

ling in a huge fire place, bringing joy to the soul and comfort to the cramped and chilled body of the traveler, even as the table near by, laden with hearty and toothsome fare brings satisfaction to his long-neglected and rebellious stomach. There may be higher joys in life than this, but it would be hard to convince the traveler who has ridden all night with a taciturn driver, his feet tucked away under the apron and his hands anon desperately clutching the side rail as the stage suddenly sank into the trough of one "ground swell" or rose upon the crest of another, the thermometer meanwhile utterly neglecting its duty of keeping the atmosphere at a comfortable temperature, but such is the case. Utter and complete satisfaction with one's present condition must be the highest joy in life, whether it be that of a clam idly floating with the tide, a Napoleon at Austerlitz or a Christian science healer who has had a successful contest with a case of toothache, and this is the feeling of the stage traveler as he sits at the matutinal meal and feels the soothing warmth that steals over him from the glowing fire place. One by one the stages are being driven out before the on-coming iron horse, and, while we welcome the new and appreciate its advantages, we can but cast a half-regretful sigh at the disappearance of the things that were.

SEALING ALONG THE COAST.

Although it will be fully three months before the annual "ruckus" will begin in the disputed waters of Bering sea, the sealing season is already well advanced in the waters along the coast from California north, and the same vessels that will, about the first of July, enter the precincts of the contested sea and begin the work of slaughter in the vicinity of the rookeries, are now quietly and unobservedly pursuing the same business in that undisputed public highway known as the Pacific ocean.

The sealing fleet consists of about forty schooners of small size, a vessel of great carrying capacity being unnecessary, and at present they nearly all have their headquarters at Victoria and sail under the British flag, though many of them are owned and commanded by Americans. Before the complications arose that resulted in the practical exclusion of American sealers from Bering sea, a number of vessels had their headquarters at San Francisco, and in their northern voyage along the coast often caught quite a number of these amphibious wearers of sealskin sacks before reaching the mouth of the Columbia; but now that Victoria is the headquarters, little sealing is done south of that stream. Where the seals spend their winters is a mystery as profound as the deep-sea home of the salmon. All that is known of them is that they make their appearance off the coast of California very early in the spring, their numbers increasing as progress north is made, until off the Straits of Fuca the northwardly moving drove, or band, numbers millions, though extending, as it does, from the shore many miles in width out to sea, it does not give a very large number within sight of any particular vessel. In this way they move north in their annual migration from their unknown winter home to the various rookeries or breeding grounds in Bering sea, receiving the attention of the sealers constantly during the passage, and even long after they have reached their destination, when they should be left unmolested.

The first catch of the sealers is along the coast both north and south of the Straits of Fuca, off the shores of Washington and Vancouver island, though often so far out to sea as to be out of sight of either of them. In this catch a number of Puget sound vessels participate, though they refrain from making the unlawful incursion into Bering sea. Many of the most experienced hunters are Indians from along the adjacent coast, to whom sealing has become an instinctive science through the Spencerian theory of cultivation through generations of ancestors. It was here the first traders a century ago established trade relations with the natives, and it was here that occurred those events that led to what is known as the "Nootka controversy," that

nearly plunged England and Spain into a war that would probably have involved other European powers, and possibly our own infant, but lusty, nation.

Sealing in the open sea is done in small boats, of which each vessel has about half a dozen, each equipped with a crew of two men, a boat puller and a hunter. In the morning the boats pull away from the vessel in different directions, though always aiming to remain within easy returning distance in case of accident or storm; while those in charge of the schooner, on their part, keep track of the boats and stand ready to go to their assistance whenever necessary. Notwithstanding these precautions, boats are occasionally lost and they and their crews never heard from again. A seal's head projecting above the surface of the water is a small object to see, especially when a swell is heaving the bosom of the ocean, and as a mark to shoot at by a rifleman standing in a swaying boat it is one calling for great skill and experience on the part of the hunter. When one is observed it is the duty of the boat puller to get his craft as quietly as possible within range, and then to steady it until the hunter fires, when he must pull quickly to the spot, for a dead seal easily sinks and is lost. A hunter necessarily scores a great many misses at such a target, and it is stated by experienced sealers that not more than one in ten of those killed or severely wounded is finally secured. It will be seen that the hunter who returns to the vessel at night with half a dozen seals must have spoiled considerable ammunition. It is upon this basis of one in ten that the great slaughter in Bering sea is estimated. If the fleet secure 40,000 skins, it means 400,000 dead seals, the majority of which, near the breeding grounds, so it is alleged, are females out foraging for their young, or so heavy with young that they are sluggish and easily shot. The engraving on the first page shows a hunter in the act of trying his skill upon the bobbing head of a seal. If successful, the shot will make him about two dollars richer and increase the wealth of the boat puller by fifty cents, that being the scale of wages decided upon for the present season for a boat securing 300 seals during the year. As night comes on the boats all put back to the vessel, their catch is hauled on board, skinned, and the skins salted away in the hold. When seals begin to become scarce off the coast, the fleet puts back to Victoria, discharges its cargo, takes on supplies for the northern cruise, and then



DECOYING SEALS ON THE COAST OF WASHINGTON.

proceeds up the coast with the animals, hunting on the way, finally entering Bering sea with them late in June or early in July and remaining there until September, bringing contention and bitterness of spirit between two nations that ought to be on the friendliest terms, and adding to the gray hairs and wrinkles of the worried diplomats.

The natives have many ways of capturing the seal, whose flesh and hide have both been objects of desire to them for centuries, but the one depicted in the accompanying engraving, as observed by Mr. H. D. Chapman, is certainly the most ingenious. Says Mr. Chapman:

"I have often read of the adroitness of the American Indian in fooling his enemy in time of war, by donning either the skin of a wild animal or dressing himself with a headdress of grass and crawling up to intrenchments, or even into an enemy's camp, and, by imitating the call of some bird or animal, signaling definite information to his friends at a distance. But not long since, while crossing Gray's harbor with an Indian, I witnessed a scene which for perspicacity outdid anything I had heretofore given the siwash credit for. My attention was called to a gray object lying on the sandy beach of the middle flats, by a cry much resembling that of a baby emanating therefrom, and I at once ordered the Indian to take me ashore to investigate. He, however, assured me that it was only an Indian hunting seals, and if I had the time he would cast anchor where we were and watch the result from the boat. To this I assented. When we had cast anchor I commenced an investigation with my glasses, and discovered that the object was a human being wrapped in a piece of gray material and imitating the cry or whining noise of a young seal. One arm, however, was left free, and close by, ready for instant use, was a long salmon spear. In a short time I discovered a seal cautiously mak-