

OUR STRANGE PEOPLE TO THE NORTH

By Frank G. Carpenter

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I have been interested in the homes of the Athapascans. They live in substantial log cabins, and many of their houses have frame doors and glass windows. Some of these Indians are now planting gardens, and not a few use cookstoves and other furniture like that of the whites. The most of them have become Christians, although they retain many of their old superstitions and customs. The government has established public schools in all of the large villages, and the younger generation is learning to speak English.

The Indians admire the whites and try to imitate them. They are now dressing much the same, except that they delight in bright colors. During my trip we have had a number of Indian men and women with us on the tourist steamer. The Indians watch the whites and try to do as they do. The other day a young Indian woman sat down at the table opposite two traveling salesmen from Seattle. As the meal went on they noticed that the girl's orders were the same as their own. She was pretending to study the menu, but they concluded that she could not read and that this was her first experience with the white man's victuals. Thereupon, one of them ordered for dessert a slice of custard pie and winked at his friend to do the same. The girl in her turn gave a similar order. When the pie came one of the traveling men seized the catsup bottle and sprinkled a liberal allowance of hot tomato sauce over his pie. His friend followed suit and then shoved the catsup across the table to the copper-skinned girl. She did the same, only more so. The men then delayed their eating to watch the agony of the Indian. The fair young woman, however, heroically finished her pie without winking, and, as far as anyone could see, the joke was on them.

During my travels in Southeastern Alaska I saw many of the Thlingits. These Indians are found on the coast and in the islands of the panhandle, and their settlement extends as far north as Prince William sound. They are the Indians most known to the tourists, and their totem poles or tribal emblems and coats-of-arms are still to be seen in many of the villages, although they are gradually disappearing with the march of civilization. The Thlingit villages are always built near the shore. Nine-tenths of their support comes from fishing, and they like to live right on the beach. Nearly every family has its boats, and some own gasoline launches. The houses are usually scattered through-out the town, without regard to any fixed plan. It is only lately that any of them have had gardens about them. In the past the buildings were made of rude slabs and bark thrown together over pole rafters. None of the houses had a chimney

or window and the smoke passed out through a hole in the roof. Now, the most of them are frame, with windows and chimneys. Some of them are ceiled, and some are papered and painted. They have shingled roofs and are comfortable homes. The Indians have become good carpenters. They have modern tools, and some of their towns have hardware stores and sawmills.

The new buildings are planned with regard to sanitary conditions. Some of the towns have plank sidewalks, and in one or two there are electric lights. In Klukwan the Indians have piped the water from the mountains and established a municipal water system. The same is true to some extent in Methlakahtla, where the water is brought from a lake in the mountains.

The Metlakahtla Indians I have already described. The proper name for them is Tsimseans. They were converted from savages to civilization by Father Duncan and their village on Annette Island has cottage homes that would be considered comfortable in almost any town of the States. Metlakahtla has plank sidewalks and its streets are laid out in regular order. Each house has its garden. There is a large general store, a sawmill and a fish-canning factory. The people have the largest church in Alaska and also a town hall and library. Many of them speak English. The government school building, recently erected, is a large two-story building, fitted with all of the modern school appliances. The natives dress just like the whites, and, were it not for their complexion and features, you would hardly know they were Indians.

Outside Annette Island the work of civilization among the Indians has been promoted by the missionaries and school teachers. The missionaries came first. They had their schools, industrial and otherwise, and they converted the Indians to Christianity.

After the missionaries came the bureau of education. It has taken charge of the natives of Alaska. It began with the establishment of schools in all of the villages, and it has added many kinds of uplifting activities. The teachers are now instructing the adult Indians in sanitation and civil government. They are inducing them to establish stores, and to engage in all possible self-sustaining industries.

So far the most remarkable progress has been among the Haidas, a tribe of five or six hundred Indians on Prince of Wales Island. The government has given them a reservation, and they have a town called Hydaburg, which is perhaps the most advanced Indian town in the world. The natives have organized a co-operative trading company and are paying big dividends to their stock holders. With only \$11,000 invested within the past three years they have paid dividends of \$8000. Last year the directors declared a dividend of 50 per cent, and the company has so increased its stock that it will undertake a fish-canning and saw-milling business.

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