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**TRUTHFUL JAMES AND THE KLONDIKER.**  
BY BRET HARTE.

We woz sittin' free—like ez you and me—in our camp on the Stanislaw,  
Round a Christmas fire of bresh and briar stirred up by a pitch-pine bough,  
And Jones of Yolo had finished his solo on Bilson's prospectin'-pan,  
And we all woz gay until Jefferson Clay kem in with a Klondike man.

Now I most despise low language and lies—as I used to remark to Nye,  
But the soul of Truth—though he was but a youth—looked out of that  
stranger's eye;

And the things he said I had frequent read in the papers down on "the Bay,"  
And the words he choosed woz the kind wot's used in the best theayter play.

He talked of snows and of whisky wot froze in the solidest kind of chunk,  
Which it took just a pound to go fairly around when the boys had a first-class drunk,  
And of pork that was drilled and with dynamite filled before it would yield to a blow.  
For things will be strange when thermometers range to "sixty degrees below."

How they made soup of boots—which the oldest best suits—and a "fry" from a  
dancin' shoe.

How in Yukon valley a corps de bally might get up a fine "menoo"  
But their regular fare, when they'd nothin' to spare and had finished their final mule,  
Was the harness leather, which with hides went together, though the last  
didn't count as a rule.

Now all this seemed true, and quite natural too, and then he spoke of the "gold"  
And we all sot up, and refilled his cup, and this is the yarn he told:  
There was gold in heaps—but it's there it keeps, and will keep till the Judgment Day,  
For it's very rare that a man gets there—and the man that is there must stay!

It's a thousand miles by them Russian isles till you come on to "Fort Get There"  
(Which the same you are not if you'll look at the spot on the map that  
of gold is bare).

Then a River begins that the Amazon skins and the big Mississippi knocks out—  
For it's seventy miles cross its mouth when it smiles, and—you've only  
begun your route.

Here Bilson arose with a keerness-like pose, and he gazed on that Klondike youth,  
And he says: "Fair Sir, don't think I infer that your words are not words of truth,  
But I'd simply ask why—since that all men must die—your sperrit is  
wanderin' here.

When at Dawson City—the more's the pity—you've bin froz up nigh a year?"

"You needn't care—for I never was there," said that simple Klondike man.  
"I'm a company-floater and business promoter—and this is my little plan  
I show you the dangers to which you are strangers, and now for a sum you'll  
learn

How you can expect us—as per this Prospectus—to insure your safe return."

Then Bilson stared, and he almost rared, but he spoke in a calm-like tone:  
"You'll excuse me for sayin' you're rather delayin' your chance to insure  
your own!

For we're way-worn and weary, your style isn't cheery, we've had quite  
enough of your game."

And what did affect us—he took that Prospectus, and he chucked it right  
into the flame!

Then our Christmas fire of bresh and of briar flashed up on the Stanislaw  
And Jefferson Clay went softly away with that youth with a downcast brow;  
And Jones of Yolo repeated his solo on that still calm evening air,  
And we thought with a shiver of Yukon River and the Fort that was called  
"Get There."