

Indian Tells Story of the Finding of Cougar Rock

(By JACK HUNTER)

Catherine creek, one of the many beautiful streams of eastern Oregon flows from east to west through the rich little city of Union.

About eight miles up the creek, where a bridge crosses the stream leading to Little Catherine creek, which empties nearby into the main creek, and where the buildings on the Half ranch are in sight, on the south side of the trail, a trail winds its way toward Cougar rock, about two miles up the steep hillside.

About one half mile up the trail on the east side, we come to what is known as the "Ice Cave."

It would be a matter of chance for any one not acquainted with its existence to find this cave. There is nothing peculiar about the place that would indicate that a cave was there.

The cave has a very small entrance. A cold and chilly current of air strikes the intruder, as when entering an abandoned igloo of the Esquimaux.

The cave is not very large inside. It has rather rough walls, and the roof is low. An angular pointed rock projects from the back wall dividing the cave in

two channels, as if forming two entrances into separate rooms. But soon we find that the cave is not so simple as it appears. The passage turns into a small shaft going up, with an incline of perhaps 75 degrees. The left room, after a drop of about five feet, forms a similar shaft in size but downward and perpendicular. A stone thrown down this shaft will not produce any sound, the depth of which being so great.

A current of air is felt from the two channels, but they are not so strong and cold as at the main entrance.

Water Fountain.
In the center of the main cave, a small jet of water bubbles up through a large cone shaped icicle. Like many diamonds, thousands of sparkling crystals of pure ice are in evidence. The spectator is enchanted at this wonderful sight. The ancient fables could never have made a more beautiful fountain.

The temperature in this cave never varies. It is the same summer or winter. There has been many conjectural discussions as to how this ice is formed during the hot summer months.

In the summer of 1922, accompanied by an old Indian of the Cayuse tribe, from Umatilla reservation, the writer visited this eccentric spot of nature. Commenting on the formation of this ice during the hot weather, the good old man told how it was first discovered, and how the ice is formed, and why it was made.

The aged man used many names and words of an old Indian tongue, which is now obsolete. Only a few names have been preserved down the ages. The following is the equivalent in readable English of an extraction from the long story that he told.

Story of Cave Told.
In the long, long ago, when Grande Ronde valley was submerged under a vast body of water, Cougar Rock was a promontory called by the Indians, "Lo-loosh" (Devil's Rock). Cougars would assemble there in great numbers, screaming terror in the hearts of the natives. For they believed that the cougars were beasts possessed of the "loosh" (devil). Hence Cougar Rock to this day.

The tribe at that time had at its head the good old Chief Ah-sheshoo (Bright Morning). He was very attentive to the care of his people, and especially to his family. He was particularly

watchful over his many daughters. Lalassee (Rolling Star), was his first born and most beloved daughter. She was a great favorite with the whole tribe. She was of marriageable age, and many young braves were sent away by the beautiful Indian girl, at the advice of the wise parents.

The Old Triangle.
But the time came when Lalassee had a problem which her father in his wisdom could not very well solve. She had set her heart and was equally loving two young men of the tribe. The problem was which of the two she would take for a husband, for this tribe was strictly monogamous. And her heart could not decide. This was an important question, for in case of the death of her father, the husband must become the chief of the tribe.

One of the favored braves was Ah-gheessee (Standing Star), the son of the good and great Medicine Man.

The other was Labishoo (Dark Morning), the son of a great warrior and buffalo hunter.

Ah-gheessee was well behaved, honest and very industrious. He was loved by all.

Labishoo was well liked also by all, but his nature was a deceptive one. He had a dual character. He had a very suave and amiable countenance, but his heart was the heart of a snake.

Duel Arranged.
After many months (months, of this double courtship, which was not pleasing to the good chief Ah-sheshoo, he decided to end the love contest with a duel. A duel with small and light arrows, which only drew blood, but with no serious results. The decision went to the one who first drew blood from the adversary.

The duel took place in a grove of "gligee" (cottonwood). Three cottonwood trees of as near equal distance from each other, forming a triangle run from and to each tree were selected. The combatants were placed by the chief behind two of the trees. They were about one arrow apart. This was a distance equal to the distance that an arrow could be thrown from the hand much as a javelin. The chief gave the signal to begin the combat. The two duellists facing the tree behind which they were standing, started to run to the left, running to the next tree. During this run, and only while facing each other, they threw the arrows at each other. They carried a set of nine arrows in a quiver suspended at their sides by a buckskin strap around the neck and shoulders. When this set of nine arrows were lanced at each other and no effective results ensued, they were furnished with another set and the duel would go on until blood was drawn.

They were to stop at each run, behind the tree reached. But no other stops were allowed and throwing was only allowed while running and facing each other.

The day of the duel had come. These duels were always a day of great interest to the Indians, but this contest between the two lovers was of great consequence, bringing all the Indians from far and near.

Lalassee was sitting on a sort of improvised throne for the occasion. She was anxiously waiting to receive the happy winner of herself as a wife. The signal had been given and the first run made. Three arrows from each of the combatants had been thrown without any effects. Lalassee was watching with a vivid interest in the conflict. She saw Labishoo when he reached the tree, as if tripped by some obstruction in the pathway run, falling to the ground. She saw his arm as he was picking some object from behind the tree. The signal was sounded again and away they ran on their second run.

Labishoo Cheats.
Labishoo did not stop to throw any arrows while running facing his adversary. But as he came in an opposite line with his opponent he stopped for a moment just long enough to throw an arrow. This was not fair to the rule of the duel. The chief eyed Labishoo's hand and arm shouting to stop the contest immediately. But the arrow went true to its mark and blood was seen freely flowing from Ah-gheessee's arm. Labishoo had drawn the first blood.

But by his unfairness had lost the contest.

The excitement was great. The enemy of the fair Indians to all things dishonest, became intense and Labishoo with shame, saw that all would not be well if he remained there any longer, made a hurried departure, vanishing into the adjacent woods leading into the high mountains.

Ah-gheessee was led to the fair maiden who immediately bandaged his wounded arm. The two lovers arm in arm walked to the newly made tipi that had been prepared to receive the happy couple.

No sooner they reached the wigwag, Ah-gheessee fell to the ground in a swoon.

Arrow Was Poison.
His father made a close inspection of the wounded boy. He pronounced it a case of the strongest poisoning from the venom of the "washoon" (the rattler). Labishoo had concealed a well poisoned arrow behind one of the trees. He had feigned that fall to pick up the mortal weapon. He had mortally wounded his hated rival.

But he could not positively ascertain a cure. If no one else would do this sacrifice he would do it himself, and he could not administer the remedies to himself and therefore it would be almost immediate death for him.

Before the good man had finished speaking, Lalassee was down on the prostrate lover and she sucked the poison out of the wounded arm.

Medicine was given to her at once. And for three weeks she nursed her lover back to health and life.

But the beautiful bride was showing symptoms of slow poisoning. And the Medicine Man had exhausted all of his science in herbs and treatments.

Lalassee was going to die!

One "Great Sun" (one year) of one's anxieties had passed. Lalassee was now in the hands of the Medicine Man, who declared that she would never come out. She would quietly pass away to the happy hunting grounds. He pronounced that she might live for about two months (two months).

Ah-gheessee, struck with grief and sorrow became despondent. He vowed that he would never live to see her die!

Just at that time a great event happened.

Aged Indian Arrives.
A strange but good man, an old Indian from distant lands came. And he came with a message. He seemed to be able to speak all the Indian tongues at one time. For Indians of different tribes and dialects could all understand what he told them.

He told them many mysterious things that heretofore they could not understand. But now he made them see how those things were simple and easy to understand.

Among many interesting teachings he told them these truths: "For some reasons, my people were made to believe in the past that the Great Spirit was all good. But that the people were more or less an evil lot. That they have no powers in themselves."

"The fact is that the Great Spirit is neither good or bad. He is simply 'IT'. He is the Law. And the good or bad we know are the results of how we obey His Law."

"When we follow life which is Him, we call it good. When we don't follow life and His Law, we are punished by adversity. We call this evil. Therefore He is neither good nor bad. He simply is."

"He has created all of us. Then he must be in us. And we must be in Him. He must of consequence give to each of us a degree of his power. This power is for us to use as individuals, for our growth and welfare. All we have to do is to use it accordingly. The evil that exists, exists only in refusing to use that power."

"Therefore by using that power which we already possess, which is in us, we can create our needs. There is nothing impossible to this power, if it be anything useful."

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for our welfare as individuals. For each individual is a part of the whole—the Great Spirit. A part cannot be where the whole is not. Therefore all necessary things are possible. Only we must go according to the Law. And that is the easiest thing there is to do, for all there is then in harmony with our desires.

"You are greatly afflicted by the condition of your great princess Lalassee. This was the result of an evil minded man, who has caused a train of calamitous effects. This man will reap just as he sowed. But the righteous must not suffer this without making efforts in the right direction to alleviate the sorrows befallen on the whole tribe."

"The Law tells in this problem of how to cure Lalassee, to follow its wonderful ways and means of restoring health and life to a needed individual in the making of the whole. See how nature which is Him the life of things, nurture and heals a wounded tree or animal. It is all done in the silence. Silently it extracts the elements that it needs."

"You Medicine Man, you the great chief of this tribe and you the brave man who will succeed to the ruler of this great tribe—all of you great thinkers, get in the silence. Implore the power that it in you silently demand the knowledge that will cure your beloved Lalassee."

"Remember that the only channel where this power can be expressed, is through thinking. All mind is one mind. That is Him. Thought is mind in motion. That is Him at work. Go in the silence and work this wonderful power within yourselves and you will find the means to bring back Lalassee to health and life. She will live for many great suns (years). She will be the guiding star of this tribe—therefore needed for the continuance of a fair and honest race of the Great Spirit's children."

After this good man left, many old Indians were somewhat dubious as to this advanced thinking. But Ah-gheessee drank every word of this beautiful creed. The lessons sank deep into his very soul. Ah-gheessee disappeared.

In the mountains, alone beneath the holy pines, Ah-gheessee meditated and thought very seriously. He asked the Great Spirit within himself for wisdom. The wisdom that would cure Lalassee.

The chief Ah-sheshoo with Ah-gheessee's father the Medicine Man, thinking much on the same

lines—the teachings of that mysterious stranger, along with this grief had also found refuge in the silence of the forest. They were concentrated on the one thought. Their very souls bent on the recovery of Lalassee.

On Mt. Emily.
They sauntered into the silent wilds back of "Lobeech" (Elk Rock, now Mt. Emily). There they encountered Ah-gheessee.

Ah-gheessee spoke thus: "Fathers, I have consulted with the Great Spirit, which is in me, and a voice from within has told me that you are the only persons who could restore health and life to my Lalassee."

To which the Medicine Man replied: "We have consulted also with that Great Spirit's power that is in us. We have found the wisdom which we were looking for, just as that good man told us. We have found the herbs and roots which will cure Lalassee. But there is one thing which we must have. And that is frozen water."

"Lalassee will not live for long. Not long enough to go after this ice which is only to be found on 'Lo-loosh' (Cold Rock, Lolo Peak in Montana). It will take four moons (four months) to go there and back. Then the ice would melt on the way."

"That night the three men sat in silence as if in trances. Thinking strongly on how to procure the ice that would save Lalassee."

At dawn the younger man spoke: "Fathers, I have worked hard all night. My mind or soul went away. I went to the foot of Lo-loosh (Cougar Rock). There I dug a hole in the ground. I uncovered a small 'lonesh' (rock house, or cave). Two holes in the rocks I saw. One goes up, the other goes down. The wind blows hard and cold from the holes in the rocks. I saw water coming from the rock between the two openings. Pretty soon the water began freezing. And soon plenty of ice. I take some of the ice and cure Lalassee."

The three good Indians went home in a large canoe, they paddled across the big lake. They soon found water seeping through the ground below Lo-loosh (Cougar Rock). With stone implements they dug a hole. They uncovered a cave. As soon as the opening was made it started a circulation of air in the two shafts. These currents focused on the spring of clear water. The con-

tact of the current of air in opposite direction formed a right vibration which caused the water to freeze.

Soon ice was formed in enough quantity to take some to Lalassee. And Lalassee lived!

Two large fir trees are still in evidence at the foot of Cougar Rock. A few small poles in their branches tell of the remains of the ancient Indian form of burial. It is said, that later, the bones of the two lovers who had reigned a long time as rulers of the tribe were taken and buried not far from this cave.

One mound is plainly visible covered with round lava rocks. There we are told that Lalassee and Ah-gheessee sleep while their spirits guard over the ice cave.

A critic says Europe's civilization is more finished than ours. He probably means more nearly finished.

Right of Way For Bridge Settled.
EUGENE, Ore.—Right of way difficulties of the new state highway bridge at Harriburg have been practically settled, according to Judge Doby, chairman of the state highway commission, who, with Roy Klein, state highway engineer, was here on the way to Crescent City, Cal., to join a caravan of California motorists coming to Marshfield, Ore. Farmers on the Lane county side of the river have agreed to the terms of the commission and construction work is expected to proceed.

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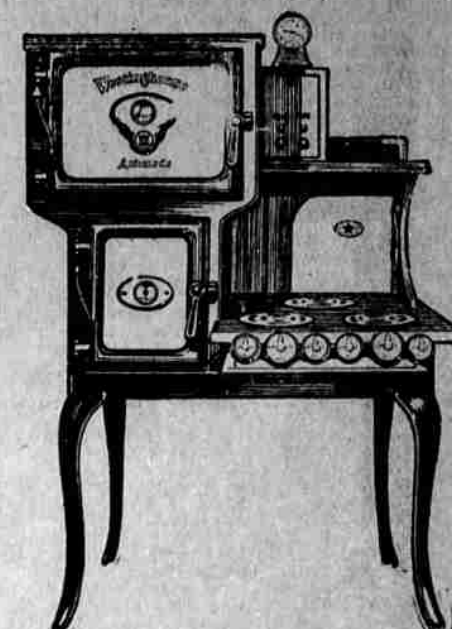
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