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ALASKA AND ITS PLACE IN RANKS OF PROGRESS

Its History and Outlook---Not a Place of Ice and Aridity---Can Support More Population Than Scandinavia.

(Advertiser Correspondence, Copyright by Frederic J. Haskin.)

Forty-one years ago the formal transfer of the district of Alaska from the Czar of Russia to the government of the United States was completed. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, believed he had done a great thing for his country when he bargained and paid \$7,200,000 gold for Alaska. Nearly everybody else believed that Mr. Seward had simply thrown away that much money, that Alaska was nothing but a waste of ice and could never amount to anything. Just before his death Mr. Seward declared that the greatest accomplishment of his very active public life was the annexation of Alaska. Then he added "but it will take the country a generation to find out Alaska's value."

The generation of Seward is a generation of the past, and the country today is beginning to realize that his predictions are fulfilled. The Portland Exposition three years ago taught the people a great deal about Alaska. The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition at Seattle next summer will teach them much more. Meanwhile Alaska is pushing forward in its development without pausing to heed the voice of pessimism.

Sixty years ago the North American coast of the Pacific Ocean whispered not the slightest promise of its present day splendor. The Oregon country was attracting settlers, now that American ownership had been made certain, and the California territory was passing from Mexican to American control. Gold had just been found in California and the great rush to the golden west was beginning. The romantic story of those sixty years which have produced the great states of Oregon, California and Washington is known to all Americans.

But few remember that the "forty-niners" sought for gold with pick and shovel which came from the forges of Sitka, the capital of Russian America and the metropolis of the Pacific. Few remember that the first steamships which plowed the waters of the greatest of oceans were launched from Sitka shipyards. Few remember that Alaskan-made clothing and Alaskan-cut lumber were used by the San Francisco pioneers.

The story of Oregon and California is an unbroken tale of triumphs. Alaska is triumphant now, but there is tragedy in its past. To begin at the beginning, the peninsula of Alaska was discovered in 1728 by Vitus Bering, a Danish navigator in the service of the Russian government. He gave his name to the sea and straits which separate America from Asia, and claimed the country for the Russian crown. A few years later a band of Russian adventurers undertook to settle the land. They so cruelly mistreated the natives that a massacre was provoked, which the Russians frightfully avenged. Thus the Russian dominion in America was built on a foundation of cruelty.

The Russian government began to pay serious attention to Alaska in the early part of the nineteenth century and set about making Sitka a commercial city. Shipyards and factories were built, a transpacific commerce was established and for years a thriving trade was carried on. Ruthless destruction of fur-bearing animals, the maltreatment of the natives, the growing importance of the cities on the Pacific Coast of the United States, the waste of capital in developing useless coal mines, and the gathering of coal for which there was no market—all these things contributed to the decline of the Russian trade. Finally the time came when all the great Russian capitalists withdrew and Sitka degenerated into a fishing village. Its very name was almost forgotten, and the world abandoned it to the fetters of ice which the world imagined bound it.

Thus it happened that the country believed Mr. Seward had been cheated when he bought Alaska from Russia. It was declared that the sale of the district was only a trick which enabled Mr. Seward to give Russia \$7,200,000 in return for assistance offered by Russia to the Lincoln administration during the Civil War. Statesmen declared that it would never return the purchase price in contributing to the American trade.

Forty-one years have passed. More than the amount paid to Russia is yielded each year from Alaskan fisheries. In the last decade Alaskan gold mines have produced more than a hun-

dred million dollars worth of gold, and the production is continuing. To this is now being added the produce of coal mines and oil fields, the importance of which is increasing rapidly.

The present population of the territory is about 90,000, of which 35,000 are white men and the rest natives. With such a sparse population and with such a comparatively small development of natural resources, the trade between Alaska and the United States proper now amounts to more than \$50,000,000 a year.

So far from being a land of never-melting and unrelenting ice, it is now known that Alaska has agricultural lands which are greater in extent than the total area of the New England states, New York and Pennsylvania. As long ago as 1876, the first prize for wheat at the Philadelphia exposition was awarded to grain grown in Alaska. The wheat-growing country is pushing its northern boundary nearer and nearer to the pole each year, and another decade will see Alaska an important factor in the grain producing business of the country.

It has been carefully reckoned by government investigators that Alaska is capable of supporting a greater population than the Scandinavian peninsula of northern Europe. This would mean the expansion of the present 90,000 population to 3,000,000, and a multiplication of wealth in like proportion. Alaska has already done enough to justify the wisdom of Seward, it has barely begun to unfold its riches.

The discovery of the rich gold fields in 1898 was the beginning of the new era of Alaskan history. While the first great mines were in British territory, it was soon found that there was plenty of American gold, too. The gold seekers endured great hardships at first, but the prize was worth the effort. Hence they continued to push forward and carry the civilization of the modern world with them. The White Pass Railway has connected the seacoast with the upper Yukon since 1900. Other railway lines are building, the Stewart peninsula is being gridironed with steel rails.

The telegraph and telephone preceded the railroad and what were trackless and silent wastes a few years ago are now annihilated by the agency of instantaneous communication. The fact that these improvements are going forward in Alaska will finally have the effect of correcting the mistaken notions of that far northern country which obtain in the larger part of the United States. The people of the Pacific northwest states know about Alaska, but the rest of the Americans think it is a solid sheet of ice.

As a matter of fact, Sitka has a mean annual temperature of forty-four degrees, which is just that of St. Paul, Minnesota, and which is only five degrees lower than that of Boston, Massachusetts. The climatic conditions are quite different from those of our temperate zone, but they are not so rigorous as to prevent great industrial development. Take the example of the Tanana Valley, of which the prosperous town of Fairbanks is the metropolis. This valley is about thirty to thirty-five miles wide and 800 to 900 miles long. It has produced over \$20,000,000 in gold from its frozen soil in the past seven years. But the future of the valley does not lie in its wealth of gold.

This valley is capable of supporting an agricultural population of at least a quarter of a million. The ground in the valley is frozen to a depth of a hundred feet, but in March and April it begins to thaw and the frost melts out to a sufficient depth to permit cultivation. The finest of small fruits and vegetables are grown here on land which is underlaid at a depth of three or four feet by solid ice and frozen ground. Without this underlying ice vegetable life could not be sustained, as there is little rainfall in the summer and the growing crops depend upon the sub-irrigation from the ice beneath the surface. In this valley during the months of May, June and July, the sun shines practically all the time, rising about 1:30 in the morning and setting at 10:30 at night. Darkness never penetrates the valley during that season, and the crops mature very rapidly under the hot summer sun. This particular valley is perhaps too far north for the grain grower but Alaska has millions of acres waiting for the wheat.

Of course the country does not offer advantages for a large farming population at this time, because of the lack of transportation facilities. As the railroads come and the placer gold mines, the coal fields and the copper deposits are opened up, the necessary markets will be provided and Alaska's permanent agricultural development will go forward.

The riches of the Alaskan coal and copper fields may yet surpass the wealth of its gold mines. The quality of coal found in some of the workings is very high, but as yet the mines have not been developed sufficiently to supply even the Alaskan demand. The value of the Alaskan oil fields is still problematical, but they may also add greatly to the mineral wealth of the territory.

The fisheries, the fur trade, and the gold are the principal Alaskan products of today. Within a few years grain, coal, and copper will be added. Then the American people will begin to appreciate the value of the bargain made by Mr. Seward when he bought this great expanse of territory for \$7,200,000.

--- THE ---

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WHOLESALE EXECUTION AT THE DOG POUND

Thirty-four doggies, faced Apana's gun—
Thirty-four luans after he was done.
Four and thirty wagging tails in the dust are laid—
Orders must be carried out, taxes must be paid.

When notice was given in the Advertiser that fifty dogs, in the pound, were to die on Thursday, unless ransomed, many persons were interested, some interested enough in the condemned animals to pay the taxes on sixteen of them, leaving only thirty-four for execution. These unlucky ones died at the appointed hour, Officer Apana firing thirty-four shots and leaving thirty-four dead dogs behind him. The work was carried out without any unnecessary cruelty, being witnessed by J. A. Smith, who bears witness to that effect.

In the meanwhile the dog catchers are still on their rounds and all dogs on which the taxes are not paid will be taken up and destroyed.

RESOLUTION AGAINST OPIUM.

Whereas, China and other nations are now fighting against the blighting curse of opium, and

Whereas, There are from 30 to 40 opium smoking dens in Honolulu, and also opium dens in Hilo and other places in Hawaii, and

Whereas, The Ministerial Union of Honolulu, the Chinese United Society, the Anti-Opium League and others, have already petitioned for opium prohibition,

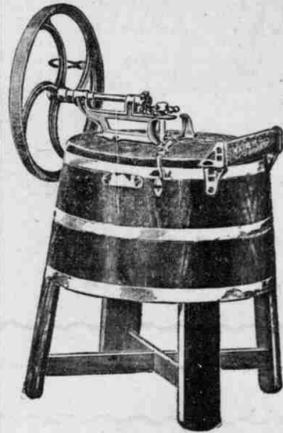
Be it Resolved, That we also, representing the 103 churches of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, assembled at their annual meeting, respectfully petition the United States Congress to prohibit the use and sale of opium, except as medicine, in the Territory of Hawaii.

The above was unanimously adopted by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association at Hilo, July 1, 1908.

WM. K. PUAU,
Secretary.

INFANTILE CHOLERA.

Any unusual looseness of a child's bowels during the hot weather should be a warning to mothers. Infantile cholera may develop in a few hours, and prompt action should be taken to avoid it. Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy, followed by a dose of castor oil, will check the disease in its insidiousness, and all danger may be avoided. For sale by Benson, Smith & Co., Ltd., agents for H. I.



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RESIDENT MANAGER.

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HE KNEW.

Sentimental Young Lady—"Ah, Professor! what would this old oak say if it could talk?"
Professor—"It would say, 'I am an elm.'"—Fliegende Blaetter.