

# TREASURE HUNT

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by Murray T. Pringle

IT WAS THE CUSTOM, at one time, for the Chinese people to send their emperors gifts of live fish as tokens of esteem. Seldom did a day pass when the Imperial Palace at Peking did not receive scores of such gifts. These fish, each bearing a small gold identification tag attached by the sender, were placed in a small lake on the palace grounds.

This practice was observed for some five centuries before China became a republic in 1911, and over that long period of time the bottom of the small lake gradually became covered with the gold identification disks which eventually dropped off the fish.

Strangely enough, nothing was

ever done about retrieving this gold until 1924.

In that year some enterprising fellow cast a thoughtful eye into the depths of the ancient lake and came up with a shrewd idea. Contacting the proper authorities, he offered \$450,000 for "exclusive fishing rights" to the lake. The authorities thought him a little mad, but accepted his offer. It was one of the most profitable business deals ever made. For the "fisherman," that is.

Within three years the fisherman dredged up from the bottom of the centuries-old lake some \$25,000,000 worth of gift fish gold identification disks! Which only goes to prove the truth of that age-old adage: "Gold is where you find it!"



## MAILMAN ON SKIS

by Louise Cheney

**O**FTEN in the dead of a blizzard-gripped winter night, a strange and eerie sight appeared in the white desolation of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A tiny ochre circle of light bounced like a displaced star frenziedly dancing amid the snowy peaks. No weird apparition or ghostly manifestation, the infinitesimal glow emanated from a lantern carried by a big Norwegian.

The big Norwegian was John A. Thompson, better known as Snowshoe Thompson, who for twenty winters, from 1856 to 1876, carried the mails over the high Sierra to the mining camps of Nevada and California. Seldom was he late and never did he allow the weather to deter him from starting on schedule. There was no regular path over

the vast trackless region, spectacular in its utter isolation but by observing trees and stones by day and using the stars by night, he arrived at his destination. It was his boast that he couldn't be lost and he never was. "I can find my way through the mountains any time," he would explain pointing to his forehead, "there is something up here that guides me."

John A. Thompson was born at Upper Tins, Prestijeld, Norway, April 30, 1827. When he was ten his parents moved to the United States and first lived in Illinois, then in Missouri. In 1841 the Thompsons moved to Iowa, remaining there until 1845 when they returned to Illinois. Three years after the great gold strike in California, John, then 24, decided to try his luck in the