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ALASKA RIVERS.

Their Number and Characteristics—The Slickine.

Sublime Alpine Scenery—An Alaska Canyon.

Glacier Mud—Suspensoid Glacial Phemonena.

[Special Correspondence of the Bulletin.]

By T. STELA.

December 27, 1879.

Alaska is covered with an infinite expanse of glacial peren-

nial streams, that flow on, ever fresh and sweet through

greasy plains and mossy fields, and then, under the

everywhere, all the way down to the sea, how-

bountiful are the clouds that fill their ample

rains, as if the streams were all the time

discovered in the Territory, the number

of the smallest ones have been called ced

ers. But there are not one of them, from the

mighty Yukon, 3,000 miles long, to the shortest

of the mountain

torrents—falling, as the glaciers, has

far been explored. Dal Kencome and others

have done good work on the Yukon, and miners,

trappers and traders have been over most of the

untraveled lands. Each one has brought in detials of river

knowledge, though too often snally and uncertain,

izing with a blind faith in the name of the

ton. The coast line in particular, with the mouths and lower reaches of the

rivers, are in great part, like moun-.

tains, their sources from the glaciers

of the fountain plateau, and their waters

draining into the sea, most of which

are navigable for light-draft vessels.

A small number of short streams

are in the basin of the Yukon, the

bountiful are everywhere, all the way down

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THE STICKINE—SUMPTUOUS ALPINE PICTURES.

The Stickine is perhaps better known than any other river in Alaska, because of its being the way back to the Cassiar gold mines. It is about 350 or 400 miles long, and navigable only by small steamers to Ghidlow 150 miles, bowing first in general westerly direction through the Vlilian uplands, darkened here and there with patches of evergreens, then southward. After receiving numerous tributaries from the north, it enters the Coast Range and from here on down, it sweeps across it to the sea through a series of valleys more than a mile wide at the bottom, and from four to eight thousand feet deep, its banks high and inspiring. To the northwestern tourist sailing up the river the views change with magical rapidity. Wondrous scenes, are ever changing, the clouds out the valley, five or six miles from the bow, and from one mass of granite to another. Beautiful and inspiring, the river sweeps through the midst of it all, the valley a avenue of sub-__ 
su.._LrM• 

The Stickine, an unbroken series of majestic spires, mountains, glaciers, falls, cascades, mountains, glaciers, falls, cascades, grandeur morning and evening, changing in glorious harmony through all the seasons and years.

AN ALASKA CANYON.

It is not easy to begin anything like a full description, where so great a multitude of varying objects crowd forward into view; nevertheless I will try to suggest to you a few suggestions and outlines of this one representative canyon, one of many, hoping that those of my readers who are free may some day and see for themselves. Leaving Fort Wrangel on one side, the river is caused by glacier mud—the fine portion of the grist of the grounds from the rocks by hundreds of glaciers. Rising in the base of the mountains, the valley, river five or six miles from Wrangel, the smooth, green islands of the Archipelago are at one side, and the mountains of the sea through the sky, with the greens of the snowy alpine, peaks, 7,000 to 8,000 feet high, with small glaciers between them seen over the tops of their arrowy spires.

STUPENDOUS GLACIERS.

A half dozen miles above the mouth of the river you come to the foot of the glaciers, pouring down through the forest in a shaggy cascade nearly to the level of the river. Here the canyon is about two miles wide, planted with cottonwoods along the banks of the river, and a great number of small islands with patches of tangled willows and raspberry extend back to the grand Yosemite walls. Twelve miles above this point a new series of falls and cascades open, along the canyon—a group of glacier-laden Alpam from ten to twelve thousand feet high, the source of the larger part of the range of the Stickine. Here the falls, walls, and cascades are more prominent than like those of the Yosemite. The granite, too, has the same neutral gray tone, and the scenery and character and general style of the mountains are similar. Cascades are quite everywhere, descending in white ribbons from the foot of the mountains, and in the valley, often several hundred feet high. On one massive rock-front, corniced with ice, I counted eight that formed a fine lace-work, bowing between the snow and ice that fringe their edges. The largest booms like Yosemite Falls in the spring, pouring from the side of the grand cascade, the ice coming down the wall in a snowy plume, two thousands feet long.
Thirty-five miles above the mouth of the river, the most striking object of all comes in sight. This is the lower expanded portion of the great glacier, measuring about six miles around the snout, pushed boldly forward into the middle of the valley among the trees, while its sources are mostly hidden. It takes its rise in the heart of the range, some thirty or forty miles away. Compared with this the Swiss mer de glace is a small thing. It is called the “Ice Mountain,” and seems to have been regarded as a motionless mass, created on the spot, like the rocks and trees about it, without venturing a guess as to how or when. The front of the snout is about 300 feet high, but rises rapidly back for a few miles to a height of about a thousand feet. Seen through gaps in the trees growing on one of its terminal moraines, as one sails slowly along against the current, the marvelous beauty of the chasms and clustered pinnacles show to fine advantage in the sunshine; but tame indeed must be the observer who is satisfied with so cheap a view.

**INDIAN TRADITIONS—INDIAN TRADER.**

On the opposite side of the river there is another large glacier flowing, river like, through the forested mountain bosses. Some 300 years ago these two glaciers, say the Indians, once pushed their snouts together and the river flowed beneath in a grand tunnel, through which they sometimes ventured in canoes. This tradition is interesting as containing a truth carried hundreds of years without suffering much. That they did meet is undoubtedly true, though more than 300 years ago, as the age of the spruces growing on the banks of the river show. Between the snouts of these two noble glaciers lives Choquette. Happy man—perhaps somewhat blind to his blessings. It was not without grave misgivings, he told me, that he ventured to build here, fearing something would happen in connection with that strange ice mountain. He is an Indian trader, the only settler on the river up to within a few miles of Glenora. Some thirty-five miles above this place the Hudson Bay Company had a trading post, now abandoned.

**MORE GLACIERS.**

The great glacier is hardly out of sight ere we come upon another of grand size, pouring a majestic white flood through the evergreens of the river level, while almost every hollow and tributary canon contains a smaller one, according to the size of the area it drains; some like mere snow banks, others with the blue ice apparent, depending in heavy bulging curves and graduating into the river-like forms that maze through the lower forested regions, and are so striking in appearance that they are admired even by the passing miners with gold dust in their
I counted a hundred and sixty-one in sight from the river, but the whole number drained by the river throughout its entire course is probably three hundred or more. A very short geological time ago this magnificent cañon was occupied by a grand trunk glacier that flowed to the sea, to which all these residual glaciers were united as tributaries.

A YOUNG WORLD.

The Stickine, like all the other rivers of Alaska, is still young and imperfect, like a half-developed plant. The trunk is well formed, but the branches are only short stumps, slowly growing upward right and left over a hundred mountains as the glaciers melt back in compliance with climate. The trunks of some of the shorter rivers heading in the Coast Range are still as imperfect as the branches of the larger ones, while a few that are predestined to take their places in the general system have not yet commenced to flow. Over the region stretching from the north arm of Cross Sound towards Mount St. Elias, the glacial winter still rules. All the landscape is covered by a remnant of the ice-sheet. When it melts the area of the sea will be somewhat extended, and several rivers added to the number already in existence.

A short time ago there was not a single river in Alaska.

JOHN MUIR.