

ALASKA AND ITS PEOPLE.

In a relation of personal observations on Alaska by Archbishop Seegers and his party, the Yukon river is described as a magnificent stream. Taking the Amazon as the first and the Mississippi as the second of American rivers, the Yukon is the third in size. At the point where the Bishop's party reached it, some hundreds of miles from its mouth, the Yukon is three miles in width, and studded with islands as far as the eye can reach. An idea of its volume of water can be gathered from the fact that out in the open sea, six miles from the mouth of the river, the water taken from its stream is still fresh enough to drink. The length of the Yukon is over 3,000 miles, and it is navigable for steamers of considerable size for over 2,500 miles of its course. Further up, where the Yukon receives a large tributary, the Porcupine, the basin formed at the confluence of the two rivers, is 24 miles in width.

The Yukon was reached after a four-days' march due east from Norton's sound, across a country which is one continuous marsh, save only the low hills now and then encountered. Mosquitoes "literally blackened the sky." Grouse were found in abundance, and it was chiefly upon their flesh that the party subsisted.

Navigation on the Yukon is carried on by means of a *bidara*, a sailing vessel consisting of a light frame-work of wood, covered by skins of the hair seal.

The party arrived at Nulato about the end of July. The language is a corruption of some Russian dialect, and consists of only a few hundred words. It is so simple, so undeveloped that the same word, accompanied though by a different gesture of the hand in each instance, is made to do service for the past, present and future tenses of the verb.

The first ice made its appearance in the beginning of September. On the 10th of October the river froze over, or rather blocked up, great cakes and fields of ice drifting down stream with the rapid current, forming a gorge at some narrow point, then heaping up and piling over one another until the river from bank to bank was filled with ridges and diminutive mountain chains of ice. As winter advances the water falls, allowing the ice bridge to hang suspended until it breaks through its own weight, and comes down with a tremendous crash. Later in winter the Bishop started to visit the Cioquo Indians. Here it may be mentioned that traveling in the interior of Alaska is always at the extreme peril of the venturesome explorer, the Indians who are continually at war, treating all strangers with strict impartiality when once they take to the war path. This journey to the Cioquo was undertaken in dog-sleds, a style of traveling not without its disadvantages, one of which is occasioned by the dogs striking a game trail, and following it up on the full run regardless of the load behind, which is scattered in every direction. The ordinary load of a dog-sled is 500 pounds. The driver usually keeps up with his team by jogging along at a dog trot, but sometimes he treats himself to a ride. A good dog-driver can easily run 70 miles a day, one day with another—a feat to match our Westons and O'Learys. A team is made up of seven or nine dogs, always an uneven number, one taking the lead, the others harnessed in pairs. The dress worn on such expeditions is a deer-skin coat with Capuchin hood to draw over the head, fur cap, deer-skin trousers and boots. The deer-skin, dressed only enough to make it pliable, is worn with the hair outside. While among the Cioquo the travelers put up quite frequently in the *barabara*, or native hut, whose construction may be understood from the following description: On entering the *barabara* the visitor first descends a shallow pit, from the bottom of which a tunnel eight feet long

conducts him to the subterranean portion of the dwelling. The hut is circular, and is sunk into the ground about five feet. The portion above the level of the ground is built of mud and is of conical form. Only one opening is provided, and this is in the apex, where it gives escape to the smoke. At night this opening is closely covered with seal-skin, and the tunnel tightly closed, so that all access to the cold, and to the air as well, is cut off. In this manner the *barabara* is made very warm, but exceedingly unwholesome. Where a hut of this description was not met with at nightfall, the travelers dug a square hole in the snow, built a rampart of branches toward the northern side, from which the wind nearly always blows, and sought repose on a couch of boughs thickly laid on the bottom of the hole. Exposed thus to Arctic cold in the open air, tea is the only beverage used by the Northerner. Strong spirits create a greater amount of heat in the system, but the reaction following leaves the traveler more than ever exposed to danger of death from freezing. While among those people, the Bishop also formed the acquaintance of a Medicine Man, who undertook by his incantations to cure a sick child in the house where the Bishop's party were guests. Part of the performance consisted in pounding a gong with a club, and when the Bishop learned that this ceremony was to be continued all night, it need not surprise us that even the proverbial patience of the missionary became exhausted, and that *vi et armis* the Alaskan M. D. was forthwith deprived of his professional paraphernalia.

Returning to Nulato, the party started down the river by sledge, experiencing such a degree of cold that 60° below zero was frequently registered by the spirit thermometer. On the trip the Bishop witnessed a religious ceremony which seemed to mean the worship of fire if it meant anything; and that half-frozen wretches should at length take to the adoration of fire as their salvation from the Polar cold is not very strange. Those Indians are adepts in making earthenware, some of their utensils being of a capacity to hold several gallons, and representing a very considerable advance in the potter's art. They differ from the southern Indians of the Pacific coast in their manner of disposing of their dead, which are buried, not burned, as among the Putes, Washoes or Diggers. They resemble the whites in having a taste for ornamenting the graves of their departed warriors; but one epitaph found by the Bishop was not calculated to stir very profound depths of woe. It had probably been picked up at some trader's camp and devoted to use as an epitaph, the finder evidently believing it to possess virtues not of this world. Fastened to a pole and placed at the head of a departed warrior, it gave "Bee hive Breakfast Bacon" as its recital of the virtues possessed by the deceased. But perhaps the most interesting fact mentioned by the reverend lecturer is the astonishing proficiency in music acquired by those savages. So far advanced are they that their arias can easily be committed to writing by our system of musical notation. Three or four of these songs were rendered word and note by his Grace, who has a fine baritone voice. In one, a warrior's funeral dirge, a mingling of grief with eulogy of martial prowess must have been the meaning of the words, so clearly did the air express those combined feelings. The lecturer also gave specimens of Alaskan dancing, which it appears is done principally by the women, under the eyes of their admiring lords. The dance is highly and superlatively "proper," consisting as it does of a leaning posture in which the dancer stands on one foot while she pounds the floor with the heel of the other, the toe not being moved from the floor. Even the most straight laced could have nothing to say against such "steps."

On the Aleutian island the winters are not very severe. The snow falls very deep, about 24 or 25 feet every winter. This depth is of packed snow, through which the people of the villages cut passages from one house to the other.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

In our various trials and vicissitudes of life, our griefs, sufferings, joys; our days of poverty and riches, to me there is nothing dearer or nobler than true friendship. A friendship that expects no return for proffered aid or sympathy, is spontaneous and pure from worldliness. It feels for you and gives as willingly as the flowing fountain at whose side we sit and drink, and cool brow and brain, thankfully in our hearts. Words of thanks would seem out of place, knowing as we do that the blessing we receive is generously given, and should teach us to go and do likewise, giving all we can to any of God's children needing what we have to give. But such friendship is rare to meet with in our social world, and is usually called *charity*. The "set" we move in perhaps is in no need of sympathy or aid in any way from us. We meet at church, party, lecture and occasional calls, and a few nearer and dearer friends visit in a more informal way, and a general sympathy is extended for any special occasion. But only in great trials like sickness and death is the friendship really put to the test, and then if the sufferers are wealthy money hires nurses, servants, undertakers, doctors and ministers, so that a friend has little to offer in the way of aid. But if poverty is their lot, what a blessing a friend is in time of need, and if you are that friend, what joy to your heart to feel that you are able to help the stricken friend to bear her burden; how willingly your hand turns to any service needed to be done—let it be watching with the sick or dressing the dear dead.

No matter for home duties—your friend needs you. And if you are the afflicted one, how your heart goes out to the friend who comes to you in your sorrow, and silently shows her real sympathy in deeds of love. Each friend who assists you has won an everlasting place in your heart, and although miles separate, such name lingers upon your lips long and often. And if we never meet to return like kindnesses, we pray our friend may never need friends in hours of trial, while we feel more like going to "do likewise" to others needing what we can give.

So far as I can reason, the poorer part of humanity have truer friendships and many blessings the richer are denied by their very wealth. I remember a remark a rich woman once made to me: "I sometimes feel that I have no friends! All my acquaintances want something of me; if it is not money for some object, it is a position I can give them in society."

I have never been placed in her position and never felt to doubt my friends, and God grant I never may! For while one does not care to be an object of charity to a friend, yet it is well to be so situated that you can feel a healthy glow in the hand-shake of a friend, or a fervent "God bless you;" or at the mention of another you feel in gratitude that "A friend in need is a friend indeed." It is well enough to have a time of need to test one's friends, as well as to teach us the value of friendship.

Poverty is a rough, hard school, but it teaches many valuable lessons in life, one being to rely on one's self, and another the blessings of sympathy. The first wins friends, and the other keeps them; and together they enable us to be true friends in return.—*Jewell, in Rural Press.*

INCREASE OF PERNICIOUS LITERATURE.—Occasionally an editorial paragraph or stray magazine article invites the public attention to the lamentable condition of literature for the young, and there the matter ends. With these rare exceptions, the subject remains untouched; the trade in cheap and filthy literature increases, and that *laissez faire* principle of our easy-going American social code restrains parents from a too close examination of their children's mental food; the clergy are silent. If this is an abuse in fact, and is to be remedied, it seems to be full time that it was begun and carried on with the energy its importance justifies.—*Sunday Afternoon.*