

The Sentinel

A GOOD PAPER IN A GOOD TOWN
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Motor buses departing at mid-night on long runs will some day be equipped with berths, a la sleeping car, predicts the Oregonian.

The LaFollette supporters at the Republican national convention at Cleveland this month won't ask for a show down, and his name will not be formally placed before the convention.

The ban on California oranges, lemons and other citrus fruits was lifted Wednesday night by proclamation of Gov. Pierce, which are now admitted unless from territory where the hoof and mouth disease of cattle prevails.

In going over our subscription list a couple of days ago we dropped a few names of subscribers, who have not heeded the request to step up to the captain's office and settle, but not so many as the new names added in the same time.

If we continue to have this rainless, California brand of weather all through the summer, we shall wonder if the Japanese earthquake last year did affect our climate, though it hardly seems possible that it should.

How many Ford cars do you suppose there are in use now? Tuesday of this week the ten millionth Model T car was completed at the Detroit factory. How many joy rides a day does that mean? And what part of the people of the United States could those ten million cars carry at the same time? Another question that is suggested by looking over our home town is: How many of those ten million cars have already been scrapped?

DID THE EARTHQUAKE DO IT?

To those neighbors of ours who have sought to keep people from coming to Oregon by describing our climate in most uncomplimentary terms we would ask, "How about it?" We have not boasted about it half as much as we had reason to, but now we are impelled to say that if better can be found anywhere we would like to be shown.

Our only complaint with the weather man is that we have not had quite enough rain to suit us. We could stand a few inches without a murmur. It might not add to the enjoyment of vacations but it would make things better for farmers and lumbermen.

We have had a perfect fall, a perfect winter and a perfect spring, with the exception of a slight deficiency in moisture. Even the lack of rain has not produced such a blistering drought as in California. Our streams still have plenty of water in them. Our cattle need not die of thirst, and while we have had days that were hot, it was Oregon heat, devoid of oppressive humidity, ideal for vacationing.

Let our visitors be the judges of our climate! We need not fill their ears with the booster's wail of, "This is unusual," heard so often when widely advertised weather fails to live up to its reputation. Let them scan our skies and form their own opinions.

After the Japanese earthquake a scientist predicted that there would be a change in Pacific coast climates because of alterations in the course of the Japan current. Oregon, for instance, was to get the climate of Southern California.

Frankly, we do not believe him, and moreover, we hope he was wrong. We do not want Southern California's climate. We should much prefer to leave it down there where they like it. What we want is our good old Oregon climate, and to those of our visitors who have been here long enough to see what it is like, we direct the question, "Can you blame us?"—Portland Telegram.

O. A. C. is getting along in years. We are in receipt of an invitation to attend its 55th annual commencement this week end, lasting until Monday.

ALASKA AND ITS ATTRACTIONS

Mrs. Mary Lee Davies Who Has Lived in Fairbanks for Ten Years Writes Entertainingly of Conditions in Far North

From the June Scribner's.

This is a "doosid hard country to write letters from," and being a contemporary ancestor is a mighty absorbing business. For that is what Alaska's people are, today living phase for phase in your American overseas Colony of the North all that our ancestors experienced in early-day New England. Yet we have now one huge advantage over those men of old, for the Georges never visited Plymouth or Boston or Salem, personally, to see what was really going on there. But President Harding and three Cabinet officers came to spy out our land last summer and see if it indeed flowed, not with Canaanish milk and honey but with more up-to-date richness such as oil and "quintals of fish," and if there were possible wide grain-fields and future grazing-lands for cattle upon our thousand-and-one untouched hills.

Did you ever stop to think that here is a territory the size of five hundred States of Rhode Island? Alaska is not only larger than the old New England, but larger than the whole original thirteen—so very much larger that New England could be dropped down into it and lost out of sight completely.

But in spite of this raw-boned size of hers, there was no shred of welcome for Alaska whatsoever when she came into the sisterhood back in '68. She came as an unwanted alien, an adoption forced by circumstances, an unloved acquisition to the family circle. It was freely admitted that she was nothing to write home about, that her "keep" was grudging as an added expense during times that were hard at best; and every one in the household knew and said frankly that she would never turn out to be a credit to them.

That was not the truth, and I suppose you wonder why it is so impossible even today to tell the truth about Alaska. It is because the whole truth is too big, too paradoxical, to be comprehended in one piece. The whole truth about Alaska would be a mosaic of a million disparate bits, and though the total must indeed be awesome, one would need the vast perspective of a god, looking before and after, to get the full effect. The whole truth about so big a thing is something you will not get in a sentence, or a book, or a whole library of books; and any one who pretends to give it to you is a quack. Alaska was bought as a unit, and is thought of to this day as a unit, but is no more united than were the original thirteen colonies on the Atlantic seaboard before the Revolution. Isolated spots, scattered over an immense area sparsely inhabited by semi-wandering Indians, have been settled, haphazardly and by tricks of fate rather than with design, by colonists of various antecedents and lineage.

There are at least three elements in Alaska making for confusion of statement: great size, a diversity of interest and resources and climate in the four main divisions, and combined with these a relatively short period of conscious history, which results in a lack of general, immediate, and authentic reference books and literature. When friends Outside have asked me to direct them to "a good book about Alaska" I have been embarrassed, for there is no book that I could recommend without explanation, addition, or correction. They are useless as fountains of truth (and I do not know of an exception to this, though I wish mightily that I did) for one at least of three reasons: written so long ago that conditions have utterly changed; written from within to advance some special industry or section; written by a touring professional writer from without who has hit a few high spots and fills in with hearsay about the places he has not seen.

Here we have such a diversity of natural features that what may be closely descriptive of one section would appear wild fable to another. And yet it is all Alaska, and when people ask largely to have Alaska described to them you have to be New England-ish and reply with more questions. "What part of Alaska? and what season? and do you mean Alaska as it was, or is, or is to be?" In a general way the main topographic features here correspond to those of the Western States, and Western people, perhaps for this reason, can best understand our problems. For we have a coast mountain range upon the Pacific, a central plateau, a continuation of the Rocky mountain system, and a region of great plains—four distinct geographical, aboriginal, vocational divisions

with diverse history and resources, needs and aims. We have an older coast and a newer interior frontier, as in the States, and the one is apt to misjudge and be jealous of the other, politically and economically, as in the States. Though I have visited all the larger sections of this Great Country (that's what the word Alaska means, you know), I confess to that "wholesome prejudice of place" regarding Fairbanks, because it has been my home for years. I know much more about the Interior and I feel more in sympathy with it. There is my "slant."

Fairbanks is called "The Golden Heart of Alaska" for three reasons, no less! First, it is an historic placer camp—that's the "gold" part. Next, it is situated, by a curious chance, at the exact geographical center of all Alaska—at the heart. And third and most vital of all, it has the good fortune to be one of those communities possessing personality and able to inspire loyalty and real feeling in all the people I have ever known who have either lived or visited here. It's just a tiny frontier town, and yet somehow it seems to have some inner quality and that makes people long for it when absent. And what higher praise could one give to a city enthroned?

This heart does not control the pulse-beat, however, for the head or capital resides, by a strange anatomical vagary, in the tail! That long stringer to the southeast is never, by solemn treaty, more than ten marine leagues wide, and often considerably less. Extending for miles up the coast, Canada and not American territory is its back country, for the mainland of Alaska lies many hundred miles distant. Even to mention this matter is political TNT, however, for Juneau is very touchy on the subject. When it is mentioned, she draws up with hauteur.

"Very well. If you do not like me as a capital, you crude Interior creatures, go off and play by yourselves," she announces. "We in the 'tail,' as you inelegantly call it, can very well get on by ourselves. We are more cultured, anyway, and older in civilization. We could be a State all by ourselves."

The intense local feeling engendered by different roots and fruits, the exaggerated sense of local importance due to the separateness and distance apart of the settlements, the lack of getting together between communities so that we could measure up and compare notes and knock off our mutual anti-social bumps, have all been inevitable so far because tides and watercourses and mountain ranges have pushed us apart. Only within the last very few years have we begun to use the machine-made tools provided by our generation—railroads, telegraphs, autos, and airplanes—to cut away and pare down these spinal demarcations. In spite of this beginning we are still in this part of Alaska, in the pioneer period of development. But, under present conditions at least, a Revolution will not be needed to bind and amalgamate us. Steady and whole some commercial development (not a forced growth, as some would have it) will in due time draw together these Colonies of the North in a sane and natural way.

Alaska is, above all, a land of paradoxes. One is tempted to say that there is no statement of physical fact that can be made about Alaska of which the exact opposite cannot also be posited, and with equal truth. To phrase this in pure Alaskanese, you can play it straight or copper the bet and stand to win good money either way! For instance, one may call the country wet, cold mountainous, inhospitable, barren, undeveloped, icy, dark, inhabited only by savages. Every one of these statements is strictly accurate, of certain places and at certain times. One may also state with absolute certitude that Alaska is dry, warm, open, hospitable, well-watered, well-developed, sunny, light, and inhabited by the venture some pick of the Nordic stock. These statements are equally true, of certain places and at certain times. It all depends upon which list you, temperamentally, incline to believe, or which one the limits of your Alaskan experience have tended to verify!

The Britannica, supposedly judicial, says, for instance, that Alaska consists geographically of a "compact central mass and two straggling appendages running from its southwest and southeast corners." The "compact mass" of continental Alaska in-

cludes both the Interior, or Yukon valley district, and Seward Peninsula (Nome) and the Arctic slope, which unite to form another more or less homogeneous division. The southeastern "appendage" is known locally as The Panhandle, and the southwestern, or Aleutian Islands, appendage as The Westward. There you have all Alaska, divided into its four parts. United, it spreads over seventeen degrees north and south, or as far as from New Orleans to Duluth, so that some variation of climate might reasonably be expected within its borders. And east and west the stretch is fifty-eight degrees, or considerably more than from New York to San Francisco. Plenty of elbow room this way, too, for diversities. The total area is nearly 600,000 square miles, or one-fifth the size of the entire United States.

President Harding came to Alaska to find out what "Seward's Ice Box" really contained; for in this day of preservation by refrigeration it has dawned upon the national consciousness that there was, sitting upon the back stoop, so to speak, and has been for these many years, a huge chest of unexplored possibilities. "Seward's Ice Box?" Why, the very idea is suggestive of good things to eat; and a real ice box in the family possession might prove a big blessing to the whole household of children and help keep them from going hungry, some rainy day. What is in the ice box? No one knows, exactly, for no one before has done more than open the door and take a sniff.

I suppose that the very first resource you instinctively think of as being kept locked up in our treasure chest is that pale Arctic gold, the wild adventurous quest of which has inspired so many tales calculated to keep old men from their chimney-corners and children from their play. For that fabulous wealth of gold which the early Spanish explorers so hopelessly sought in the "wilderness" of Florida and Louisiana was destined to be found later by another race of Argonauts in the wilderness of Alaska.

Since earliest days it was known that the Yukon was gold-bearing. Schwatka notes the points on the river where gold in placer deposits commences, and states that "from here on to the mouth of the Yukon a painful dirt taken from almost any bar or bank with any discretion will give several colors." By 1880 prospectors had followed the Indian trail over the Chilkoot and reached the headwaters of the Yukon upon the Lewes; for as early as 1867 the Western Union Survey had discovered gold in the interior and also on Seward Peninsula. Since '87 a few placers have been worked continuously on the Fortymile, but it was not until 1896 that the big Klondike strike brought thousands struggling and swarming into Dawson, Yukon Territory, and spilling over the then ill-defined border and down the river into Alaskan jurisdiction.

Well, all the Dawson discontents and unlucky draws rushed in turn down the Yukon to Nome when the Anvil Creek strike occurred there in '98 and the great beach strike in 1900. The Fairbanks discovery in "nineteen and two" brought them all scrambling up-river again, to the Golden Heart. This has been the last of the big, or "easy" (shallow bed-rock), stampedes, so we have here in Fairbanks an interesting residue of all the human flotam carried by successive tidal waves to all the great mining camps of Yukon Territory and Alaska, many of them thirty years in the north without a single trip Outside. Gatherers of the dust are these men, hunters of the impossible, questers of an unconsecrated grail, a golden cup at a false rainbow's end. Because to many the goal has been so long denied, by now the very quest itself has become objective.

Roundly speaking, three hundred and fifty millions in gold have been taken from Alaska, to date. I say "taken from" advisedly, for those who have been the most lucky ones have taken this wealth Outside and either invested it in building up the cities of the Pacific, Seattle and San Francisco especially, or have spent it prodigally, also Outside, and have returned to Alaska broken and unrepentant, asking another golden boon of fortune. This aufererous crop is not a renewable one. It was poured molten into the veins of the earth long ages since. But as yet, it is known, only the easiest surface gold has been taken away from Alaska. The far greater treasure that still remains will have to be won with more patience, however, with more intelligence and more contriving, with a more concerted effort. One man alone may stumble upon and develop a rich placer; many people must cooperate and contribute diverse gifts of organization to win any great fortune from deep gravels or hard quartz. There is no doubt about the gold being there. As yet we have not readjusted ourselves to the new conditions, have not been driven to

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co-operation by Necessity, who is no less famous as an amalgamator than as a maternal parent.

"Safe as in God's pocket." That's a saying common here. It is used as the uttermost term of security, and the stress is usually laid upon the word "safe." But we are living in God's pocket; and far from being the land that God forgot, it is a place close and intimate to Him, where there are a host of His hidden ancient treasures, tucked away in unlikely corners, to be haphazard upon all in good time. There is comfort and there is richness in that homely saying, "God's pocket."

Fitting in better with our ice box simile are the great Alaska fisheries of salmon, cod, flounder, halibut, herring, as well as the newer canneries of clam and shrimp. Add to these two further products of the sea that are hard to classify, whales and fur-seal, and you have an industry no less picturesque or romantic than the gold, and a source of even great revenue year by year. To indulge in a highly mixed metaphor, the cornerstone of Alaskan prosperity has been fish! Between the gold rushes and before them, going on patiently while our still primitive farming gets upon its feet, tiding us over with food for Alaska malemutes and natives and sourdoughs while we wait for the fast growing redeer herds to multiply, and continuing, so we hope, into the time when we shall become truly a new New England and build our mills and factories, the silver horde of fishes yearly revisits our waters, and (until the canneries came!) he who would dip in his net was fed.

Fish are the be-all and end-all of many an Alaska town's existence. The entire southern littoral may be said to smell distinctly of fish. The coast towns are all fishing towns, wholly or in part: Ketchikan, Petersburg, Wrangell, Sitka, Kodiak, Seldovia, Kenai, Seward and Anchorage, Valdez and Cordova, are mining outlets as well. For, as the banks and shoals from Nantucket to Newfoundland are the feeding grounds of enormous schools of cod and herring that swarm in the Labrador current, so the Gulf of Alaska and all the firths and fjords and land-locked bays and river-mouths adjacent to it swarm with countless fish. If gold is scarce and coy, if the beaver and the marten and the mink retreat farther and farther into the vast unknown of the Arctic, if the wild soil is not easily tamed, here at least has always been God's plenty.

And do not think of gold as the one metal of Alaska, though it has been best advertised. Cordova is our Copper Gateway, and I have heard that one shipment of copper from the Kennicott alone, during the war, equalled the total price paid for Alaska back in '68. Silver, tin, lead, antimony, marble, gypsum, platinum, all go to swell the list. And don't forget oil, for that is a mineral resource too, you know, and Katalla continues to produce, as it has for nearly twenty years, and Gold Bay and Iniskin keep up their promise, and it seems now that oil is flowing almost within a stone's throw of the very Pole! Here we have not only an ice box but a well-equipped service station, too. (Concluded next week)