in making the descent until shelter was attained amongst the spruce trees below. Nigger Jim and his party proceeded down the creek for about three miles, and then commenced cutting stakes and marking out their claims, while the others followed their example, some staking below and others higher up the creek according to their fancy. When the staking was completed all were glad to start the camp fires and warm their limbs, and remove the thick lumps of ice congealed on the moustaches. The tea-kettles were quickly filled with snow and placed over the fires till the snow was melted and the water boiling, while the frozen beans were soon thawed out and warmed up in the frying-pans. After lunch the return to camp where we had left the dogs was accomplished without delay, and as the trail had already been broken our progress was considerably quicker, while we all hurried across the bare plateau on the mountain summit, where a slight breeze was still blowing.

The distance from Dawson was about 60 miles —rather a long day's journey for the dogs; however, they had travelled constantly during the winter, and were therefore in good condition; so at about six o'clock the next morning we cooked breakfast, and after loading up the sleigh started back for Dawson. Dogs, like Indians, work better on an empty stomach and are fed only once a day—in the evening when their day's work is completed. The return journey down the creek was easily accomplished, as the trail had already been broken and cut out two days previously, and eventually we arrived at the main trail on the Yukon, which was hard and slippery from constant use, so that snow-shoes could be dispensed with, and our progress became faster. The stars gradually faded away as dawn approached, and towards noon a glimpse of the sun occasionally appeared between an opening in the mountains, but so low down on the horizon that its feeble rays presented a sort of ghostly aspect, and produced no effect on the surrounding atmosphere. We stopped for half an hour to rest the dogs, while we lighted a camp-fire on the river bank and cooked some lunch. We were also glad to enjoy a smoke, as when travelling during the winter the moisture in the stem of the pipe becomes frozen solid, and must be thawed out in front of a fire before a smoke can be obtained.

After a short interval we resumed the journey; but the daylight during the winter months lasts only for a short period, and soon after two o'clock the stars commenced twinkling and the Northern Lights flashing. Hour after hour we travelled along the trail, sometimes running and sometimes riding on the sleigh, until eventually a bend in the river disclosed the lights of Dawson. The dogs promptly raised their heads and quickened their pace, realising that the end of their journey was approaching and that supper would soon be at hand. The trail after a short interval diverged straight towards the river bank opposite the town, and the dogs quickly dragged the sleigh up the steep incline to the top of the bank and through the main street, amidst the glare from the drinking-saloons and the dance-halls; and after traversing some side paths we arrived at the cabin.

The interior of the cabin, after being for nearly four days without a fire, was as cold as the outside atmosphere. Before our departure we had therefore left some dry kindling wood by the stove, which would enable it to be quickly lighted, and a small cabin soon warms up again. The next morning we wandered down to the recording office and paid $15, or £3 apiece for the privilege of recording our claims. All was, however, entirely wasted, as when the creek was eventually prospected, although small quantities of gold were found scattered through the gravel, nothing was discovered in paying quantities. The claims were all ultimately abandoned as valueless, and consequently the Nigger Jim stampede resulted, like many others, in a complete fiasco.

CHAPTER VI

THE MINES

When the rich discoveries on Bonanza and Eldorado Creeks were first reported, the claims in the creek valleys were rapidly taken up in the wild stampede that resulted, but the mountains adjoining were at first completely ignored. Later on, when people turned their attention to the hillsides sloping down to the creek valleys, old river channels were discovered imbedded in the mountains, containing pay-streaks which in some places proved extraordinarily rich, and a large number of fresh claims, called hillside claims, were consequently taken up. These hillside pay-streaks, high up in the mountains, were the beds of primeval rivers in bygone geological eras, when the summits of the present mountains were valleys, ages before the country had been worn down by denudation to its present level.

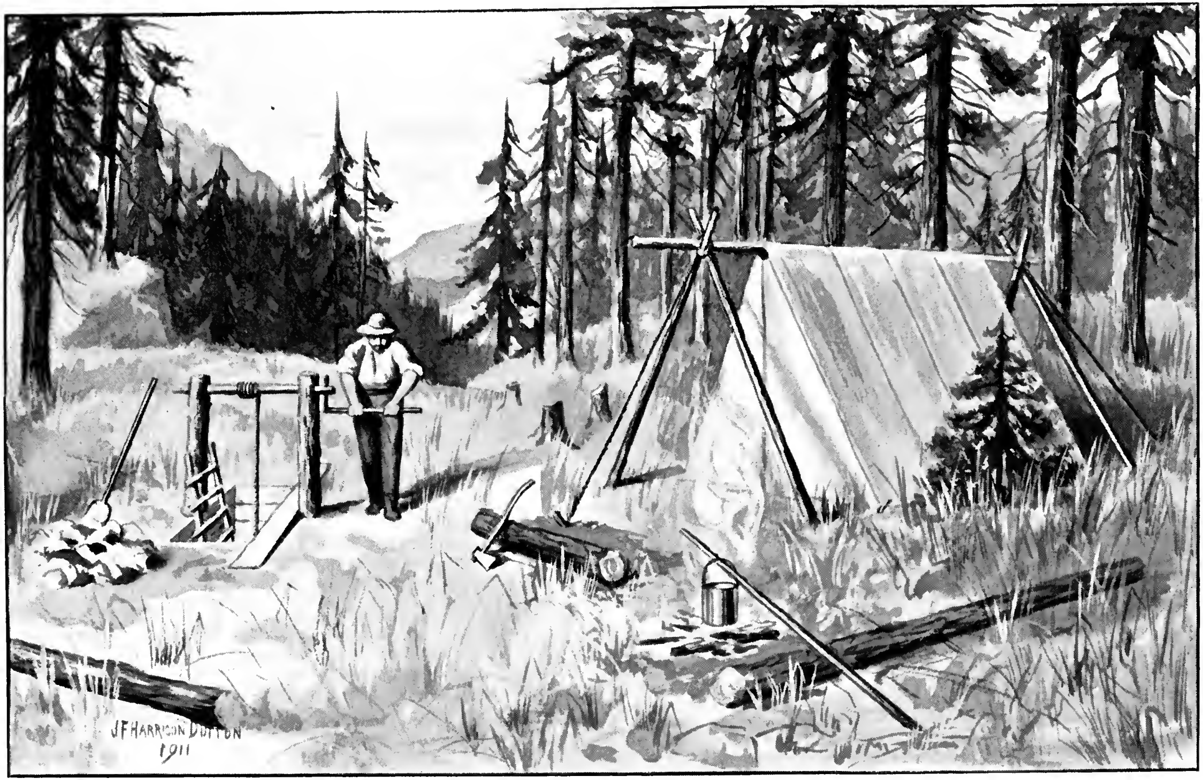
An acquaintance of mine, named Senator Lynch, purchased a hillside claim in 1899 on a mountain called Chee-Chako hill, situated near the junction of Eldorado and Bonanza Creeks. A long tunnel penetrated from the side of the mountain into the mine, the gold-bearing gravel being excavated from the drift and wheeled in small cars to the entrance of the tunnel. The gravel in some places proved exceedingly rich, and on examining the drift at the end of the tunnel with a candle, gold nuggets could be often observed lying near the bed-rock, partly imbedded in the frozen gravel.

The claim was situated about 400 feet from the creek below, and as the side of the mountain was extremely steep, clambering up involved quite a hard climb. On one occasion during the winter I paid Senator Lynch a visit at his mine, where I stopped for dinner, and after spending a convivial evening started at about 11 P.M. down the mountain side for home. The hard snow trail was smooth and slippery, which necessitated extreme caution while descending the steep decline, and in places that were almost precipitous the snow steps that had been cut out had become partly worn away by frequent use.

The descent was not an easy undertaking at the best of times, but on the present occasion the intense darkness added to the difficulty, while the convivial evening had not assisted in steadying my nerves. After groping my way down for a short distance, I sat on a snow step and contemplated the situation. Far below me the howling of a melancholy dog echoed through the darkness, while above could be seen the lighted window of the cabin I had just vacated. I felt too ashamed to struggle back to the cabin and be ridiculed for being afraid, but my nerves were becoming decidedly shaky, while I was wondering how long it would take me to arrive at the creek valley below.

A few minutes later the difficulty was solved in an unexpected and very simple manner, and instead of the descent occupying a considerable time, it only took a few seconds. I had continued my journey down the steep decline, keeping myself in a sitting posture on the smooth trail, and feeling my way down cautiously in the darkness with my feet, when I suddenly slipped upon one of those snow steps, which had been almost worn away, and was as hard and smooth as ice. The next moment I shot rapidly down the mountain side, turning over and over in every imaginable position, until eventually I arrived in a confused heap at the bottom. Fortunately I landed in a bank of soft snow, which completely buried me, and, except for a severe shaking, was none the worse for the adventure. After regaining my breath, I struggled out of the deep snow and searched about until I found the trail, and felt considerably relieved at having completed the journey so rapidly and with such extreme ease.

The term "prospector" is applied to a person who travels to some out-of-the-way creek, and sinks holes across the valley in the hope of discovering a pay-streak. The old river channel in which the pay-streak is located will extend for a considerable distance down the valley, though it may vary in richness and dimensions. When the discovery of a pay-streak in some


J F HARRISON DUTTON
1911

The Prospector.

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locality is first reported, a stampede promptly occurs to the vicinity, as those who are able to secure a claim near the point of discovery are aware that the pay-streak is pretty certain to extend over their particular ground, and that to find the spot is merely a question of sinking holes.

Only a small proportion of creek valleys contain a pay-streak of any value, so that the man who first prospects a new locality takes part in a far greater gamble than subsequent stakers, as he is totally unaware if a pay-streak even exists. As a reward for his enterprise, and also to encourage others to prospect over new localities, the person who first reports the discovery of gold in a creek valley is, therefore, entitled to the "discovery claim," which consists of a far larger extent of ground than other claims which may subsequently be staked in the same vicinity. An individual is only allowed to stake one claim on a creek, although those possessing capital may purchase any number of claims from other people.

A prospector leads by no means an easy existence, and is entitled to a considerable amount of admiration for his doggedness and perseverance. He is generally "broke," which is the term usually applied to people without money, so he works for wages until sufficient money has been saved to buy himself a "grub-stake," that is to say, enough provisions, &c., to enable him to travel to some distant locality and prospect for gold. Occasionally he may be able to procure a pack-horse, but this is extremely rare, as horses in the Yukon are expensive. The prospector will generally place his outfit in a rowing-boat and proceed up or down the Yukon, and then work his way up one of its tributaries until he arrives at the mouth of some small creek flowing into it. Most of the rich discoveries have been made on small creeks, such as Bonanza, Hunker, Quartz Creek, and others which flow into the affluents of the Yukon. Sometimes he may be accompanied by a partner, but usually he will travel by himself and do his prospecting alone, his principal companions being mosquitoes.

On reaching the mouth of the creek he desires to prospect, his boat journey will terminate, nearly all the small streams in the Yukon being unnavigable for boats, and the outfit has now to be transported on his back to his destination. He accordingly trudges with his pack up the creek for, perhaps, 10 or 15 miles, pushing his way through the thick bush, and clambering over fallen timber, until he has discovered, according to his fancy, a favourable location for prospecting. The boat remains at the mouth of the creek, and several journeys will be required before his tent, provisions, blankets, cooking pots, mining tools, &c., have all been conveyed thence. A rude windlass will now be erected over the spot where he imagines it most likely that he will strike the pay-streak, which is generally pure guess-work;

also a rough bucket is constructed, and a ladder for ascending and descending the shaft, while the rope for hauling up the bucket will have naturally formed part of his outfit.

The shaft is now commenced, which may be 20, 30, 40 feet deep or more before the bed-rock is reached, and as every inch must be thawed out, either by fires or hot rocks, before being excavated, a considerable amount of time and labour is necessarily involved. It is very improbable that the first shaft will strike the pay-streak; and, if not, the prospector will then proceed to sink others across the valley, the number of shafts that he is able to sink depending on the extent of his provisions. The valley may not contain a pay-streak rich enough to prove of any value, while, even if one exists, it may be situated higher up or lower down, and may not extend to the place where he is prospecting; so, after his provisions have become exhausted, he will generally return to Dawson, "broke" as usual, and feeling that the whole of his labour has been wasted.

The genuine prospector has experienced these conditions so frequently that he is not easily disconcerted, and simply hopes for better luck on a future occasion. He hunts about for employment, and having earned sufficient wages to buy another "grub-stake," promptly throws up his job and starts off on some other prospecting adventure as before. He is thoroughly optimistic, and is always expecting to "strike it rich" on the next occasion. The wild, independent life, combined with a gambler's excitement, exerts a certain fascination, and after pursuing this vocation for a certain period a man becomes too restless to settle down and work for regular wages, and is always anxious to resume the wild nomadic life in the woods where he can search for gold.

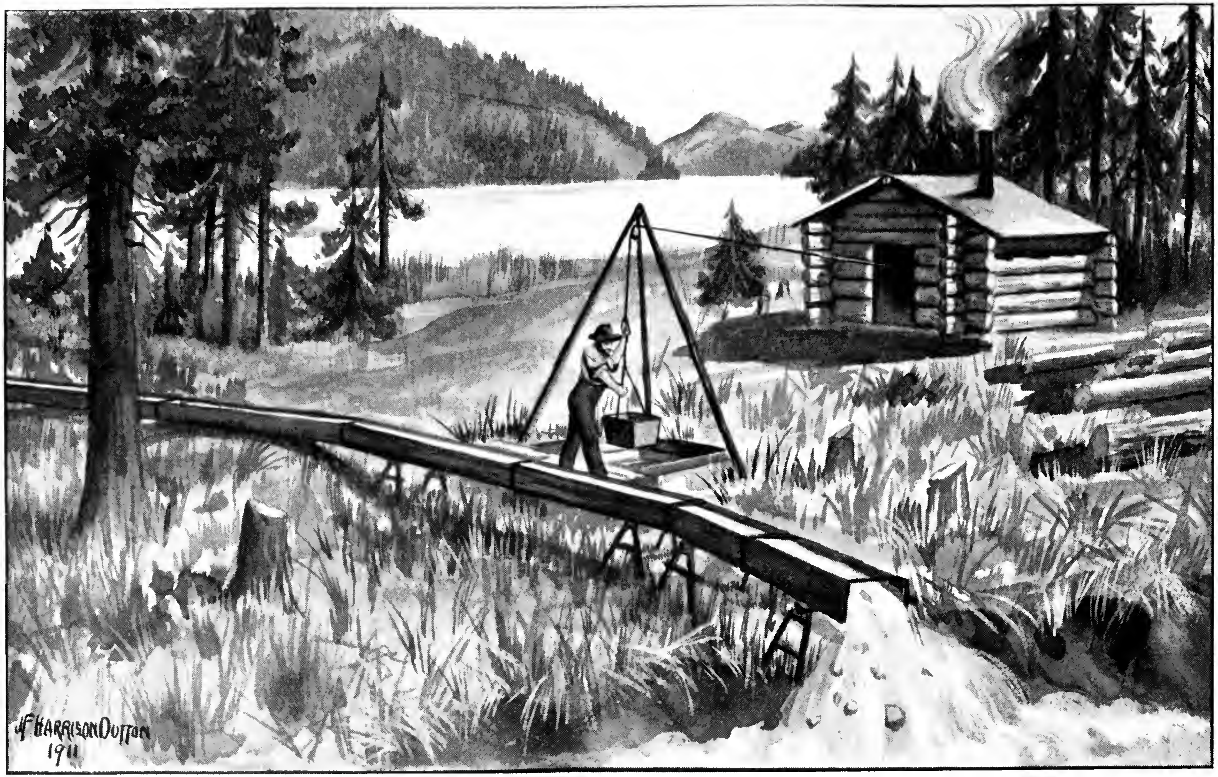
Occasionally the prospector may make a fairly rich discovery and realise a considerable sum by selling his claim, but he very seldom manages to retain his money for any length of time. It is soon dissipated in gambling and drinking, and after indulging in a short "flutter" he becomes again "broke" as usual, and returns to the woods to prospect. I have encountered old men who have spent their whole lives in this fashion. Some of them have been great travellers, and are acquainted with the Mackenzie River, the Great Slave Lake, and all sorts of practically unexplored regions in this Northern country. Their stories are, no doubt, often exaggerated, but they must have experienced all sorts of strange vicissitudes, and are able to relate many interesting anecdotes.

About fifteen years ago, during my sojourn in Juneau, a mining town on the Alaskan coast, I became acquainted with a well-known character of this description, named Juneau Joe. He was an old man of over sixty years of age, and supplied a typical example of those hardy old prospectors; but, as he resided in a quartz-mining district, he prospected for quartz formations instead of for placer. Occasionally he had succeeded in making a lucky "strike," but being, like most of his class, of a generous and improvident nature, the proceeds were soon exhausted in dissipation, and he would then resume his wild solitary existence, roaming about among the mountains prospecting.

Shortly before my arrival in Juneau, he had succeeded in making a "strike" of an exceptionally rich character, and by selling his claim had realised quite a large sum, sufficient to have maintained him in comfort for the remainder of his existence. His final lucky strike had not, however, altered his temperament, as he had evidently no intention of making provision for his old age, and when I was introduced to him in Juneau he was accompanied by some admiring and impecunious friends, who were quite ready to assist him in squandering his money as rapidly as possible. I was informed that when his claim was disposed of, and a substantial fortune placed at his disposal, the old man was quite overcome with emotion, and sat down on a log complaining bitterly, that at his advanced age he might not live long enough to "blow it all in." However, old Juneau Joe's constitution lasted longer than he anticipated, and when I last heard of him, which is many years ago, he had managed to "blow in" every sixpence; and, being now too old for further prospecting, he was earning a scanty existence as night watchman on a wharf in Juneau.

When a claim is considered sufficiently rich to pay a fair profit, a number of men are engaged, cabins for boarding and lodging them erected, a boiler and hoisting-gear placed by the shaft, sluice-boxes for washing the gravel constructed, and the necessary preliminaries executed for placing the mine in working order. During the night steam is forced through the "points" into the gold-bearing gravel at the bottom of the shaft, and the next morning the portion thawed out is excavated and conveyed in wheelbarrows to the entrance of the shaft, where it is hoisted in a bucket to the surface and washed in the sluice-boxes. When the pay-streak round the shaft has been excavated for a considerable distance, another shaft is sunk, the hoisting-gear and sluice-boxes are removed to the new locality, and the process continued as before.

The gold-bearing gravel, after being hoisted to the surface, is emptied from the bucket into the "sluice-box," which consists of a long square-shaped trough with small pieces of wood, called "riffles," placed about two inches apart transversely across the bottom. The sluice-box is set at a particular slope or fall, about one in eight, and a stream of water is conducted from the creek into the upper end, so that the gravel and stones are washed right through the box and out at the lower end by the force of the current. The particles of gold, owing to their heavy specific gravity, quickly sink to the bottom and are retained in the sluice-box by the riffles. Quicksilver


J.F. HARRISON DUTTON
1911

SLUICING.

is often deposited in the sluice-box between the riffles in order to catch the lighter particles of gold, which otherwise might be washed away with the gravel.

Quicksilver and gold possess a chemical affinity which causes them, when coming in contact, to form an amalgam. The former, as everybody knows, if placed in the palm of the hand will always assume the form of a quivering globe, but when amalgamated with gold its consistency somewhat resembles the appearance of putty. The amalgam is deposited into a retort with a spout at the top, and when heat is applied the quicksilver, being easily evaporated, escapes in a gaseous state through the spout, while the gold is retained within the retort. The spout is constructed with a curved end, which is placed in a pail of cold water, so that the quicksilver, when coming in contact with the cold water, becomes condensed into its original form, and can then be replaced in the sluice-box. A certain amount of care is necessary when opening the retort, while those watching the process must be careful to stand on the windward side. Some remnants of quicksilver gas will probably still be enclosed within the retort, and if the fumes come in contact with the face, the results may be exceedingly unpleasant. People, when opening these retorts or watching the process, have occasionally discovered their teeth getting loose, if precautions are neglected, owing to their becoming impregnated with the fumes of the quicksilver.

Placer gold is always associated with a very fine species of sand, called black sand, and, as this contains a heavier specific gravity than ordinary sand or gravel, a certain amount remains scattered amongst the gold dust after the ordinary gravel has been separated and washed away with water. As black sand comprises an iron formation, it can be separated by stirring amongst the gold dust with a magnet, when the particles of black sand will adhere to the magnet and can be drawn away, while the gold dust remains intact.

Robberies would occasionally occur from the sluice-boxes when laden with gold, so that in the earlier years it was not uncommon to see a man guarding the sluice-box with a loaded rifle. A gold sack was on one occasion stolen from Senator Lynch's claim on Chee-Chako Hill, containing several thousand dollars in gold dust. His cook obtained access to a safe in the cabin, and after purloining the gold sack, absconded to Dawson, where he embarked down the Yukon in a rowing-boat.

The American boundary commences about 60 miles below Dawson, so when robberies are committed on the Canadian side of the boundary, the thieves invariably endeavour to escape into American territory. Although extradition treaties were supposed to exist between the two countries, the Canadian officials always experienced great difficulty in securing a criminal who had succeeded in crossing the boundary. The American officials in those outlying districts resorted to all kinds of "graft" and corruption for obtaining plunder. The thief who escaped into Alaskan territory would be quickly fleeced of the greater portion of his ill-gotten gains, but provided that the amount stolen was sufficient to bribe the sheriff and other guardians of the law, he would undergo no danger of being handed over to the Canadian authorities.

The robbery on Senator Lynch's claim was not discovered until some hours later, but the Dawson police were then informed of the matter, and two of them promptly embarked in a canoe in pursuit of the culprit. He had, however, managed to cross the boundary in time to avoid capture, and the two policemen eventually came upon him in Circle City, a small mining town on the Yukon in Alaskan territory.

Circle City, so called because it lies close to the Arctic circle, formed the rendezvous of the worst ruffians in the country. Besides being the refuge for criminals escaping from justice in the Klondyke, it also provided a congenial home for many other suspicious characters in the Yukon. The police authorities in an isolated region like Dawson possessed a very wide authority, and could render matters exceedingly uncomfortable for people who came under their suspicion. Notorious characters of both sexes, whose absence was considered preferable to their company, were served with an official notice on blue paper, called in Dawson a "blue pill." This gave them warning to leave the country within a few days, or sometimes within a few hours, and those who did not comply with the request would soon find matters exceedingly uncomfortable.

Many of them, therefore, migrated down the Yukon to Circle City, where they found a lax community more congenial to their requirements. The arrival of a robber with a large sack of gold dust, stolen from the Klondyke mines, was always considered a justifiable windfall by the inhabitants of Circle City, so he was sure of a cordial welcome. Besides the officials, there were other desperate and notorious characters in the place, both men and women, and unless he was extremely liberal with his ill-gotten gains, these would soon begin to make themselves truculent.

Although the Canadian police were able to identify the robber and prove his guilt, the officials in Circle City steadily refused to extradite him, while the policemen themselves were not in a very pleasant situation, as the desperadoes in that lawless place objected to their interference, and were becoming openly hostile. Fortunately Senator Lynch, being an American citizen with a considerable influence in Washington, threatened to make things unpleasant for the officials in Circle City. He was, therefore, able to recover a certain amount of his gold dust, although a considerable proportion had already disappeared, but the culprit was allowed his liberty without any penalty whatever.

Another mine owner in the Klondyke was

robbed of $40,000, or £8000 worth of gold dust. The culprit managed to escape down the Yukon, and although he was discovered in Circle City, squandering his stolen gold dust amongst the gambling saloons and dance-halls in the most flagrant manner possible, the Canadian police were unable to secure his extradition, or to recover any of the gold dust.

The term "tailings" is applied to the waste gravel which has been washed through the sluice-boxes and the gold extracted. In the earlier years of the Klondyke a considerable amount of the finer particles of gold were lost owing to being washed with the gravel right through the sluice-boxes and deposited amongst the tailings. This was due partly to the sluice-boxes not always being set at the correct slope, and partly because quicksilver was so scarce and expensive that it was seldom employed. Many huge mounds of tailings which had been abandoned by the owners as being of no further value really contained a considerable amount of gold which had escaped the riffles in the sluice-boxes. These tailings were afterwards taken up by other people, who derived a handsome profit by shovelling them into sluice-boxes and re-washing them.

Portions of Bonanza, Eldorado, and other creeks were so extraordinarily rich that, although the mines were operated in a most extravagant fashion, with supplies, wages, and transportation at exorbitant prices, the claim owners were still able to derive an enormous profit. In a few years the very rich portions became worked out, and the lower grade gravels were then brought into requisition. However, by that time the country had become more settled, transportation was facilitated by the construction of roads and the White Pass Railway, the price of labour and supplies was reduced to a more reasonable figure, and consequently the lower grade gravels could then be worked at a profit, which a few years previously would have been regarded as useless.

Mining claims were purchased on the different creeks by several members of the English community in Dawson, and worked with more or less indifferent success. I eventually bought a claim on a tributary of the Indian River called Quartz Creek, about thirty miles from Dawson. Parts of it were fairly rich, but the fact of its being a hillside claim made it difficult to obtain sufficient water to wash the gravel. A claim was also being worked on Quartz Creek by some Japanese, although their mining operations did not prove very successful. No Chinese were allowed in the Yukon owing to the antipathy which prevails against them both in Canada and the United States; but there was quite a large Japanese community in Dawson, who employed themselves principally in restaurants and laundries.

Two English friends of mine were working a claim on the upper part of Eldorado, and although that part of the creek was nothing like so rich as the section near the junction of Eldorado and

Bonanza, they were fairly successful in their operations. Their claim was situated very conveniently for my purpose, being about half-way between Dawson and Quartz Creek; and as I often required to make journeys to and fro, it made a convenient half-way house.

On one occasion, while proceeding to their cabin on my way to Dawson during the winter, I was walking down a stream called Calder Creek, which flows into the upper part of Eldorado Creek, when one of my feet broke through a weak spot in the ice and went into the water slightly above the ankle. A cabin was situated not far away where some men were mining, so I proceeded there as quickly as possible. The weather was rather severe, about 40° below zero; and my moccasin with three woollen socks inside, all saturated with water, quickly froze into solid ice and became like a bar of steel, making it both difficult and painful to walk. Fortunately the cabin was not far distant, and on my arrival my foot was slightly touched with frost-bite, although not sufficiently to cause serious results.

One of the two Englishmen on Eldorado was afterwards obliged to abandon mining owing to a nasty accident. He was engaged in splitting up some wood with an axe, when a chip of wood suddenly flew up into his face and damaged one of his eyes so severely that he was obliged to have it taken out.

My own attempts at mining were also brought to a sudden termination owing to a severe accident. One evening after dark I was walking along a trail not far from Dawson, when I suddenly tumbled into a hole that had been recently dug just on the edge of the trail. The hole was not very deep, as I only fell about 4 or 5 feet; but one of my feet happened to strike the edge of a rock, and I sustained a compound fracture of the ankle. I managed, however, to scramble out, and crawled on my hands and knees to a cabin that fortunately was not very far distant. Some men who were living there constructed a litter and carried me to the hospital at Dawson; but it was two months before my foot was out of splints, and nine months before I was able to dispense with crutches. Another man fell into the same hole about a month later and injured his head rather severely, so the authorities then considered it time to place a fence round it.

Unfortunately, my ankle had not been set properly, which made the foot crooked, so that when I commenced to put pressure upon it the foot became gradually more and more out of place. This necessitated further operations, and I have never regained the proper use of my foot. During the next two years I was only able to hobble about very slightly, and as I was four times under chloroform for different operations a considerable portion of my time was spent in the hospital. I was therefore confined to Dawson during those two years, and my mining operations came to a conclusion.

The upper Yukon contains several large tributaries besides the Klondyke, while quantities of small streams, like Bonanza Creek, flow into them. It is therefore a curious coincidence that the first creek which was prospected for gold in that district proved to be far richer than any creeks which were prospected subsequently. This circumstance principally accounted for the great boom in 1898, as people were fully aware of the vast area of gold-bearing territory in the Yukon, and imagined that numbers of other creeks would also be discovered containing gold in the same proportion. Rich prospects have been discovered on Hunker, Dominion, Quartz Creek, and others; but Bonanza Creek, with its tributary Eldorado, has probably produced more gold than all the rest of the creeks combined.

The people who originally staked the rich claims on Bonanza and Eldorado were principally uneducated labouring men, worth practically nothing, and it was a curious change for them to become suddenly possessed of enormous fortunes. However, this sudden acquisition of wealth proved in many cases of no advantage to the owners, as the majority knew neither how to retain their money nor how to spend it judiciously. This led to the natural result, that in three or four years they discovered their claims worked out and themselves as poor as before, while their fortunes had been recklessly squandered among the dance-hall girls and gambling saloons in Dawson.

In later years the Klondyke region has been principally operated by large companies. Bonanza and Eldorado, besides other creeks, still contain a vast amount of low-grade gravel, but these can only be worked profitably by introducing extensive machinery and operating on a large scale, and the days of the individual miner are practically over.

Quartz-mining only occupies a very insignificant part in the Yukon, so that very little need be said upon the subject. According to the general theory, quartz ledges originated in very ancient days, when the crust of the earth was commencing to cool. The process of cooling caused the crust to contract, and in localities where the shrinking became too pronounced the crust split open, forming cracks or dykes. Subterranean springs of hot water containing silica and gold in solution were forced up into these crevasses by their own pressure, like the water in an artesian well. The crevasses, therefore, became filled with silica and gold in solution, and in process of time, when the crust of the earth became sufficiently cool, the silica hardened into the form of rock and became a quartz ledge.

Quartz veins can, of course, be discovered all over the world, but a very small proportion are gold-bearing, while a still smaller proportion are sufficiently permanent or contain gold in sufficient quantities to prove of any value. The gold discovered in placer-mines is supposed to have originated in pre-existing quartz ledges, which have been worn away with the ancient hills by denudation until they finally disappeared. The gold contained in them was washed by streams and surface water into the valley below, and the country has, therefore, become changed from a quartz-mining to a placer-mining district. Many of the nuggets collected from the placer-mines in the Yukon consist of pieces of quartz impregnated with gold, showing that they must have originated from pre-existing quartz ledges.

In the Klondyke district, gold-bearing quartz veins were discovered in several places, and companies and syndicates organised, and for a short period there was quite a "boom" in Yukon quartz-mines. Unfortunately the veins, although occasionally very rich, were not sufficiently permanent to prove of any practical value. After sinking for a short depth they finally tapered out and disappeared, without revealing a sufficient body of ore to recoup the expense of placing them in working order; so the companies and syndicates gradually tapered out and disappeared with them.

Although quartz-mining in the Yukon has proved at present so disappointing, on the Alaskan coast, which is not very far distant, several quartz-mines have been opened up and worked with great success. Juneau is the principal quartz-mining centre in Alaska, and on an island close by is situated the famous Treadwell Mine, which is considered the largest quartz-mine in operation.

Next to the Treadwell is situated the Bear's Nest property, although "Mare's Nest" would have been a more appropriate appellation, as about twenty years ago it formed the scene of a famous swindle. This, like the Treadwell, contained a huge ledge of quartz, but unfortunately it happened to be "barren quartz," which is the term applied to quartz devoid of gold. Some Juneau celebrities became owners of the ground, and inveigled a London company into purchasing the property by representing that the ledge was a continuation of the Treadwell, and would, therefore, contain the same proportion of gold.

Experts were, accordingly, despatched from England to examine the property and to procure specimens of the ore, and on their arrival some samples of the quartz were blasted out of the ledge and packed in sacks for transmission to England. These were placed on the wharf pending the arrival of a steamer, but through some extraordinary oversight no precautions were taken to prevent the sacks being tampered with during the interval. The result was that during the night the sacks were pushed off the wharf into the sea, while some good samples of ore, obtained from the Treadwell Mine, were packed into similar sacks and deposited on the wharf in their place.

On the arrival of the steamer, these sacks were conveyed on board and transported all the way to England, under the impression that they contained ore belonging to the Bear's Nest. The ore was carefully analysed in London and, as it consisted of picked samples from the Treadwell Mine, the assays proved so satisfactory that a large company was formed on the strength of it. The owners of the Bear's Nest were accordingly paid a magnificent price for their worthless property, while a large sum was also expended in purchasing extensive machinery and erecting it in the locality. When this was completed and the mine put into working order, quartz was blasted out of the ledge and conveyed to the mill, but being, as before stated, absolutely barren, there was no gold to be extracted, and the operations came to a sudden conclusion.

When I was in Juneau, many years ago, portions of the machinery still remained neglected on the site, although a certain amount was afterwards purchased by the Treadwell Mine. The affair was commonly known in Juneau as the "Famous Bear's Nest Swindle," while the perpetrators were not regarded by the inhabitants as dishonest rogues, but were greatly admired as being extremely smart business men.

CHAPTER VII

THE PELLY RIVER

I HAD now been hobbling about a semi-civilised town like Dawson for two years, and was naturally becoming anxious for a change of residence, especially as there had been no diversion to occupy my time, except an occasional operation on my foot accompanied by a few weeks' residence in the Dawson hospital. A reading-room with a very primitive library had been established in the town, which afforded a certain amount of entertainment, although books, with the exception of the usual trashy sixpenny novels, were then extremely limited. In later years, Mr. Carnegie was induced to donate a certain sum towards a free library in Dawson, which now forms quite an imposing building with a fairly good supply of reading matter.

Two French-Canadians resided in a cabin not far removed from mine, so when my ankle became sufficiently strengthened to enable me to move about rather better, we formulated plans for making an expedition up the Pelly River, which flows into the Yukon about 180 miles south of Dawson. My two companions could both talk English fluently, and, in fact, it is very exceptional to meet a French-Canadian in Western Canada who is unable to converse in English. When the plans for the expedition had been definitely decided upon we purchased about a year's supplies, together with two sleighs, about 300 traps, some lumber for building a boat, and five sleigh dogs. Our total outfit amounted to rather over two tons, and when the numerous packages had all been collected together and checked, we embarked on a steamer for the Pelly River.

The journey up the Yukon occupied about three days, and we were then landed with our supplies on the bank of the river at about ten o'clock at night, in pitch darkness and pouring rain. The start of our expedition did not appear very propitious, with the rain pouring down on our provision sacks and other articles, which were lying strewn about the river bank. Before starting we had procured some canvas sheets, so after piling the stuff together we covered it over as much as possible, and then groped about among the trees and the bush in the darkness, endeavouring to find some poles for pitching the tent. Eventually the tent was erected and the blankets arranged inside, with a tarpaulin spread out underneath to protect them from the wet ground, and we were then glad to discard our drenched clothes and retire into our blankets, while we smoked and discussed our plans.

The next morning we commenced operations on the boat, which was completed and caulked with oakum in the course of about a week, and when a layer of pitch had been spread over the seams, we dragged it on skids to the edge of the bank and launched it in the river. A couple of oars and a paddle for steering had been fashioned out of some dry spruces in the vicinity, and, after loading up the boat with our two tons of supplies, we started up the Pelly River.

The river is about 400 miles in length, while about 80 miles from the mouth a large tributary called the M'Millan River flows into it, which is almost as large as the main river. Only a small amount of mining prevails on the Pelly, and although in some places fine gold has been extracted from the gravel, nothing has yet been discovered which approaches in richness the produce of the creeks flowing into the Klondyke. However, the Pelly River held a high reputation as the abode of fur-coated animals, and was therefore a favourite resort for trappers.

The current in the Pelly and M'Millan rivers is not regulated with locks, like the Thames, and is far too swift to row against, so the trappers transport their boats and supplies up the river either by poling or towing with a rope where the bank is not too much encumbered with bushes. Poling up the Pelly River is somewhat similar to punting on the Thames, except that the current is much more rapid, especially towards the upper end, while riffles large and small have constantly to be negotiated. A person may imagine himself an excellent puntsman on the Thames, especially in a small light punt with no load inside, except, perhaps, an acquaintance ensconced amongst some cushions, but if he was placed on the Pelly River with perhaps a ton or more of supplies in his boat, he would find poling a very different proposition. Punts are not considered most suitable for poling in the Yukon, as they swing round too easily in a fast current, so the boats generally employed are termed "double-enders," where the stern and the bow are both sharp-pointed. Many trappers employ large Canadian canoes, which will hold a considerable amount of supplies, and whose shape renders them suitable for poling.

The autumn was now rather advanced, so we were happily not bothered with mosquitoes, while the river at that period of the year is always low, and the beach therefore unencumbered with bushes and convenient for towing. My lame foot prevented my being able to walk very much, so the two men hauled on the tow-line, while I sat in the boat and steered. Occasionally we encountered riffles, or small rapids extending partly across the river, and were often obliged to cross to the other side in order to avoid them. Rowing a heavily-loaded boat across a river with a fairly swift current entails the loss of a considerable amount of ground, and as this had to be repeated several times a day, the journey was appreciably lengthened in consequence. In the evenings when it was getting dark we moored up to the bank, and removed from the boat our tent, blankets, and articles required for the night, while the remainder of the supplies remained in the boat, covered with a canvas sheet in case of rain.

High banks forming steep gravel slides, where rocks and stones came rolling down into the river, would sometimes intercept our progress. We had therefore made three poles out of small dry spruces, and my two partners would sometimes get into the boat, and we would all work with the poles until the boat was punted past the dangerous spots. On one occasion we were all labouring with our poles, and exerting all our strength in slowly working up the boat with the two tons of supplies past a spot where a slide occurred, and where the current was exceptionally strong. We had almost reached the end of the slide, where towing would recommence and our heavy poling be over for the time being, when one of the poles suddenly broke with a loud snap under the heavy strain, and my partner who was working with it promptly overbalanced himself and fell overboard into the river. Fortunately he managed to clutch hold of the side of the boat, so we went to his assistance and pulled him on board. In the meantime the bow of the boat had swung round towards the middle of the river, and was floating rapidly down the current, so that by the time we had got out the oars and rowed back to the bank, we had lost about half a mile of ground. We then searched about until we found a small spruce tree suitable for another pole, and after whittling it down with a draw-knife to the required size, recommenced our journey up the river, and succeeded in poling past the bad place without further mishap.

Our journey had commenced rather too late in the season to enable us to proceed very far up the river, so after travelling for about a week we decided to stop and establish our winter quarters. The valley and the adjoining hillside were densely wooded, so there was ample material for building a cabin, while in the middle of the river was a small thickly-wooded island.

The following morning we set to work cutting down dry trees and hauling them to the site of the cabin. It was composed of one room, 12 by 14 feet, the crevices between the logs being "chinked" or filled with moss. We had brought some panes of glass for forming the window, while the flooring was composed of poles roughly squared with an axe. Bunks constructed of dry poles were arranged against the walls, with some dry grass spread over them to form a mattress, while the indispensable stove of course occupied a prominent position. Three empty boxes were provided in place of chairs, and when we wished to smoke and be comfortable we reclined upon our bunks. We also built a shed for keeping tools and articles not required in the cabin, besides a small house for the dogs.

The cold weather had already commenced, and soon after the cabin arrangements were completed, films of ice which gradually increased in size and thickness came floating down the current, grinding against the shore ice and the frozen eddies. Our boat had already been hauled out of the water to prevent it from being damaged by floating blocks of ice, and was deposited safely on the top of the bank. The country was by this time covered with snow, so one morning we harnessed up the dogs, and after placing our tent, blankets, and some provisions on the sleighs, we proceeded up a gully in the mountain side, in order to mark out a line along which to set the traps for the ensuing winter. In some places the country was fairly open, so that the trail did not require much attention, but in others our progress was impeded with thick brush and bunches of young spruce trees, so that our axes were busily employed in hewing out a trail for the sleighs to traverse.

In about four days we had cut out a trail as far as a small lake, about 25 miles from the cabin. Small heaps of leaves could be noticed dotted about in different places over the frozen surface of the lake. These had been collected and conveyed to the spots by the musk-rats, with the object of protecting the ice under the leaves from the cold atmosphere, so that it would not become too thick and prevent the rats from gaining access to the water.

Musquash, generally called in Canada musk-rats, are large water-rats, inhabiting the different shallow ponds dotted about the Yukon Valley, but not so numerous in the Yukon as in parts of Manitoba and other districts of Canada, where they are trapped by thousands. The musk is contained in two bags inside the body, and forms a peculiar feature in certain different classes of animals. Besides the musquash there is also the musk-ox, inhabiting a country called the Barren Grounds in the north-western part of Canada, and the musk-deer, which is found among the Himalaya Mountains.

Over the spots on the ice where the leaves have been collected the rats construct their houses, composed of leaves cemented together with mud, where they reside during the winter months protected from the cold atmosphere. The houses, resembling small domes, may each be occupied by several rats, and are built round the water-hole, but constructed of slightly larger dimensions. A platform of ice, which is covered with leaves, therefore, extends round the hole and forms a comfortable bed for the rats to lie upon when not in the water.

Musquash are often trapped during the winter by breaking into their houses. A small piece is cut out with a knife from the bottom part of the house, and the traps are inserted through the hole and laid on the platform inside. The part cut out is then replaced in its former position, the chains of the traps with sticks attached protruding outside the house. During the process of cutting into the house the rats inside, on hearing the noise, will escape by jumping into the water, but when the piece has been replaced and everything appears quiet, they will return to their house and step on the traps inside. Rats, when trapped, will bite off their feet and escape unless drowned, but, as a rule, when caught in a trap a rat will promptly spring into the water, and the weight of the trap is sufficient to prevent it rising again to the surface. The sticks attached to the trap chains will remain outside on the ice, and enable the trapper to secure the animal.

We built a small cabin near the lake, 6 feet square inside, so as to provide a warm place for passing the night when one of us happened to be travelling round the trap line. These small wayside cabins are roughly constructed of logs chinked with moss, and can be built in a day, an axe being the only tool required for their construction. We only possessed one stove, which was required for the main cabin by the river, and as several stoves are rather cumbrous to transport and expensive to purchase, we had brought some extra stove pipe and some empty five-gallon coal-oil tins, which can be converted into excellent stoves. A round hole is cut at the top of the tin near one end, on which is placed the stove pipe, while the other end is formed into a door, which can be opened and shut when replenishing the stove with wood. As wayside cabins are only used occasionally, these stoves made of coal-oil tins will last during the winter, although, being very thin, they soon burn through if used constantly.

About 12 or 15 miles is supposed to be

sufficient for a man to travel and attend properly to the traps during the short winter days, so on our return journey to the river we built another wayside cabin about half-way, and placed in it another coal-oil stove.

During the winter, the trail along the trap line will be kept more or less hard through being constantly travelled over, and as animals find it easier to walk along a hard trail than travelling over soft snow, on encountering a trap line they will nearly always walk along it for a certain distance, and will be sure therefore to pass one or more of the traps set alongside the trail.

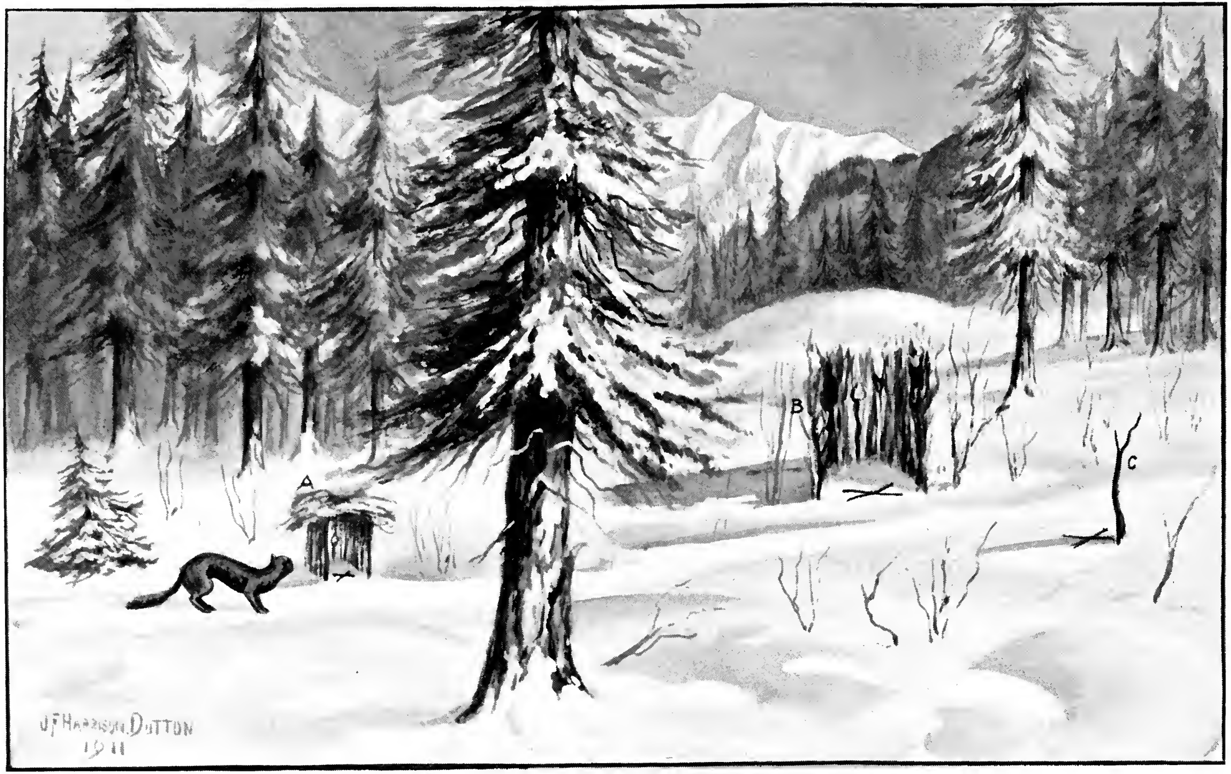
The fur-coated animals in the Yukon comprise different species of foxes, besides marten, mink, musquash, ermine, lynx, wolverine, otter, beaver, wolves, and bear. These animals have been principally trapped out in the lower regions of the Pelly River, so the trappers now travel far up towards the head waters of the Pelly or M'Millan rivers, where furs can still be obtained in considerable quantities.

The different fur animals possess different habits, some being much more cunning than others, and therefore, when trapping them, different methods must be employed according to the nature of the animal to be trapped. The traps are similar to ordinary gins, except that the jaws are provided with plain bars instead of teeth like gins. They can be purchased at the trading posts in different sizes, and to each trap a chain is affixed, so that when setting the trap the chain can be attached to a pole, which is laid on the snow alongside. An animal when caught may drag the trap for a few yards, but the pole soon becomes entangled amongst the bushes, which prevents the beast from escaping.

When setting traps for marten, mink, or ermine, sticks are placed upright in the snow, forming a small house close to the side of the trail, the top being covered with brush to keep the snow from the interior. The bait is placed inside the house at the back, while the trap is set across the doorway, so that a marten, on scenting the bait, is obliged to enter the house in order to secure it, and will therefore walk on to the trap placed across the entrance.

When setting traps, a hollow is first formed in the snow, and the trap placed within the hollow and covered with a piece of thin paper, in order to prevent the snow from clogging it. The paper is then covered over with a thin layer of snow, which is made to appear as similar as possible to the surrounding surface, so that the trap becomes effectually concealed. The chain and the pole affixed to the trap are also concealed with snow, in order not to arouse the suspicions of the animal. (In the illustration the traps are placed far closer together than would be the case under natural conditions.)

Traps for lynx or wolverine are usually set about a foot from the side of the trail, while the bait attached to an upright stick is placed behind it, and although in this case a house is not usually


A
B
C
J. F. HARRISON DUTTON
1911

THE TRAP LINE.

A. Marten House. B. Trap arranged for Lynx or Wolverine. C. Trap for Foxes.
(Cross indicates the position of Trap concealed with Snow.)

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constructed, the bait is often enclosed on three sides with brush, in order to guide the animal to the trap, which is concealed beneath the snow at the entrance.

A lynx resembles a huge Manx cat, about the size of a retriever dog, and possesses no tail except a short stump about 3 inches long. When caught in a trap it will make a brief struggle for liberty, but soon loses heart, and will then sit down quietly and await the arrival of the trapper. On approaching a lynx caught in the trap, the animal assumes a crouching position, and presents a beautiful spectacle with its deep growls and hairs bristling. Care must be taken not to approach the lynx too closely. A trapper always carries with him a light axe, so he simply cuts down a pole about 6 feet long, and as lynx possess thin skulls, one blow on the head will stun it and another finish it off.

A trapper of my acquaintance had rather a narrow escape from a lynx caught in a trap, as he foolishly attempted to kill the animal with his axe, instead of taking the trouble to cut a pole of sufficient length to prevent the lynx from reaching him. The result was that the lynx suddenly sprang forward and bit him severely on the leg, a small artery being severed, which bled profusely. Fortunately his sleigh was close by, so the dogs dragged him to the cabin, but as a lynx bite is rather poisonous the wound festered, and it was another three weeks before he recovered, and, being entirely by himself, without any companion to attend to him or any means of communication with the outside world, the results might have been much more serious.

The wolverine averages about the same size as a lynx, but is more strongly built, while the colour of its coat is black with brown splodges. Wolverines are very strong and fierce, and are sometimes a cause of considerable annoyance to the trappers, as when proceeding along a trap line they will attack and kill a lynx or other animal, which they may encounter in a trap, and tear its fur to pieces. Traps for wolverines are set on the same method as those for lynx, but a wolverine is a very determined animal, and when caught in a trap it will not sit down quietly like a lynx, but struggles desperately to regain its liberty. The chain must be, therefore, very firmly attached to the pole, while care must be taken that the pole is sufficiently thick. The wolverine will persistently gnaw at the place where the chain is attached, and if it eventually succeeds in biting through the pole, it will escape with the trap on its foot, when the trapper will discover that he has lost the wolverine and his trap as well.

Foxes are much more cunning and suspicious than lynx or marten or wolverine, and are consequently far more difficult to trap. When trapping foxes, a dry stick on which some beaver castor or other scent has been rubbed, is placed upright in the snow about 3 feet from the side of the trail, while the trap, carefully concealed with snow, is placed near the bottom of the stick. The bait is not partially enclosed with brush or in a house, as the fox would then become suspicious, while a slight fall of snow after the trap has been set is also an advantage, so as to cover up any traces of the ground having been disturbed. When sorting fox traps in the cabin, gloves should be worn in order to avoid handling them with the bare hands, as otherwise some scent from the hands will be imparted to the trap, and is very liable to arouse the suspicions of the fox.

Arctic hares, or rabbits as they are called in the Yukon, existed in abundance in the woods, and as moose in the lower regions of the Pelly are very scarce, the rabbits formed a useful addition to our larder, besides assisting us in feeding the dogs. Some thin wire for making rabbit snares had been included in our outfit, and after visiting the snares in the morning we would often return to the cabin with perhaps a dozen rabbits. For trapping purposes the rabbits were rather a nuisance, as they would run along the trap line and get caught in the traps, which were then rendered unavailable for the fur animals for which they were intended.

On one occasion when visiting the trap line I came across a rabbit which had been caught in one of the traps, and just as I was approaching it a large hawk suddenly swooped down and seized the rabbit with its talons, hoping to make off with it before my arrival. It was, however, unable to carry off the rabbit with the trap and the pole attached, and as the rabbit was required for my own supper I drove the hawk away. The rabbit was then extricated from the trap, which was then reset, and I then continued my journey. The hawk, after my departure, had evidently returned to investigate the cause of the rabbit's disappearance, but it must have looked into the matter too closely, as on my return along the trail a short time afterwards, I was surprised to find that the hawk was also caught in the same trap.

Quite a number of porcupine reside in the Yukon, and they do not hibernate like some of the smaller animals, but wander about during the winter months, climbing up the spruce trees and feeding on the green brush. They possess long black quills with yellow tips, and when boiled they are not unpalatable, though moose or cariboo would be preferable. When attacked by a dog they roll themselves up like a hedgehog, and although experienced dogs will be cautious, they sometimes return home after attacking a porcupine with their nose and mouth so full of quills that they resemble a pincushion. The yellow tips easily break off from the rest of the quills, and remain imbedded in the dog's skin, and as they possess a faculty of working themselves in, like some species of grass, they are often difficult to extract. Festering will ensue unless the quills are removed, and people have occasionally been obliged to kill their dogs, owing to the quills imbedded in their mouths and noses after attacking a porcupine.

About sixty miles from our cabin, a lake called Tatlaman Lake lies ensconced among the mountains, and as we had been living for some weeks principally on rabbits, which were becoming rather monotonous, we decided to make an excursion to the lake for a supply of fish. Two men who were ranching near the mouth of the Pelly River had informed us of the lake and the best means of getting to it, and also of a cabin they had built there, which they placed at our disposal. The lake extends for about twenty miles in length and is well stocked with white fish, which is considered about the best eating fish in Canada. The fish are of two species, of which the smaller averages in weight about a pound, while the larger averages about five pounds. The fish feeds by suction like a roach, and rather resembles it in appearance, although possessing a very different flavour.

The men at the ranche had provided us with a net suitable for catching white fish, so one morning we loaded the sleighs with our sleeping robes, a few provisions and cooking utensils, and started off for Tatlaman Lake. We followed the trail of the river for about twenty miles, and then branched off towards the mountains adjoining the river valley. An Indian trail led from the river bank to the lake, and as this had been blazed, and in thick places fairly well cut out, we found no difficulty in ascertaining the proper route. On arriving at the foot of the mountain, the trail followed a steep zigzag path up the mountain side, and, as it was now becoming dark, we decided to camp here for the night. A snowstorm came on during the night, and all the next day it was snowing hard, which made the trail rather heavy. My two partners therefore walked ahead with snow-shoes, while the dogs and sleighs followed in their tracks. As we relied on obtaining fish at the lake we had only brought a small supply of provisions, so the sleighs were lightly loaded, and on reaching the summit of the mountain the dogs found no difficulty in dragging our small outfit and myself as well.

The summit consisted of the usual bare plateau, and on the opposite side the trail wound down into a gulch densely wooded with willows and alder. The bottom of the gulch opened into a valley with its frozen creek, and after travelling along the creek for a few miles, the trail again branched off into the woods, and followed a long gradual ascent, twisting and turning amongst the heavy timber, until it finally dropped into another valley, which eventually led to the lake. We were still about twelve miles from our destination, so we camped for the night among the spruce trees on the creek bank with the dogs chained up to trees or bushes adjoining the tent.

That night, when supper was finished, we were smoking and reclining on our sleeping robes with the camp fire opposite the doorway, when the dogs suddenly commenced whining and appeared restless. At first we concluded that a moose was wandering about which the dogs had scented, but soon a long howl echoed through the woods, followed by other howls from different quarters, showing that a band of wolves had arrived in the vicinity. We all sat quiet and listened, and soon afterwards we distinguished some slight rustling among the bushes not far distant, and on looking out of the tent door we discerned, about ten yards away, a pair of eyes gleaming through the darkness. We did not consider ourselves in any danger, but those peering eyes produced rather an uncanny feeling, gleaming probably from the reflection of the camp fire, and watching us intently. A rifle was lying in the tent, and while we were reaching for it a loud dismal howl suddenly rose from the place we had just been gazing at, while other howls were promptly raised in chorus by the other wolves near by. The eyes had disappeared by the time the rifle was ready, but my partner aimed and fired in the direction, and the noise probably frightened away the wolves, as we heard no more howling during the night.

The wolves in the Yukon district are either of the grey or black variety, whose skins, worth about £2 apiece, provide warm and handsome coats or robes. They are not often seen near the Yukon River, but towards the head-waters of the Pelly and M'Millan rivers, where moose and cariboo abound, they exist in considerable numbers. They travel in bands of perhaps a dozen, or generally less, and are never found in huge bands of a hundred or more, as appears to be the case in certain parts of Russia and Siberia. Although when meeting a band of wolves I would prefer to possess a rifle, I am not aware of any authenticated instance in the Yukon where people have been attacked by them.

The next morning we continued our journey up the creek, and came across the tracks of the wolves we had heard the preceding night. There appears to have been about eight or nine of them, and after following along the trail for a short distance they had branched off into the woods. After proceeding for a few miles along the trail we came across two very old Indian women, and a small boy of about eleven years old, who were spending the winter encamped among the spruce trees. The men of their tribe had departed to another locality for the winter, and as these two women were too old to accompany them, they were left alone by themselves with a small boy to look after them. They were sitting in front of a camp fire without any tent or covering, while behind them was a flimsy brush shelter, about three feet high, which acted as a partial protection for their backs from the cold atmosphere. A roasted rabbit was lying near them on the snow, and as they were devoid of plates or knives and forks they were tearing it asunder with their fingers. They possessed no food whatever except rabbits, which the small boy snared for them, so when we presented them with a little tea and sugar these were highly appreciated. We told them about the wolves, but they did not appear frightened, and simply pointed to the camp fire, which would probably be sufficient to keep them at a distance. The weather was not then very cold, about 25° below zero, but cold snaps of 50° and 60° below zero would occasionally occur, and it is extraordinary how those two old women could exist exposed to an Arctic winter under such conditions.

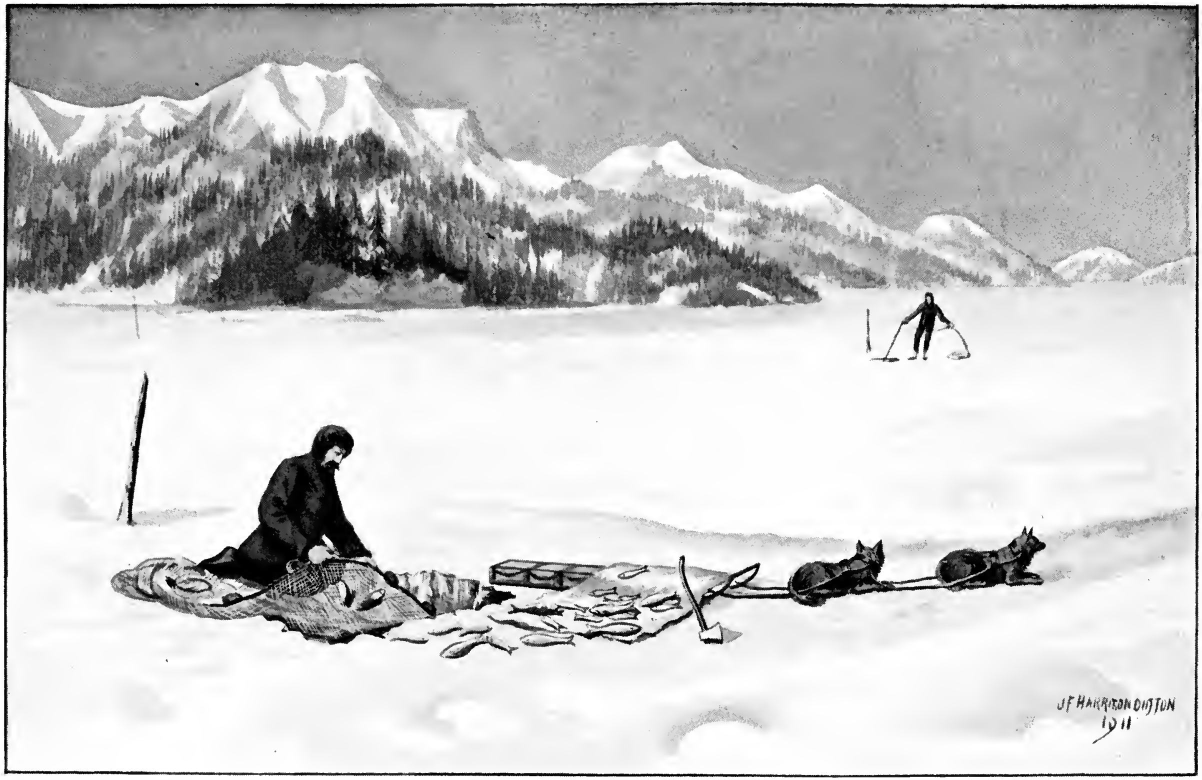
After leaving the old women we continued our journey up the creek, and soon afterwards arrived at the cabin by the lake. Tatlaman Lake, like most of the lakes in the Yukon district, is beautifully situated in wild mountain scenery, while a feeling of remoteness in that outlying region, far removed from habitation, lends an additional charm to the locality.

The cabin was already provided with a stove, so we quickly cut down some dry spruces, and chopped them up into smaller pieces for firewood. When the fire was lighted we filled the teapot with snow, and placed it on the stove till the snow was melted and the water boiling, while we also produced from a sack some pieces of frozen cooked rabbits, which were placed in a frying-pan to warm up.

The cabin had not been occupied lately, so some of the moss chinking between the logs had fallen out, leaving numerous holes and crevices where the outside air could enter, which in a temperature of 30° or more below zero feels uncomfortably draughty. Moss is not easy to obtain during the winter, but we found some old discarded clothes and dirty rags scattered about the floor of the cabin, and these we cut up into pieces and pushed them tightly into the holes and crevices until the outside atmosphere was fairly well excluded.

The next morning we wandered down to the lake and commenced to set the net. Setting a net through the ice involves a considerable amount of trouble, especially in the middle of winter, when the ice has attained a thickness of several feet. A pole about 20 feet long, and attached to a rope, is conveyed to the locality where the net is required to be set, and several holes are cut through the ice at the same distance apart as the length of the pole. Nets 200 feet in length are generally employed in the lakes, so if the pole is 20 feet long it will necessitate cutting eleven holes through the ice at intervals of 20 feet apart.

The pole with a long rope attached to it is then inserted through the first hole, and pushed under the ice in the direction of the second hole. The man then walks to the second hole, and as the holes are the same distance apart as the length of the pole, he will there find the end of the pole, which he works along under the ice in the direction of the third hole. This process is repeated from hole to hole, so that the pole is gradually worked along under the ice until it eventually arrives at the last hole, and it is then drawn out of the water and the rope secured. A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Fishing through the Ice.

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green pole is better than a dry one for the purpose, being more easy to push along, as it floats deeper in the water, and therefore presses less heavily against the under surface of the ice.

A man at the first hole then attaches one end of the net to his end of the rope, care being taken that the net does not become entangled when being inserted through the ice, while at the same time the man at the last hole, by pulling the other end of the rope, gradually draws the net under the ice towards him. As the white fish reside at the bottom of the lake, the net must be sunk to the bottom by means of heavy sinkers attached along the bottom of the net. When the net has once been set, only the end holes are required to be opened for raising the net and extracting the fish, so that the intermediate holes, being no longer required, are allowed to freeze up and become covered with snow.

In the mornings when the net is being raised, the end holes are cleared with an axe of the ice which has formed in them during the night, and the ends of the rope, which have been attached to two poles partly inserted through the holes, are then secured. One end of the net is then pulled up and drawn through the hole in the ice, while the fish are extracted and thrown on the snow, where they quickly freeze solid. When all the fish have been extracted the net is reinserted through the ice, while the man at the further hole pulls at the rope and draws the net under the ice towards him, and it is then reset as before. The fish can be packed in sacks or rolled up in a canvas sheet and deposited on a sleigh in the vicinity, and hauled by dogs to the cabin. Extracting the fish from a net during the winter is not a comfortable occupation, and very trying on the fingers, especially as only the bare hands can be employed during the operation. However, a tent with a stove inside is occasionally erected on the ice over the hole where the net is raised, and the fish can then be extracted with comparative comfort.

The fish were fairly abundant, and on raising the net in the mornings a good quantity of white fish would be secured, besides occasional pike and lake trout. Quite a large number were required every day for ourselves and for feeding the dogs, which when working hard in a cold climate possess vigorous appetites, and require a large amount of food to maintain them in condition. Fortunately the fish were so plentiful that in the course of a few days we had secured about enough for a sleigh load. The temperature had now suddenly dropped to about 60° below zero, which considerably increased the discomfort attached to standing about on an exposed lake extracting fish from the ice; so we decided to abandon the fishing and return to the Pelly River. We accordingly loaded one sleigh with the fish, while the other sleigh was reserved for the blankets, with myself perched on the top of them, and after harnessing the dogs proceeded back along the trail.

The cold snap continued throughout our journey; however, when the tent was pitched for the night we cut down a green spruce-tree, which was stripped of the green brush, the brush being then spread in a thick layer under the sleeping robes, which furnished a soft and springy mattress, as well as a protection from the cold ground. The camp fire was made opposite the tent door, which was kept open, while a canvas sheet was propped up on the further side of the fire. This acted as a screen, which deflected the heat towards the interior of the tent. We slept of course with our clothes on, and during the night one of us would occasionally get up and replenish the fire with dry logs. On our way back to the Pelly River, we again passed the two old women and the small boy crouching before their camp fire. They were now engaged in roasting a rabbit by means of a stick pierced through its body like a spit.

The remainder of the winter was employed in trapping; but as fur animals in the lower regions of the Pelly are rather scarce, we were not very successful, especially as this was our first attempt at the business, trapping, like most other things, requiring a certain amount of experience before proficiency is obtained. When the spring came and the river was clear of ice we caulked and pitched the boat, and after launching it in the river placed in it the few furs we had been able to obtain, together with the remainder of our supplies, and proceeded down to Fort Selkirk, situated on the Yukon near the mouth of the Pelly River. Shortly after our arrival rowing-boats appeared from time to time, emerging from the mouth of the Pelly River and making their way to Selkirk. These were the trappers arriving from the upper regions of the Pelly and M'Millan rivers, where they had been trapping during the preceding winter, who were now returning to the trading post at Selkirk to dispose of their furs.

The trappers on the Pelly and M'Millan rivers leave Selkirk for the trapping grounds about the middle of July, and return about the middle of May when the rivers are clear of ice. They are, therefore, absent in the woods for about ten months, and as during that period they may be 300 miles or more from their source of supplies and completely isolated from communication, it is necessary for them to obtain everything likely to be required before starting. They are also careful not to purchase more supplies than are absolutely necessary, both owing to the initial expense and the difficulties of transportation. After a certain amount of practice a trapper or prospector can calculate very closely how many provisions he will consume in nine or ten months, and can produce a list of articles required in the woods within a few minutes; while nothing essential, such as tobacco or needles and thread for patching his clothes, will be forgotten. Besides provisions for about ten months, he also requires his blankets, winter clothes, stove, cooking pots, plates and cutlery, candles for the long winter evenings, tools and nails, ammunition for his rifle, snow-shoes, salmon net, &c.; as well as about 300 traps. When all these have been deposited in his boat or canoe, he has quite a heavy load to pole and tow up the river for perhaps 300 miles or more against a fairly swift current.

On their return to Selkirk after their long isolation trappers resembled the typical "wild man of the woods," with their clothes in tatters from tramping through the bush, and their shaggy beards and long unkempt hair, which had not been combed or trimmed for the last ten months. However, they gave me lots of tips regarding the habits of the different fur animals and the most effective means of trapping them; and for the next few years they formed practically my only companions. My two partners of the preceding winter embarked on a steamer for Whitehorse and proceeded to Quebec in Eastern Canada, which forms the principal resort of the French Canadians.

Soon after the departure of my late partners, myself and another man who had lately arrived in Selkirk decided on making an expedition up the Hootalinqua River, which flows into the Yukon about 250 miles above Selkirk, so we embarked on a steamer for Whitehorse, the head of navigation on the Yukon. The steamer took about five days to plough its way against the current of the Yukon, and crossing Lake La Barge and then proceeding again up the river at the further end, we eventually arrived at Whitehorse.

Whitehorse on our arrival was indulging in the luxury of a boom owing to the discovery of a large amount of copper ore in the vicinity, so that the town presented quite a busy appearance and was endeavouring to emulate Dawson in 1898 on a very diminutive scale. Unfortunately for the residents the Whitehorse boom differed essentially from the Klondyke boom, as the Klondyke possessed something substantial on which to base its pretensions, while the mines there were producing large quantities of gold which was freely circulated in Dawson. The Whitehorse mines were producing nothing of any practical value, so the boom was being conducted principally on credit, assisted with effusive proclamations about the glorious future, while ready money in the town was exceedingly scarce. On the arrival of a train from the coast the passengers were eagerly scrutinised, and any one who gave the appearance of possessing a certain amount of means was considered a "capitalist," and was therefore promptly pounced upon by real estate agents and other hungry sharks, eager to palm off town lots and mining claims on any gullible new arrival at exorbitant prices. The term "capitalist" is a common denomination in Canada and the United States, and may include any one possessing $100 or more in ready cash. The existence of an extensive copper ledge near Whitehorse was certainly genuine, but owing to the depreciated value of copper and the heavy cost of production in the Yukon the mines were not sufficiently rich to prove remunerative, and the boom gradually subsided into a general slump.

My partner and myself remained at Whitehorse for about three days while we purchased a year's outfit, and after loading our supplies into a rowing-boat started down the Yukon for the Hootalinqua River. The current in the upper waters of the Yukon is fairly swift—about 6 miles an hour, so we soon rowed down the 30 miles which intervened between Whitehorse and the upper end of Lake La Barge. The lake extends for about 25 miles in length, and, like all lakes in mountainous districts, is very susceptible to sudden squalls, which make the crossing in a small rowing-boat rather precarious. We rowed down the side of the lake for some distance, myself in the centre with the oars and my partner in the stern with a paddle, and as the weather appeared nice and calm we then proceeded to cross over to the other side, which was the nearest way to reach the river at the further end.

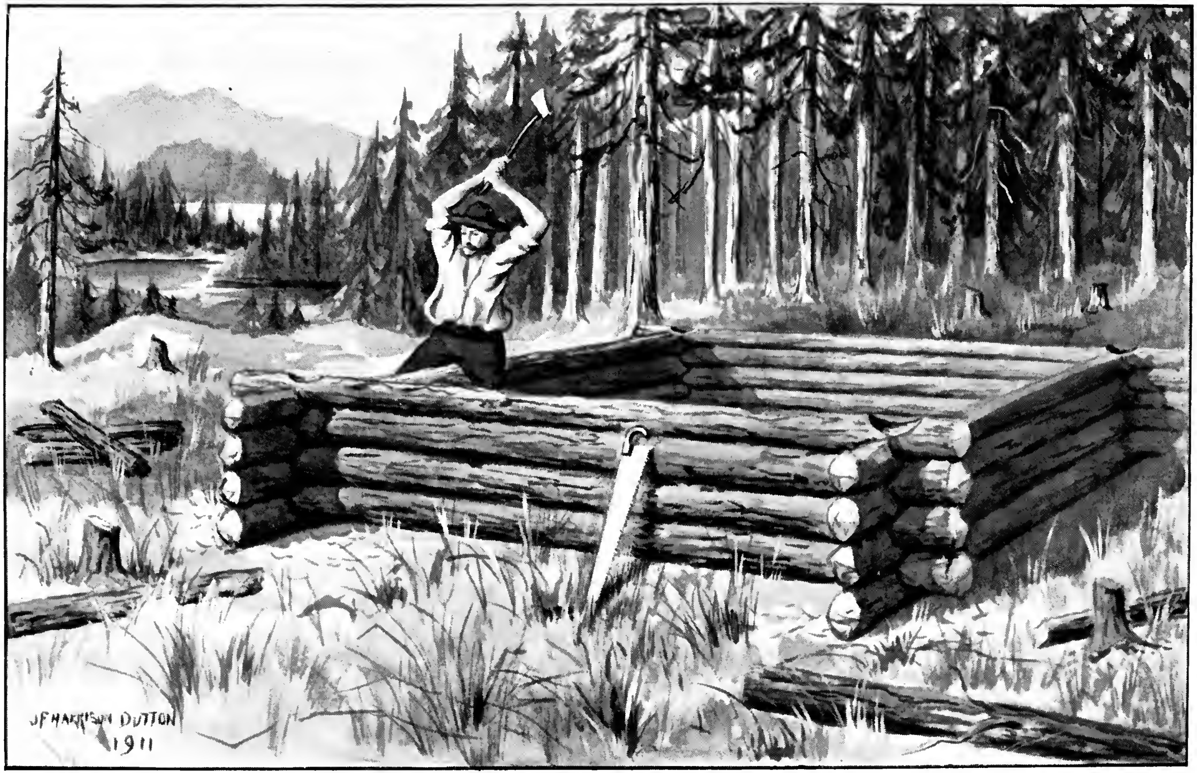
Our hopes of being able to cross the lake without interruption were doomed to disappointment. When about two miles from the opposite shore a squall suddenly bore down upon us, and within a few minutes the smooth surface of the lake was transformed into a nasty choppy sea. Rowing a heavily-loaded boat in a choppy sea is not a very easy undertaking, so our progress was necessarily both slow and laborious, while the waves were continually breaking over the side and threatening every moment to swamp us. For some time matters appeared exceedingly ugly, and we were both wondering what the betting was on our being able to reach the other side before being swamped. However, I tugged with all my strength at the oars, with the perspiration streaming down my face, while my partner was busily employed in bailing out the water with a saucepan. Eventually, to our great relief, we arrived partly under the lee of the shore, where the sea was not so rough, and after rowing down for a short distance we came across a small bay which was sheltered from the squall. Here we camped, emptied the water out of the boat, and examined the wet supplies. Some of the provision sacks containing flour, sugar, rice, &c., had been soaked by the waves and the water in the boat, and the contents considerably damaged. We therefore laid out on the ground a canvas sheet, and spread over it some of the damaged provisions, so as to enable them to dry before becoming mouldy.

The next morning we continued our journey down the lake until we arrived at the river flowing out of the lower end, and then continued our journey down the river until we eventually reached the mouth of the Hootalinqua. This river flows out of the lower end of Teslin Lake, so we intended to travel up the river until our arrival at the lake, and there to build a cabin and to spend the winter trapping in the vicinity. Unfortunately, this particular summer happened to be extremely rainy, so that the water in the Hootalinqua River was exceptionally high, which made the journey up much more difficult and laborious. Owing to the high water there was no convenient beach to walk along, while the top of the bank was too much encumbered with trees and bushes to allow of the use of a tow-line. Poling a heavily-loaded boat against a fairly swift current is not an easy undertaking even for two men, and as it is also impossible to exert a heavy weight on the pole without incurring a severe strain on the feet, I found my weak ankle a perpetual handicap.

We accordingly struggled along for a few days, one of us poling in the bow of the boat and the other in the stern; bothered all the time by swarms of mosquitoes, and soaked day after day in torrents of rain which fell continuously. Owing to the heavy strain on my bad foot we were only able to travel each day for a comparatively short distance, and were both becoming decidedly sick of the journey when an incident occurred which completely altered our plans.

Occasionally while slowly poling up the river some sweepers overhanging the bank would force us to keep farther into the river, where the current was stronger and the water rather deep, which made our progress more difficult. On one of these occasions, encountering an overhanging tree about six feet above the surface of the water, my partner, who was in the bow, caught hold of a small branch to assist in pulling up the boat. Unfortunately he pulled the boat sideways across the stream, so that the bow became subjected to a far stronger pressure from the force of the current. The result was that the boat was suddenly swept away from under him, and he was consequently left suspended above the water, hanging on to the small branch with his hands. The trunk of the tree was too large to enable him to get his arm round and climb on to it, and as he was totally unable to swim his position was precarious.

I was standing at the time in the stern of the boat, so when the bow swung round and the boat began drifting rapidly down the river, I clambered over the supplies to the middle of the boat and got out the oars. A heavily-loaded boat requires some time to manœuvre in a swift current, and by the time I had got the oars in position and had managed to gain the shore, and tied the boat up to the bank, it had already proceeded for some distance down the river, while a considerable time had elapsed. I then scrambled on to the bank with a pole, and pushed my way through the bushes towards my partner. He was now yelling at the top of his voice for me to hurry up, as his arms were already aching and he would not be able to hold on much longer. On arriving at the spot I held out the end of the pole which he was able to reach, and he then dropped into the river. Luckily he managed


J F HARRISON DUTTON
1911

Building a Cabin.

to cling on to the end of the pole, so I pulled him up to the bank.

His nerves were considerably shaken by this adventure, and he refused to continue the journey, saying that he had experienced quite enough of the Hootalinqua River. For my part I was not sorry to turn back, as owing to the high state of the water the difficulties were greater than we anticipated, while my weak ankle had become rather swollen from the continual strain on it. We accordingly adjourned to the place where the boat was moored and camped there for the night, and the next morning started down to the mouth of the river. On reaching the mouth of the Hootalinqua my partner waited for the arrival of a steamer to convey him to Whitehorse, while I purchased his share of the boat and supplies, and rowed down the Yukon for about 250 miles, until I eventually arrived at Selkirk.

For the next two years I remained principally on the Pelly River. Part of the time was spent in an old deserted cabin which I repaired sufficiently to render habitable, while at different times I built myself other cabins rather higher up the river. A small cabin, 12 feet square inside, was sufficiently large for my requirements, and was composed of one room which formed the bedroom, dining-room, workroom where I skinned the animals and dried the furs, sitting-room, and kitchen. The only tools required for constructing these cabins are an axe, a large cross-cut saw for sawing logs, and an inch and a half auger for boring holes through the logs when forming the gable. When constructing the interior fittings, a small saw, hammer, and nails are needed for making the door, window-sash, bunk, table, &c. I generally brought sufficient boards in the boat to make a door and table, while the flooring was sometimes composed of poles squared with an axe, although in many trappers' cabins the floor is simply the bare ground. Panes of glass for a window can be purchased at the trading posts, and may be included in a trapper's outfit, but otherwise a piece of linen soaked in candle grease would serve the purpose of a window.

For the construction of a cabin only dry logs must be employed, and these ought to be a fair size, not less than 10 or 12 inches in diameter, in order to prevent the outside cold from penetrating within. When starting the cabin two logs are placed on the ground parallel to each other to form the bottom logs of the two opposite walls, their distance apart being regulated according to the dimensions of the cabin required. At the end of each log notches are hacked with the axe down to the centre of the log, the notches being of sufficient size to enable the ensuing logs to be fitted into them. The next two logs are then placed transversely in the notches (see illustration), and form the bottom logs of the other two sides of the cabin. Notches are again hacked in the ends of these logs, two other logs fitted into them transversely, and in this manner the walls of the cabin are gradually built up to the required height, and by means of the notches become securely dovetailed.

If 12 feet square is the required dimensions for the interior of the cabin, the logs must be about 15 feet in length, so as to afford sufficient room for cutting the notches. The crevices between the logs are "chinked" or tightly filled with moss, while the door and window are cut out with the cross-cut saw after the walls have been completed. Care must be taken that the logs are placed above each other exactly vertically, otherwise the cabin will lean at a slight angle, and as the weight will not then be evenly distributed, the angle will gradually become more pronounced, until eventually the cabin, unless propped up with poles, will tumble down like a pack of cards.

The logs forming the gables at the two ends of the cabin are sawed into shorter lengths as the height of the gable proceeds. They are fastened one above the other by boring holes through them with the auger, and hammering wooden pegs tightly into the holes, thus securing the gable logs firmly in position. A log is then laid across the tops of the gables at each end of the cabin, and the poles for the roof are laid against it. A thick layer of earth is shovelled on to the roof, a layer of moss being first spread over the poles in order to prevent the earth from falling through the crevices into the cabin. It is important that the layer of earth should be sufficiently thick, otherwise the cold atmosphere will penetrate through the roof, while the bottom of the cabin is also banked round with earth, so as to prevent the cold from penetrating under the bottom logs.

The period required for building a cabin of this description will depend on the proximity of dead trees suitable for the purpose. If the logs have to be conveyed for a considerable distance, a certain amount of extra time and labour will be involved. When, however, the trees have been cut down, and the logs deposited by the site of the cabin, an ordinary able-bodied man should complete the cabin and interior fittings in about ten days.

During the winters I resided principally by myself in the woods, occupying my time in trapping, although occasionally I would take a trip down to Selkirk with the dog team, in order to replenish supplies and look up acquaintances. In the lower regions of the Pelly River, where I was situated, the fur-coated animals were not plentiful, although at that time there were a fair number of lynx, while mink, ermine, and foxes would also occasionally walk into the traps. Occasionally Indians, when travelling up the Pelly River during the winter, would enter the cabin to warm themselves and beg for a meal. I generally gave them a cup of tea, some beans, and some homemade bread baked by myself, which weighed on an average about a pound to the cubic inch. Late in the autumn they would often arrive, floating down the river on rafts laden with bear or moose meat obtained from the upper regions of the Pelly, and I would then purchase from them a supply of meat for the ensuing winter.

During very severe snaps, such as 50° or 60° below zero, I abstained from travelling far from the cabin, as it was then too cold to ride much on the sleigh, while my lame foot prevented my being able to run or walk fast and thus keep myself warm. At such times I employed myself in replenishing my wood supply. Cutting down trees affords good exercise, while, as the cabin was not far distant, I could always return there to warm myself, and to keep the stove well supplied with wood. When choosing out a site for building a cabin, a clump of dry trees in the vicinity is an important element to consider, both for furnishing logs when building the cabin, and also for purposes of firewood during the winter. A trail would be cut from the cabin to the dry wood supply, and when it was too cold for travelling round the trap-line I employed my time in cutting down some dry trees, and after chopping them into lengths which I could handle, would carry or drag them to the edge of the trail. A large pile of logs would here be deposited, so that when required for consumption they could be loaded on to the sleigh and hauled by the dogs to the cabin.

When travelling round the trap-line, a lynx or other animal which has been caught in a trap is promptly killed, and the trap is then reset and concealed with snow, so as to be ready for the next occupant. The animal is conveyed on the sleigh to the trapper's cabin, which is a more comfortable place to work in than the outside cold. The skin is then removed and stretched on a mould, until the moisture has completely evaporated, and this is termed a "raw fur." When skinning deer or bears a cut is first made through the skin, which extends down the legs and along the centre of the underneath part of the body. The skin is then detached from the animal, and during the process of drying is stretched against a flat surface, such as a wall or paling, while nails are driven into the paling through the edges of the skin, in order to retain it in position, and prevent it from shrinking as the moisture evaporates.

Fur-coated animals, except bear, beaver, and occasionally wolves and wolverines, are skinned and stretched in a different manner. In their case, the cut is only made down the hind legs, and the skin when detached from the hind legs is then pulled back over the body and head, in much the same manner as a man pulls off a football jersey. Very little knife-work need be resorted to, although when drawing the skin over the head, the knife is necessary for freeing the eyes, ears, nose, and gums; while care must be taken, especially when freeing the eyes, not to cut the skin.

The mould consists of two flat pieces of board, varying in size according to the species of the animal. The skin is drawn over the mould, and

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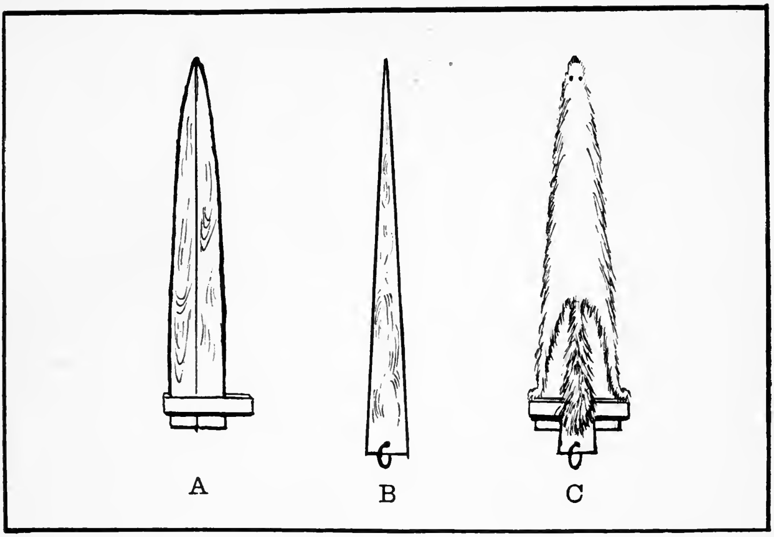
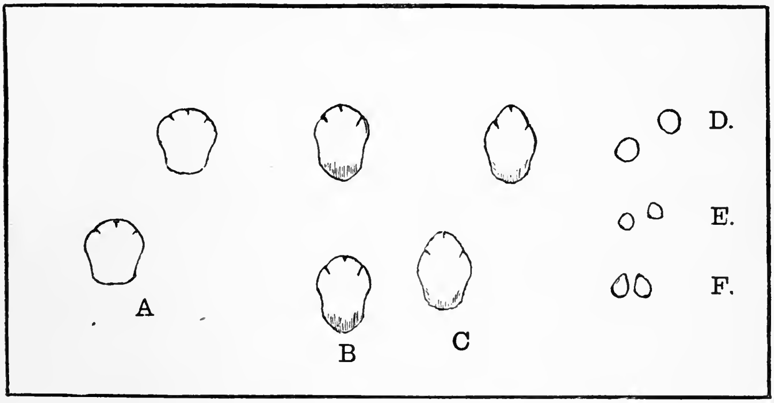


Mould for Fur.
A. Mould. B. Wedge. C. Fur stretched on Mould.



Tracks in the Snow.
A. Lynx. B. Wolverine. C. Wolf. D. Marten. E. Ermine. F. Mink.
(Only the fore-feet are shown.)

a wedge is then inserted between the two boards, which are thus forced farther apart, until the skin becomes tightly stretched. The skin when stretched on the mould appears inside out, the fur being on the inside next to the mould, while the inside skin, called the pelt, becomes exposed on the outside, and as it will contain a certain amount of fat and greasy substance, this must be scraped off until the pelt becomes thoroughly clean. The skin remains on the mould for perhaps two or three days, until the moisture has completely evaporated, and the pelt somewhat resembles parchment, and it is then ready to be sold as a raw fur. This method of skinning and stretching skins is termed "casing," and cased furs will usually command a higher price in the market than skins which have been cut down the centre of the body and stretched on a flat surface.

The ermine, the marten, and the mink resemble in shape an ordinary ferret, and in fact the marten, sable, mink, ferret, weasel, stoat, polecat, and ermine all belong to the same family, and merely vary in size and colour. The ermine is considerably smaller than the marten or mink, and during some seasons fairly large quantities are caught in the Yukon district. Unfortunately, their white coat is rather spoilt by a yellow stain, which appears to become more pronounced after the fur has been tanned and made up, as ermine furs worn in the street generally show the yellow to a greater extent than when the animal has been recently trapped in the woods. Their favourite diet consists of mice, which during some years simply infest the Yukon district, causing considerable damage to provisions in a cabin; so, if an ermine is residing near one's cabin, it is sometimes wiser to leave it alone, as the mice will then be quickly cleared from the vicinity. Personally, I always included a cat in my outfit, when leaving Selkirk for my quarters up the Pelly River. Besides affording a certain amount of companionship when living alone in the woods, a cat is also extremely useful for protecting one's supplies against the depredations of mice.

On one occasion I met with a rather nasty accident while travelling during the winter, although the result was fortunately not serious. The sleigh was descending a steep bank, so I lay down on it with my feet pressed into the snow behind, in order to check its velocity. This expedient answered all right for a time, but on rounding a curve the descent suddenly became very much steeper. The result was that the sleigh shot rapidly forward, rolling over the dogs, until its wild career was abruptly stopped by plunging against a stump on the side of the trail. The sudden jar shot me straight out of the sleigh, and I landed violently against a tree in front. For a few moments I felt slightly stunned, while my face was badly bruised and scratched, and my nose bled profusely. Fortunately it was not then very cold, so after pulling myself together I disentangled the dogs and continued my journey. Eventually the dogs arrived at the cabin, but my face was too sore and swollen to enable me to travel again for about a week.

In the spring, when the ice in the river had broken up, I launched the boat and rowed down to Selkirk, where I met the trappers returning with their furs from the upper waters of the Pelly and M'Millan rivers. Many of the trappers lived entirely by themselves in the woods, perhaps 300 miles or more from Selkirk, being entirely cut off from communication or intercourse with other people. After their solitary life for the last ten months they were extremely glad to meet acquaintances, and when they had congregated in the spring at the trading post and their furs had been disposed of, they generally considered themselves entitled to what they call a "good time," which entailed dissipating their money in gambling and drinking. Trappers spend a lonely ten months in the woods, travelling to their locality in the summer, building their cabins and preparing their trap-lines during the autumn, and trapping during the winter. Late in the spring, when the rivers are clear of ice, they return to the trading post where they sell their furs, and after a dissipated existence of about two months' duration, depart again with their supplies, probably in debt at the trading post, for another ten months in the woods; and this process is repeated for years.

An old man named Jim Grew, about seventy years of age, was one example of an old trapper, and when I last saw him in Selkirk he had just completed a lively two months' existence in the place, and was departing for his trapping-ground up the Pelly River. He had evidently a premonition that his life would soon terminate, and when bidding adieu to the residents in Selkirk, mentioned that he was doubtful whether he would ever live to return. Although situated nearly 300 miles up the Pelly River, he was not entirely isolated, like many trappers, as another man had built a cabin more or less in the vicinity, and the two used occasionally to meet each other. However, Jim Grew's premonition turned out quite correct. One day during the winter his acquaintance called to visit him, and on entering the door he discovered the old man lying dead and frozen in his cabin, so he buried him out in the woods amongst the spruce trees close by.

CHAPTER VIII

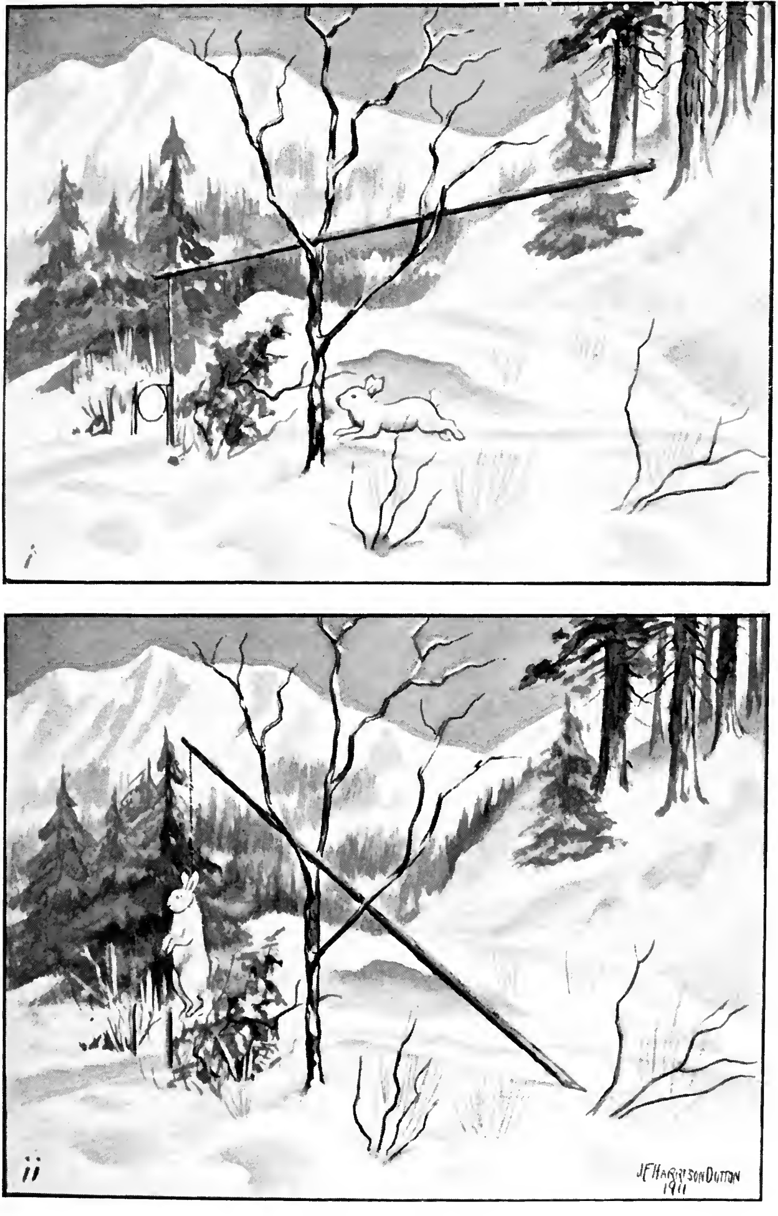
COLOUR PROTECTION AND BIG GAME

In the Natural History Museum at South Kensington a study described as "colour protection" is exhibited, in which stuffed specimens of the Arctic fox, the Arctic hare, the ermine, and the ptarmigan are portrayed in their white winter coats inhabiting their snow-covered localities. The figures ensconced amidst their white surroundings are well represented, but nature occasionally produces some striking anomalies, and it is a curious incidence that other species, although belonging to the same family and inhabiting the same district, and presumably requiring colour protection to an equal extent, do not assume a white fur or plumage during the winter months, but retain their dark summer colouring throughout the year.

Animals like the Arctic hare and the ptarmigan, which are continually preyed upon, require their white colouring during the winter as a form of concealment from their enemies, but the Polar bear, the Arctic fox, and the ermine are not preyed upon by other animals, and have few if any enemies to contend with, except the hunter and the trapper, so that the advantage of their white coats is not to afford them a protection against their enemies, but to enable them more easily and effectually to approach and secure their victims.

The ptarmigan, although adopting a white plumage in the winter, during the summer months assumes a buff-coloured plumage, and early in the spring or late in the autumn, when their feathers begin to change, they present, like the snow-bird, a curious mottled appearance, their plumage being speckled with brown and white splodges. The ptarmigan and another game bird which exists in the Yukon, called by Indians "the chicken," both belong to the grouse family, the chicken being a rather larger bird, while its colouring is slightly darker. The ptarmigan resides principally on the higher slopes, though it may occasionally be observed in the river valleys, while the chicken is more prevalent in the valleys, although I have also encountered it high up in the mountains. Both birds belong to the same family, inhabit practically the same district, and have the same enemies to contend with, but while the ptarmigan assumes a white plumage during the winter, the chicken retains its dark summer colouring throughout the year.

To take another example, the ermine, the mink, and the marten all belong to the same family. They all traverse the same district and live on practically the same food, so they presumably each require the same advantage of colour protection; and yet the ermine is the only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ii
J F HARRISON DUTTON
1911

Spring Snare for Rabbits.
i. The Spring Snare set. ii. The Rabbit Snared.

one of the three which assumes a white colouring during the winter months.

The Arctic hare, or rabbit as it is called in the Yukon, is an important feature of the country, and in districts not frequented by moose or cariboo, furnishes a welcome addition to the larder. Its colour during the summer closely resembles an ordinary rabbit, but during the winter its coat changes to pure white. It does not burrow like an English rabbit, but when the snow becomes deep forms regular run-ways over which it constantly travels, and can then be easily caught by means of wire snares, which are placed in these run-ways. Rabbits run with their heads rather high up; it is therefore important to place the snare at such a height above the ground, that the rabbit will be caught by the neck. If the snare is placed too low, the rabbit will often attempt to jump through, and will then be caught by the hind leg, and as wire in very cold weather becomes extremely brittle, the rabbit during its struggles will generally manage to escape by breaking the snare.

The most satisfactory method of snaring these rabbits is to attach the snare to a spring pole, which is constructed by cutting down a pole and then placing it on a tripod formed of three sticks, or the fork formed by a branch with the tree will answer the purpose, if conveniently situated. One end of the pole is attached to the snare by a string, which is also attached to a stake in the ground, a particular kind of slip-knot being employed, simple to construct but difficult to describe. (See illustration.) The pole is adjusted on the tripod, so that the end farthest from the snare is much the heavier, and, consequently, when the slip-knot is released, that end of the pole will fall to the ground by its own weight. The struggles of the rabbit when caught in the snare releases the slip-knot, and consequently the further end of the pole drops to the ground like a see-saw, while the end attached to the snare is raised up and hauls the rabbit up with it, which remains suspended in the air by its neck, and is quickly strangled.

It is a curious fact in connection with the rabbits in the Yukon and other parts of Canada, that they invariably become almost entirely extinct at the expiration of every seven years, only a few remaining to enable them to breed again. About four or five years ago the rabbits were in great abundance in the Yukon, and the woods were simply full of them, especially during the early part of the winter. In the ensuing spring, however, when the snow had melted, dead rabbits were constantly encountered, and the next winter hardly a rabbit was ever seen. Some disease breaks out amongst them, probably owing to over population, which sweeps them nearly all away, so that they require another seven years before regaining their former populous condition. This is well known in the Yukon and other parts of Northern Canada, and both Indians and white men who have resided long in the country affirm that the sudden disappearance of the rabbit invariably recurs at the expiration of every seven years.

The big game in the Yukon consist of the moose, cariboo, mountain sheep, and bear. The moose, which is practically the same animal as the Norwegian elk, forms the largest species of the deer family, a big bull moose being of about equal size to a large bullock. The animal called the elk on the North American continent is very different to the Norwegian elk, while the nomenclature appears to be really a misnomer, because the American elk, if called by its correct name, should be the wapiti deer.

The three species of deer, namely the moose, wapiti, and cariboo, although they all belong to the same family, each require a different substance for their food. The moose feeds on willows, the wapiti on grass, and the cariboo on lichen ; they, therefore, each frequent different haunts, where they will find their particular food in most abundance. The moose and the cariboo range over more or less the same district, but the moose will generally frequent the low flat ground in the river valleys, where willows grow in profusion, while the cariboo is usually found high up on the mountains, the abode of the lichen, which they will also gather from the trees.

The wapiti deer ranges further south than the moose or the cariboo, and does not exist in the Yukon district. In certain portions of Vancouver Island they exist in considerable numbers, but the interior is very thick and difficult to penetrate, and I was never successful in shooting wapiti on the island, although I have shot them many years ago in Wyoming in the United States.

The broad valleys of the Yukon and its tributaries contain numerous marsh-lands, while lakes great and small exist in abundance throughout the Yukon district, and as the moose possesses a strong partiality for water, it occupies during the summer months a considerable portion of its time standing in the lakes or wallowing in the ponds to keep the flies away. It possesses an extraordinary power of scent and hearing, and being the most shy and cunning of all the deer tribe, proves a most difficult animal to stalk, and when startled will always run down wind, so that it can detect by scent the approach of its pursuers. An experienced moose hunter would not attempt to follow up its tracks, but would diverge to the right or left, making a wide detour, so as to avoid being scented.

During the autumn, when the bulls are searching for the cows, they utter a loud sort of grunting noise which can be heard for a considerable distance. In some parts of Canada, principally the eastern part, the moose are often killed at this season by means of "calling" them, a horn being sometimes used for the purpose which emits a sound similar to the noise of the animal. A considerable amount of skill is required to mimic the sound correctly, and the moose on hearing the "call" imagines the presence of another moose in the vicinity, and being eager to fight any rival, rushes heedlessly towards the spot and can then be easily shot.

On the arrival of spring a hard crust is formed on the snow owing to the action of the sun's heat, which melts the surface of the snow during the day-time, while it freezes again into a hard cake during the night. At this period a moose can often be overtaken and shot by the hunter on a pair of snow-shoes, as the hard crust will then bear the hunter's weight, while the moose breaks through at every step and eventually becomes exhausted. Moose are also hunted with dogs, a good moose-dog affording quite a valuable asset to a man trapping or prospecting in a district where moose are plentiful. The dog on scenting a moose will pursue and soon bring it to bay, and the two will stand facing each other, the dog barking, until the hunter, who is guided to the locality by the barking of the dog, arrives on the spot with his rifle and shoots the moose.

At the commencement of the autumn when their horns have become hard, the bull-moose contract a habit of rubbing and banging them against the trees in order to divest them of the velvet. The noise can be imitated by striking a tree with the back of an axe, and this method is occasionally employed for attracting the animal to the vicinity. The moose being under the impression that the noise is produced by another moose, is attracted to the spot by the sound, and on arriving near the locality is easily shot by the hunter, who remains concealed behind a tree.

During the winter, when the bulls have shed their horns, the moose are sometimes snared like rabbits, the size of the loop being three or four feet in diameter, and arranged above the ground at about the height of the animal's head. The loop can be constructed of half-inch linen rope, which is sufficiently strong for the purpose, as linen rope is much stronger than ordinary hemp, while the other end of the rope is attached to a stout pole, placed on the ground alongside the snare. In districts where moose are plentiful, regular moose trails are formed during the winter months, the snow along the trail being trampled down through frequent use. A spot for arranging the snare is chosen on a moose trail, where the brush on either side is high and thick, so that the snare can be more effectually concealed. The moose when walking along the trail inserts its head through the loop, which quickly tightens round the animal's neck, while the stout pole to which the rope is attached becomes soon caught and entangled amongst the trees and bushes, so that the moose in its frantic struggles to escape eventually strangles itself.

These methods of killing moose may not be considered "sporting," but the trapper or the prospector does not reside in the Yukon for sport, but for a living, and when endeavouring to obtain a moose, he is not thinking of the sport, but of his supper—which is much more important. After all, the methods of nine-tenths of those sportsmen who bring the heads of the animals they have secured home to England, and after having them mounted by Rowland Ward point them out with pride to their friends, are no more "sporting" than the methods just described. Even presuming that, instead of purchasing their heads from taxidermists, they have shot the animals themselves, they engage a hunter in America or a shikari in India, who discovers where the game is located and informs them how to approach it, tells them where to go, when to lie down and when to get up, and in fact does all the hunting for them.

Moose, when searching for cows in the autumn, possess, like other deer, a keen predilection for fighting, and such an incident as is depicted in the well-known picture by Landseer of two stags lying dead with their horns interlocked occurs also occasionally amongst moose. Several years ago, when I was residing in Dawson, two moose horns with part of the skulls attached were brought into the town in that condition, and judging from their appearance they must have been lying on the ground for many years. The horns were most firmly interlocked and wedged together, and I have seen two big men take up the heads and exert all their strength to try and pull them asunder, but without being able to move them a fraction of an inch. The horns were of quite a fair size and must have originally belonged to two large bulls, who had evidently engaged in the fatal fight for possession of the harem, and being unable to extricate their interlocked horns, had eventually died together from hunger and exhaustion.

The tracks of a large animal, like a moose or a cariboo, will remain in the snow for quite a long period, if sheltered from the wind, even after fresh snow has fallen. The fresh snow when falling into a track will obliterate the details, but will not necessarily obliterate the track. This will then assume a cup-like formation, and hunters often find it difficult on these occasions to determine the direction in which the animal is travelling. This, however, can be ascertained by a very simple method, it being not even necessary to examine the track itself, because an animal, when raising its foot out of the snow, will always kick up some of the snow with the front part of its foot. Some mounds of snow can, therefore, be observed scattered in front of the track, which will indicate the direction in which the animal is travelling. The smaller particles of snow will be thrown some distance in front of the track, while the larger and heavier mounds will remain near the place from which they were dislodged.

It is important when hunting deer to ascertain from the track whether the animal is walking or running, because these animals only run when startled; and so, if the track discloses that the animal is running, the hunter's approach has probably been detected, and he can then arrange his plans accordingly. An animal when running will, of course, take longer strides, while its disturbed condition can also be detected by the particles of snow, which will then be kicked for a considerable distance in advance of the track.

Towards the end of November the moose shed their horns, which late in October become a light greyish colour, and a big bull moose with its massive horns, standing perhaps knee deep in the water amongst its native haunts, presents a grand and imposing spectacle.

The cariboo is a species of reindeer, the two animals being very similar, while their horns, although palmated like moose horns, are very different to the latter in shape and appearance. The cariboo, although smaller than the moose, forms a large and handsome member of the deer family, a big bull being fully equal in size to a large red deer stag amongst the Highlands of Scotland. The cariboo can be divided into two main species—the Woodland cariboo and the Barren Ground cariboo, of which the latter species is much the smaller. The district called the Barren Grounds, the home of the musk ox, is a vast treeless tract of country in the very northern part of Western Canada, and the Barren Ground cariboo migrate in enormous bands when changing their summer or winter quarters, and are then killed in large numbers by the Indians. Those frequenting the Yukon district, British Columbia, and Alaska belong to the larger species, namely the Woodland cariboo; but Barren Ground cariboo have often been brought into

Dawson from the head-waters of the River Klondyke and sold in the butchers' shops.

It appears rather remarkable that cariboo are not more generally trained for sleighing purposes, like the reindeer, especially as they exist in such abundance in the Yukon district, as well as in British Columbia and other parts of Canada. I have heard of the cariboo being trained amongst certain tribes of Esquimaux, but I am not aware of any Indians who employ them for that purpose, except a tribe residing on the Peel River, a tributary of the Mackenzie River, members of which have occasionally arrived in Dawson during the winter with toboggans drawn by Barren Ground cariboo.

The cariboo, like other deer, possess a keen sense of smell, but they are not so shy or cunning as the moose, and provided that care is exercised regarding the direction of the wind are much more easy to approach, especially as they reside higher up on the mountain and are generally found on more open ground. The moose, ensconced among the willows and bushes, is more difficult to observe; while to walk amongst thick brush without making a certain amount of noise is not an easy undertaking, and the moose with its fine sense of hearing would instantly detect any rustling amongst the bushes. The bull cariboo, like all the deer tribe, is very jealous of his harem, guarding his wives as vigilantly as any Moslem in Cairo or Constantinople, and if any of the cows wander too far away will instantly pursue and drive it back to the herd. It may here be mentioned that the female moose and cariboo are not called hinds, but cows.

Many years ago, when hunting cariboo in British Columbia, an Indian and I crouched concealed behind a rock while we watched the approach of a bull cariboo accompanied by a herd of seven cows. As the wind was blowing in the right direction, our presence remained undetected, and after approaching to within a comparatively short distance, the cariboo suddenly lay down to take its noonday rest. This was on a bitterly cold day towards the end of October, high up on the mountain, which was perfectly bare, with a strong biting wind blowing; and although the shelter of the spruce forest was not far distant, the cariboo appeared perfectly contented to lie down on the snow in the open. When the bull lay down to rest the cows promptly stopped, some lying down at the same time, while others grazed about in the vicinity.

I watched them closely for a short period, and noticed that although the cariboo were taking their noonday sleep, their ears were constantly twitching and turning about, showing that they were ever on the *qui vive* for enemies. I also noticed that the bull, before lying down, made a detour by walking to the leeward side of all the cows, which would enable it to retain their scent. It probably derived a certain satisfaction from their scent, while also, according to the Indian's explanation—and as the Indians are continually hunting them, they ought to be acquainted with their habits—if any of the cows wandered too far away, the bull by missing the scent would detect its departure, and instantly pursue it.

On another occasion in British Columbia, two Indians and I were packing supplies on our backs through an open space, with high bush which extended nearly up to our shoulders. One of the Indians was carrying on his shoulders the head of a cariboo with the horns pointing upwards, when to our surprise a large bull cariboo suddenly emerged from the spruce forest which was not far distant and walked directly towards us. It had evidently noticed the horns, while the high brush partially concealed us, and imagining the presence in the vicinity of another cariboo, it was approaching in order to make its acquaintance, either friendly or otherwise.

We promptly stopped and crouched down, leaving only the horns exposed; while the cariboo, after approaching to within about 200 yards, evidently became suspicious and stopped to gaze at us. After gazing for a few moments it commenced at a slow walk to make a detour round, stopping every now and then to gaze, so that by reaching the leeward side of us it would be able to obtain our scent. Of course, if its object had been accomplished our presence would have been instantly detected, so I shot the cariboo before it had time to complete its investigations.

The mountain sheep in the Yukon comprise a species of the *Ovis montana* or Rocky Mountain sheep, and closely resemble the *Ovis ammon* of the Himalaya Mountains, although on an average the former are not quite so large, a Rocky Mountain sheep with a horn measuring 16 inches round the base being considered a good head. The white sheep occasionally appears in Dawson, brought in by hunters from the head-waters of the Klondyke River. Their heads are very pretty, the hair being pure white, with the horns long and forming a beautiful curve, although not usually quite so massive as the horns of the Rocky Mountain sheep. The meat of the wild sheep makes excellent mutton; but it seldom appears in the market at Dawson, as their ranges exist some distance from the Yukon, and wild sheep are not always very easy to obtain.

During the summer the rams reside high up in the mountains, so the best period for shooting them is early in the winter, as the rams then descend to the lower slopes and do not require climbing after so far. They are more difficult to approach than cariboo, their sense of sight and hearing being very keen, and are often found on difficult and rocky ground. However, they do not usually look high up, so if one can manage to make a detour round and climb above them, and the direction of the wind is favourable to avoid being scented, a reasonably close shot can generally be obtained.

The mountain goats do not range so far north as the Yukon, although in certain portions of British Columbia they exist in abundance. These animals are very large goats, attaining about the size of a small calf, the colour being pure white with short jet black horns, while they possess a long shaggy coat which is often made into robes for winter use. Of course, like all wild animals, they can smell; but their senses are by no means keen, and after a hard climb over difficult ground and suitable precautions being taken about the direction of the wind, they are not difficult to approach. They are nearly always found on rocky ground on the mountain side, and like the wild sheep descend lower down towards the valley at the commencement of the winter, when therefore the best opportunity arises for obtaining them.

The upper regions of the Pelly River have gained quite a notoriety for big game, and every year parties arrive from England and the United States to collect specimens of heads from the head-waters of the Pelly. The moose on Cook's inlet are supposed to possess the largest heads; but the Pelly moose are considered fairly good specimens, while cariboo and mountain sheep can also be obtained. Trappers, prospectors, and those residing in the country are allowed to shoot all the game that they require for their own use; but hunters arriving from the outside for the purpose of collecting heads are obliged to obtain a permit from the Government at Ottawa, for which a certain fee is charged, and are also restricted to a certain number of each variety.

Some of the residents in the Yukon complain of these big-game hunters on the ground that, as only the heads are required, they waste a considerable portion of the meat, while they help to destroy the game. These complaints, however, are much exaggerated, as the upper regions of the Pelly are too remote and the journey too expensive to tempt a large influx of hunters. The animal that destroys the game far more than all the trappers and head hunters combined is the wolf, and wherever moose and cariboo exist wolves are always found in the vicinity. If the moose or cariboo migrate from the district the wolves will follow them; and the amount of game they destroy, especially cows and young calves, must be enormous.

Bears are very plentiful all over the Yukon valley, but owing to the dense forest and thick brush they are not so often encountered as might be expected. Several different species are found in the Yukon, namely, the black bear, the grizzly, the cinnamon, and the bald-face bear, the latter being a large dark brown bear with a white face. Over twenty years have elapsed since my shooting days amongst the Himalaya Mountains in Kashmir and Astor; but from what I remember the black bears of the Himalayas were on the average just as large and as dangerous as the brown bears, while on the American continent the brown bears are on an average considerably larger and more formidable than the black bears. The great brown bear of Alaska is considered the largest specimen on the American continent, Kodiak Island off the Alaskan coast being especially noted for the size of its enormous brown bears.

Bears " hole up " or hibernate during the winter months, which implies that they choose some convenient crevice, such as the hollow where a tree has been uprooted. Here they form a comfortable bed, and allowing the place to be covered with snow remain in a semi-dormant condition without any food whatever until the ensuing spring, a period in the Yukon of about five or six months. Some people assert that during this prolonged retirement the bears occupy their time by licking their paws, which contain a certain amount of greasy substance that assists in keeping them alive. The truth of this appears to be rather doubtful; it is, however, a curious fact that the cubs are born while the mother bear is in this semi-dormant condition. The cinnamon and the grizzly can withstand the cold rather better than the black bear, and therefore hole up rather later in the winter. In the spring, when they feel the sun's warmth, the bears will emerge from their holes and take a walk; but if, as occasionally happens, another cold snap occurs, they will retire to bed for perhaps a week or two and wait for more favourable weather.

These winter quarters have occasionally been detected by following the bear's tracks, which, as already explained, can sometimes be distinguished for a considerable period after the animal has formed them. A bear wandering about at the commencement of the cold weather is probably searching for a cosy spot, so the track can be followed until the position of the bear's den has been located. The place will be marked and remembered; but the animal will not be immediately disturbed, as time will be allowed for the fur to grow, which late in the winter becomes longer and more valuable.

I have never witnessed the occurrence, but have been informed that on being suddenly rousted up with a pole thrust through the snow the semi-dormant bear becomes very wide awake, and, judging from the subterranean growls, is extremely irate at being disturbed during its beauty sleep, and on subsequently emerging from its snow-roofed den is evidently in a thoroughly bad humour, and quite prepared to argue with any one in the vicinity. However, the wretched beast is not afforded much opportunity, as some men will be standing a few yards off with rifles ready, and on its first appearance above the snow the unlucky bear is promptly greeted with a volley and rapidly demolished.

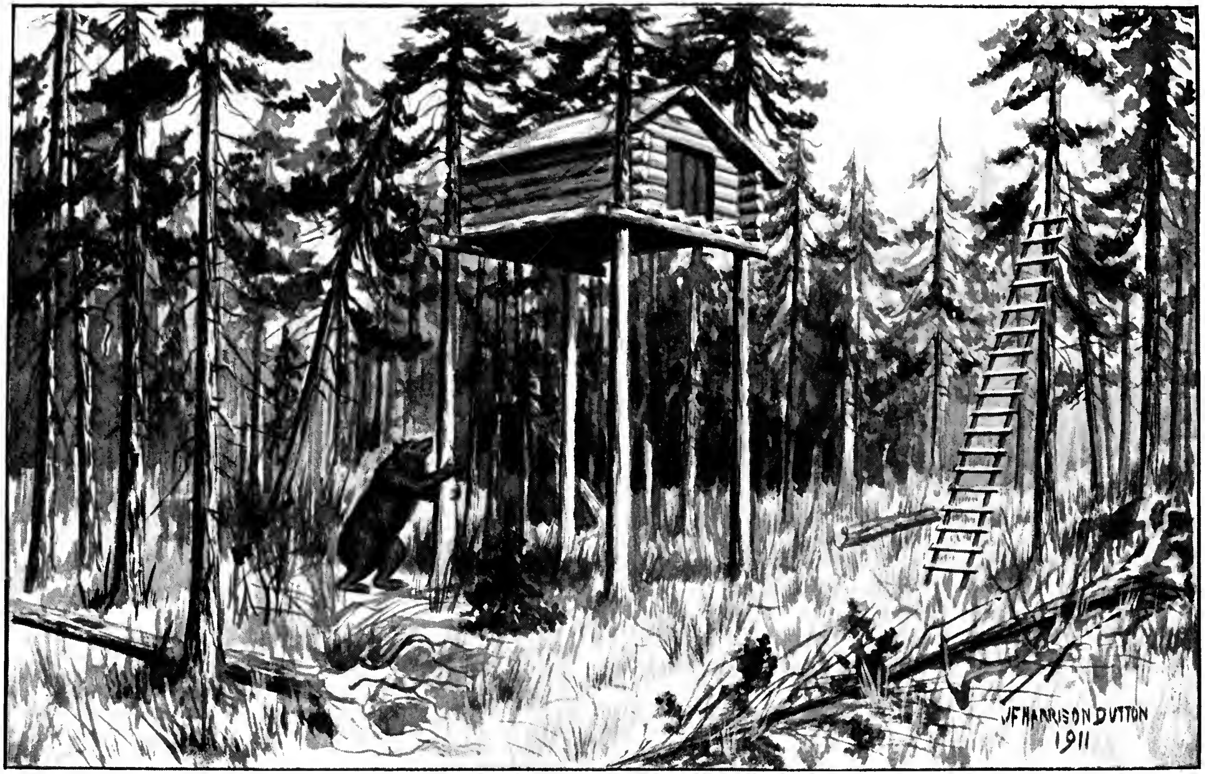
On emerging in the spring from their winter quarters bears feed on roots and a certain kind of weed, called skunk weed, while they are very fond of wild berries when they become ripe, and on encountering an ant-hill will promptly tear it up and devour the inhabitants with avidity. When the salmon are swimming up the river the bears become carnivorous, and stationing themselves by the riffles, pounce upon and clutch the fish with their claws. They will also eat the dead salmon stranded on the banks, and the more gamey the salmon the more the bears appreciate them. There is no better bait for enticing a bear than a thoroughly gamey salmon. The meat of a young bear, when feeding on roots or berries, provides excellent eating, and is of a rather darker colour than beef or moose meat, but when the bears are feeding on gamey salmon the flavour of the meat becomes strong and is quite uneatable.

Bears possess a poor eyesight, but their sense of smell and hearing are very keen, and, as they reside principally amongst the brush, are not very easy to approach, as they will quickly detect any rustling in the bushes. They are often hunted with dogs, which on scenting a bear will pursue and soon drive it up a tree or bring it to bay and remain barking until the hunter arrives at the spot with his rifle. A really good bear dog is not very easy to obtain, and will always command a good price. Small dogs are more active than large dogs, and, therefore, more suitable for the purpose, as they are more easily able to avoid the bear's claws. The bear when brought to bay will strike at the dog with its long sharp claws, and a successful stroke will tear the flesh to ribbons. However, a good dog will manage to avoid the strokes, while it keeps barking and bounding round the bear, and whenever an opportunity occurs it will promptly rush in, and after taking a bite at the bear's hind quarters will quickly jump back again before the bear can strike it. The bear in this predicament squats down on its hind quarters in order to protect them from the dog, and with growls and snarls continually turns round like a teetotum, while the dog keeps bounding round it. In the meantime, the hunter with his rifle is guided by the growls and barking towards the spot, and as the bear's attention is already concentrated on the dog it can easily be shot.

Another method of obtaining bears, although not often resorted to in the Yukon, is by means of a small keg in which large sharp nails are driven round the open end, so that the points protrude into the interior and slant towards the bottom. A bait, such as rotten fish, which bears can smell for a long distance, is then placed in the bottom of the keg. The bear can push its head into the keg to obtain the bait, but when it wishes to withdraw the sharp points of the nails, which are slanting inwards, come in contact with its skin, so that its head becomes firmly secured within the keg. I have never witnessed the occurrence, but have been informed that a bear in this predicament employs its time in rolling over and over, with the fore-paws against its neck, endeavouring to release its head. The harder it pushes with its paws against the keg, the farther are the nails driven through its skin, so that its snarls and growls can be heard for a considerable distance. The trapper or hunter, guided to the locality by the pandemonium, soon arrives at the spot with his rifle and shoots the unfortunate bear.

A "cache," derived from the French-Canadian "cacher," to hide, is a term frequently employed by those residing in the woods in Canada, and denotes any supplies deposited by a person in some locality, either near his cabin or at any spot in the woods which he may intend to revisit on a future occasion. Bears are exceedingly destructive animals, and as they occasionally obtain access to the interior by tearing down the caches if not strongly built, these, as a further precaution, are sometimes erected on trees. For this purpose four trees situated together are selected, forming approximately the shape of a square, and a platform about fifteen or twenty feet from the ground is constructed between them. Small trees are advisable, as bears require a fairly large tree to climb easily, while as a further precaution the bark is peeled off below the platform, which will render the trees slippery, so that the bears are unable to climb up. The goods can be placed on the platform, or, as a protection against rain, a small cabin is occasionally constructed on the platform in which the supplies can be safely deposited. Access to the cache is obtained by means of a ladder, which, when not required, can be placed on the ground or against another tree in the vicinity.

Bears are not usually dangerous, and, unless wounded or suddenly encountered at close quarters, will nearly always run away on detect-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Cache protected from Bears.

ing the approach of a human being. The most dangerous of the bears is supposed to be the bald-face, which, according to tradition, will promptly attack any one discovered in the vicinity. These bears are comparatively rare in the Yukon, and the report of their ferocity is probably exaggerated, while even the famous grizzly, on detecting the presence of a human being, will generally retire gracefully. At the same time, although the occurrence is comparatively rare, people are occasionally mauled by bears, generally when wounded, and while I was residing at Fort Selkirk one of the Indians arrived at the place after having become entangled with a wounded bear, and was rather badly hurt in consequence. The other Indians, on hearing his story, immediately started with their rifles in pursuit, and after tracking the bear for some distance eventually succeeded in killing it. They then proceeded to cut up the body into tiny fragments, which they scattered far and wide, and when this feat had been successfully accomplished the wounded Indian was considered by his fellow Indians to have been completely compensated for his injuries.

CHAPTER IX

THE M'MILLAN RIVER

STEAMBOAT stampedes, as explained in a previous chapter, originate from a report being circulated about Dawson of a rich gold strike having been discovered somewhere on the Yukon or one of its tributaries. A special steamer undertakes to convey passengers to the locality, and although the report is probably a pure fabrication, the owners of the steamer derive a handsome profit from the deluded passengers. One of these stampedes occurred from Dawson to a place situated far up the Pelly River, and a steamer one afternoon arrived at Selkirk with a number of passengers on board, who were anxious to secure claims in the locality. Some trappers from the Pelly River were then residing at Selkirk who would probably have known of a recent gold discovery if such a thing existed, and as they were totally ignorant of the occurrence, the report was received in Selkirk with a considerable amount of scepticism. The stampede resulted in a complete failure for those engaged in it, as no mining ground was discovered of any value; however, the presence of a steamer on its way up the Pelly River proved extremely convenient to some of the trappers, as it saved them a long and tedious tramp when returning to their trapping grounds for the ensuing winter.

The journey involved by no means a cheap undertaking, as the charges, like all expenses in the Yukon, were excessive in comparison to prices on the outside. Many of the trappers who were unable to afford the passage money had already departed up the Pelly in their rowing-boats, while those who could scrape together enough to pay for their journey on the steamer had waited for its arrival in Selkirk. I had never yet been able to travel far up the river, and was therefore glad of an opportunity to see the upper regions of the Pelly or M'Millan rivers; so, after purchasing provisions for about ten months at the trading post, and paying about £35 for a ticket for myself and outfit and sleigh dogs, I accordingly embarked on the steamer and started up the Pelly River. The steamer was smaller than the regular steamers on the Yukon, and therefore more suitable for navigating the tributaries. It was flat-bottomed, and possessed one large paddle in the stern, like the paddle-steamers on the Nile.

Wood instead of coal was used for fuel, and when the supply on board ran short the steamer moored up to the bank, and we would then all turn out with axes and spend perhaps an hour or two in chopping down trees near the river bank. These would be cut up into suitable lengths and conveyed on board the steamer, and when a sufficient supply had been obtained the steamer proceeded on its journey. When embarking on these expeditions a mutual understanding was observed that the passengers worked with the crew when their services were required, and assisted in replenishing the wood supply. In places where the current was exceptionally strong, a long cable would be dragged along the bank and fastened round a tree in front. The other end would be secured to the capstan, which would then be put in motion, and the steamer would slowly drag its way up against the rapid till the bad spot had been surmounted.

On one occasion, when it reached a small rapid, the steamer attempted to make its way up without the assistance of the cable, but was soon forced back by the current, and the stern was, consequently, driven against some rocks, several of the paddle blades being broken and the ironwork twisted. Matters for a few moments looked rather serious, as the rocks threatened to knock a hole in the bottom of the boat. Fortunately, the bow swiftly swung round in the swift current, so that the steamer veered away from the rocks and was eventually moored to the bank some distance below. Some extra paddle blades were stored on board in case of emergencies, so the remainder of the day was employed in straightening the ironwork and renewing the broken paddles.

Eventually we arrived at the junction of the Pelly and M'Millan rivers. Most of the passengers had embarked at Dawson and were destined for the upper waters of the Pelly River, where they hoped to acquire some valuable mining ground. I myself and some trappers on board were too sceptical of their mining prospects to be induced to accompany them, so we here disembarked and waited for the steamer to return and take us up the M'Millan River. We therefore camped on the river bank, and employed the intermediate time in cutting down trees and chopping them up into suitable lengths, so that the steamer would be furnished with fuel on its arrival.

The steamer returned in about three days, and when the wood had been conveyed on board we started on our way up the M'Millan River. For the first 20 miles the river was broad and extremely shallow, besides being studded with numerous mud bars, so that it was often a difficult matter to find a channel deep enough to navigate. The flat-bottomed steamer drew less than 4 feet of water, and as it slowly ascended amongst the shoals, a man with a long stick stood in the bow and sounded the depth of the river while we cautiously advanced. Every now and then we would ground in the mud, and the steamer would then work away with the paddle reversed until we were clear, which sometimes took a considerable time. Other places in the river would then be attempted, so that an hour or two would occasionally elapse before a channel was found sufficiently deep to navigate.

After proceeding up the M'Millan for about 100 miles, we overtook a couple of trappers who had journeyed up from Selkirk with their boats and supplies. One of them owned a cabin on the river, which he had built a few years previously, and which I had arranged to share with him during the ensuing winter. He had invested most of the proceeds from his last winter's furs in general dissipation at Selkirk, and had, consequently, been unable to afford a passage on the steamer. However, now that the steamer was nearly empty, the captain was glad to pick up some stray passengers at reduced rates, so, after considerable bargaining, some terms were eventually agreed upon, and the two trappers with their boats and supplies were taken on board.

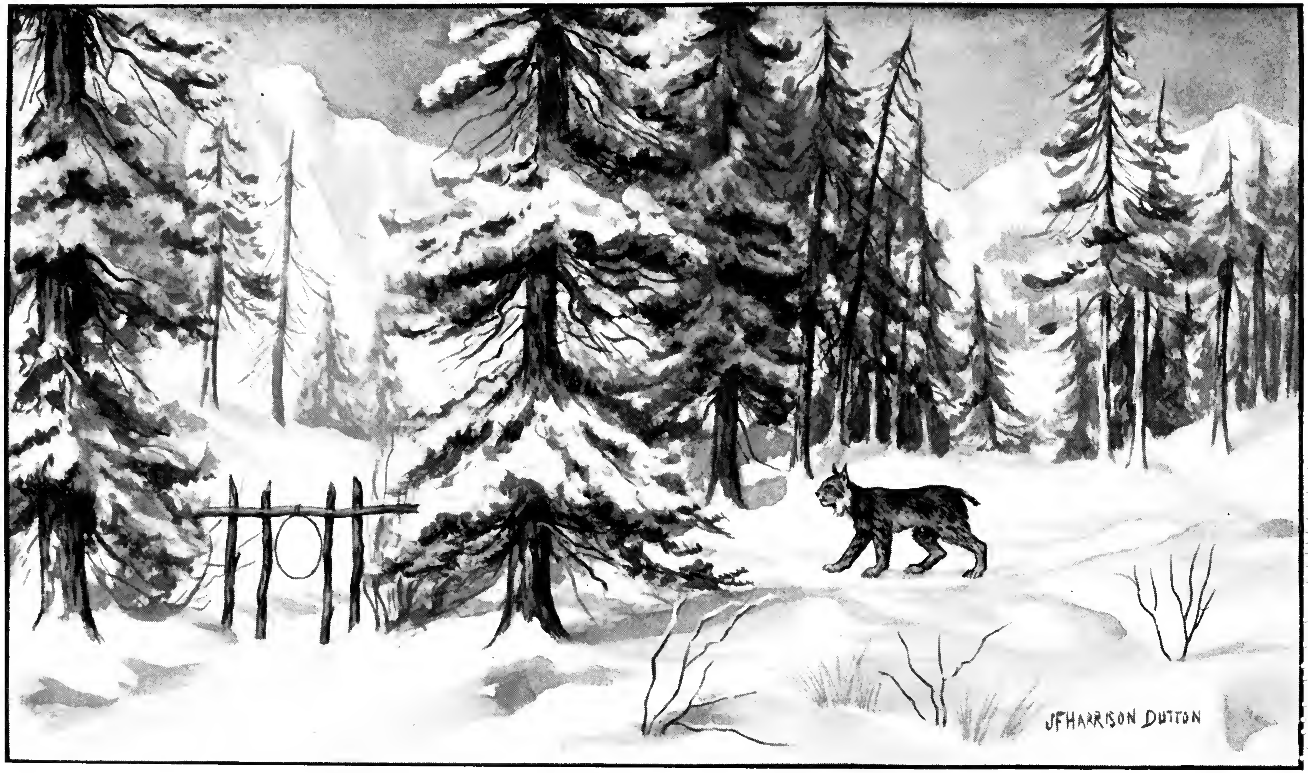
On one occasion, while proceeding up the stream, we came to a place where the river forked, and the captain unfortunately chose the wrong channel, which ended in a cul-de-sac. The channel gradually became more and more narrow, until the ends of the branches from the trees overhanging the banks began sweeping over the deck, so that we were obliged to take refuge in the saloon, where some of the windows were broken by the branches striking against them. It was impossible to turn round, and considerable difficulty was experienced before we were finally extricated. The paddle was accordingly reversed, and the steamer gradually backed its way towards the mouth, every now and again colliding with the banks or sticking in the mud and becoming entangled amongst the overhanging branches.

Eventually we managed to blunder our way back to the entrance and into the main channel, after having broken several windows and more paddle-blades, and the rest of the day was employed in repairing damages. On arriving at our destination my cabin partner and I disembarked with our supplies, while the steamer proceeded with some other trappers higher up the river. My partner's cabin was in a most dilapidated condition, so the next few days were employed in collecting moss and jamming it into the crevices between the logs, besides repairing the roof and making the cabin as air-tight as possible for the ensuing winter.

The scenery on the M'Millan River much resembles that of the lower regions of the Pelly, except that the valley is rather more narrow, while the mountains rise up to higher altitudes and are more rugged. The country, like most parts of the Yukon district, is thickly timbered, and the mountain ranges, with their lower slopes densely wooded and their bare snowy peaks towering up towards the sky, form an imposing spectacle. Wild berries grew in profusion round the cabin, consisting principally of black and red currants, strawberries, raspberries, and cranberries, all of which could be gathered in abundance. I had brought an extra supply of sugar in anticipation, so I occupied myself for a few days in wandering through the woods with a bucket and gathering wild berries, which I afterwards converted into jams and preserves for the ensuing winter.

When the cabin arrangements had been completed, my partner went off amongst the mountains to prepare his trap line. He had spent previous winters trapping in the locality, so his line had already been marked out by blazing trees along the route. Blazing trees, as is well known, consists in hacking off a piece of bark with an axe, and as the bark will not grow again an old blaze can be distinguished for many years. A blazed tree must be, of course, within sight of the next blazed tree adjoining, which will indicate the proper route, while trees must always be blazed on both sides, so that the blazes can be distinguished when travelling in either direction.

A trap line may extend for seventy-five to a hundred miles in length, and as this will take about a week to traverse small wayside cabins will be constructed along the route, where the trapper may find a warm place to pass the night. My own trap line was on a very diminutive scale, as my lame foot disabled me from cutting out a long line for sleighing purposes. The main cabin was sufficient for my own requirements, and three lines would branch off from it in different directions, so that the dogs could pull me along one of the lines and back to the cabin during the day, the total length of the three lines being about twenty miles. They were


J F HARRISON DUTTON

Snare for Lynx.

cut out principally after the snow had commenced, so that the dogs could drag me from the cabin to the place where I was working, and when a certain amount had been completed I got on to the sleigh and drove back to the cabin. This process would be continued from day to day till the lines had been completed.

My trap lines were necessarily confined to the vicinity of the cabin in the river valley, but my partner's trap line extended far back amongst the mountains, where the fur animals had been less molested, and were consequently more abundant. I, therefore, seldom saw him during the winter, although he would occasionally return to the main cabin for fresh supplies. Although we shared the provisions and the main cabin, we trapped independently, and each owned the furs which he secured. Two trappers will occasionally place their furs together and divide the proceeds, but with my diminutive trap line I was only able to secure comparatively few skins, so I would have been hardly suitable as a partner on such terms. However, a fair number of lynx, besides foxes and other fur animals, would occasionally wander down my lines and walk into the traps.

Lynx, besides being trapped, are also caught by means of snares made of strong cord, the loop being about fifteen inches in diameter, and placed across the trail at about the height of the animal's head. A spot on the trail is chosen where thick bushes prevail on each side, so that the snare can be made to harmonise more effectually with its surroundings. Brush or sticks are placed upright across the trail, leaving an opening where the snare has been set, while one end of the cord is attached to a pole which is placed across the trail above the snare. A lynx, on approaching the opening in the trail, places its head through the loop, which promptly tightens round its neck, so that the animal during its struggles to escape is quickly strangled.

Lynx are infested with fleas, which makes the process of skinning them rather disagreeable, as the fleas jump off the lynx on to one's body and are most unpleasant companions. It is preferable to let the lynx freeze outside for a few days before skinning them, as the fleas, having then no longer the warmth of the body, become dormant and can to a great extent be shaken off. The fleas possess considerable vitality, as they will remain in a frozen state for several days, and when the lynx has been thawed out in the cabin for skinning purposes will soon become lively again and as active and voracious as ever.

Although a species of the cat family lynx are not averse to water, and think nothing of swimming across the rivers. Their coat contains a long silky fur providing a beautiful coat or robe, but in latter years they have become very scarce, which makes the fur extremely expensive, a prime full-grown lynx skin being worth about £9. They are all of the same colour, a sort of light tabby; but the skins when made up for commercial purposes are generally dyed black, so that when the animals were more common "black lynx" robes were occasionally seen advertised for sale, while in reality a black lynx does not exist. Trappers occasionally eat the lynx they have killed, while some people consider them quite a delicacy, although, as they belong to the cat family, I could never manage to eat them myself.

Numerous baits are employed for enticing animals to the traps, while the best baits are, to a great extent, a matter of opinion, which varies considerably amongst different trappers. Fish kept for several days in a closed jar, until it ferments and becomes absolutely rotten, forms a most disagreeable bait to employ, but during the early part of the winter or towards the spring, when the cold is not so severe, rotten fish is most effective, and will entice animals from a considerable distance. During the middle of the winter, when the temperature is about 30° below zero and often a great deal colder, meat or fish baits become of very little use, as they do not retain their smell when frozen solid.

Strong smelling scents, called scent baits, made of essential oils, such as oil of anise, &c., are often employed, a few drops of the scent being poured on to a rag, which is attached to a small stick placed behind the trap. An animal on smelling a strange scent will proceed to investigate the cause, hoping probably that it may be something edible, and will therefore be guided towards the trap. These essential oils, although they do not freeze, are very expensive in the Yukon, and also quickly evaporate; so unless the traps are revisited at very short intervals, which with a long trap-line is not often possible, their scent will not always be retained for a sufficient period.

This particular winter happened to be exceptionally severe, the cold snaps recurring more frequently than usual, while the main cabin where I resided was extremely cold and draughty, which made matters considerably more uncomfortable. We had omitted to bring any window-panes, so the window was composed of a piece of linen soaked in candle grease, which only excluded the cold air to a very limited extent, while the rough home-made door fitted extremely badly, so that a strong draught from the outside atmosphere, which ranged between 30° and 70° below zero, was continually entering the room. On one occasion, after retiring to bed, I had foolishly omitted to cover up my face sufficiently with my robe before going to sleep, and the result was that the next morning a portion of my nose and face was affected with frost-bite. Fortunately the frost-bite was not very severe, but the skin peeled off; my face was too sore and tender to be exposed much to the cold atmosphere, and for about ten days I was confined to the precincts of the cabin.

Besides traps and snares, animals are also secured by means of "dead-falls," which consist of bait attached to what is termed the "trigger,"

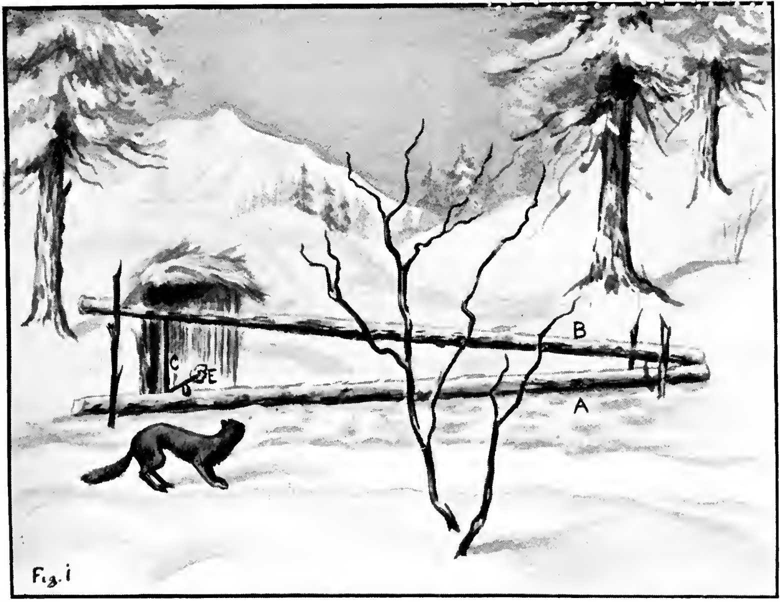


Fig. i

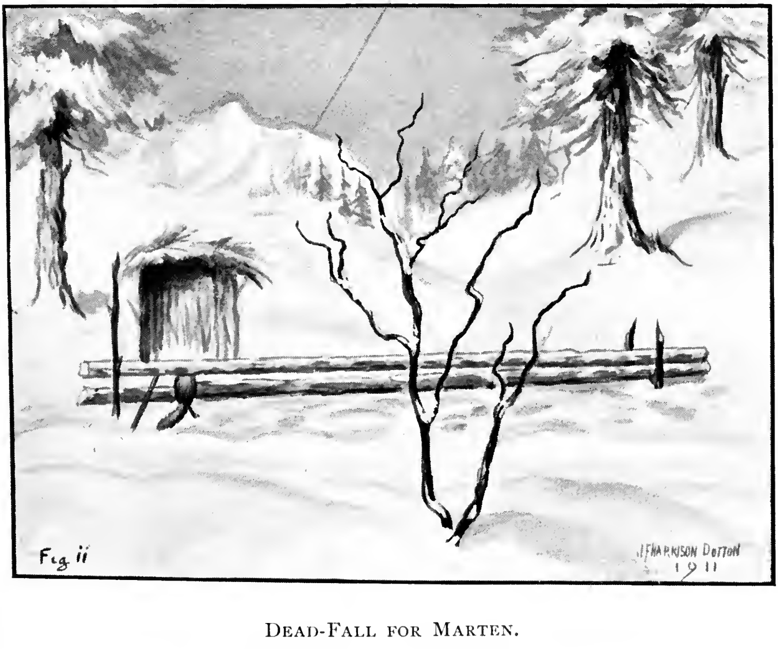

J. HARRISON DOTTON
1911

Fig. ii

DEAD-FALL FOR MARTEN.
i. The Dead-Fall set. ii. The Marten killed.

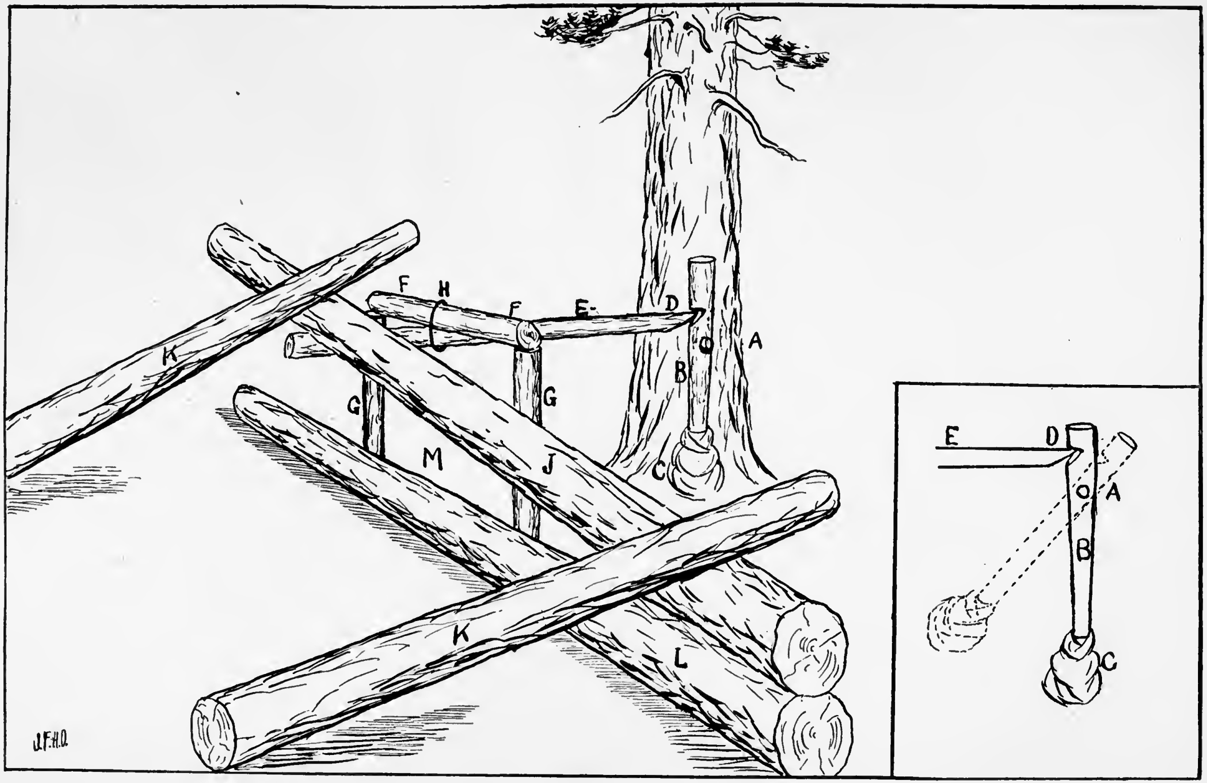
so that when the animal pulls at the bait the trigger is released, and a weight which is arranged above promptly falls upon the victim and kills it. The amount of weight required will, of course, vary according to the size of the animal for which the dead-fall is set, while the trigger is arranged on the same principle so often employed by boys when constructing a trap composed of four bricks for the purpose of securing small birds.

When arranging a dead-fall, two poles and two small sticks are required, one pole (A) (see illustration) being laid on the ground, while the other pole (B) is placed above it in a slanting position, so that the lower end of (B) rests on the pole lying on the ground, while the upper end is supported by an upright stick (C) placed between the two. The second stick (D) is arranged so that one end rests on the bottom pole (A), and is retained in position by the upright stick (C) resting upon it. The bait (E) is attached to the other end of the stick (D), which is set horizontally and pointing away from the trail. The stick (C) is arranged to just balance itself on the end of (D), so that when the bait is pulled by the animal, a slight movement on (D)'s part will cause the supporting stick (C) to upset and the weight to fall. A house (F) of upright sticks is also constructed round the bait, so that the animal, in order to secure the bait, is obliged to place itself underneath the dead-fall. An animal travelling along the trail is attracted by smelling the bait placed under the dead-fall, but when it pulls at the bait the stick (D) forces away the supporting stick (C), and, consequently, the pole (B) falls upon the animal, which becomes pinned between the two poles and is promptly crushed.

Foxes are generally far too cunning and suspicious to allow themselves to be inveigled into either a snare or a dead-fall, and although I once happened to secure a fox in a snare set for lynx, the occurrence is very exceptional.

Besides traps and dead-falls, another method of securing marten is sometimes employed, a hole about 4 inches deep being bored into a tree with an auger, and the bait deposited at the back of the hole. A couple of nails are then hammered in near the edge of the hole in a slanting position, so that their points intrude into the interior and slant towards the back of it. Marten are good climbers, and spend a considerable portion of their time up the trees, so they will experience no difficulty in reaching the mouth of the hole. On scenting the bait the marten shoves its head into the hole in order to secure it, but when it wishes to withdraw, the back of its head is brought in contact with the sharp points of the nails, so that the animal is effectually secured.

As bears hibernate during the cold weather, their skins are seldom obtained during the winter months. Their furs are in the best condition when they have first emerged from their holes in the spring, but their winter coats soon begin to rub off after they have commenced wandering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Mechanism of Dead-Fall for Bear.

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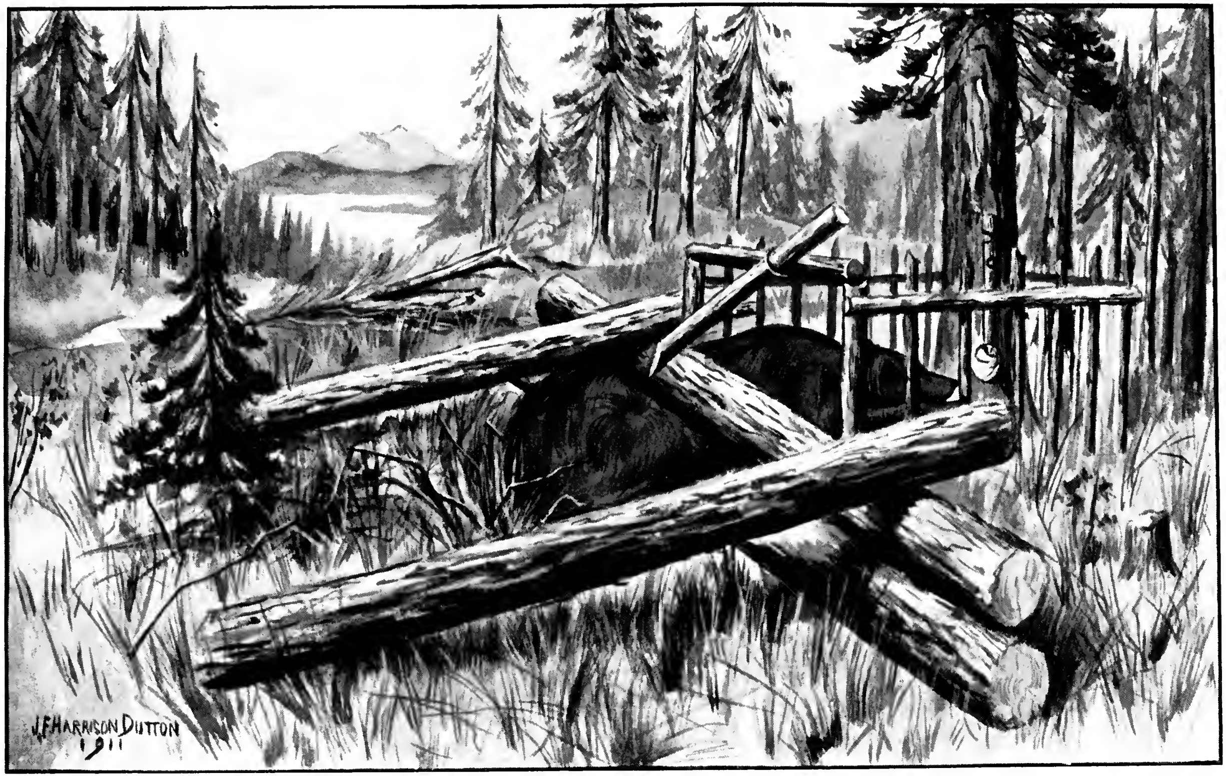
through the brush, and a bear killed after the middle of June seldom proves of much value. Although usually shot, they are occasionally trapped; but bear traps, being very large and heavy, are awkward things to convey about, and are, consequently, not often employed by trappers.

Bears are occasionally killed by means of dead-falls, but a dead-fall of sufficient weight to kill a bear requires considerable time and labour to construct, while the method applied is rather different than when constructing dead-falls for the smaller animals. When arranging a dead-fall for bears a hole is first bored into a tree with an auger, and a wooden peg (A) (see illustration) is hammered tightly in, while a short pole (B), with a hole also bored through it, is then fitted on to the peg. The peg thus forms a pivot on which the pole (B) will easily swing. To the bottom of the pole is attached the bait (C), which may consist of rotten fish, which bears are exceedingly fond of and can smell for a long distance. This can be enclosed in a sack, which is firmly tied to the pole, so that considerable force would be required to detach it.

Near the top of the pole a notch is cut at (D), which forms the trigger. The pole (E) is placed in position, so that one end is inserted into the notch at (D), while the other end passes under a short pole (F, F), to which it is attached by means of a rope tied round the two poles at (H). The weight (J) is placed in a slanting position over the end of the pole (E), so that when the trigger at (D) is released, the pole (E) will swing round, which will enable the weight to fall. The weight can be indefinitely increased by placing other logs against it, such as (K, K). The dead-fall is enclosed by a palisade, leaving an entrance at (M, M), so that the bear is obliged to place itself under the dead-fall in order to secure the bait. In the first illustration on the subject the palisade has been omitted, in order that the mechanism can be more easily observed.

The bear is attracted to the spot by scenting the bait, and enters at the entrance (M) in order to secure it, but when it pulls at the bait (C) the trigger at (D) is released. The pole (E) then promptly swings round, so that the whole weight of the dead-fall falls upon the bear, which becomes firmly pinned between the two logs (J and L), and crushed to death. In Fig. 2 of the first illustration on the subject, the dotted lines show how the trigger is released when the bait is pulled at. When the dead-fall is set a heavy pressure is exerted on the notch at (D), so in order to produce a strong leverage the distance from the pivot (A) to the bait at (C) is made considerably longer than from the pivot to the notch at (D). The bear, when pulling at the bait, is now assisted with a strong leverage, which enables it easily to release the trigger and cause the weight to fall.

Another trapper was situated in a cabin about ten miles higher up the M'Millan River, whom


J.F. HARRISON DUTTON
1911

Bear killed by Dead-Fall.

I used to meet occasionally. He was an old trapper, who had occupied his time in this fashion for the last twenty years, and had penetrated all sorts of out-of-the-way places both in the upper and lower portions of the Yukon, besides the Mackenzie River, Great Slave Lake, and other remote districts in this Northern region. He was accompanied by four children and a wife, who was half-Indian and half-white. She was a great, strong woman, who could accomplish any amount of work, and was, therefore, a most useful companion for a trapper. She had spent all her life in the woods, and was thoroughly acquainted with the methods of preparing a camp or laying out traps and dead-falls, while she could chop down trees or saw up logs just as well as a man. My cabin partner and myself had arranged to dine with them at Christmas; so on Christmas Day we harnessed up the dogs and journeyed off to his cabin. To our great surprise he brought out a bottle of rum, which he had religiously kept intact to celebrate the occasion, while his wife produced for dinner a plum pudding made with moose suet and wild currants, which, under the circumstances, formed quite a work of art.

Our host was a good moose hunter, and killed nineteen moose during that winter, and might have killed several more if he had required them. This may appear to be something like slaughter, but not a pound of meat was wasted, as, besides himself and his family, he owned five sleigh dogs, and it is extraordinary what amount of food dogs will consume when working hard in a severe climate. Moose existed in great abundance on the M'Millan, and when travelling round the trap-line their fresh tracks were constantly encountered. Occasionally I would happen to run across a moose, but I was not able to hunt them regularly, as travelling on snow-shoes through deep snow exerted a severe strain on my weak ankle.

As moose were so abundant on the M'Millan, it was natural that wolves should also exist in considerable quantities. Like all wild animals, they roamed about principally at night, so I did not very often see them, but their fresh tracks in the snow were constantly observed, while occasionally I would hear them howling round the cabin. Wolves are more cunning and suspicious even than foxes, and are not often trapped except by a fluke, but are usually caught by means of poisoned baits.

Strychnine is the poison generally employed; a deer, after being shot, being sometimes impregnated with the poison, and left on the snow to attract the animals. If deer are not available for the purpose, a small piece of poisoned meat or lard is sometimes deposited on the snow, the amount of strychnine required being only a few grains, which can be retained on the end of the blade of a pocket-knife and inserted into the bait. A few other small pieces of meat or lard ought to be strewed about near the poisoned bait, as the wolf, on finding several morsels, will proceed to sniff about the vicinity in hopes of discovering some more, so that the poison will then have time to act before the animal has wandered far away.

The spot where poisoned baits have been deposited should be carefully marked by blazing a stick in the locality, and before the trapper leaves the country great care must be taken to pick up and burn all the poisoned baits no longer required. This rule has not always been rigidly observed, so that sleigh dogs have occasionally been killed through eating poisoned baits which have been left strewed about by former trappers. An Act has, therefore, been passed in the Yukon forbidding the use of poisoned baits, but they are still sometimes employed in remote localities for the purpose of securing wolves or foxes.

Omitting the use of poisoned baits, which are only occasionally employed, a trap-line will consist of traps, snares, and dead-falls distributed at intervals along the trail, and if the line extends for seventy-five or a hundred miles in length, the traps, snares, and dead-falls will total in number about six or seven hundred, or perhaps more.

The mink, being fond of the water, inhabits the banks of streams and rivers. It much resembles the marten, except that the marten is slightly larger, with longer and rather more valuable fur. The mink in the Yukon district obtain a high price in the market, as their fur is almost invariably of a dark colour; and in fact, as a general rule, the farther north the fur-coated animals reside the darker and therefore the more valuable are their skins. Mink range backwards and forwards up and down the streams and rivers, and when a mink track is observed in the snow the animal will probably return over more or less the same ground in the course of about a week. A trap in the vicinity with a strong scent bait has, therefore, a favourable chance of eventually securing it. Mink are fond of peering under roots or fallen trees in the hope of finding a concealed mouse; so if a mink track is observed where the animal has entered one of these places, a trap should be set near the spot. The mink, on its return, is very liable to remember this particular place as affording a favourable hiding-place for a mouse, and is therefore likely again to revisit it.

These fur-coated animals are not absolutely impervious to the cold, and when a very cold snap prevails they prefer not to wander about much, but remain curled up in some sheltered spot until the weather has moderated. On occasions when the temperature reaches 50° or more below zero travelling round the trap-line, besides being then by no means a pleasant occupation, becomes of very little use, as the animals are not often moving about, and the chances of observing a fresh track on the trail or finding an animal secured in a trap become exceedingly remote. A trapper, however, might be staying at one of his wayside cabins and become short of provisions. In that case he would naturally be obliged to travel back to his main cabin in order to replenish his food supply, however low might be the temperature.

Some people may be interested in the different tracks impressed on the snow by the various fur-coated animals inhabiting the Yukon. The lynx, possessing big feet, forms a track which is large in proportion to its size, the toe part being almost square. The wolverine possesses long hair at the back of the fetlock, so the snow at the back part of its track is brushed away. The toe part is also not quite so square as the lynx, and, unlike the lynx or the wolf, the wolverine places one foot on the ground exactly in front of the other. The wolf and the fox form the same shaped track as a dog, except that the wolf's is of course larger, while it is also more pointed than either lynx or wolverine tracks. The smaller animals, such as the marten, mink, and ermine, always advance at a jump, and at the end of each jump their hind feet are placed in the same spot formerly occupied by the front feet. The ermine and the marten form the same shaped track, except that the marten's track is larger—about the size of a two-shilling piece; while both the ermine and the marten always place one of their fore-feet slightly in advance of the other. The mink jumps like the marten and ermine, except that it places its feet together instead of one being placed in front of the other. The inside part of a mink's foot is also more straight, so that its track will not be round like that of a marten or ermine.

When travelling round the trap-line the trapper is eagerly on the *qui vive* for any fresh tracks that may appear on the trail, and as the species of the animal can always be recognised by its track quite a thrilling sensation is experienced when a fresh track is encountered, and it is eagerly followed in the hope of finding an animal secured in the next trap. Disappointments are, however, frequent. An animal will not proceed far along the trail unless it leads approximately in the required direction, and may, therefore, turn off again into the woods before reaching the vicinity of a trap or dead-fall. Or it may arrive at a trap placed alongside the trail and be attracted by the bait; but its feet may be placed too much on the edge of the trap, which will then sometimes spring without securing the animal. Or perhaps a heavy fall of snow has recently occurred, and the trap will then often not spring, although the animal's foot has been placed over it.

Of all these disappointments the most annoying is when the bait fails to attract the animal, owing either to evaporation or because it is too much frozen to retain its scent. After the traps have been arranged and concealed beneath the snow with so much care and the most alluring baits or scents employed to attract the animal, there is nothing more irritating than to follow a track along the trap-line and to discover that the animal has passed trap after trap with complete indifference and without taking the smallest notice of the baits placed so enticingly behind them.

Not many otter exist in the Yukon, though a few skins are brought in every year to the trading posts for sale. The value of the skin varies according to the size and colour, a fairly dark prime otter skin being worth about £3. The animal spends a large portion of its time in the water, living on fish; while its presence can often be detected by a slide made on the bank, as it amuses itself by climbing repeatedly to the top of a steep bank and sliding down head foremost into the water. During the winter spaces often remain open in the ice owing to the prevalence of warm springs, and these open spots, if close to the shore where the water is shallow, form a likely place for otters. Where the track of an otter is thus observed is a favourable place for setting a trap, as the otter will probably return before long, and is liable to remember this open spot and again revisit it.

Trappers, from travelling so constantly alone in the woods, do not often become lost, as they imperceptibly acquire a habit of observing their surroundings, while their bump of locality becomes naturally developed. During the winter months there is no danger of becoming lost, as a person can always return by following his back tracks, although, of course, this does not necessarily apply to the prairie parts of Canada, where blinding blizzards occasionally prevail, and tracks may become obliterated in a few moments. In the summer people occasionally become lost, and often make matters worse by roaming about without knowing their direction, the result being that they wander farther and farther away from their destination. When thoroughly lost in the woods a person generally becomes confused, so that he eventually loses all idea of his proper direction; and as there are 360° in a circle the chances are extremely remote that he will happen to strike the right course. If companions are residing in the vicinity who will notice his disappearance and institute a search, his best method, on discovering that he is completely lost, is to remain where he is. People in the woods generally carry matches and a light axe, so he can proceed to light a big camp fire, which will probably guide his companions to the locality.

A man lost without companions to notice his disappearance or to institute a search is naturally in a more precarious predicament. He may, however, come across a stream or remember one which he has lately passed, and by following its course, which would entail pushing his way through tangled brush, provided his strength is maintained with probably nothing to eat, will eventually arrive at the river. Amongst such a scanty population, he may still be situated a long distance from an inhabited abode, but as he will probably possess a light axe, a raft of logs can be constructed and bound together with willows, as is often done by Indians. A pole can be cut for guiding himself past the sand-bars, so that by floating on the raft down the river he will probably, either dead or alive, eventually arrive somewhere. A person of my acquaintance was on one occasion lost in the woods for four days, and succeeded in saving himself by the above method.

Personally, my bump of locality is not strongly developed, and I have managed to become lost in the woods on two occasions, both times in British Columbia, although in different districts. The first occasion was insignificant, as I was not far away, and two companions who were in the camp, on noticing my non-arrival, fired off their rifles and that indicated their whereabouts. On the second occasion I was considerably farther away, about ten miles from camp as it afterwards transpired, and remained lost in the woods from about five o'clock in the evening until about eleven o'clock the following morning. I was then on a shooting expedition after cariboo, accompanied by an Indian, and occasionally I used to carry some lunch in my pocket and wander off with a rifle, while the Indian remained in camp.

On one of these occasions, when returning to camp, I was unable to discover certain expected landmarks, so I tried two or three other directions in the hope of being able to see them, but without success. At last it dawned upon me that I had not the faintest idea of the direction of the camp, and as wandering aimlessly through the woods would have probably resulted in my getting farther away, my only resource was to remain in my present position. The autumn was then rather advanced, so a fire was necessary for purposes of warmth, as well as to attract attention. When leaving camp a light axe was fastened to my belt, so after starting a fire I cut down several dry spruce trees and piled them upon the flames, until eventually a huge bonfire was blazing. Some live spruce trees were also cut down and stripped of the green brush, which I threw from time to time on the flames. This produced a dense column of smoke which could be observed for a considerable distance.

Being lost in the woods naturally produces a sort of uncanny feeling, while the dark sombre spruces probably increase the depression, and although I knew that the Indian was pretty certain to find me, especially as I owed him some wages, there was at the same time a certain element of doubt which it was difficult not to brood over. However, I had brought a pipe and plenty of tobacco, and smoking in that predicament not only helps to soothe the nerves, but to a certain extent alleviates the pangs of hunger. When it became dark, and it was evident that the Indian would not arrive that night, I allowed the fire to die down, only keeping up sufficient for purposes of warmth, and passed the night in occasionally drowsing, but principally in smoking vigorously. The next morning at dawn I cut down numerous dry trees, which soon formed a huge roaring blazing mass, while I also tore up from the ground the half-rotten remains of decayed trees, partly imbedded in the deep moss, and these I piled upon the flames, producing a dense column of smoke. The Indian had not suspected my becoming lost until it was nearly dark, but the next morning he started off in the direction that I had taken when leaving camp, and after proceeding for some distance arrived at the summit of some rising ground, where he caught sight of the column of smoke curling up in the sky. This guided him to the spot, where to my great relief he eventually arrived.

The beaver have been practically exterminated on the lower waters of the Pelly River, but on the M'Millan River they still exist in considerable numbers. Their coats are covered with long coarse hair which conceals the fur underneath, but when tanned and made up into articles of clothing this long hair is plucked out, so that the beaver skins, when sold in their raw state, appear very different to the fine fur displayed in made-up articles. Beaver are extremely shy animals, possessing keen powers of scent and hearing, and as they work principally at night, they are not often observed except when caught in traps. They are remarkable for their industry, so that the expression "to work like a beaver" forms a common saying in Canada, and they certainly manage to accomplish an extraordinary amount of labour, cutting down trees for building their dams and houses, and storing up sticks for their winter supply of food. They possess two very long, strong, and sharp front teeth in the upper and lower jaws, which the beaver employ for scraping off the bark for feeding purposes, and also for cutting down the trees.

Their dams, often constructed across large streams, are composed of sticks cemented together with mud, and are marvels of industry and engineering skill; and if a portion of the dam gives way at a weak point, the beaver on noticing the water falling will promptly hasten to the spot and commence repairing the broken part. A trapper, on discovering a beaver dam, will occasionally break it through at a certain spot and set traps in the vicinity, knowing that the beaver will soon approach the place to investigate the matter, and will probably be caught in a trap.

Their object in constructing dams is to furnish themselves with a place where their winter supply of food can be stored. The beaver feed on the tender green bark which they gnaw off young poplars and willows, but during the winter months the bark becomes frozen hard, and is therefore unsuitable for their food. However, the animals are fully aware that materials kept under water will be prevented from becoming frozen, so they construct a place where their winter's food can remain under water in a soft and palatable condition. The shallow creeks or streams in a severe climate like the Yukon and Northern Canada become frozen solid from top to bottom during the winter months, and would consequently be rendered useless to the beaver. They accordingly construct a dam across the stream, by means of which the level of the water is raised, so that it becomes too deep to freeze solid to the bottom, and some clear water will, therefore, always remain under the ice, where provisions can be stored.

The beaver also show remarkable ingenuity when depositing their winter supply in the water, so that the sticks will remain together at the bottom instead of floating about under the surface of the ice. They commence by imbedding a number of sticks firmly in the mud in a slanting position. More sticks are then conveyed to the spot, which are entangled and intertwined amongst the first lot, so that eventually their whole winter supply of food is thus firmly riveted together at the bottom of the water.

Their houses, built on the edge of the bank, are strongly constructed of sticks cemented together with mud, so that the cold atmosphere outside is effectually excluded. There is no entrance from the outside, as the only opening consists of a channel at the bottom of the house leading to the water, into which they can dive when they require a swim, or to obtain a stick from their food supply. They occasionally cut down trees of remarkable size, and on the M'Millan River, and in certain parts of British Columbia, I have noticed the stumps of trees twelve or fourteen inches in diameter which have been felled by beaver. It is easy to ascertain whether a tree has been felled by a beaver or by an axe, as the animal will continue to gnaw all round until the tree has fallen, so that the stump will rather resemble the sharp point of a pencil, while a tree felled by an axe is only cut at the side on which the tree is desired to fall. Two or three beavers will assist each other when cutting down a tree of considerable dimensions, and it is a well-known fact that by gnawing more on one side of the tree than the other, the beaver will cause it to fall in whatever direction they require.

The female beaver gives birth to two young ones, one of which is always a male and the other a female, while a beaver house may contain six occupants, consisting of the two parents, the two eldest children, and two babies. Inside their bodies they possess two substances called "castors," which are eagerly purchased by the Chinese, as they are included amongst the drugs in the Chinese pharmacy. These castors contain a strong scent, and they are therefore extensively employed by trappers for use as "scent baits" in order to attract the fur animals towards the traps. Beaver meat is occasionally eaten, although not usually considered a great delicacy, but beaver tail soup is highly appreciated, and possesses a very rich and delicate flavour.

A beaver colony may consist of several houses, whose occupants will all make use of the same dam. Each family will occupy its own house, but the different families will freely intermingle, and assist each other when building or repairing the dam.

Beaver are occasionally trapped by cutting their dams, when, as before explained, the beaver are attracted to the spot for the purpose of repairing the break, and traps are set in the vicinity. This method, however, is not usually resorted to by experienced beaver trappers, as it has the effect of frightening away the animals. Beaver are often trapped in the autumn, but the best time is in the spring, about the end of May, as their fur is then in better condition, and consequently more valuable. A trapper rowing down the river, or walking along the bank of a stream, will readily distinguish fresh beaver cuttings amongst the willows and poplars, and also the marks formed on the bank at spots habitually used by the animal for sliding down into the river. Slides are chosen out which from their worn appearance are frequently made use of, while the trap is set at the bottom of the slide, just under the water, which effectually conceals it from the beaver.

When caught in a trap the beaver will often bite off its foot, and consequently escape, unless precautions are taken, so a bag filled with stones is attached to the trap, while a rope with plenty of slack is tied by one end to the trap chain, the other end of the rope being secured to a stake driven into the bank. A beaver when caught in a trap will immediately make for the deep water, and the slack in the rope will enable it to attain a certain distance. The animal will have no difficulty in dragging the trap and the bag of stones down the steep decline into the deep water, but when wishing to return for breath will be unable to drag them back again.

It is, therefore, eventually drowned, and when the trapper visits the locality he draws in the rope attached to the trap, which enables him to secure the animal. Beaver castor, which is rubbed on a stick placed by the slide, is the scent invariably employed for attracting the animal. The beaver possesses a very keen scent, and on scenting the beaver castor will immediately detect that the smell does not belong to a member of the community, and, expecting the arrival of a strange beaver, will promptly swim to the slide in order to investigate the new acquaintance, and on its arrival steps into the trap.

In remote localities, such as the upper regions of the Pelly River and other affluents of the Yukon, the beaver still exist in considerable numbers, but their colonies are rapidly disappearing before the ravages of the trapper. Unlike the fox or the lynx, which are wandering animals, the beaver, residing in the vicinity of their dams and houses, are entirely local animals, and this makes it all the easier to obtain them. Like the otter they form slides on the bank which, together with their dams, houses, and fresh cuttings amongst the poplars and willows, indicate their presence, and once these signs have been detected by the trapper the colony is soon trapped out and destroyed. During my peregrinations in the Yukon district and the more remote portions of British Columbia, I have often encountered old beaver cuttings and the remains of their dams, showing the presence in former days of a thriving population; but all have now been completely obliterated. It is rather pathetic to think that such an industrious and intelligent animal as the beaver should fall a victim to fashion, and that because it has the misfortune to possess a warm and handsome fur it must therefore be exterminated for the demands of society.

The trapper and the prospector both lead the same sort of wild solitary existence, except that as trapping is conducted during the winter, the trapper is usually more completely isolated by a barrier of ice and snow from communication. Prospecting for gold is usually conducted during the summer time, so that the prospector is not exposed, like the trapper, to the intense cold and the danger of being frozen, and as he is probably in the vicinity of the Yukon or one of its tributaries, by embarking in a boat or floating down on a raft he can always return to some trading post.

Trapping is not a sociable occupation, because a trapper prefers the animals to walk into his own traps instead of into other peoples', and the more territory he can cover for himself the more furs he is likely to obtain. Two trappers may sometimes arrange to form a partnership by placing together their furs and dividing the proceeds; but although they may arrange to meet occasionally during the winter, they will probably occupy separate cabins a considerable distance apart so as to enable them to cover more ground. My cabin partner had been trapping by himself the previous winter, and from the time of his departure from the trading post up to the time of his return to Selkirk, about ten months later, he had not seen a vestige of a human being.

Living entirely alone in the woods for months together is not very safe, especially during the severe winters in the Yukon. The story of Jim Grew's death has been narrated in a previous chapter, and other men have occasionally been found lying dead in their cabins, simply because there was nobody present to attend to them. Personally I was seldom entirely isolated for more than three weeks or a month at a time, and except during one winter on the M'Millan River was never very far from Selkirk, so that I would occasionally harness up the dogs and drive down there for a visit. Owing to my lame foot I was unable to lay out a long trap-line or to penetrate into very remote localities, so that my trapping was more of a pastime than a business enterprise, while the value of my furs obtained during the winter did not really compensate for the cost of my supplies.

When the temperature is 50° or 60° below zero, the roughly built trappers' cabins, composed of one room with four outside walls chinked with moss, quickly become cold unless the stove is continually replenished with wood, so that considerable labour is involved in cutting down trees and chopping them up in order to obtain sufficient fuel. A man temporarily disabled by illness or accident may, therefore, freeze to death within a short period.

About two winters before Jim Grew's death two men were trapping in partnership up the Pelly River, and in the following spring one of them returned to Selkirk with rather an extraordinary story, that his partner had left the country by another route. As any other route would have involved a most arduous undertaking, the story occasioned a considerable amount of surprise, and eventually other circumstances transpired, which caused very little doubt that the man had really murdered his partner up the Pelly River and that his story was a pure fabrication. The upper regions of the Pelly are so remote from regular communication, that considerable time had elapsed before suspicions became thoroughly aroused, and the man had then departed from Selkirk down the Yukon. The police proceeded to search for him, but the next summer had commenced before they discovered his destination, and it was then too late to arrest him, because during the preceding winter he had been trapping on the Porcupine River, a tributary of the Yukon, and, having evidently met with some mishap, his dead body was discovered lying frozen on the trail.

The trapper, as a rule, can only manage to earn a meagre existence, and in a country like the Yukon, where supplies and provisions are so expensive, must work hard at his trap-line in order to obtain sufficient furs for his support. Although he remains for ten months away in the woods, the trapping season only lasts for about five months, and during that period he must secure sufficient skins to maintain himself for the whole year. People, when purchasing furs from the shops in London or elsewhere, may admire their beauty and, perhaps, grumble about the price, but few probably realise what it has cost the trapper to procure them. The ordinary labourers in England are probably married or have people to look after them, and on returning home in the winter evenings after their day's work they will find a warm fire and supper awaiting them, while in case of illness they can procure doctors to attend them. The trapper possesses none of these advantages, and if seized with illness must take his chance of being able to provide entirely for himself. During his solitary life through the long winter, he is entirely cut off from letters or communication with the outside world, and must often expose himself for many hours in temperatures of 50° and 60° or more below zero, while he is in constant danger, through accident or illness, of being frozen to death on the trail, or of dying alone in his cabin.

Soon after the commencement of April the sun rose high above the horizon, and the surface of the snow began to melt during the daytime, although the nights were still so cold that in the mornings the half-melted snow would be frozen into a hard, solid cake. The fur animals now commenced to shed their winter coats, so that their skins were of no further value to the trapper.

I, therefore, made my final journey round my trap-lines, collecting all the traps and depositing them on the sleigh, while I also sprung the different snares and dead-falls, so as to render them innocuous to future animals which might happen to wander by.

On one occasion when travelling round the trap-line, I noticed that a trap was missing from the place where it was set, while the disturbed state of the ground showed that a lynx had been secured, but had managed to disappear. I searched about amongst the bushes adjoining without being able to find the animal, and began to fear that the pole had become detached from the trap-chain, and that the lynx had consequently escaped with the trap on its foot. Eventually I happened to look above me, and discovered the lynx, to my surprise, ensconced amongst the branches of a spruce tree. It had managed to climb up a tall spruce tree with the trap on its foot, besides dragging up with it the pole attached to the trap-chain, and was now sitting on a branch far above the ground with the pole dangling below it. An axe was tied on to the sleigh, so I proceeded to cut down the tree, as being the only means of securing the animal. The lynx did not appear to be injured by the tree falling, and on reaching the ground it attempted to escape, but the pole attached to the trap-chain soon became entangled amongst the brush, and effectually secured the animal. I always carried with me a light pole, about six feet long, which assisted me when walking, and also came in handy for killing animals which I found in the traps, and with this the lynx was quickly demolished and deposited on the sleigh.

The result of my winter's trapping amounted to about what I expected, which was nothing very grand. Lynx formed the principal item amongst the furs, as during that winter there were quite a large number wandering through the woods. Marten were very scarce in the river valley, and I only obtained an insignificant quantity. A few mink, ermine, and wolverine had also been obliging enough to walk into my traps or be killed by the dead-falls, whilst I had also secured a solitary otter and a couple of red foxes, besides some wolves which I managed to poison. My cabin partner had obtained a much larger supply of furs, as he was trapping in a better locality, while his trap-line extended over a much wider area of ground. Besides a fair number of marten and other furs, he had also been lucky enough to secure a fine silver fox, which is a comparatively rare occurrence, and very valuable.

About the middle of May the ice in the river had become rotten and honeycombed, until it finally broke up from the force of the current. The huge blocks of ice swept swiftly by, grinding against the shore and turning over and over as they crashed and jammed against each other. At first their motion was fairly rapid, but soon an ice jam occurred across the river below, and the current gradually became almost stationary, while the river commenced rapidly to rise. In a very few hours the river had risen about 8 or 9 feet, and was rapidly approaching the top of the bank, so that we were half afraid that it might overflow and inundate the cabin. However, a spur jutting out from the mountain side approached to within about 30 yards of the cabin, and then it would have been easy to obtain refuge in case of emergency. The furs constituted our principal assets, so we tied them together and also made up into bundles our blankets and other articles, so that they could be quickly transported to a place of safety on the mountain side. The river rose steadily to within about 3 feet of the top of the bank, and we were then glad to notice that the level of the water remained stationary, showing that the ice jam was broken through.

When a jam of ice across the river commences to weaken, it soon gives way under the pressure of the water and the ice blocks piled against it. The jam will then sometimes burst with a sudden crash, and the pent-up waters, now suddenly released, rush seething through the open channel, while the huge blocks of ice are banged and tossed against each other like marbles. Shortly after the jam broke the river commenced to fall rapidly, leaving the banks lined with huge blocks of ice, which remained jammed and piled together in a serried mass. Our next business was to launch the boat, so we set to work with axes and hewed a path through the ice blocks, until we had gained access to the river. For a couple of days the ice from the upper waters of the river continued floating past, and when the river eventually became clear we launched the boat.

The next afternoon our host of the previous Christmas arrived in his boat with his wife and family. They remained at our cabin for the night, and the next morning we collected our furs, traps, and the remains of our supplies, and after depositing them in our boat we all proceeded together down the river. Except on the mountains and in sheltered places the snow had by this time entirely melted, so that with the hot sun high up in the sky the country now presented quite a summery aspect, forming a remarkable and striking contrast to the huge ice blocks lining the river banks on either side.

After proceeding down the M'Millan for a short distance we arrived at a place called Fish Slough, a favourite resort for fish. The steep side hills here reach almost to the river bank, while the slough is connected with the river by a narrow channel cutting its way in between the hills, which form a gorge on either side. This narrow channel extends inland for about 50 yards, and then opens out into a basin, forming a round lake of about a quarter of a mile in diameter. The entrance was now clear of ice, but the lake inside was still frozen over, except for an open channel that extended round the shore, leaving in the centre a huge flat cake of ice.

We camped here for about three days, and set a net across the entrance, and caught quantities of fish, principally pike and white fish. Only a small proportion was required for our own consumption, so the remainder we cut up and hung over poles in the air to dry. In a country like the Yukon, where supplies are so expensive, food for the dogs is always an important element to consider, and sometimes a matter of considerable anxiety, so that a supply of dried fish is always useful.

After leaving Fish Slough we continued our journey down the river, and on arriving near the mouth discerned a moose feeding some distance away on the mountain side. We accordingly rowed to the bank and moored the boat, while the two men departed with their rifles to stalk the moose. Eventually, some rifle shots being heard in the distance, we got the dog packs out of the boats, and after adjusting them on the dogs' backs, the wife started off with them in the direction of the hunters.

Dog packs must be made of strong canvas, otherwise they will soon become torn when travelling through the thick brush. The pack is fastened over the dog's back like a pannier, and is provided with a bag on each side in which articles can be deposited. When travelling through the woods during the summer time the sleigh dogs can then be converted into pack dogs, a fair-sized dog being able to carry about 40 lbs., or more in case of emergency. Later on the party returned laden with moose meat, and as the evening was now rather advanced we camped for the night, and the next morning proceeded down the M'Millan River until we eventually arrived at the Pelly.

Moose are very scarce in the lower regions of the Pelly River, as they have been principally hunted away. We therefore came across no more moose during the journey, but while rowing down the Pelly we saw a bear swimming across the river some distance ahead. We accordingly commenced rowing as hard as possible, but when the bear landed on the opposite bank it was still a considerable distance away, and an accurate aim is very difficult when firing from a moving boat. However, we blazed away with our magazine rifles and succeeded in hitting the bear, although it managed to scramble up the bank, and quickly disappeared amongst the bushes. On arriving at the spot the boats were quickly tied up to the bank, and the dogs placed on the bear's tracks. The two men followed quickly after the dogs with their rifles, and as I wished to see the results, I scrambled and hobbled along behind. Soon afterwards the dogs were heard barking vigorously. The bear had not proceeded very far, and when pursued by the dogs had managed, in spite of its wounds, to climb up a tall spruce tree, while the dogs remained barking below. A rifle shot soon put an end to the wretched beast, which fell to the ground with a loud thump. It possessed a fine black coat, which was soon stripped off and conveyed to the river, while the dog packs were taken out of the boats and brought to the spot where the bear was lying.

We had already a fair supply of moose meat in the boats, but a considerable number of Indians reside in Selkirk, besides a small white population, so that a supply of meat is always acceptable. We accordingly loaded up the dogs with bear meat, and after returning to the river continued our journey down the Pelly. Eventually we reached the mouth, and after rowing across the Yukon at last arrived at Selkirk, on the opposite side of the river.

The inhabitants of a small isolated place like Selkirk have not much variety in the way of diversion, so that the return of the trappers after their long absence produces quite a commotion in the place, and when we emerged from the mouth of the Pelly into the Yukon, the bank was quickly lined with Indians and the white people residing in the place anxious to welcome our arrival. I had built myself a small cabin in Selkirk a couple of years previously, so when the boat was moored to the bank I conveyed my things to the cabin, and then adjourned to the trading post to hear the news. For the last ten months we had been completely cut off from communications or news of the outside world, and were all very interested to learn what events had been happening in the meantime.

The next day we proceeded to dispose of the furs which we had obtained during the preceding winter. In addition to the inhabitants of the trading post, some fur buyers from Vancouver and other towns arrive during the spring, so as to be ready for the trappers on their return from the woods. The furs are all sold by auction, which is conducted by means of sealed bids. The trappers bring their furs to the trading post, and each in turn spreads his furs out on the floor. The furs are then divided into groups to separate the different species, while the different groups are graded and subdivided according to the size and quality of the furs. Each buyer is provided with a pencil and a piece of paper, and when the furs have been carefully counted and examined, he writes down the amount he is prepared to give, and the paper is then carefully folded up. When this is completed the pieces of paper are handed to another person, or perhaps to the trapper, who then proceeds to read out the figures, and the buyer who has written down the largest amount obtains the furs. Another trapper then spreads out his furs on the floor, and the auction proceeds in the same manner. When the furs have been finally disposed of the whole party adjourns to the drinking bar, where the sale is consummated by means of numerous libations.

Among the arrivals in Selkirk during the summer was a young trapper from the Pelly River, accompanied by an Indian girl whom he had recently purchased from her parents, on their way to Dawson to be married. The girl belonged to a band of Indians residing amongst the upper regions of the Pelly River, who scarcely ever appear in Selkirk. This was her first experience of a white community, and she could not talk a word of English, and was dressed entirely in blankets, with moccasins on her feet and an Indian handkerchief round her head. The couple remained in Selkirk for a few days, and then departed down the Yukon for Dawson.

About three weeks later they returned to Selkirk, on their way back to her tribe up the Pelly River; but during their honeymoon in Dawson they had evidently seized the opportunity of doing some "shopping," so that her appearance was now considerably altered. Her blankets, moccasins, and handkerchief had all been discarded, and she now appeared in a cheap but very gaudy bodice and skirt, with an enormous hat decked out with brilliant feathers, while her bodice, fingers, and wrists were adorned with a profusion of cheap but gaudy jewellery. Her feet were ensconced in a pair of dainty boots, which she must have found most uncomfortable after wearing moccasins; and, in fact, everything was in the latest Parisian style. Her altered appearance occasioned a considerable amount of surprise and merriment amongst the inhabitants in Selkirk. After remaining in the place for a few days, she and her husband departed from Selkirk for her tribe up the Pelly River, where her fellow Indians, on her arrival, must have viewed the transformation scene with mingled feelings of surprise and admiration.

CHAPTER X

YUKON INDIANS

THE Indians residing in the Yukon, besides those inhabiting the Pacific coast, are very different in appearance from the Red Indians of the prairie, and, as they bear a strong resemblance to the Japanese, the ancestors of the present Indians probably migrated from Japan by way of the Aleutian Islands. Many tribes inhabit the Yukon valley, so that several different dialects are spoken, and although people acquainted with their language have characterised it as being fairly rich, the Indians possess no literature or written vocabulary. The Indians inhabiting the Yukon and other parts of Canada, except the tribes in very remote localities, have experienced so much intercourse with white people that nearly all can talk a simple sort of English, much resembling the Chinese "pidgin" English, while some are able to speak quite fluently. Occasionally one meets an Indian who has been educated at a missionary school, and has, therefore, learnt to read and write a very simple English, resembling that of an ordinary child of eight. However, these specimens are rare, and when they wish to correspond amongst each other, Indians nearly always obtain the service of a white man to read and write their letters for them.

A considerable mortality exists amongst the Indians, especially among the children, due principally to lung troubles, such as pneumonia, and as they seldom, if ever, produce large families, they are gradually disappearing. The North American Indians were probably never very numerous compared to the inhabitants of other countries, owing to continually being decimated in tribal wars, although in former days they were, no doubt, far more numerous than at the present time. The supremacy of the white man has caused their internecine wars to cease, but the Indians have gradually adopted a portion of the white man's habits, and the result has proved fatal to their constitutions. Instead of pursuing their former hardy existence, dressed in blankets and deer skins and living continually in the open air with brush shelters and camp fires, they now adopt the white man's garments and spend their time in very dirty unventilated cabins, heated by a hot and stuffy stove. Also they possess no idea of taking ordinary precautions, and an Indian drenched to the skin would scarcely ever take the trouble to change his clothes, even if he had another suit to change, but would stand before the stove or a camp fire and let the clothes dry on him.

The Selkirk Indians number about sixty, including men, women, and children, while a missionary is stationed at the place with the object of providing for their religious and moral welfare. The missionary, no doubt, performs his task to the best of his ability, but the raw material is so unsatisfactory that the business of providing for their future welfare must be most disheartening. Although missionaries have resided in the country for a long period, and the Indians have been converted into nominal Christians for a number of years, they still rigidly adhere to their former heathen superstitions. When an Indian dies his blanket and rifle will still be placed within his coffin to accompany him to the Happy Hunting Grounds, while his grave is still adorned with cooking pots and other articles, which may be considered useful to him in another world. The Indians still retain their "medicine" man to drive away the evil spirit, and, when seized with illness, an Indian would much rather prefer the "medicine" man to shout and dance before him to the services of the most experienced physician. A few years ago an epidemic of diphtheria broke out in Selkirk, which resulted in the place being quarantined for a certain period. A doctor arrived from Dawson to examine some cases, but many of the Indians disappeared in the woods sooner than allow him to treat them.

The mission at Selkirk belongs to the Protestant denomination, and although a Roman Catholic chapel was formerly erected, no priest is now attached to the place, so that the religious instruction of the Indians is left entirely to the

Protestants. Throughout the Yukon and other parts of Canada between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches there exists a mutual understanding regarding the Indians, and consequently the two denominations refrain from hampering or interfering with each other.

Many years ago, when hunting in British Columbia, I camped one evening close to a band of about eight Indians, composed of men, women, and children, who belonged to a Roman Catholic mission in the district. That night they were sitting round their camp fire, about thirty yards away, when to my surprise they suddenly commenced to chant their evening vespers. The effect was somewhat weird, those semi-savages chanting vespers round their camp fire amongst the spruce trees in the forest. However, judging from the Indian character, I am very doubtful whether they really appreciated or understood the meaning of their action, and as Indians, like most savage tribes, are naturally fond of singing and making a noise, it is more probable that they were nonchalantly chanting their vespers on much the same principle as a Thibetan Buddhist revolves a prayer-wheel.

The Indians, being steeped in ignorance, are naturally extremely superstitious, and if an Indian is lying in a cabin desperately ill, his fellow Indians will always remove him from the cabin and deposit him in a tent. One can imagine that during the winter in a severe climate like the Yukon, the fact of removing a sick person from a hot stuffy cabin into a cold draughty tent would be quite sufficient to destroy any chance of his recovery. This procedure is not due to any affectionate regard towards the Indian ; but they imagine that if he happened to die in the cabin, it will afterwards be inhabited by his ghost, so that no other Indian would dare to occupy it. The result is that his son or legatee, who will afterwards inherit the cabin, is most anxious to have him removed before his death occurs.

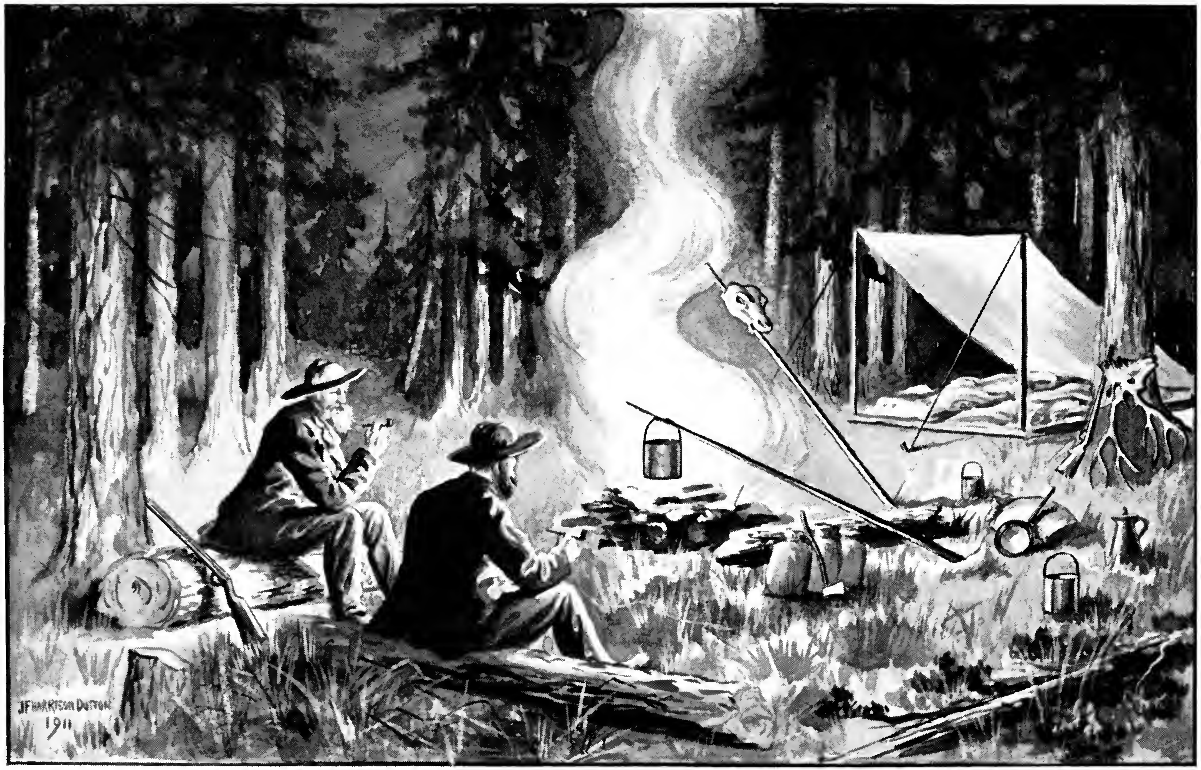
Some years ago, when travelling in British Columbia accompanied by two Indians, I wished to hunt on a mountain some distance ahead, but the Indians refused to approach the spot, explaining that it was inhabited by bears who were all man-eaters. It appears that some years previously, a Chinaman had been killed by a bear and partly eaten, so that ever since that event the mountain had been religiously tabooed, as it was supposed that all other bears that might happen to be wandering there must necessarily be imbued with the same proclivities.

Regarding their general character, there is a well-known saying in Canada and the United States, that "the only good Indian is a dead one," and those who have been brought much in contact with them can appreciate the truth of this remark. The influence of the white man, on the whole, has certainly not been of moral advantage to the Indians, partly because the class of white people in the Yukon are not often inspired with high principles, and also because the Indian possesses an extraordinary capacity for rapidly absorbing all the vices of the white man without being able to acquire any of his virtues. They are devoted to alcoholic drink, and would starve both themselves and their families in order to provide money to obtain it. An excellent law therefore prevails in Canada and the United States, making it a criminal offence for a white man to provide an Indian with alcohol, while an Indian discovered intoxicated or with whisky in his possession is promptly sent to prison.

The Indians, like the Chinese, are inveterate gamblers, and as playing-cards can be purchased at the trading post, they occupy a considerable portion of their time in gambling in their cabins or hunting camps, and if they possess no money for the occasion, will produce some tea or sugar, &c., as an equivalent. When meat or fish prevails in abundance, during the salmon season or when moose have lately been killed, they will gorge themselves in the most extraordinary fashion, rising several times during the night in order to satisfy their appetite. At the same time, they have no idea of being provident or laying by for a rainy day, and consequently they are often obliged to go hungry. Some of them prove fairly good workers, but as a rule they are naturally lazy, and prefer to remain gambling in their cabins unless forced to work by lack of provisions.

When I was residing in Selkirk the Indians, principally the women folk, would often walk up to my cabin and pay me a visit. At first I used to give them some tea and bread and butter, but they were so constantly paying me visits in consequence that it became rather a nuisance. I therefore discontinued giving them anything, but they would still sometimes walk into the cabin, generally two or three together, without taking the smallest notice of me, and would stand in the corner jabbering away in their lingo and peering about, while I would continue my reading or occupation, as if utterly oblivious to their presence. This would continue for about ten minutes, and they would then open the door and walk out without making any remarks, and without either of us having taken the slightest notice of one another. As there was nothing new in the cabin for them to look at, I do not quite understand the object of these visits, unless they were hoping to be given something.

When living in my cabin on the Pelly River, an Indian arrived one cold winter evening, and asked permission to sleep in my cabin for the night, so I gave him some supper and let him spread his blankets on the floor. A red fox was lying in the cabin which I had recently trapped, so by way of paying for his board and lodging, I told him that he had better skin the fox for me and put it on the mould—a task which would have taken him about twenty minutes. However, he promptly refused, saying that it was not his business to skin my animals, so I told him that under the circumstances he had better clear out of my cabin. He accordingly rolled up his


J. Harrison Dutton
1911

Roasting a Deer's Head

blankets and walked out into the darkness, and I could hear him chopping down wood for his camp fire. It was then about 40° below zero, and I was surprised that he preferred sleeping outside in the cold to doing a small amount of work for me, especially when preparing his camp and keeping up the fire entailed more labour than skinning the fox. The most curious part was that the next morning he came into the cabin to warm himself and appeared perfectly good humoured, and when I sarcastically inquired if he was comfortable last night, he did not appear to be in any way annoyed at having been turned out of the cabin the previous evening.

Boiled salmon-heads are considered a great delicacy amongst the Indians, while deer heads are also regarded as particularly appetising, a point of view with which I rather agree. I have occasionally in British Columbia hunted black-tail deer and mule deer, both being smaller species than the moose or cariboo, accompanied by one or two Indians packing supplies, and when a deer has been shot they will cut off the head, and then drive a stake into the mouth till it protrudes through the back of the neck. The stake will be driven into the ground adjoining the camp-fire, and when the head has been sufficiently roasted we will gather round with our knives, and hack off dainty morsels from the cheeks and other tender portions in the vicinity.

Although people who have hunted big game are naturally aware of the fact, it may as well be mentioned that when heads are required for purposes of mounting, it is not necessary to preserve the skull. Deer horns, especially those of a big deer like the moose or cariboo, prove most awkward articles to pack through heavy brush, while the skull adds considerably to the weight, and when tramping through the woods, packing supplies and horns upon one's back, every ounce is of importance. When the horns have to be conveyed for a considerable distance, involving perhaps several days' journey, I only preserved a small portion of the forehead, and this would be sawn in half so as to separate the two horns, which can then be tied together and carried with comparative ease. The skin, of course, would be removed from the head and preserved. A good taxidermist will construct a skull out of plaster to which he will attach the horns, and when the skin has been laid on, the head will appear just as natural as if the original skull had been preserved.

During the winter the tracks of an animal in snow are naturally easy to distinguish, but to follow an animal's track during the summer, when the ground is hard, becomes a very different undertaking, which few white men can accomplish. The Indians who spend their lives in the woods naturally become expert trackers, although some are far more proficient than others, and a tiny broken twig or a tuft of pressed-down grass will instantly attract their attention, and disclose the ground over which the animal has travelled.

Some years ago, in the Yukon, three white men arrived at Fort Selkirk in a small rowing-boat on their way to Dawson, and, after purchasing some supplies from the trading post, continued their journey down the river. A ranche is situated about three miles from Selkirk, and on the following day one of the three men suddenly appeared at the ranche, exhausted and terror-stricken, with a bullet-wound in his cheek. He was conveyed to Selkirk, and explained that himself and one of the men were acquaintances, who had travelled together from Seattle, a town on the Pacific coast. On arriving at Whitehorse they had purchased a small boat with the intention of rowing down the Yukon to Dawson. Just before leaving Whitehorse, the third man, who was a total stranger, had approached them, and asked permission to accompany them in the boat to Dawson, and they all travelled together down the Yukon to Selkirk. After leaving Selkirk they had camped about twelve miles down the river, and the stranger and his friend had then wandered off with their rifles into the woods on the chance of securing a bear.

The stranger returned later on, saying that they had succeeded in shooting a bear, that his friend was employed in skinning it, and that they required his assistance. Without suspicion he accompanied him towards the spot, but after proceeding for a certain distance the stranger, who was walking a short distance behind, suddenly shot him in the head. Fortunately, the aim was miscalculated, the bullet entering the cheek, so the two men promptly grappled, and after a short and fierce struggle the wounded man succeeded in throwing him down, and then rapidly disappearing in the thick bush he made his way to the ranche near Selkirk. He entertained no doubt that his friend had been murdered by the stranger, who attempted to murder him as well, with the object of stealing their money, possessions, and their boat.

The news was quickly telegraphed to Dawson, while a policeman who resides at Selkirk, accompanied by another man, started off in a canoe in pursuit of the stranger. They arrived late in the night at a spot where his boat was perceived moored up to the bank, while his tent was pitched in the vicinity; and, as the man was found fast asleep inside, he was easily arrested. Indians were then engaged to search for the missing person, and, after tracking his footsteps through the bush for about three miles, they eventually discovered his murdered body. Three bullets had been fired into him, and the stranger was, needless to say, conveyed to Dawson, where he was tried and hanged.

The Yukon Indians manage by different methods to collect a fair amount of money from the white people. They bring in moose meat and wild berries for sale, while many during the winter lay down traps, and sell the furs which they have secured to the trading posts. They are also occasionally employed in cutting wood for the steamers on the Yukon, which usually burn wood instead of coal, while some of them construct rafts which they float down the river to Selkirk or Dawson, where they sell the wood. They are almost invariably paid by the amount of work produced, instead of by the length of time employed, as very few can be relied upon, and if paid by the day or week, would probably shirk their work whenever an opportunity occurred. Indians employed to accompany one on hunting expeditions are usually paid by the day, but a satisfactory or reliable Indian is most difficult to obtain. On these occasions it is a great mistake for the white man to set an example by working extra hard himself, as an Indian is not troubled with a feeling of *esprit-de-corps*, or with a sense of pride in performing his proper share. By his peculiar method of reasoning, he will consider the completion of a certain amount of work sufficient for two men within a certain period, so that the harder he observes the white man working, the less he will consider it necessary to do himself.

Ideas of gratitude or altruism are practically unknown amongst them, and although a white man saved an Indian's life, the Indian would never think of rendering the slightest service in return, except when he was paid for it. The same idea appears to prevail amongst themselves. When they render each other any service they expect to be paid, either in money or its equivalent, while I have been informed by those acquainted with their language that it contains no words expressing thanks or gratitude.

Although, when suffering from illness, they generally prefer their "medicine man" to any white practitioner, at the same time they will often appear at the white men's cabins complaining of illness, and begging for drugs or medicine. However, to supply an Indian with drugs, especially if the symptoms are at all serious, is a most unsatisfactory task, because in the event of his recovery he will entertain no feelings of gratitude, while, if he happens to die, his fellow Indians will invariably attribute the result to poison.

A policeman, stationed at Selkirk, told me about a letter shown to him by an Indian, which had been recently received from the Stuart River, a tributary of the Yukon. The letter had been written by another Indian in doggerel English, and contained the following rather startling remark: "My brother die, Stuart River, white man kill him, poison." The real facts were very simple. The white man who resided in the vicinity of the sick Indian had attempted to be of service by attending to him, but not having succeeded in saving his life, was naturally accused by the other Indians of having poisoned him.

The Indians, especially those not contaminated by white men, are generally credited with being extremely honest, and although this characteristic is true to a certain extent, it appears to result more from force of necessity than from any high ideas of principle. An Indian, when hunting, might kill a moose or a cariboo, but in a country where transport is often so difficult it might be impossible to convey all the meat to his destination. He would, therefore, construct a cache, in which would be deposited whatever was not temporarily required, besides, perhaps, other supplies in his possession. The locality of the cache will be remembered, and, on his return to the spot, provided that the cache has not been tampered with, supplies and provisions can be readily obtained. It is of extreme importance, perhaps a matter of life and death, that their caches should not be molested, as an Indian might return to his cache tired and hungry in a locality where other food was unavailable, and if his cache had been disturbed starvation might ensue. They have, therefore, been habituated through many generations not to steal from one another, and white people residing amongst Indian tribes in remote localities will seldom find their property stolen or molested. However, as before explained, the Indian possesses a marvellous aptitude for absorbing the white man's vices, and among the Indians now residing in Selkirk and other communities there are few who will not steal if an opportunity occurs.

An Indian is supposed to be imbued with the most ideal patience, which may also be true to a certain extent, although their natural propensity for laziness will partially account for it, and, owing to their primitive existence, the value of "time" is to an Indian an unknown thing.

During the winter an Indian will occasionally cut a small hole through the ice on a lake, and will squat beside it for hours enveloped in a blanket, while he holds a piece of twine with a baited hook submerged in the water on the chance of securing a stray pike. In a severe climate like the Yukon, to continue this occupation for a prolonged period on a cold and draughty lake requires an amount of stolid patience which few white people could display.

At the commencement of the Klondyke boom, before the Yukon Indians had become so thoroughly accustomed to the white man and the North-West Mounted Police, they were inclined occasionally to be hostile, and at Teslin Lake a white man was murdered by the Indians, while another was wounded, but managed to escape. Some police were promptly despatched to the locality, with the result that the two culprits were arrested and conveyed to Dawson, where one of them was hanged, while the other died in prison. Since that event the Indians have entertained a wholesome dread of the law and the police. They entertain an intense dislike to prison, as they are naturally averse to systematic and continual labour, while to be forced to undergo considerable hard work without even being paid for it, appears to their methods of reasoning as the height of injustice. While residing at Selkirk, I asked one of the Indians, who had recently undergone a term of prison life for drunkenness, how he enjoyed his enforced retirement. Indians are not voluminous in their conversation, so he merely assumed an expression of disgust and said, "Plenty work, no pay."

The Indians all possess sleigh dogs, which they feed sufficiently well provided that meat is plentiful. On the other hand, they do not follow the example of the white people by laying up supplies of food in order to enable them to feed their dogs when scarcity prevails. Their wretched dogs are, consequently, often seen wandering about Selkirk in a terribly starved condition, and completely neglected by their owners. The policeman stationed in Selkirk is authorised to shoot a dog when in a very bad condition and likely to die, but to anybody without authority this expedient would be extremely risky. No matter how emaciated or hopeless might be the condition of the wretched animal, if once it was shot, the Indian owner would promptly put in an appearance and demand heavy damages for destroying a valuable sleigh dog.

The missionaries in the Yukon deserve every praise for their efforts and self-sacrifice, and although numerous criticisms are directed against them by the white population, their failure to produce more satisfactory results is not due to their lack of zeal, but to the difficulties against which they are forced to contend. The ordinary white man in the Yukon, although possessed of some fine qualities, is usually absolutely ignorant, and, being accustomed from his infancy to a rough, hand-to-mouth sort of life, cannot understand the trials undergone in those isolated Arctic regions by an educated missionary. In a country where the "Almighty Dollar" forms practically the only god that is worshipped, he envies the missionary for always appearing in comfortable circumstances and possessing ready cash, which he attributes to his large salary, while he completely forgets the simple fact, that the missionary does not, like himself, dissipate his money in gambling and drinking.

The Indians, to whom the missionary has devoted his life, will resort to him for assistance, and are not hampered by feelings of bashfulness in obtaining as much as possible; but they regard favours merely as part of his business, and entertain no feelings of gratitude or affection for his services. Their views of religion must be a most discouraging proposition to the missionary, because, although they can easily be taught the forms of Christianity, they appear completely incapable of assimilating its ethics. The idea of altruism is wholly incomprehensible to Indians, and whether their characters have been elevated since their conversion to Christianity is usually considered by those acquainted with them to be an extremely doubtful matter. They formerly possessed a pagan religion which, although extremely crude, was probably better than nothing, while now they have become imbued with a hybrid religion, composed of a sort of Christianity intermingled with their ancient paganism, which is a very bad imitation of either.

In the Yukon district, as in many parts of British Columbia which I have visited, the Indians are gradually decreasing, while people acquainted with them elsewhere in Canada and the United States have informed me that the same state of things is taking place. Certain tribes appear to be holding their own with regard to population, and a few instances may, perhaps, be cited where they are slightly increasing, while occasional Indians employ their time in cultivating ranches, and appear to have developed into fairly respectable members of society. These examples, however, are comparatively isolated. The gradual decadence of the Indian is more generally noticed and commented on, and whether their ultimate disappearance will prove of any loss to the general community is usually considered extremely doubtful.

A curious legend prevails amongst some of the Red Indians of the prairie, although it must have originated since the advent of the white and negro races into the country. According to the legend, the Great Spirit fashioned man out of clay and placed him in the oven to bake. As this was his first attempt, he was naturally very uncertain regarding the proper period required for the baking, and on withdrawing the figure from the oven, he discovered to his disgust that this first attempt had proved a failure. The proper period for the baking had been completely underestimated, and instead of possessing a nice healthy brown colour, the figure consisted of a nasty pasty white, and from that figure originated the White Race or the Pale Faces.

The Great Spirit then fashioned another man out of clay, and again he placed him in the oven to bake. This time he was determined that his human being should not prove underdone, so he retained it in the oven for a considerable period. Unfortunately, the proper time required for the baking had now been overestimated to just about the same extent as it had before been underestimated. The result was that the figure, on being withdrawn from the oven, now appeared all charred and burnt and blackened, so that the second attempt resulted in a failure just as dismal as before, and from that figure originated the Black or Negro races.

The Great Spirit was, however, very persevering, so a third time he fashioned a man out of clay, and again he placed him in the oven to bake. By this time he was becoming more acquainted with the business of man-making, or, to use a slang expression, he was now "getting into his job." This time the figure was baked for exactly the proper period, and when removed from the oven it possessed a beautiful healthy brown colour, so that the Great Spirit perceived to his delight that he had now produced the acme of his ambition—the Noble Red Man.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRADING POST

On my return from the M'Millan River I purchased a half interest in a trading post at Selkirk, and for the next two years my time was principally employed there, which was more suitable for my lame foot than trapping through the woods. The trading posts—composed generally of rough log cabins, which are scattered along the Yukon, where the trappers can sell their furs and obtain supplies—are something similar, on a very diminutive scale, to Whiteley's or Harrod's, where anything can be purchased that is likely to be required. Their stock of supplies include provisions, clothes, blankets, tools, cheap jewellery for the Indians, &c., &c., besides a drinking bar, where the trappers are cordially invited to dissipate the money which they have just obtained for their furs after their hard winter's work.

In a remote locality like the Yukon, the trading posts naturally expect to derive a handsome profit on their goods, although this varies according to the nature of the article. Their supplies are obtained from the towns on the Pacific coast during the summer months when the Yukon is open for navigation ; but as the railway between

Skagway and Whitehorse, besides the steamers on the Yukon, are all owned by the Yukon and White Pass Company, a monopoly has been established, so that transportation is still very expensive, which further increases the cost of living. Flour, for instance, which could be purchased at Vancouver for about 14s. per 100 lbs., cost in Selkirk as much as 28s. per 100 lbs., and sometimes rather more. Out of this amount the trading post only gained about 10 or 12 per cent. in profit, the remainder being appropriated by the White Pass Company for transportation. On the other hand, the trading post would derive a profit of from 60 to 100 per cent. on clothes, tools, and other articles, while cheap gaudy rings would be purchased by the gross for about 2d. apiece, and sold to the Indians for 1s. each.

Fort Selkirk is a very old-established place, having been formerly a trading post for the Hudson Bay Company, which was suddenly attacked and destroyed by the Indians, although the white people in charge managed to save their lives by escaping in a boat down the Yukon. The place now possesses a trading post and a telegraph office, besides a policeman and a missionary for the Indians. A few married people reside there, and the white population, not including some children, would total on an average about a dozen people, although others are scattered about through the district. During part of the summer, which corresponds to the "season" in London, the population is increased, as some trappers are then staying in the place before leaving for their winter trapping grounds.

It may appear strange that a telegraph office should be required for such a small population as Selkirk, but the telegraph line from Dawson to the outside world traverses over 1000 miles of dense forest, and as the electric current is constantly being broken or interrupted owing to trees falling against the wire, it is necessary to establish stations at regular intervals, where men are ready to sally forth and repair the damage. Telegraphing in the Yukon is rather an expensive luxury, as a telegram from Dawson to Selkirk, a distance of 180 miles, costs 6s. for twelve words.

The Selkirk trading post comprised a general store business, official post office, hotel, public house, and social club combined. White people and Indians residing in the place would congregate there, topics of interest would be discussed, and the social gossip freely elaborated and commented on. In such a small community the different families were intimately acquainted with one another's private affairs. The few women folk residing in the place had very little to occupy their time, except in quarrelling and circulating scandalous stories about each other; and, considering the diminutive population, the number of "causes célèbres" that were continually occurring and being discussed at the trading post was surprising.

The building, which was constructed of wood, had a ground floor with an attic above. The beds for the hotel were placed in the attic, which was simply one large room, about eight beds being ranged side by side like a dormitory, while the other end of the room formed a lumber place for groceries and other articles. The "guests" frequenting the hotel would not expect to be furnished with sheets, although the beds would be provided with blankets, which were generally of a dark blue or grey colour, thereby requiring to be washed infrequently. There were two small private bedrooms about the size of cubicles on the ground floor, reserved for those who preferred a certain amount of privacy and were willing to pay for it. Personally, I resided in my cabin, which was about 50 yards distant, while my partner with his wife and some children lived at the trading post. During the "season," when the trappers were living in the place, games of "poker" would be started at the trading post almost every evening, and the gambling would continue until the early hours of the morning.

The purchase and sale of furs form an important adjunct of the trading post, as the trader derives a double profit from the transaction. He expects to realise a profit of about 30 per cent. from the sale of the furs which he obtains from the trappers, while the trapper will invest the money which he has just received in merchandise and whisky, which the trader will supply at a profit of 60 per cent. or more in addition. The traders despatch the furs which they have bought from the trappers to different centres either in

Europe or America, where large consignments of raw furs are sold by auction. These are purchased wholesale by fur houses and companies, who tan the skins and convert them into muffs, coats, or anything else that is required by the public.

The value of the fur of any particular animal varies according to the size of the skin, and also according to the primeness and colour of the fur, and a really good judge of fur must possess a considerable amount of knowledge and experience. The primeness of the fur depends on the period of the year when the animal was killed; and although the period varies slightly according to the species, a prime skin, as a rule, can only be obtained when the animal has been killed between the end of November and the first week in April. Early in the spring most of the fur animals commence to shed their winter coats, so that when judging and buying furs care must be taken to ascertain that the hair has no tendency to become loose. A fur obtained during the spring might resemble, on first appearance, a long-coated prime winter skin, but after a short period the fur, if commencing to shed, would gradually fall out, until the skin would eventually resemble a door-mat and become valueless.

Some animals, such as foxes and wolves, have a habit of sitting on their haunches, and these, if killed too late in the spring, can be easily detected, as a bare patch can be observed on the haunches where the fur has begun to rub off. Skins obtained rather too early in the winter may have already acquired their winter coat, which will remain fast, and will therefore be of more value than when obtained too late in the spring. However, the fur if obtained too early in the winter will not have acquired its full length and fine texture, and will therefore be less valuable than a thoroughly prime winter skin. The primeness of a skin can be ascertained not only by examining the fur, but also by the colour of the inside pelt. During the summer time the pelt is of a dark bluish colour; but as the winter advances the pelt becomes lighter, until eventually, when the skin is thoroughly prime, the colour of the pelt becomes a pure white.

Animals which habitually frequent water, such as beaver, otter, or musquash, retain their primeness later than exclusively land animals; and the skins of beaver, even when caught as late as the middle of June, will still be quite prime and obtain the full market value. The value of an animal's fur also depends upon the colour, and amongst most fur-coated animals, such as foxes, marten, mink, &c., the darker the colour of the fur the higher the price it will obtain in the market.

The white fox ranges farther north than Dawson, and the foxes in the upper Yukon consist of the black, silver, cross, and red fox, of which the black and the silver are by far the most valuable. The fur of the black fox, which contains no silver hairs except at the end of the tail, is extremely rare and probably the most valuable fur in existence. A full grown prime black fox, even in its raw state, would sell in the market for at least £200, and probably for more; and when this has been tanned and made into some article of clothing, the price would be considerably higher. The value of a silver fox depends, of course, on the primeness; but presuming that the skin has been obtained at the proper season of the year it will vary greatly according to the colour, and the nearer the colour resembles a black fox the greater will be its value in the market. A dark silver, which contains comparatively few silver hairs, is of considerably more value than what is termed a "pale silver," where the white hairs exist in large quantities.

Valuable raw furs, like black or silver fox, must be examined with great care, as high prices have to be paid for good ones; so that an inexperienced purchaser, by overestimating their value, might become involved in considerable loss. Some of these black and silver foxes are termed "rusty," implying that the fur possesses a reddish tinge, and when the tinge or rust is extremely slight an inexperienced buyer might not detect it. This rust, even when so slight that the reddish tinge may not easily be apparent, will have the effect of destroying the gloss, and therefore to a large extent diminishing the value of the fur.

The value of silver fox skins varies to a very large extent, since the silver hairs in different skins vary so greatly in numbers and distribution. A prime dark silver fox skin might be worth in its raw state anything from £80 to £150, according to the colour; while a pale silver would not fetch more than £30 to £40, and perhaps less. These values, of course, do not apply to the imitation silver foxes, which are now so fashionable in the street and which cost about £15 apiece. These simply consist of a red fox which has been dyed black, with the white hairs, probably rabbit hairs, fastened in.

The red fox of the Yukon resembles in appearance the ordinary English fox, but as the animal resides in an Arctic region the fur is very different from the species in England. The value of the skin varies like other furs according to the colour, a dark red being more valuable than a pale red. A prime full-grown skin is worth from about 25s. to £2, although exceptionally fine specimens may obtain, perhaps, as much as 50s. The cross fox is an intermediate breed between the red and the black or silver fox, the skin generally resembling that of a red fox with black and silver splodges. These different species of foxes interbreed like different species of dogs, while the black fox appears to be more of a freak than anything else. A litter of five or six fox cubs might contain one black or silver fox, although this would be an uncommon occurrence, as the animals are comparatively rare, especially the black; while the remainder of the litter would probably consist of either cross or red foxes, or more probably of both.

The values of the different furs vary considerably in different seasons, according to the fashion which happens to be in vogue. In recent years the prices of furs in general have been steadily rising; and in some instances, where a particular fur has suddenly become fashionable, the rise has been remarkable. About three years ago musquash skins could be purchased by the thousands for a shilling apiece; but latterly the fur has been employed in imitating sealskin, which has rendered it extremely fashionable, and consequently the value has risen about 500 per cent.

The rise in the value of furs is not necessarily due to the animals becoming extinct through being over-trapped, but simply because the public are becoming more luxurious, and furs are therefore more in demand. The furs brought into the market have not sensibly diminished in quantity within recent years, although the trappers, in order to obtain their skins, must penetrate farther back into the wilds. However, a vast amount of territory in Northern Canada still remains almost unexplored, with the fur-coated animals practically untouched; so that many years will elapse before they become extinct or the supply of raw furs sensibly diminishes.

The lynx provides a notable exception; but their present scarcity is not due to over-trapping but to the fact that their principal food supply consists of rabbits, which, as explained in a previous chapter, disappear every seven years, so that the lynx periodically disappear likewise. About fifteen years ago lynx skins were only worth about 5s. apiece; but the introduction of motor cars brought lynx furs into fashion, as lynx robes dyed black became greatly in demand for motorists, especially in the United States. The value of the skins, consequently, increased from about 5s. to a sovereign; and as within the last few years the lynx have again become very scarce, owing to the temporary disappearance of the rabbits, their skins, which about five years ago could be purchased for a sovereign, are now worth about £8 or £9.

A considerable amount of insanity used to prevail in the Yukon, which is rather surprising considering that the population consisted principally of healthy men in the prime of life. Every summer, when the river became open for steamboat navigation, a certain number of insane people would be escorted outside to the lunatic asylum at New Westminster in British Columbia. An acquaintance named Corning underwent rather a disagreeable experience with a lunatic, when living right away in the woods where communication with other people was impossible. Corning and another man were working a mining claim in a remote part of the country, about 200 miles up the Pelly River. His partner, who professed to be a Roman Catholic, was suddenly seized with insanity, which took the form of religious mania, so he constructed an altar in a corner of the cabin out of empty boxes, on which six candles were constantly kept burning, and although he had not previously shown any religious proclivities, he now remained kneeling in front of the altar for several hours a day.

A miner does not purchase more supplies than are absolutely necessary, both on account of the initial expense and the difficulties of transportation, so Corning not only lost his partner's assistance—who persisted in praying when he ought to be working—but the candles were also being consumed upon the altar at an alarming rate. His insanity eventually assumed a more aggravated form, as he threw several articles belonging to the cabin down a shaft hole, and afterwards climbed to the top of a cliff and jumped off it. His injuries from the fall were severe, so Corning conveyed him to the cabin and attended him until he recovered.

The spring had by this time commenced, and when the Pelly River was open for navigation Corning, who was anxious to convey his partner to where assistance could be obtained, persuaded him to start for the river, which was some distance from the cabin. His partner was still as mad as ever, and after proceeding for a short distance he suddenly sprang at Corning and attacked him. Fortunately Corning was well acquainted both with boxing and wrestling, and although physically smaller than the madman, who was a great strong German, he proved himself quite equal to the occasion. He administered to him a sound hammering, and after that experienced no further trouble, as his partner, in spite of his madness, was quite sensible enough to understand the meaning of a thrashing. On arriving at the Pelly River they embarked in their boat and rowed down to Selkirk, where the madman remained under supervision at the trading post until the arrival of a steamer which conveyed him to Dawson.

The salmon arriving on the Pacific coast are far more abundant than those frequenting the Atlantic, and at the mouths of certain rivers, such as the Fraser River, the Columbia, and some of the Alaskan rivers, salmon canneries have been established where they catch them by the thousands. They are caught partly in nets by the Indians, who are paid about fivepence per fish, and partly by means of traps, which consist of a large wheel continually revolving with troughs attached to it, the bottom troughs being placed just below the surface of the water. The trap is arranged at the entrance of the rivers, so that the revolving troughs pick the salmon while swimming up, and deposit them into a receptacle placed conveniently for the purpose. The salmon are then cut up, cleaned, boiled, and packed in hermetically sealed tins, all by machinery, and are then forwarded to different quarters of the globe, a considerable number finding their way to England.

Several different species of salmon swim up the rivers, their runs generally taking place at different periods during the summer and autumn months. The sockeyes, cohos, and king salmon are considered the best species for eating purposes, while other species, such as the humpback and the dog salmon, are not deemed palatable for human beings, and are, therefore, only caught for purposes of dog food, and by the Indians, who will eat anything.

Two species of salmon swim up the Yukon, namely, the king salmon, which arrives at Fort Selkirk about the middle of July, and the dog salmon, which arrives about the middle of September. The king salmon is a magnificent fish which provides excellent eating, occasionally attaining a weight of 50 lbs. or perhaps more, and although its colour is dark when residing in the sea, after travelling for a long distance up the Yukon its skin becomes a bright red. As the mouth of the Yukon is situated in Behring Strait the salmon are obliged to wait until it is clear of ice before commencing their long journey up the river. On arriving at Fort Selkirk they have already travelled up the river for about 1800 miles, although some of them go very nearly up to the head-waters of the Yukon, involving a journey of over 2000 miles.

Dawson is situated some distance below Selkirk, and as the two places are connected by telegraph the inhabitants in Selkirk are promptly informed when the salmon first make their appearance at Dawson. New nets have been constructed or old ones repaired in anticipation of the event, and when the arrival of the salmon at Dawson has been telegraphed to Selkirk, we promptly pack up our tents and supplies and deposit them in a boat, and then repair to one of the large eddies on the Yukon or the Pelly River. An unwritten law exists in the Yukon that when a person has set his net in a particular eddy, no other person is supposed to interfere with him, but must proceed to some other eddy in a fresh locality; so on arriving at our particular spot, we quickly pitch the tent and set the net before any one else arrives, and are then ready to receive the salmon when they make their first appearance.

The upper end of the net is always placed in the river at the top of the eddy, and attached by a rope to a stake driven into the bank. The remainder of the net is then laid out in the river, as near as possible along the line where the eddy and the current of the river meet, thus forming a V shape with the shore. When this has been done the net is anchored in position by means of a sack filled with large stones, which is sunk to the bottom of the river, and attached to the lower end of the net by a rope.

The task of setting or laying out a net in the river is a simple one if two people are in the boat, as one man can then guide the boat while the other attends to the net, but when entirely alone, which with myself has generally been the case, the operation is by no means such an easy matter. The net is placed in the bow of the boat, and the man, while laying out the net in the river, has not only to prevent it from becoming entangled with itself and the boat and the floats, but must also guide and handle the boat in a fairly swift current at the same time. The fact of the current in the eddy and the current of the river travelling in exactly opposite directions makes the operation all the more awkward, as the boat is, therefore, more liable to be swung round; there is consequently always a feeling of relief when the net has eventually been laid out in the river, and securely anchored in the proper position.

A large king salmon in the net, with its bright red skin, provides a splendid spectacle, and if recently caught, care must be taken when landing it in the boat, as its frantic struggles are very liable to tear the net. Gaffs are not obtainable in the Yukon, so a stout stick about 3 feet long is kept handy in the boat, and after gently drawing up the head of the salmon, in a sort of coaxing manner, on to the edge of the boat, a sudden heavy blow on the head with the stick will stun it, and two or three more will finish it, after which it is hauled into the boat and extracted from the net.

The salmon run lasts for about a month, the middle portion being the most plentiful, while the abundance of salmon varies considerably in different seasons. The worst salmon run in my experience occurred about the year 1906, being the same year that a large barge, while proceeding up the river laden with coal oil, was wrecked in the lower regions of the Yukon. The river was covered for a considerable distance with floating oil, and as salmon when swimming constantly appear above the surface of the water, the paucity of the salmon during that particular year was attributed by many to the destruction of the barge.

After the salmon caught in the net have been deposited by the tent or cabin, the portion required for the day's food is put aside, while the remainder is cut up for purposes of drying. The Indians are extremely fond of dried salmon, and every year they catch and dry large quantities. They do not generally fish alone like the white men, but construct a central camp where they dry the salmon, their nets being set in different eddies in the vicinity. Visiting an Indian fishing camp during the salmon season would provide quite an interesting and novel experience to people unaccustomed to the spectacle, the men working at the nets and catching the salmon, while the women are employed in cutting them up and hanging them on poles to dry.

Dried salmon is not often eaten by white men, but as the fish contains about 80 or 90 per cent. of water, the salmon when dried becomes a highly concentrated form of food, and in a country where transportation is often so difficult and weight so important, affords an excellent form of dog food. Dried salmon is extremely nourishing, so that sleigh dogs working hard can thrive on it, and as catching salmon costs nothing, except one's time and a certain amount of trouble, people possessing sleigh dogs are always eager for the salmon run in order to enable them to replenish their supply of dog food.

The other species of salmon which swims up the Yukon, namely the dog salmon, arrives at Fort Selkirk about the first week in September. The fish are of a dark colour with white splodges, while their size is much smaller than that of the king salmon, the average weight being about eight pounds. For purposes of food they cannot be compared to the king salmon, and in fact are only eaten by the Indians. However, they are far more numerous than the king salmon, so their appearance at Selkirk late in the autumn proves most convenient, as it enables people to provide a large supply of dog food for the ensuing winter. They can be caught in large quantities about the third week in September, when it is freezing hard, and the trouble of cutting them up and drying them becomes then unnecessary. I used generally to net about 500 of them, and as at that time of the year they quickly freeze, it was only necessary to slit them down the throat, and to deposit them in a cache or shed where there was no fire, and during the winter they could be boiled up for the dogs as required.

Sleigh dogs in the Yukon being fed to a large extent on fish, become very clever in manipulating the bones. I used to serve out fish to my dogs, bones and all, and they were never bothered by the bones sticking in their throats. The head and the large backbone would be eaten by the dogs, while the small rib bones would be separated from the meat, and all licked clean and left in the bottom of the dish.

The eggs of the salmon are laid during the summer or autumn according to the species, and after hatching out, they swim as small fry down to the sea where they remain for five years, and at the end of that period, by some extraordinary instinct, return to the very spot where they were originally hatched. The truth of this may appear questionable, but it is a well-known fact among those acquainted with the salmon on the Pacific coast—while probably the same rule applies to the Atlantic—and has been constantly proved by marking the fish. Salmon, like other fish, lay an enormous quantity of eggs, of which only a small proportion arrive at maturity, as both the eggs and the young fry are eagerly preyed upon by pike and other fishes. The parent salmon form a nest by scooping with their noses a hole in the sand, and when the eggs have been deposited within the hollow they are carefully covered over by the parents, so as to conceal them from their enemies.

The adult salmon do not return to the sea, but after the eggs have been deposited and fertilised they become diseased, white spots breaking out on them which gradually extend over the body, and after floundering about for a short period they die. The life of a salmon, therefore, extends approximately to five years. The eggs are hatched in the summer or the autumn, according to the season of the salmon run; the young fry swims down to the sea where it remains for five years, and then returns, a full-grown adult, to the place of its birth, and after propagating its species, dies.

It may, perhaps, be remarked that if the salmon are all of the same age, each species ought also to be of the same size, but the discrepancy is not so great as might at first be imagined. The male salmon is on an average considerably larger than the female, while the salmon which breed in the Yukon average a larger size than those which breed in its tributaries. If, therefore, the two sexes are separated, and the salmon breeding in the main river or its tributaries be taken into consideration, the discrepancy in sizes is probably not more pronounced than those between other animals of the same species, or even amongst human beings.

The salmon possess another peculiar feature, which is that the young fry after their return to the sea completely disappear. They are never observed or caught in nets, and nobody knows where they go to or what becomes of them, until five years afterwards at an appointed period during the season, which varies according to the species, they gradually reappear in shoals, returning to their birthplace.

One summer after the salmon fishing was concluded, I returned from the Pelly River where I had been fishing, and on arriving at Selkirk discovered that the place was in quarantine, so I was obliged to remain there until the quarantine was abolished. An epidemic of diphtheria had recently broken out, two people having died of it, while others were infected. No physician resided in the place, so news of the occurrence was telegraphed to Dawson. A doctor was accordingly despatched to Selkirk with some antitoxin, and managed to stop the epidemic and cure the remainder of those infected. The steamers were allowed to call at Selkirk for discharging mails and cargo, but while the quarantine was in force, none of the inhabitants was allowed on board.

On one of these occasions, a passenger on board was unaware of the quarantine, and while the steamer was discharging some cargo, happened to go on shore unobserved and strolled into the trading post. At first we concluded that he intended to remain in Selkirk on some business, but when he mentioned that he was on his way to Dawson, we informed him of the quarantine regulations. He promptly returned to the steamer in a state of great trepidation, but the captain refused to admit him on board. His luggage was accordingly handed out to him, and to his great disgust he was obliged to remain in Selkirk for about three weeks, until the quarantine was abolished.

The waggon road from Dawson to Whitehorse crosses the Pelly River near the mouth, and a road-house has been established at the crossing, about four miles from Selkirk. The road-house is only kept open during the winter months, as the waggon road is not made use of in the summer time. Stages, consisting of four-horsed sleighs, make regular trips two or three times a week between Dawson and Whitehorse, conveying mails and passengers. The arrival of the stage at the Pelly road-house, with its passengers well muffled up in furs, forms quite an interesting spectacle. The horses also present a curious sight in severe weather, as the steam from their bodies immediately condenses, so that they appear enveloped in a thick fog. The stages cease to run when the temperature drops to over 70° below zero, because inhaling such extreme cold while trotting along the road proves fatal to the horses.

No bridges exist over the Pelly, and the stages cross the frozen river on the ice. Late in spring, when the ice becomes dangerous, the mails are deposited in a canoe which is placed on a sleigh, and drawn by men across the ice to the further side of the river, so that in the event of the ice breaking under them, they can still save themselves by clambering into the canoe. Horse stages travel to and fro between the rivers, so that on reaching the bank the mails are conveyed on the stage to the next river, when the process is repeated. This method of conveying mails across the rivers, when the ice becomes rotten, appears to be rather hazardous, though I have not heard of any fatal accidents resulting therefrom.

By way of enlivening our small community during the winter months, dances were periodically inaugurated, which were held alternately at the Selkirk trading post and the Pelly River roadhouse. The two places are situated about four miles apart, with the river Yukon intervening, and on dance nights the inhabitants in the vicinity would transport themselves on sleighs to their destination. The music was provided by a gramophone belonging to the trading post, the dances commencing at about seven o'clock in the evening, and continuing until the early hours of the morning. Kitchen lancers composed the principal part of the programme, one of the party being told off to act as master of the ceremonies. During the lancers he would be employed in shouting out the changes, such as "Gents to the right, ladies to the left," "Now swing your partners," &c., &c., which is a common device in Canada and the United States, the words of command being usually emphasised with a strong nasal twang.

During these dances the white female element was naturally rather scarce in Selkirk, so Indian girls would be called in to increase the number of lady partners. The trading post or the roadhouse, at whichever place the dance was held, would supply the supper, but as each place was provided with a drinking bar, the guests were expected to pay indirectly for their entertainment by investing in occasional libations. As the ball progressed the kitchen lancers, consequently, became more and more "kitchenified," and towards the close of the ball they would assume rather a boisterous character.

During my last winter in Selkirk my trading partner had rather a narrow escape from being frozen. He had driven across the Yukon one evening on his dog sleigh in order to dine at the Pelly River road-house, and after indulging in a convivial evening, was returning home to Selkirk at about twelve o'clock P.M. in rather an intoxicated condition. While proceeding across the Yukon his sleigh bumped against a cake of ice, the jar tumbling him out into the snow on the side of the trail. The dogs being headed for home, and finding the sleigh suddenly lightened, promptly started off at full gallop, and never stopped until their arrival at the Selkirk trading post, while my partner was left in the snow on the Yukon. Fortunately some people were in the trading post engaged in a game of poker, and hearing the dogs shuffling about outside were surprised at the non-appearance of the owner. One of them consequently opened the door and walked out, and on seeing the empty sleigh with nobody about, his suspicions were aroused. He accordingly turned the dogs round and proceeded with them backwards towards the Pelly road-house. The missing person was soon discovered floundering in the snow, and was conveyed on the sleigh to Selkirk. The temperature was then about 40° below zero, so that if the arrival of the dogs had not been remarked, the man would have been frozen to death within a very short period.

The principal supply of furs is obtained in the spring, when the trappers have returned with their winter's proceeds; but during the winter Indians will often arrive at the trading post with a few skins, which they have recently caught and wish to dispose of. Conducting business with an Indian involves the expenditure of a considerable amount of time and patience. When their furs have been examined and a price offered, they will stand about cogitating the matter and chewing tobacco, while every now and again they will commence jabbering to each other in their lingo, so that, perhaps, half an hour or more will elapse before they have made up their minds, and the negotiations are finally completed.

During the summer of 1908 an extraordinary robbery of gold dust occurred in Dawson, amounting to over $20,000. The robbery had been very skilfully conducted, and for a considerable period eluded the vigilance of the police. The perpetrator did not abscond down the Yukon to Circle City, according to the usual custom, but continued to reside in Dawson, as he hoped to remain undetected. Eventually a man, who had long been regarded by the police as somewhat of a shady character, came under suspicion as being concerned in the robbery, owing to his extravagant manner of living. The man became suspicious that the police were watching him, and embarked on a steamer for Whitehorse, but the telegraph was brought into requisition, and he was accordingly arrested on the arrival of the steamer at Selkirk. He remained at the trading post at Selkirk under supervision for a couple of days, until the arrival of a steamer to convey him back to Dawson. During his stay at the trading post he made no allusion to the robbery, but was very conversational, and appeared perfectly unconcerned, although he must have already premeditated suicide. He embarked on the next steamer for Dawson, but had managed to secrete some laudanum which the police when searching him had not detected, and the following morning was found in his bunk on the steamer dying from its effects.

Indian couples would occasionally get married by the missionary residing in Selkirk, but a white wedding in the place forms an extremely rare occurrence. I only know of one occasion when such an event occurred, and it took place during my last winter in Selkirk, between a French-Canadian who owned a ranche on the Pelly River, about a mile from the Pelly road-house, and a white lady who resided in the vicinity. They were both well known amongst the residents in Selkirk, and in such a small community everybody is supposed to know all about each other's affairs. However, nobody had the smallest suspicion of their engagement, until one winter's day they arrived together in a sleigh at the missionary's house in Selkirk, and informed him that they had just become engaged and wished to be married that afternoon.

The proclamation of banns is not a necessity in the Yukon, so the arrangements were rapidly concluded, and about an hour later the wedding ceremony was conducted in the church, attended by the fashionable society of Selkirk. When the wedding was concluded the whole party, except fortunately the missionary, repaired to the trading post, where a reception was held, and although no wedding breakfast was furnished for the occasion the guests were provided with whisky *ad libitum* at the expense of the bridegroom. The result was that a heated altercation eventually broke out between two of the people, which suddenly devolved into a free fight. Some of the others joined in, and the place was suddenly in an uproar, and resembled a bear garden. The bridegroom very sensibly adjourned with his bride to the stable, where he quickly got ready his sleigh and drove off to his ranche, leaving his wedding guests to fight the matter out to their hearts' content.

Late in the autumn, after my second year at the trading post, I decided to pay a visit to the outside world for a change. I had now been absent from England for thirteen years, eleven years of which had been spent in the Yukon, so my original intention was to pay a visit to England for the ensuing winter, and return to Selkirk the following spring. It was then about the third week in October, with the country covered with snow, while ice had commenced floating down the Yukon. The last steamer of the season was now proceeding from Dawson to Whitehorse, and was expected to arrive at Selkirk the following morning, so there was only a short interval for making up my mind on the subject. Accordingly, the next day, I locked up my cabin and nailed some boards across the window, and having sold my sleigh dogs, embarked on the steamer for Whitehorse.

On about the second day after leaving Selkirk we arrived at the Five Fingers, which, except for occasional sand-bars, forms the only obstruction between the mouth of the Yukon and Whitehorse. The Fingers are formed by five huge rock pillars extending across the river, which present rather a striking appearance. The river, in consequence, becomes banked up for about a foot or so, forming a slight rapid. A wire cable had therefore been laid down between one of the openings in the pillars which form the regular channel, so that steamers could pick up the cable and adjust it round the capstan, and then proceed to pull themselves up until the rapid had been surmounted.

For about four days the steamer slowly proceeded against the current of the Yukon and pushed its way through the ice-cakes floating down the river, and after crossing Lake La Barge, and then proceeding up Thirty Mile River at the further end of the lake, we eventually arrived at Whitehorse. The railway here commences, the line being cut through the dense primeval forest, skirts along the shore of Lake Bennett, and then puffs slowly along up rather a steep incline, until its arrival at the summit of the White Pass. Here commences the valley where form the head waters of the main branch of the Yukon. A small mountain stream, which one could almost jump across, was flowing rapidly towards the North, and gurgled and bubbled amongst the rocks and boulders. One could hardly realise that this tiny stream was the commencement of the mighty Yukon, which continues its long journey of over 2000 miles, until it ultimately arrives at Behring Strait.

The White Pass is an opening in the mountain range which divides the Yukon territory from the Alaskan coast. The scenery on the summit is wild and dreary in the extreme, as we are now above the timber line, and the country is mainly composed of rocks and scraggy bush. During the Klondyke boom in 1898 the White Pass was one of the principal routes into the Yukon, and people came pouring through it in thousands. This was before the construction of the railway; and the task of transporting themselves and their supplies over the summit of the pass proved an arduous and difficult undertaking. The route was lined with the corpses of hundreds of horses which had died from injuries and privation. An avalanche swept down the mountain side which buried a number of people, while many others succumbed and died on the trail from hardship and exposure.

During our progress men were occasionally passed trudging along the line with packs strapped on their backs. These were people proceeding from Whitehorse to Skagway who could not afford to pay $20 for accommodation on the railway. The summit of the pass is the boundary line between Canadian territory and Alaska, and United States officials here boarded the train in order to examine the passengers' luggage. This, however, did not take much time; and the train then proceeded down the valley on the other side of the pass, the line winding along the mountain side amidst beautiful mountain scenery, and occasionally passing over high trestle bridges, where the passengers almost shuddered as they peered from the carriage windows down a rocky chasm with a mountain torrent roaring far below.

On arriving at Skagway I embarked on a steamer for Vancouver, and skirted down the Alaskan coast amidst innumerable densely wooded islands as though traversing a network of canals. The steamer called on its way at Prince Rupert, the Pacific terminus of the future trans-continental railway. The town appeared like all Western American towns which have suddenly sprung into existence through the occurrence of a "boom" of some description. The dense spruce forest had been cleared away in the vicinity, although the stumps of trees were still scattered about through the compounds. The main street was unpaved except for a wooden footpath, and led at a steep angle up the hill side; while it was lined on either side with rough wooden cabins. These appeared to be principally drinking saloons and real estate offices, where people were busily employed in trying to dispose of prospective town lots at exorbitant prices.

After leaving Prince Rupert the steamer skirted along the coast in a perfectly calm sea, being protected on the windward side by the islands, until we arrived at the open channel off Prince of Wales Island. This open sound only extends for a few miles, but the sea is apt to become exceedingly nasty, as it is here exposed to the full breadth of the Pacific Ocean. Luckily, on this occasion the weather was comparatively calm, and on about the fifth day after leaving Skagway we eventually arrived at Vancouver.

The population of Dawson in 1898 consisted of about 30,000 inhabitants; but in 1908, or ten years later, had dwindled down to about 3000. During the Klondyke boom thousands of people poured into the country expecting to secure rich claims without any great difficulty; but when they discovered that these could only be obtained by a few lucky individuals they became discouraged, and numbers of them flocked back to civilisation. Gold discoveries in other parts of the Yukon also tended to diminish the population of Dawson. Every mining town consists of a large number of disappointed individuals, so whenever a fresh strike is reported, they immediately hurry off to the new diggings, where they hope to obtain better luck.

A few years after the Klondyke boom a rich discovery was reported at Nome, situated at the mouth of the Yukon, and a stampede promptly occurred from Dawson for 1600 miles down the Yukon to the new locality. Shortly after the Nome boom people rushed off to Fairbanks, another place on the Yukon where a gold discovery was reported; and later on a boom occurred on the Tanana River, a tributary of the lower Yukon; and, just before leaving Selkirk, I heard that another migration had taken place to some fresh discovery somewhere down the Yukon. Each of these places became suddenly invaded with stampeders from the old mining camps, and also with crowds of fresh enthusiasts from the towns on the Pacific coast. The place, hitherto nothing but jungle, was conseqently transformed into a large city of perhaps 30,000 inhabitants within a few weeks, and remained so until a fresh boom was started in some fresh locality, upon which the city was promptly forsaken by a large proportion of its population, and deserted cabins could be counted by the hundreds.

The Yukon district is situated too far north for the production of wheat, and is not likely ever to develop into an agricultural country. A few ranches are cultivated in the river valleys, where potatoes and oats form the principal item of production; but the ranchers have only a very limited and continually decreasing market for their crops. The localities suitable for cultivation are confined to favourable spots in the river valleys, so that only a very small proportion of the country is of any use whatever, except to the miner and the trapper.

Ideas have occasionally been mooted of connecting Dawson by railway with the new transcontinental line, which is now under construction. The undertaking, however, appears to be extremely improbable, as the line would have to traverse about 1000 miles of mountainous and densely wooded country; while the Yukon district affords nothing to warrant the support of anything except a most scanty population. The timber in the country, although enormous in extent, would be of very little value for commercial purposes, as the trees in northern regions do not approach in size that of the timber growing farther south. The low grade gravels in the Klondyke district will probably continue to be mined by large companies for a certain number of years; but both the mining and the trapping are decreasing factors which will gradually disappear, and the Klondyke district will then revert to the Indians, or will probably be inhabited by the Chinese.

Numbers of old mining camps, after becoming worked out and abandoned by the white men, are taken over by the Chinese, who indulge extensively in gold mining and can thrive on a pittance where a white man would starve. I have occasionally come across some of these old deserted mining camps in the districts of Cassiar and Cariboo in British Columbia, and have watched the Chinamen prowling like wild animals among the abandoned cabins and old mining plants, and pawing about amongst the débris which have been forsaken by their former owners. The spectacle is somewhat depressing, and rather reminds one of the deserted cities in India and elsewhere, formerly the scene of a thriving population and now abandoned to the wolf and the coyote.

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