

THE PHILIPSBURG MAIL.

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ALL ABOUT ALASKA

The Government Has Been Making In-
vestigations.

THE NEW GOLD DISCOVERIES

What Prof. Spurr Says of the Mines
and Miners of the Golden North.
Some Valuable Information.

The arrival of the Excesior, the mod-
ern treasure ship, at Seattle, freighted
with gold, and the consequent national
excitement and demand for precise in-
formation, has directed attention to the
fact that the United States government
recently sent an expedition into Alaska
after the very knowledge that is now
so widely sought. The expedition con-
sisted of members of the United States
geological survey, and was headed by
that distinguished geologist and man
of science, Prof. J. Edward Spurr.
The following information gathered by
Prof. Spurr is of the greatest possible
interest. It might be said to be the
first official knowledge.

Close to the waters of the Yukon
river, in far away Alaska, the north-
ern-most of Uncle Sam's possessions,
lies what the government now pro-
nounces the coming gold mining cen-
ter of the world. Here for the first
time is told, by Prof. Spurr, chief of
the party sent out by the government
geological survey to thoroughly examine
what has hitherto been largely veiled in
mystery.

There is little about the country, be-
sides its mineral wealth, to invite. In
the short summer, clouds of mos-
quitoes descend on the yellow land
like the pestilence of ancient Egypt.
In the long winter the cold is so se-
vere that mining can only be carried
on during the sunshiny days. Yet
Prof. Spurr tells us in the accompany-
ing statement that this is a country
which for placer will exceed Califor-
nia's palmiest days. To gather the
gold, however, and vein it from the
surroundings where nature has placed
it, much valuable machinery is neces-
sary. So it will be seen that it is go-
ing to be a hard fight the seeker of
wealth will have, who tries his
chances with fortune in the Yukon
gold fields. This is what Prof. Spurr
says:

"Much has been written of late con-
cerning the possibilities of Alaska as
a gold-producing country. As a mat-
ter of fact, the production of the pre-
sent year may be roughly estimated at
\$3,000,000; this amount, however,
comes from an immense region of half
a million square miles, or about one-
quarter as large as the United States.
Of the mines which produce this gold,
some are in the bed-rock while others
are placer diggings.

"The bed-rock mines are few in
number and situated on the southeast
coast, which is the most accessible part
of the territory. The chief one is the
great Treadwell mine near Juneau,
and there are also important mines at
Berner's bay, at the island of Uganu
and other places. The latest strike is
in Klondyke. Most of these mines,
however, are in low grade ore, and the
production is only made profitable by
means of careful management and op-
erations on a very large scale.

"The placer mines are those which
occupy the most prominent place in the
popular mind, since they are re-
mote from civilization and in a coun-
try about which little is known, and
which is, on account of this uncer-
tainty, dangerously attractive to the
average man. This gold-producing
country of the interior is mostly in the
vicinity of the Yukon river or of some
of its immediate tributaries. The
most productive districts hitherto have
been the Forty Mile district, which
lies partly in American and partly in
British territory, and the Birch creek
district, which lies in American terri-
tory. Some gold diggings are also
supposed to exist on Stewart river, and
some gold has been shipped from the
Keykuk. During the latter part of the
past season diggings were also found
on the Klondok and Indian rivers near
Forty Mile.

Another place concerning which
there have been vague rumors of gold,
causing a stampede of many unpre-
pared and unfitted men, is the Cook
inlet country which lies on the coast
above the mouth of Copper river, a sit-
uation remote alike from the mines
near Juneau and from the placer mines
on the Yukon.

In all this immense country over
which placer digging is carried on, or
has been carried on, I estimate that
there are about two thousand miners.
They are mostly in the Yukon district.
These districts lie in a broad belt of
gold-producing rocks having a consid-
erable width and extending in a gen-
eral east and west direction for several

hundred miles. Throughout this belt
occur quartz veins which carry gold,
but so far as yet found out, the ore is
of low grade, and a large proportion
of the veins have been so broken by
movements in the rocks that they can-
not be followed. For this reason, the
mines in the bed-rock cannot be
worked except on a large scale with
improved machinery, and even such
operations are impossible until the
general conditions of the country, in
reference to transportation and sup-
plies, are improved.

Through the gold-bearing rocks the
streams have cut deep gullies and can-
yons, and in their beds the gold which
was contained in the rocks which
have been worn away, is concentrated,
so that from a large amount of very
low grade rock there may be formed in
places a gravel sufficiently rich in gold
to pay washing. All the mining
which is done in this country, there-
fore, consists in the washing out of
these gravels.

In each gulch prospectors are at lib-
erty to stake out claims not already
taken, the size of the claims being de-
termined by vote of all the miners in
each gulch, according to the richness
of the gravel. The usual length of a
claim is about five hundred feet along
the stream, and the total width of the
gulch bed, which is ordinarily nar-
row. When a prospector has thus
staked out his claim, it is recorded by
one of the miners, who is elected by
his fellows in each gulch for that pur-
pose, and this secures his sufficient
title. The miners' laws are practical-
ly the entire government in these dis-
tricts, for the remoteness prevents any
systematic communication being car-
ried on with the United States. All
questions and disputes are settled by
miners' meetings, and the question in
dispute is put to popular vote.

In prospecting, the elementary meth-
od of panning is used to discover the
presence of gold in gravel, but after a
claim is staked and systematic work
begun, long sluice boxes are built of
boards, the miners being obliged to
fell the trees themselves and saw out
the lumber with whip-saws, a very la-
borious kind of work. The depth of
gravel in the bottom of the gulches var-
ies from a foot up to twenty or thirty
feet, and when it is deeper than the
latter figure it cannot be worked.

The upper part of the gravels is bar-
ren, and the pay-dirt lies directly upon
the rock beneath, and is generally very
thin. To get at this pay dirt all the
upper gravels must be shoveled off,
and this preliminary work often re-
quires an entire season, even in a very
small claim. When the gravel is
deeper than a certain amount—say ten
feet—the task of removing it becomes
formidable. In this case the pay-dirt
can sometimes be got at in the winter
season when the gravels are frozen
hard by sinking shafts through these
gravels and drifting along the pay-
dirt.

The pay-dirt thus removed is taken
to the surfaces and washed out in
sluices when the warm weather begins.

This underground working is done
by burning instead of blasting and
pickling. A fire is built close to the
frozen gravel, and when it is suffi-
ciently thawed, it is shoveled out and
removed. The stripping off of the up-
per gravels, which has been mentioned,
can be done only in the comparatively
short summer season when the surface
thaws.

The ordinary method of getting into
the Yukon country is by crossing the
Chilicat pass from Juneau, down the
Lewis and Yukon rivers to the gold
districts. The usual time for starting
is in April, and a large part of the
journey is made over ice which fills
the lakes and rivers at this time of
year. By this early starting, a large
part of the season available for work-
ing is obtained. Not every comer can
find new diggings which are profit-
able, and many of them are glad to
work for wages.

The ordinary wages in summer are
\$10 per day, but sixty days is consid-
ered about the average number for
summer work, so that the total earn-
ings are not so great as will appear at
first sight; and the prospects for work
during the remainder of the year are
slight. The journey over the pass and
down the Yukon is one of great diffi-
culty and hardship, especially as all
supplies have to be carried along. The
pass itself is difficult to cross, the lakes
are subject to violent gales, and there
are a number of very dangerous rap-
ids. Once in the country the newcom-
er finds himself no more comfortable.

During the summer season, when
the days sometimes are really hot,
there are swarms of mosquitoes and
gnats which have not their equal in
the world, and which are enough alone
to discourage most men. I have heard
stories, which I can readily believe to
be true, of strong and hardy men be-
ing so tormented by these pests while
on the trail through the swamp to the

Birch creek diggings that they broke
down and sobbed in utter despair.
The method of reaching these and
other diggings consists partly in pull-
ing a loaded boat against a swift
stream, and often over rapids, and
partly in trudging through the swamp
or over a rough mountain trail with a
heavy load on one's back. In winter
the thermometer falls so low that it
cannot be measured by any available
means. It is certain, however, that it
reached 70 degrees below zero. During
all this winter season very little can
be done and, as darkness exists most of
the time, life often seems intolerable.

The actual expenses of getting into
the country are considerable. Indians
must be hired to do a part or the whole
of the transportation of supplies across
the Chilicat pass at very high wages,
and the cost of the necessary outfit is
in itself considerable. On arriving at
the diggings provisions are often
not obtainable at any price; or, if they
are to be had, the variety is slight.
The supply is always uncertain, de-
pending upon the lateness of the spring
and of the fall.

Owing to the difficulty in bringing
in supplies, prices are very high at the
river posts and much higher in the
diggings. The freight alone from the
coast to the diggings costs as high as
50 cents a pound, so that when one
eats potatoes at \$1 a pound and bacon
at 85 cents a pound, other things in
proportion, the cost of living is enor-
mous, and even employment at \$10 per
day for sixty days out of the year will
not enable a man to grow rich very
rapidly. Even employment for wages,
moreover, is scarce, there being sev-
eral applicants for every job. Owing
to the high price of supplies, no claim
that does not pay at least \$10 a day to
each man working can be worked ex-
cept at a loss. Many competent men,
who engage in mining there and work
faithfully, experience failures, and are
unable to earn enough to buy provi-
sions.

In such a situation it is very difficult
to make one's way out of the country,
for the journey up the river along the
usual route requires upwards of thirty
days hard work, and provisions must
be bought for the trip. The trip down
the river and back to civilization by
steamer, is very expensive, and of late
years the number seeking to get out in
that way exceeded the carrying capac-
ity of the few steamers. Last year
fully 150 men who wished and in-
tended to leave the country by steamer
were unable to do so, and are still
there.

Under the conditions which now ex-
ist there are quite enough in the
Yukon district already, and the object
of this article is to discourage people
from rushing there without due con-
sideration. Probably ninety-nine out
of every hundred men are un-
fitted by nature for such a life as Yukon mining
necessitates, and had much better
never make the attempt. The hun-
dredth man must be a miner and fron-
tiersman by nature, strong and pa-
tient, a hard worker, and a lover of
secluded life. Even such a man will
very likely fail on account of the large
element of chance, and the most suc-
cessful miner obtains only a few thou-
sand dollars in profit after a number of
years of patient work.

Any great increase in the number of
men going into the Yukon district
would be disastrous on account of the
strict limits of the food supply and fa-
cilities for transportation. The result
would be famine, disorder and failure.
Several years ago this actually hap-
pened when all the Forty Mile miners
were without food and were obliged to
travel down the Yukon over the ice to
St. Michaels in the dead of winter, a
terrible journey of nearly two thou-
sand miles. At that time there were
only a few men in the country, but if
the number had been very much larger
even this resource would have been
impossible.

My general advice to the average
man intending to go to the Yukon
gold district is—to stay out. Many
men go there every year and suffer
hardship, failure, loss of capital, and
sometimes of health. If any one un-
dertakes the trip, he should take with
him enough supplies to last as long as
he intends to stay—one year, two
years, or whatever amount. He should
have money enough to last him into
the country and start again, if neces-
sary, and should start early enough in
the season to enable him to return up
the river if he intends to come out the
same year, for the facilities for trans-
portation by steamer are likely to be
entirely inadequate.

J. Edward Spurr,
United States Geological Survey.

THE MANHATTAN COMPANY.
President Thofehrn Talks About Their
Richness.

Among the mining men of promi-
nence who visited Butte last week,
according to the Miner, was Herman
G. C. Thofehrn, president of the Man-
hattan and Montana Mining company.
The properties of this company are
situated at the head of Stony creek, in
Granite county, and comprise at the
present time fourteen claims, on which

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there are now 30,000 tons of ore in
sight that will average \$50 per ton in
gold. The properties of the company
originally comprised only three claims,
the Blue Bell, Golden Anchor and the
Red Star. A short time ago a number
of extension claims were acquired by
the company, which increased the total
number of quartz claims to four-
teen. The company also owns five
acres of a millsite with plenty of water
and adjoining a placer claim of 40
acres. On the Red Star there is nine
feet of an ore vein exposed. On the
extension claims there is a lava cover
of a peculiar ore formation that assays
from \$8 to \$18 per ton in gold. The
company contemplates running a tun-
nel through the side of the mountain,
which will cut three large ore veins at
about 600 feet from the surface.
Speaking of the Golden Anchor group
of mines before the extensions were
acquired, Mr. Thofehrn says:
"This property consists of three full
claims adjoining each other, the Blue
Bell, the Golden Anchor and the Red
Star. Below these claims is a millsite
of 15 acres, and adjoining this is a
placer claim of 40 acres, called the
Lone Star. The property includes
also a water right of 3,000 miners'
feet, on Stony creek, and plenty of
good timber is on the ground. Good
road to millsite.

"All the property is situated in
Stony creek (unorganized) mining dis-
trict, Granite county, Montana. It is
about 60 miles from Anaconda and
about 20 miles from Philipsburg, and
because the discoveries of ore have
been quite recent, the district is not
widely known. The titles are perfect
as locations.

"Within the boundaries of the three
claims a lead nine feet wide, of good
though partly refractory ore, has been
traced for about 3,000 feet, and assay-
ing about \$12 in gold. Two shafts six
by six feet, single compartment, have
been sunk on this vein, striking the
ore from the 'grass roots' down. The
vein runs northwest by southeast, dip-
ping north. It is a true fissure, between
porphyry and slate rocks. The ore is a
quartzite, very ferruginous, partly
free millling on the surface, but will
probably turn to be all refractory fur-
ther down. Another shaft is sunk on
the Red Star on a parallel lead three
feet wide. The ore is not so good on
the surface, but improves and widens
lower down. The indications are that
this lead is a branch of the main lead
coming from a level probably not over
200 feet down from the main.

"As the main vein is nine feet wide
and as the ground is inclined, it should
be worked by tunnels and shafts,
while the ore now actually in sight
(above 15,000 tons) can be quarried
from the surface at an expense, I esti-
mate, below \$2 per ton. This could
be kept on to quite a depth, blocking
out an enormous amount of ore.

"As to the future operations of the
mine, the next season, I would propose
to erect a mill and leaching plant on
the ground. This would cost about
\$30,000 and the milling expenses would
be about \$3 per ton, handling 50 tons a
day. According to these figures the
following account may be established:
Cost of mining and milling, \$5 per
ton, \$250; 50 tons of ore at \$2 per ton,
recovery 85 per cent, \$2,210; receipts
per day, \$1,960."

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