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An Anchor. Weathering a Gale in St. Laurence Bay-Social Intercourse with the Natives-An Esquimo Orator-A Great Reindeer Owner-Native Appetite for Strong Drink-Glacier Markings. Steamer Corwin, St. Laurence Bay, Siberia, June 6, 1881.

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Written, June 6, 1881
Pub. July 13 "

AN ANCHOR.

Weathering a Gale in St. Laurence Bay—
Social Intercourse with the Natives—An
Esquimo Orator—A Great Reindeer Owner
—Native Appetite for Strong Drink—Gla-
cier Markings.

STEAMER CORWIN,
ST. LAURENCE BAY, Siberia, June 6, 1881.

Yesterday morning at half-past 1 o'clock, when we were within 25 miles of Plover Bay, where we hoped to be able to repair our rudder, we found that the ice pack was crowding us closer and closer inshore, and that in our partly disabled condition it would not be safe to proceed further. Accordingly we turned back and put into St. Laurence Bay, to await some favorable movement in the ice.

DROPPING ANCHOR IN ST. LAURENCE BAY.

We dropped anchor at 7:30 A. M. opposite a small Tchuchi settlement. In a few hours the wind began to blow fresh from the north, steadily increasing in force, until at 8 P. M. it was blowing a gale, and we were glad that we were in a good harbor instead of being out at sea slashing and tumbling about with a broken rudder among the wind-driven ice. It also rained and snowed most of the afternoon, the blue and gray sleet mingling in grand uproar with the white scud swept from the crests of the waves, making about as stormy and gloomy an atmosphere as I ever had the fortune to breathe. Now and then the clouds broke and lifted their ragged edges high enough to allow the mountains along the sides and around the head of the bay to be dimly seen, not so dimly, however, as to hide the traces of the heavy glaciation to which they have been subjected. This long bay, as shown by its trends, its relation to the ice fountains at its head and the sculpture of its walls, is a glacial fiord that only a short time ago was the channel of a glacier that poured a deep and broad flood into Behring Sea in company with a thousand others north and south along the Siberian coast.

MEETING AN OLD ESQUIMO ACQUAINTANCE.

In a party of natives that came aboard soon after we had dropped anchor, we discovered the remarkable Tchuchi orator, Jaroochah, whose acquaintance we made at the settlement on the other side of the bay, during our first visit, and who had so vividly depicted the condition of the lost whaler Vigilant. To-day, after taking up a favorable position in the pilot house, he far surpassed his previous efforts, pouring forth Tchuchi in overwhelming torrents, utterly oblivious to the presence of his rival, the howling gale.

NATIVE APPETITE FOR STRONG DRINK—AN ANTI-TEMPERANCE SPEECH.

During a sudden pause in the midst of his volcanic eloquence he inquired whether we had rum to trade for walrus ivory, when he explained, in total abstinence phrase, that rum was very bad stuff for Tchuchi, and by way of illustration related its sad effects upon the Esquimo natives of St. Laurence Island. Nearly all the natives we have thus far met admitted very readily that whisky was not good for them, but Jaroochah was not to be thus easily silenced, for he at once began an anti-temperance argument in saloon-and-moderate-drinker style, explaining with vehement gestures that some whisky was good, some bad; that he sometimes drank five cupsful of the good article in quick succession, the effect of which was greatly to augment his happiness, while out of a small bottle of the bad one, small glass made him sick. And as for whisky or rum causing people to die, he knew, he said, that that was a lie, for he had drunk much himself, and he had a brother who had enjoyed a great deal of whisky on board of whalers for many years, and that though now an old gray man he was still alive and happy. This speech was warmly applauded by his listening companions, indicating a public opinion that offers but little hope of success for the efforts of temperance societies among the Tchuchi.

Captain Hooper, the surgeon, and myself undertook to sketch the orator, who, when he had gravely examined our efforts, laughed boisterously at one of them, which, in truth, was a slanderous caricature of even his countenance, villainous as it was. In trading his ivory for supplies of some sort other than alcohol, he tried to exact some trifling article above what had been agreed on, when the trader threatened to have nothing further to do with him on account of the trouble he was making. This set the old Chief on his dignity, and he made haste to declare that he was a good and honorable man, and that in case the trade was stopped he would give back all he had received and go home, leaving his ivory on the deck heedless of what became of it.

RIDING OUT A GALE—WHALERS IN COMPANY.

The gale increased in violence up to noon to-day, when it began to abate slightly, and this evening it is still blowing hard. The Corwin commenced to drag her anchor shortly after midnight, when another that was held in readiness was let go, which held, so that we rode in safety. The whalers Francis Palmer and Hidalgo came into the bay last evening from Behring Strait and anchored near us. This morning the Hidalgo had vanished, having probably parted her cable.

NATIVE INDIFFERENCE TO THE WEATHER.

Last evening a second party of natives came aboard, having made their way around the head of the bay or over the ice. Both parties remained on board all night as they were unable to reach the shore in their light skin boats against the wind. Being curious to see how

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they were enduring the cold, I went on deck early. They seemed scarcely to feel it at all, for I found most of them lying on the deck among the sludge and sleeping soundly in the clothes they wore during the day. Three of them were sleeping on the broken rudder, swept by the icy wind and sprinkled with snow and fragments of ice that were falling from the rigging, their heads and necks nearly bare. I inquired why their reindeer parkas were made without hoods, while those of the Esquimos of St. Laurence Island had them; and seemed far more comfortable in stormy weather, keeping the head and neck warm and dry. They replied that they had to hunt hard and look quick all about them for a living, therefore it was necessary to keep their heads free; while the St. Laurence Esquimos were lazy, and could indulge in effeminate habits. They gave the same reason for cutting off most of the hair close to the scalps, while the women wear the hair long.

A DIRTY NATIVE.

One of their number is very dirty, and Capt. Hooper, who is becoming interested in glacial studies, declared that he had discovered two terminal moraines in his ears. When asked why he did not wash himself, our interpreter replied, "Because he is an old fellow, and it is too much work to wash." This was given with an air of having explained the matter beyond further question. Considering the necessities of the lives they lead, most of these people seem remarkably clean and well dressed and well behaved.

MORE NATIVE ORATORICAL ELOQUENCE.

The old orator poured forth his noisy eloquence late and early, like a perennial mountain fountain, some of his deep chest tones sounding in the storm like the roar of a lion, rolling his wolfish eyes and tossing his brown, skinny limbs in a frantic storm of gestures; now suddenly foreshortening himself to less than half his height, then shooting aloft with jack-in-the-box rapidity, while his people looked on and listened, apparently half in fear, half in admiration. We directed the interpreter to tell him that we thought him a good man, and were, therefore, concerned lest some accident might befall him from so much hard speaking. The Tchutchi, as well as the Esquimos we have seen, are keenly sensitive to ridicule, and this disconcerted him for a moment and made a sudden pause. He quickly recovered and got under way, however, like a wave withdrawing on a shelving shore, only to advance and break again with gathered force.

AN ESQUIMO CATTLE MAN.

The chief man of the second party from the other side of the bay is owner of a flock of reindeer, which he said were now feeding among the mountains at a distance of one sleep from the head of a bay to the south of here. He readily indicated the position on a map that we spread before him, and offered to take us to see them on a sled drawn by reindeer, and to sell us as many skins and as much meat as we cared to buy. When we asked how many reindeer he had, all who heard the question laughed at the idea of counting so many. "They cover a big mountain," he said proudly, "and nobody can count them."

SOME NATIVE SOCIAL FRUITS.

Shortly after we had breakfasted the reindeer chief having intimated that he and his friends were hungry, the Captain ordered a large pot of tea, with hard-tack, sugar and molasses, to be served to them in the pilot house. They ate with dignified deliberation, showing no unseemly haste, but eating rather like people accustomed to abundance. Jaroochah, who could hardly stem his eloquence even while eating, was particular about having his son invited in to share in the meal; also, two boys, about eight years old, giving as a reason, "they are little ones." We also called in a young woman, perhaps about 18 years old, but none of the men present seemed to care whether she shared with them or not, and when we inquired the cause of this neglect, telling them that white men always served the ladies first, Jaroochah said that while girls were "little fellows" their parents looked after them, but when they grew big they went away from their parents with "some other fellow," and were of no more use to them, and could look out for themselves.

Those who were not invited to this meal did not seem to mind it much, for they had brought with them plenty of what the whalers call "black skin"—the skin of the right whale, which is about an inch thick, and usually has from half an inch to an inch of blubber attached. This I saw them eating raw with hearty relish, snow and sludge the only sauce, cutting off angular blocks of it with butcher-knives, while one end of the tough black rubber-like mass was being held in the left hand, the other by their teeth. Long practice enables them to cut off mouthfuls in this way, sawing their long knives back and forth, close to their faces, as if playing the violin, without cutting their lips.

After the old orator left the steamer, the reindeer man accused him of being "a bad fellow, like a dog." He evidently was afraid that we were being fooled by his overwhelming eloquence into believing that he was a great man, while the precious truth to be impressed upon us was, that he, the reindeer man, whose flock covers a big mountain, was the true chief. I asked his son, who speaks a little English, why he did not take a trip to San Francisco, to see the white man's big town. He replied, as many a civilized man does under similar circumstances, that he had a little boy, too little to be left, and too little to leave home, but that soon he would be a big fellow, so high, indicating the hoped-for statue with his hand, then he would go to San Francisco on some whale-ship, to see where all the big ships and good whisky came from.

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THE SHORE OF ST. LAURENCE BAY.

Around the shore opposite our anchorage the ground is rather low, where the ancient glacier that filled the bay swept over in smooth curves, breaking off near the shore in an abrupt wall 70 to 100 feet high. Against this wall the prevailing north winds have piled heavy drifts of snow that curve over the bluff at the top and slope out over the fixed ice along the shore from the base. The gale has been loosening and driving out large masses of the ice, capped with the edge of the drift, past the vessel without doing us any harm; and now that the wind is abating, we hope to get away from here to-morrow morning, and expect to find most of the ice that stopped our progress yesterday broken up and driven southward far enough to enable us to reach Plover Bay without further difficulty.

JOHN MUIR.

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