

## WHALING OFF CAPE FLATTERY.

ON Sunday, the second of September, the Neah bay reservation, near Cape Flattery, in Washington, discovered an immense whale spouting in the Pacific opposite and about three miles off shore. Following the custom of the Indians, a report of the fact was made to the medicine man, or dreamer, of the tribe, who called a hurried council and allotted a number of picked men to the different available canoes. Incantations were then held, wherein a certain harpoon was blessed by the dreamer and handed to the *hoachin-i-ca-ha*, or thrower, with a warning not to let it go from his hands, except as ordered by the dreamer himself, lest their efforts in the chase should prove abortive. The harpoon used on this occasion was constructed of two pieces of elk horn, each about four inches long, a half inch in thickness one way, and three-fourths of an inch the other, elaborately carved, beveled at one end and the two joined together in the shape of a "V," with a sharp piece of steel fastened between them at the apex. To the angle of the harpoon was woven one end of a rope about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, and from sixty to eighty feet in length, made from the sinews of a whale. The harpoon, when hurled, is fastened into a slot cut in the end of a yew-wood shaft from an inch to an inch and a quarter in diameter and nine or ten feet in length. When the harpoon enters the body of the whale the two outer points, which are sharpened, act as barbs and spread, securely imbedding themselves in the flesh, with the sinew rope attached, the shaft having dropped out from its own weight. All the harpoons used by the Indians are similar in construction to the one described, but only the enchanted ones are embellished or engraved.

The incantation ceremonies over, the dreamer seated himself in the stern of a canoe, and the *hoachin-i-ca-ha*, or thrower, armed with the prophetic harpoon, which must be the first one hurled, took his position in the bow of the same boat. They were then run through the surf by the members of the tribe who were to accompany them, closely followed by two other canoes fully manned, which, according to their instructions, kept astern of the first, but close at hand.

About 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon their game was overhauled, and his heading being carefully discerned, the approach was made directly from behind. It is the habit of the whale when he comes to the surface to blow, to skim along the top of the water, appearing three or four times within a few seconds. On his last appearance he throws himself high in the air, turns his tail to the clouds, dives deep and remains down several minutes. This habit is well known to the Indians, and they can calculate to a nicety when he dives

how soon and where he will again appear, and when he does so the leading boat is generally not far away. In a short time the first boat had approached within thirty or forty feet of the proposed game, and the dreamer, who, upon such occasions, is anything but asleep, fixed his practiced eye upon it to discover the auspicious moment at which to give the command, for only when the animal humps its back to make the dive is it even comparatively safe to give him the harpoon. The thrower, bared to the waist, stood statue-like with shaft and harpoon lifted high in the air, his ear alert for the command "*latab*," or throw, for well he knew if his instrument failed of its mark he would be deposed and some other appointed to his honored position. (This is the scene chosen by the artist for the graphic sketch on pages 112 and 113). He had killed his eighth whale, and hoped to hold his position for the remainder of his days.

Presently the word came and the blessed harpoon was thrown with unerring aim, and others followed in quick succession. At the same time the oarsmen backed water with all their strength to escape the great danger of being swamped by the animal's tail. Six harpoons, with lines attached, were successfully thrown into him, and the whale, goaded to madness, lashed the water into foam with his huge tail, not preventing, however, the canoe-men from binding one float line after another together, and soon the three canoes, tied to the line at intervals of two or three hundred yards, and drawn by the monster of the sea, were sailing through the water oceanward at a fearful rate. The float line is made of cedar bark, twisted like "factory work" into a rope about an inch and a half in diameter. To this line, at spaces of twenty or thirty feet, are attached air floats, made from the stomach of the common hair seal, and much resembling the bladder football of "ye olden times." All the openings to the stomach are sewed up, with the exception of one, and at this is ingeniously constructed a valve, which opens on the inside and is kept closed when the float is "blown up" by the pressure of the air. Each float holds about twenty gallons of air, so one can readily imagine the little chance a whale with a half mile of float line attached has to escape.

At sundown it commenced to blow a regular north-wester, and the sea became so heavy that the canoes were obliged to disconnect and leave their victim to tire himself out battling with the air floats secured to him. That night the wind increased in velocity and the sea ran mountains high, and on the third only two of the canoes were discernable; but the whale soon hove in sight, returning from the tour of many miles he must have journeyed during the night. The two remaining canoes gave chase and were soon again attached to the float line, and enjoying the excitement