

TO THE YUKON BY RAIL

A BOLD AND DIFFICULT ENTERPRISE.

Interesting to Men Impelled by Gold Hunger—The Terrible Dead Horse Trail—Up the Dangerous White Pass.

Of all the industrial auxiliaries which the closing century has seen set up on the American continent the railroad just finished from Alaskan tide-water into the valley of the great Yukon is the boldest and most difficult, and promises to be the most useful. A year ago the gold-hesprinkled Yukon water-shed was accessible only to the hardy mountaineer and at the cost of much money, immense labor and serious peril. Of all those who ventured up the Pacific through the Alexandria archipelago and Lynn Canal as far as Skaguay and Dyea at least a quarter turned back intimidated and disheartened, for in front of them loomed the precipitous coast range, with the terrible Dead Horse Trail on the one hand, and on the other, only five miles north the Chilkoot Trail from Dyea, even more terrible, with its dreaded avalanches and its cemeteries of numerous dead at Sheep Camp.

To cross the divide was at the risk of limb and life, for it involved hitching along a narrow and insecure shelf through a dark defile over a turbulent river and climbing rocky walls that defied almost any creature not armed with claws. In Chilkoot Pass, back of Dyea, several scores of adventurous Argonauts had been buried beneath the tremendous slides of ice and rock from the summit, and the Indian trail from Skaguay over White Pass was populous with buzzards feasting on the carcasses of a thousand horses which perished there in a single autumn.

The narrow vale through which flows down to Lynn Canal the stream known as the Skaguay is one of the most humid portions of the earth's surface. It is carpeted with heavy moss, and the thickest evergreens and tangle of dead trees are saturated with water and veiled with lichens of gigantic size and motley coloring, and kept wet by tremendous storms of rain and by an incessant downflow of melted snow from the summits of mountains where winter makes its perpetual home. The climate of the sea coast and adjacent islands is equable and mild, the winters being scarcely as cold as those at Washington, D. C.; but the valley of the Yukon is cold and forbidding, constituting a strange contrast.

To men impelled by gold hunger the coast range was only a temporary bugbear. American enterprise did not long remain idle in the presence of this menacing obstruction. Chilkoot Pass is nearly a thousand feet higher than White Pass, on account of which important fact the great stream of eager transit turned in the spring of 1898 from the former to the latter. But even here the Thinkit Trail was so terrible that, while thousands of the hardier succeeded in getting over and setting their trail boats afloat on the Upper Yukon at Lake Bennett, a hundred every week turned back, appalled and disheartened.

One of the visitors to Skaguay in the fall of 1897 strolled up the Indian path which had even thus early accumulated so many of the carcasses of horses falling from the sloping rocks that it had borrowed from that circumstance the greswome name of "Dead Horse Trail." He was a man of mature years, shrewd, strong, alert, fearless, and not unacquainted with personal exposure in Indian wars and hazardous enterprises—Mr. George A. Brackett, one of the early pioneers of Minnesota. He climbed the trail to the summit of the White Pass, and concluded that though almost inaccessible to horses and dogs, it was practicable to build a wagon road through the dark defiles and up the frowning activities. From his tour of inspection he returned to Skaguay, where a company was formed for the purpose of building and cutting a road through the lowest pass of the coast range to Lake Bennett, the projectors to reimburse themselves by charging a small toll to travellers.—W. A. Crofut, in Frank Leslie's Monthly for April.

Compliment With a Sting.

Talk about delightfully put compliments. I heard a girl at a supper deliver herself of a perfect jewel of the other night. She leaned across the table—the table next me—to say it, and she meant well.

"Oh, Miss Dumdam," she said, cordially, "I've got a trade at last for you."

"A swap?" asked Miss Dumdam, beaming with anticipatory delight.

"Uhhuh," answered the other.

"Lieutenant Bulbul said it."

"Oh, do tell it!" pleaded Miss Dumdam, eagerly.

"It was an awfully nice one," said the first girl, "and Lieutenant Bulbul meant it, too. He said you waltzed divinely. He said he was awfully surprised, too, to find it out, so I know he meant it. He said he wouldn't have thought from seeing you walk that you could dance at all."—Washington Post.

A common sight in Cape Colony is a herd of ostriches accompanying a railway train as it speeds on its way.

President's Kruger's ultimatum was the first that had ever been received by Great Britain.

LIGHTER WHEELS.

Changes in the 1900 Bicycle—Bevel Gears.

There is little, if any, appreciable change in the models of construction of this year's bicycles from last year's pattern and build. While in quality and workmanship improvements are made where possible, the models in both chain and chainless wheels are practically unchanged.

With most manufacturers there is a tendency toward lighter machines, while with a few the coaster brake or "free wheel" will be featured. Many of the makers composing the American Bicycle Company, or "Cycle Trust," will give more attention to the chainless bicycle than to the chain driven wheel. They believe that the experimental stages of the chainless has been passed, and that before the close of another year it will have superseded the chain machine in popularity.

The improvement in the bevel gear type of chainless to be marketed this year are a reduction of several pounds in weight. Chainless models that formerly weighed from twenty-six to thirty pounds have been reduced by three, four, and, in some cases, five pounds. A constant rider will appreciate the value of this improvement.

The reduction in weight has been accomplished by a general lightening of the tubular framing and of the spokes in the wheel. Some makers had increased the number of spokes in the wheels from forty to forty-four, the new makes being of smaller design and lighter. In several of the highest grade machines the front forks are being lightened without lessening their strength. For the first time several of the bevel gear models are fitted with the new coaster brakes, which by many are considered an improvement.

One manufacturer announces that he has put no "roadster" on the market this year. His experience has been that lightly constructed wheels are not broken by heavy riders so often as by reckless riders. Some of the light wheels built by this maker will be fitted with one and three-quarter inch tires for heavier riders.

Another manufacturer announces a combination of bevel gear and cushion frame bicycle. He thinks the two combined make a popular mount with long distance tourists and others by whom comfort is sought. This same maker has reduced the length of his cranks from seven to six and a half inches. Several firms have put their 1899 models on the market again without other change save a reduction in price.

The prices of chainless wheels of the highest type this year are \$75 and \$90, while chain driven wheels vary from \$25 to \$50, according to grade. At the latter price, however, the best chain wheels built may be bought. The most important feature to the average purchaser probably will be the fact that he may buy good grade, well built, easy running wheels for \$35 and \$40, while even the wheels listed at \$25 are strong and serviceable.

Tandems are in such small demand that many firms have entirely ceased their manufacture. Those that have not done so, with one or two exceptions, put out the models of 1898 and 1899.

Several makers who have added automobile factories to their bicycle plants make a feature of specially constructed motor cycles for one or two persons. Gasoline will be the motive power of most of these, and prices vary from \$300 to \$500 for a machine.

Position.

A good deal has been said concerning position for wheelmen. But it may not be generally known that while some riders find it necessary to pull up on the handle bars to make use of their entire physical powers, others are unable to get the use of their full strength without bearing down on the handle bars. The speedy rider must necessarily bend down upon the bars but when training, it is best, so far as



possible, to sit erect. In any case, let the bend be at the joint and not in the middle of the back. There is likewise a difference in the balance of wheels. In some makes an erect position will secure the proper balance of the wheel and the greatest ease of running, and in others the weight must be thrown farther forward to get the right balance.

The Cycle War.

In the cycle trade the inevitable war between the combination of manufacturers, generally known as the Cycle Trust, and those wheel manufacturers who are on the outside of the combination, is at last assuming shape. Both sides have planned an active campaign and though the members of the retail trade will anxiously await the outcome of hostilities, it is not believed that the cost of bicycles to riders will be affected. The Cycle Trust claims to own and control patents necessary in the construction of all bicycles. By use of these patents it proposes that all outside manufacturers either shall become licensees of the Trust or go out of business. On the other hand, the independent makers, who are as numerous as the makers in the combination, have banded together for mutual protection and have openly defied the Cycle Trust.

Automobile Club House.

The Automobile Club of America has chosen its country clubhouse and will take possession on March 1. It is the Kingsland Point mansion and grounds in the Tappan Zee on the Hudson. The property covers 233 acres and is liberally grown over with trees. It is twenty-six miles from New York over good roads. The use of the house and grounds has been given to the club by John Brisben Walker for one year, free of rent. Mr. Walker is interested in an automobile manufacturing

THE ASPECT OF BASEBALL.

Off Season Chat of League and Other News.

EIGHT CLUB SCHEDULE.

National League Players Signing Their Contracts Slowly—A Remarkable Dream—A Little Story About McGraw—Minor News and Notes.

It is too bad, but the condition of base ball in this country to-day can best be described by the single word "stagnant." There are several reasons for this, but the most potent is the fact that the game carried on by the National League savors too much of the syndicate or trust spirit. Does the public care for that kind of sport? Or, rather, is not at least 25 per cent. of that number is opposed to it? And if that number opposed to it? And if prefer the old method which favored individuality and provoked rivalry, it would be well to turn back and resume the practice that prevailed before a few individuals owned it all. For that 25 per cent. of attendance is the difference between profitable and losing base ball.

Minor leagues seem to be active, yet it is a question whether the modern game of golf, has not drawn away a good many former base ball enthusiasts.

"These base ball magnates don't do their business with the expedition that they expect us to play games," remarked a veteran ball player, while discussing the unsettled conditions of base ball. "If we have a wrangle in the excitement of the contest and delay play for a few minutes, they raise a row and indulge in roasts on us. Well, we divide the year with them. Our season lasts six months, and they begin when ours closes. Compare the results of the playing and the business end, and I guess you'll find that the players are entitled to as much, if not more, credit than their employers."

"Let me tell you a singular dream I had recently. We had fanned for several hours that night and my head was full of base ball when I sank into a troubled sleep. It seemed to me that I was doing as I usually do, to report to the Great Empire to get my assignment for eternity. As I entered the portals I was surprised to receive a cordial greeting from St. Peter. 'You'll have to go before the judgment seat pretty soon, Jack,' he said, 'and if you will take my tip you'll refresh your mind so that when you go to give an account of your life you'll not overlook anything.' I thanked him and began to reflect. 'Don't trust to your memory altogether,' he continued. 'Here's a piece of chalk. Follow that aisle until the first turn and just around the corner you'll come to a blackboard. Write on it all the lies you have told, big and small. I'll be around in a few minutes with other instructions for you.' The piece of chalk he handed me was bigger than a bat and I was inclined to protest, but he moved me away. I followed the directions, and as I hurried around the corner I ran into a National League magnate, whose name often appears in the papers but never in connection with the championship club. 'Is that you, Jack?' 'You here,' I replied, 'where are you going?' 'Back for more chalk,' he said. Such a truthful answer from that man so surprised me that I woke up. Some of these fellows would need two or three boxes of chalk to jot down the many times they have dicked the truth."

"Connie" Mack, who is managing the Milwaukee club, of the Western League, announces that Jimmy Burke, the St. Louis boy, will play third base for his team next season. Mack, it appears, loaned Burke to the Rochester club last spring, and recently yanked him back to Milwaukee.

George Decker, who played with Muckenfuss' Browns for awhile in 1898, has gone to Los Angeles, Cal., where he will remain until March. His health was poor during the greater part of last season, and, although he says he feels well enough now, he is sure the trip to the coast will do him a lot of good. Decker has not yet signed for this year. He looks doomed to drop the bat of the minor leagues, most likely the American.

Fitcher Elmer Cunningham has not yet signed with Pittsburg, and it looks assured that he will be intrusted with the management of the Louisville club in the event of that club remaining in the National League. Otherwise he will become a Pirate.

Taylor, of Toronto led the Eastern League bats in the past season with a percentage of .385. Frisbee, who played with Boston for awhile, was third, Jimmy Bannon seventh, "Tuck" Turner tenth, and "Billy" Shindle twenty-fourth. Smink led the catchers, Lew Whistler the first basemen, Taylor the second basemen, Shindle the third basemen, Cooney the shortstops, and McHale the outfielders.

Says Arthur Irwin in the Washington Post: "McGraw has had a long fight with himself when he came into the league as a kid, six or seven years ago, than any youngster that I ever heard tell of. Wally Taylor, the Covington boy who played for me at Toronto, played in the minor leagues with McGraw. He was with him the day he left to join Baltimore, and he is responsible for the story I am going to tell, which shows the amount of confidence Mac had when he first came into the league. Wally went to the depot to see Mac off, it seems, and he gave him the usual good wishes. McGraw replied: 'Don't worry about me, Wally, I'll get along; and, furthermore, I expect to be one of the greatest ball players that ever lived in a few years, because I intend to work hard.' McGraw has made that good. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest ball players that ever lived. I admire his gall at times. In a game in Washington we had the Orioles beaten to a standstill. In the eighth inning McGraw came to the bat. He had one ball, when Mercer shot one right over the plate. Mac let it go by, and then turned around to Hank O'Day, who was umpiring, and gave him one of his characteristic looks. 'Two balls,' shouted O'Day. 'There you are,' replied McGraw; 'that was right over the plate, but you didn't have the nerve to call it.' And then Mugsy expressed his opinion about O'Day in his own peculiar manner."

THE SKILLFUL BILLIARDISTS.

Why So Few Men Become First-Class Players.

GEORGE SLOSSON'S VIEW.

The Foremost Professionals Believe That Skill Is Largely a Matter of Practice—"Student" Slosson Says He Began When He Was a Boy.

"Why do the leading professional billiardists play so much better than the leading amateurs?"

That is a question that has doubtless been asked hundreds of times by those who indulge in the "gentleman's game."

A reporter of the New York Sun asked George Slosson, the well-known professional, who is known as the "Student" because it is popularly supposed that all his skill was developed by a careful study of every point of the game, why it is that so few men reach the stage of first-class in billiards? This was his reply:

"Hundreds of persons have asked me that question during the past twenty-five years and I never have been able to give them a really satisfactory answer. In the first place, of course, a man must have a natural instinct for the game as one must have a strong liking for music in order to become a great musician. But leaving all that aside I believe a person must begin at billiards when he is a boy and stick to it all the time to become a great player. This was my experience and it has been the experience of Schaefer, Daly, Sexton, Wallace and all the other great players of the past and present. In my own case my father kept a hotel in the northern part of this State. One of his boarders was an old man we used to call Uncle Jerry, who kept a public billiard hall near by. In those days it was almost a crime for a boy to be seen in a public billiard hall, but from running errands for Old Uncle Jerry, I was frequently in his place. When he was out of the room for a minute I would grab a cue and knock the balls around. I was fascinated with the sport, but got little chance to enjoy myself with the ivories until I concocted a scheme which worked to perfection for many days."

"I was a boy in short pants in those days. My scheme was simply this: I said to Uncle Jerry: 'See here, you are growing too old to come down early in the morning to clean up the place. Give me the key and I'll come down and do that work for you.' After a little hesitation he consented, and early every morning I would go to his bedroom and he would hand me the key. But, once in the billiard hall, I would throw a set of balls on the table and practise as long as I dared. Uncle Jerry was very old and very lame, and he walked slowly. The hotel was four blocks from the billiard hall, and by running to the window every now and then I could see when he was coming. Then I would put away the cue and he would be coming to clean up like a good fellow and usually had the job nearly completed by the time Uncle Jerry reached the room."

"One morning, however, he noticed the table I had been playing on was covered with chalk marks and dust and he asked me how that happened because he had brushed it off before closing up the night before. I made an excuse that I thought was satisfactory, but was caught red-handed the next morning. Uncle Jerry suspected me and instead of coming to the hall by his regular route, he went out the back door of the hotel and reached his place of business by another entrance. He was so angry when he saw me playing billiards that he kicked me downstairs. It was nearly a month before I was able to make peace with the old fellow but finally he consented to allow me to clean up the place in return for an hour's practice at the table. Soon after that I was regularly employed by him as marker, and from that time to this I have played billiards nearly every day. That was nearly forty years ago, and I play better to-day than I ever played before in my life."

"It is simply a case of beginning early and keeping up your practice. Such a case I experienced and Daly's also was similar to mine. Both began playing the game when they were mere boys and have kept it up ever since. Of course, I learn new things every day. The amateurs nowadays play better than the professionals of a decade ago. That is simply because the tools are better and they get the benefit of all the things the professionals have learned from time to time. When I first began playing billiards the 6 by 12 table with six pockets was used. The cues were worse than one sees nowadays in the poorest country hotels. They were simply pieces of ash with a thin strip of leather for a tip. It was almost impossible to make a draw shot with them. As the tools were perfected we billiardists were able to play better. Had I begun with the cue, table, cushion, cloth and ivories I use now doubtless I would be twice as good a player as I am now."

"The best amateurs of to-day put up a fast game, but most of them have other business to attend to, and they are not able to play steadily. Occasionally they go for weeks without touching a cue. Then it takes them a week to catch up to the point they left off in the degree of skill."

"But," said the reporter, "you have customers who have been playing regularly every afternoon for ten or fifteen years. Why do not they improve? Instead of averaging two or three at the fourteen-inch banking game, why cannot they average ten or fifteen, considering the amount of time they devote to billiards?"

"In most every case," replied Slosson, "they began to play when they were old enough to vote. They followed no particular system and hardly know more about the game now than when they first handled a cue, although of course by constant practice they are able to execute better. But, having reached a certain stage, they hang there because they don't know the thousand and one things which every first-class professional has mastered. Particular shots I have practised for months. I know a professional who practised nothing but the left-handed masse for six months steadily. I could not begin to figure the time I have spent in practising masse shots."

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