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Some Popular Errors Corrected—A Good Country to Live In.

An Alaska Summer Day—Glorious Sunsets.

An Alaska is a good country to live in, with polar bear and iceberg stories to the contrary notwithstanding. The climate of the islands and of all that portion of the mainland that is bathed by the warm ocean current from Japan, is remarkably bland and temperate, and free from extremes of either heat or cold throughout the whole year. It is rainy however, a wee too wet, as a Scotchman would say, so much so that haymaking will hardly ever be extensively engaged in here, whatever future developments may show among contemplated possibilities. But even this rainy weather is of good quality, the best of the kind I ever experienced; mild in temperature, gentle in its fall, filling the fountains of the deep cool rivers, feeding the mosses and trees, and keeping the whole land fresh and fruitful; while anything more delightful than the shining weather in the midst of the rain; the great round sun-days that occur in the months of June and July, may hardly be found in any other portion of the world, north or south.

AN ALASKA SUMMER DAY.

An Alaska summer day is a day without night, for the sun at its lowest point is only a few degrees below the horizon, and the topmost colors of the sunset blend with those of the sunrise, leaving no gap of the night darkness between. What is called the midnight of the partial, divided days of other countries, is here only a low noon, the middle-point of the gloaming, with light enough to read by. The thin, colored orange and red, clouds that are almost always present, are then colored orange and red, making a striking advertisement of the progress of the sun around the northern horizon. The day opens slowly, the low arch of light stealing round to the north-eastward with gradual increase of height, and span, and intensity of tone, and when at length the sun appears, it is without much of that stirring, impresive pomp, that flashing, awakening, triumphant energy, so suggestive of the Bible imagery—a bride coming out of her chamber, and rejoicing like a strong man to run a race. The red clouds with yellow dissolving edges now vanish as their color leaves them, and subside into a hazy dimness; the islands with ruffs of metal about them cast ill-defined shadows on the glistening waters, and the whole down-bending firmament becomes pale pearl-ray. For three or four hours after sunrise there is nothing specially impressive to be felt in the landscape. The sun, though seemingly unclouded, may almost be looked in the face, and the islands and mountains with all their wealth of woods and snow, and varied beauty of architecture, seem comparatively dull and uncommunicative.

As the day advances towards high noon, the sun-flood streaming in full power through the damp atmosphere lights the water-levels and the sky to glowing silver. Brightly play the ripples about the bushy edges of the islands and out over the plume-shaped streaks between them, stirred by some passing breeze. The warm air hovers now and makes itself felt as a life-giving, energizing ocean embracing all the world.
LIFE AND MOTION.

Now we may contemplate the life and motion about us. It comes to mind of itself. The tidest, the rivers, the flow of the light through the sky and the landscape, and the general stamp of things in the region of fish feeding in the lower ocean. Misty flocks of insects in the warm air. The wild sheep on a thousand grassy ridges among the glaciers. But the beaver and the moose of the deep, broadening stillness; sky, land, and water meeting and blending in one inseparable scene of enchantment. Then comes the sunset, touched with a thousand grassy ridges along the shores. Leaves and flowers falling among the hills. Vast flocks of small overlapping clouds that are often seen higher up are mostly touched with crimson, like the outline in shadow of a dull centre in strong contrast; and the spaces of clear sky between are filled in with great clouds that come, roving on their paddles told by a quick, glancing flash, half as big as the moon. No bird - choirs in the sky, but the water, and everything else, all to sing out.

Now I have seen the most extravagant of all the sunset effects. The light seems to thicken by slow degrees, as if a horizontal mist, too, was in the body of the atmosphere itself, which, seeming then to lie drawn around them, on the peaks, too, snow fields and glaciers, and become yet more generously fruitful of enchantment. Then comes the sunset; the glowing portion of the horizon are fired on the islands, and turning all the water into deep, rosy alpenglow of ineffable beauty. Even the people on the ship's deck were completely overwhelmed by the general effect. The divines we had aboard seemed then to be truly divine as they gazed, submerged and transfigured, on the glorious purple flood. So also seemed our salt, storm-fighting old captain, and the tarry sail ors, spars, rigging and canvas.
SUNSHINE, CLOUD AND RAIN.

About one-third of the days of this last summer at Fort Wrangel were cloudy, with very little or no rain; one-third decidedly rainy or nearly so. Of 147 days, beginning May 17th of this year, there were 65 on which rain fell, 49 cloudy and 33 clear. In June rain fell on 18 days, in July rain fell on 8 days, in August rain fell on 15 days, in September rain fell on 30 days. But on some of these days there was only a few minutes' rain—a light shower, scarce enough to count, while as a general thing the rain fell so gently, and the temperature was so mild, few of these days could be called stormy or at all dismal. Even the bleakest and most draggled specimens usually have a dash of late or early color to cheer them, or some white illumination about the noon hours. I never before saw so much rain fall with so little noise. There was no loud rushing wind all its slimmer, nor any thud. At least I heard—silence, and from what I can learn it is quite as rare a phenomenon here as in any portion of California—a flash and clap, faint and far away, once in two or three years. There is a freshness, sound, wholesomeness about even the wettest of this weather, that seems generally conducive to health. There is no mildew in the houses, as far as I have seen, or any tendency toward eternal mouldiness in any nook however hidden from the sun. And neither among the people or plants do we find that flabby, drop-like appearance which so soft and poultice-like an atmosphere might lead one to expect. In September clear days were rare indeed. More than three-fourths of them were either decidedly cloudy or rainy, and the rains that fell this month were driven slant by winds moderately strong, and the clouds between showers crawled and drooped in a ragged unsettled way, without, however, betraying hints of violence such as one so often sees in the gestures of the storm-clouds on the California mountains.

CAUSE OF WETNESS OF THE CLIMATE.

The cause of this marked wetness of the climate is not far to seek. It is found in the vapor-laden winds from the Japan current, and the condensing range of mountains along the coast, which, by the way, is more than four times as high as it is generally supposed to be.

TEMPERATURE.

July was the brightest month of the summer, with fourteen days of sunshine, six of them in uninterrupted succession, with a temperature of about 60° F.; maximum at 12 M., 70°. The average 7 A.M. temperature for June was 54° 38'; 12 M., 57° 19'. The average 7 A.M. temperature for July was 55° 35'; 12 M., 61° 21'. The average temperature for August was 54° 50'; 12 M., 61° 37'. The average 7 A.M. temperature for September was 53° 28'; 12 M., 56° 21'.

The highest temperature observed here during the summer was 76°. The most remarkable characteristic of this summer weather, even the brightest of it, is the palpable velvet softness of the atmosphere. On the mountains of California, throughout the greater part of the year, the presence of an atmosphere is hardly recognized, and the thin, white, bodyless light of the morning comes to the peaks and glaciers as an unmixed spiritual essence, the most impressive of all the terrestrial manifestations of God. The most transparent and most brilliantly lighted of Alaskan atmospheres is always appreciably substantial, and oftentimes so thick that it would seem as if one might reach
out and take a handful of it and examine its quality by rubbing it between the thumb and finger. I never before saw days so white and so full of subdued lustre.

ALASKA WINTERS.

In winter, from what I can learn, the storms are mostly rain, at a temperature of thirty-five or forty degrees, and strong winds, which, when they sweep the channels lengthwise, lash them into waves and carry salt scud far into the woods. The long nights are then gloomy enough to most people, and the value of a snug home, with blazing, crackling, yellow cedar fire and book-covered tables may be finely appreciated.

Snow falls quite frequently, but never to any great depth or to lie long. Only once since the settlement of Fort Wrangel the ground was covered to a depth of four feet. The ordinary depth anywhere near sea-level is said to be a sloppy condition.

The mercury seldom falls more than five or six degrees below the freezing point unless the wind blows steadily from the mainland. Back from the coast, however, beyond the mountains, the winter months are intensely cold. At Glenora, on the St.ickene river, less than a thousand feet above the level of the sea, a temperature of from thirty to forty degrees below zero is not uncommon.

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