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Indian Superstitions—The Tahko River and Indians—Magnificent Glacial Scenery—Gorgeous Sunset.

[GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE BULLETIN.]

MOUTH OF TAHKO RIVER,
ALASKA, August 24, 1880.

I never saw Alaska looking better than it did yesterday, when we bade farewell to Sum Dum, and pushed on northward on the coast towards Tahko. The morning was extremely beautiful—clear, still, bright—not a cloud in all the purple sky, nor wind, however gentle, to shake the slender spires of the spruces on the heights, or the dew-laden grass-leaves around the shores. Over the mountains and over the broad white bosoms of the glaciers the sunbeams poured, rosy and purple over the spires of the mountains, and the mornin"es make a vivid showing of the old winter time of the glacial period, and mark the bounds of the mer-de-glace that once filled the bay and covered the surrounding mountains. Already that sea of ice is replaced by water, in which multitudes of fishes are fed, and the rocks are covered with forests and gardens up to a height of 2,500 feet, while the mountains and over the sea, and the glaciers lingering about the bay and the streams that pour from them are busy night and day bringing in sand and mud and stones, at the rate of tons every minute, to fill it up. The spring will bring the fields here for the plow like those in the broad level valleys of California.

PUSHING NORTHWARD—INDIAN SUPERSTITIONS.

Our Indians, exhilarated by the fine sunshine that morning, were careless as the gulls and swallows, and pulled heartily at their oars, evidently glad to get out of the ice with a whole boat. “Now for Tahko,” they said, as we glided over the shining water. “Good bye Ice Mountains, good bye Sum Dum.” Soon a light breeze came up, and swept over the water, like the breath of God. “Good for the Indians,” said one of them; “for it may bring them luck.” And it did, for though the wind was so strong that day that we could not keep the sail down, yet the Indians were not discouraged by it. They were busy all day pulling away their oars and began as usual in such times to put their goods in order, unloading and winding up provisions, guns, rope, clothing, etc. Joe has an old flintlock musket suggestive of Hudson Bay times, which he wished to discharge and reload. So stepping in front of the coming trill of the waves and the wind, he asked the Indian captain to let him have it. He said he had left it in his bundle. “And why did you leave it there?” asked the Indian, to which Joe, our Captain, who is a better man, de- nounced the deed as likely to bring bad luck. Before the Indians went among them, most of the Indians, hold-
The white food. (Continued.)

Lief S. In this connection occurred at Fort Wrangell last year while I was there. One of the sub-chiefs of the Stickines had a little son five years old, a very much attached, always taking him with his canoe trips, and leading him by the hand while going about town. Last summer the boy was taken sick, and gradually grew weak and thin, whereupon his father became alarmed, and feared, as is usual in such obscure cases, that the boy had been bewitched. He first applied in his trouble to Dr. Carilles, one of the missionaries, who gave medicine, without effecting the cure that the fond father demanded. He was, to some extent, a believer in the powers of missionaries, both as to material and spiritual affairs, but in so serious an exigency it was natural that he should go back to the faith of his fathers. Accordingly, he sent for one of the Shamans, or medicine men, of his tribe, and submitted the case to him, who, after going through the customary incantations, declared that he had discovered the cause of the child's illness, and that it was caused by his soul, and this is the way it happened. He was playing among the stones down on the beach, when he saw a crawfish in the water, and made fun of it, pointing his finger at it, and saying: 'Oh, you crooked legs! Oh, you crooked legs! You can't walk straight; you are so, could it be recovered and reinstalled in his forlorn son? Yes, the doctor rather thought it might be charmed back and reunited, but the job would be a difficult one, and would probably cost about fifteen blankets.

Beautiful Coast Scenery.

After we were fairly out of the bay into Stephens's Passage, the wind died away, and the Indians had to take their oars again, which ended our talk. On we sped over the silvery level, close along shore, meeting fresh exciting beauty all the way. The dark forests extending far and near, planted even like a field of wheat, might seem monotonous in general views, but the appreciative observer, looking closely, will find no lack of interesting variety however far he may go. The steep slopes on the mountain sides, lined with a peculiar tree, with its peculiarities of form and color, to be seen like an audience on seats rising above one another—the blue-green, sharply-tapered spires of the Menzies spruce, the warm yellow-green Merten spruces, with their finger-like tops all pointing in the same direction, or drooping gracefully like leaves of grass, and the airy, feathery, brownish-green Alaska cedar, blending in harmony, lichens and mosses on the branches, hanging over the brows of the cliffs, the white mountains above, the shining water beneath, the changing sky over all, making pictures of divine beauty in which no healthy eye may ever grow weary.
A "DEsertED village."

Toward evening we came to a village at the head of a picturesque bay, belonging to the Tahkous. We found it silent and deserted. Not a single lawyer, doctor or policeman had been left to keep it. They are so happily rich as to have but little of a perishable kind to keep, and the most worth fighting about are the salmon, which they are away catching, our Indians said. All the Indian villages hereabout are thus abandoned, their regular periods of residence being as a tent is left for a day, while they repair to fishing, trading, feasting and buying. Nothing goes on but the selling of the year's work of their summer's work is done, the winter supply of salmon dried and packed, fish oil and sea otter and sea otter store. There is a peculiar electric, berries and spruce and in cakes, their trading trips completed, and the year's stock of quarrels with the neighboring tribes settled up in some way, some of the tribes returning home from the fishing trip and having dispersed. Our Indians wanted to camp for the night in one of the deserted houses, but I urged them on into the clear wilderness until dark, when we landed in a rough, rambly beach, near a devil's club, greatly to the disgust of our crew. We had to make the best of it, however, as it was too dark to go farther. After the accounts were exchanged among the boulders they retired to the canoe, which they anchored a little way off on the low side, while Mr. I. counted the expense of a good deal of scavenging, discovered a spot on which we could sleep among the back of the bay.

This morning, about two hours after leaving our thorpy camp, we rounded a great mountain range, a mile in height, and reached the Tahkou ford. It is about 35 miles long, and from 5 to 5 miles wide, and extends directly back into the heart of the Alaskan Peninsula, cutting hundreds of noble glaciers and streams. The ancient glacier that formed it, fed by a thousand tributaries, was far too broad and too little concentrated to erode one of those narrow canyons, usually so impressive in size, in structure, and architecture, but more interesting on this account when the grandeur of the ice work accomplished is seen. This mountain is more than any other that I have examined, explains the formation of that wonderful system of channels extending along the coast. The Puyet Sound to another degree, for it is a marked portion of the system—a branch of Stephens' passage.

GlaCIAL TRIBUTARIES.

And its trends and general sculpture are as distinctly glacial as that of the narrowest flord, while many of the largest tributaries of the great glacier that occupied it are now in existence. A counted among the Fluorescent, little, big, and little, in sight from the canoe in sailing up the middle of the bay, some of them came down to the level of the sea at the head of the flord from a magnificent group of snowy mountains, forming a most impressive spectacle, seen from one's back at the mouth of the head of the channel. The middle one of the three belongs to the first class, pouring its majestic column of water and cascading it into the flord, and crowding about twenty-five square miles of it with bergs. The next below it is a great block of ice that occasionally lets off bergs, and occasionally a narrow slip of glacial detritus separates the channel from the tide-water. This forenoon a large icefall from the mountain side came down the estuary, which at length broke the dam, and the flood that resulted swept forward thousands of cubic miles across the mud-flat, impetuously and with tremendous energy. In a short time all was quiet again; the floodwaters receded, leaving a large blank space on the sand, and stranded bergs on the swept moraine flat to tell the tale.

MAMMOTH GLACIERS.

These two magnificent glaciers are about the same size—two miles wide—and their slopes are only about a mile and a half apart. While we are sketching them from a point among the drifting icebergs, where I could see far back into the heart of their distant fountains, two Tahkous Indians, father and son, came gliding toward us on an extremely small canoe, appearing alongside with a good-natured "saghaya," they inquired who we were, our objects, etc.
and gave us information about the river, the village and two other large glaciers that descend nearly to the sea-level a few miles up the river cafon. Crouching in their little shell of a boat among the great bergs, with paddle and barbed spear, they formed a picture as arctic and remote from anything to be found in civilization as ever was sketched for us by the explorers of the far north.

TAHKOU RIVER.

Making our way through the crowded bergs to the extreme head of the fiord, we entered the mouth of the river, but were soon compelled to turn back on account of the strength of the current. The Tahkou is a large stream, nearly a mile wide at the mouth, and like the Stikine, Chiecat and Chilcoot, draws its sources from far inland, crossing the mountain chain from the interior through a majestic cafon, and draining a multitude of glaciers on its way.

The Tahkou Indians, with a keen appreciation of the advantages of their position for trade, hold possession of the river, and compel the Indians of the interior to accept their services as middlemen, instead of allowing them to come down the river to trade directly with the whites.

ANOTHER CAMP.

When we were baffled in our attempt to ascend the river, the day was nearly done, and we began to seek a camp-ground. After sailing two or three miles along the left side of the fiord we were so fortunate as to find a small nook in the rocky wall, described to us by the Tahkou Indians, where firewood may be obtained, and where we could drag our canoe up the bank beyond the reach of the ice. Here we are safe, with a fine outlook over the bergs to the great glaciers, and near enough to have the full benefit of the thunder of the bergs falling from their snouts.

This has been one of the best of all my Alaska days; clear and warm, and full of glacier interest throughout.

AN ALASKAN SUNSET.

The sunset in this glorious mountain mansion, with the weather so perfect, was intensely impressive. After the dark water of the fiord was in shadow the level sunbeams continued to pour through the square miles of bergs with ravishing beauty, every one of them reflecting and refracting the purple light like cut crystal. Then all save the tips of the highest became dead white. These, too, were speedily quenched, the glowing points vanishing one by one like stars sinking beneath the horizon in a clear frosty night. And after the shadows had crept gradually higher, submerging the glaciers, and the ridges between them, the divine Alpen glow still lingered about their fountains, ann the lofty peaks laden with ice and snow stood in glorious array, flushed and transfigured. Now the last of the twilight-purple has vanished, the stars begin to shine, and all trace of the day has gone. Looking across the fiord the water seems perfectly black, and the two great glaciers are seen stretching dim and ghostly back into the mountains, that now are massed in darkness against the sky.

JOHN MUTH.