

THE LAND OF TOMORROW

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649624812

The Land of Tomorrow by William B. Stephenson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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WILLIAM B. STEPHENSON

**THE LAND
OF TOMORROW**



THE BEAUTIFUL ALASKAN SUMMER

THE LAND OF TOMORROW

BY
WILLIAM B. STEPHENSON, JR.
FORMERLY UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER IN ALASKA



ILLUSTRATED

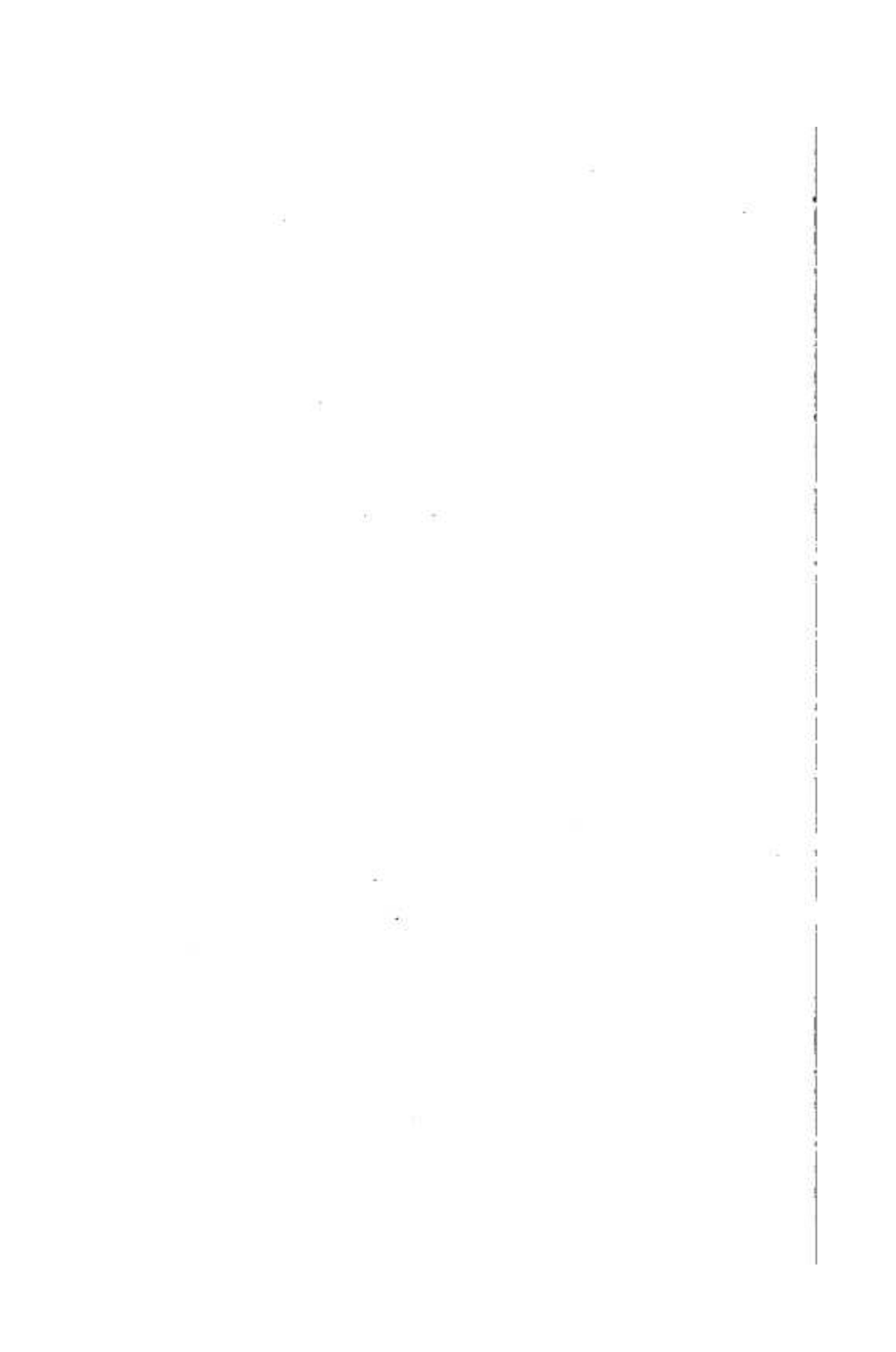


NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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TO MY MOTHER
ALICE HERSHEY STEPHENSON
WITH GREATEST DEVOTION

B.T., 11 July 1919



FOREWORD

THAT the Voice of the North calls insistently to him who once has dwelt amidst its snows is neither myth nor legend. It is history. Like the Song of the Lorelei, having heard it once it rings in his ears forever. True, it is a strenuous game which Man plays against Nature in Alaska. There, as nowhere else on earth, he pays the price for what he gets. Yet if you ask one who has loved and left her, one who has lived among her mountains, experiencing alike the bitter winter and the wondrous Alaskan summer, every day of which is perfect beyond the power of words to describe, even though he may deny the call it is not difficult to detect the hidden longing underlying his reply. For it is a fact not to be gainsaid that after such an experience, no matter how much a man may have looked forward to a life of ease after his return, he seldom finds it satisfying. Usually when he goes back home it is to find his old friends scattered or dead. The old pleasures turn to gall and wormwood in his mouth. In time the jar and turbulence of cities get on his nerves. He begins to hear the Voice! The old residents of Alaska, they who have lived

there so long that they seem a part of the land itself, always smile grimly when they hear a man begin to curse the land where he has made his wealth and swear that he never wants to see it again. To them it is an old story. They have seen many return to the regions whence they came. And they have seen most of them come back! They alone know the truth of the line from the old Norse legend:

"Dark and true and tender is the North!"

Following the opening up of the gold fields much was written of Alaska, but it was confined largely to the territory of the Yukon and the unsettled, chaotic conditions of the hour. The fortunate few who, through the medium of poem, song or story, have revealed the glories and the tragedies of this part of the country have done their work well. The record of that now-historic stampede to the Klondike gold fields has journeyed to the uttermost parts of the earth. But all this was twenty years ago. The Alaska of to-day is not what it was then, and there are sections of this marvelous country which no artist has yet painted and of which no poet has yet sung. Were this not true the present scribe would have no task,—no reason for adding to the list.

Sixty miles north of the mouth of the Yukon lies the little island of St. Michael on which the writer spent five years (first as manager of the Pacific Cold Storage Plant and afterward as United States Commissioner), journeying later from this island to almost every spot in the country which the white man has yet penetrated. Moved by the astonishing discovery during a recent visit to the States that there is practically nothing to be had in any library in regard to this island, so important a connecting link between the Yukon and the outer world, he is inflicting this little volume upon a patient and long-suffering public. He has been moved to do this, not from a desire to pose as a creator of literature, but because of a belief which can not be shaken that Alaska is *The Land of Tomorrow!* It is the only bit of Uncle Sam's territory where it is still possible for a man to get in on the ground floor. Now that the great World War is at an end thousands of soldiers are coming home again—to begin life over! They will be seeking a new environment. Travel, especially by water, even though (as is the case with those lately in the service) it be under difficulties and not always of one's own choosing, never fails to breed *wanderlust* in man. It awakens something within him which urges him to go adventuring, to seek