

ROOKERIES OF JAPANESE SEAL-PIRACY IN ALASKAN WATERS

Instigated for the most part by American promoters, the trail of the poachers has been marked by needless international friction and even death itself.

JAPANESE FUR-SEAL PIRATE TAKING IN SKINS FROM THE RAID OFF NORTHEAST POINT, ST. PAUL'S ISLAND, JULY 17th, 1906.

In view of the recent raids of Japanese seal poachers on American fishing islands in the Pacific, new interest is awakened in the subject. The following article, by Henry W. Elliott, has a special importance, as Mr. Elliott is an authority, and his book, "Alaska and the Seal Islands," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is considered the last word on the subject.

In the subjoined article he declares that "the Japanese raids on the Alaska seal islands are planned by American and Canadian promoters." He also makes the surprising statement that the killing of five Japanese hunters on St. Paul island this summer was the result of a so-called Japanese poaching expedition, but which was originated by the Japanese themselves.

One of the excellent pictures accompanying the article shows the landing at St. Paul island, Bering sea, near where two schooners and 65 Japanese hunters were captured July 5 by the revenue cutter Manning.

The pictures are taken from senate documents of the fifty-fourth congress, except the one showing northeast point of St. Paul island, which was taken by Mr. Elliott himself.

By Henry W. Elliott

THE killing of five Japanese hunters on St. Paul island last summer aroused intense public interest and was commented on universally as an improper business conducted by one party to it unlawfully and on the other cruelly. But since a fresh haul last July, on the 6th, of more than 60 Japanese hunters and two vessels has been made by our revenue marine authorities right off shore and near the landing at St. Paul island, it seems that the public ought to know now that this business of raiding the fur seal islands with crews of Japanese hunters shipped on "Japanese" vessels is not a new one and it is not of Japanese origin or direction.

In short, it never did originate in Japanese minds, and it never was conducted by Japanese officers and agents from 1880, when it was first launched, up to the close of the season of 1906, when it resulted in the death of those men above mentioned. The status of the present season is not yet known and will not be accurately defined until the end of the hunting at sea next October or early in November.

But we have full and complete records of the inception and progression of this business of fur seal piracy, ostensibly under the Japanese flag. The facts in this history of that lawless hunting are interesting and timely in their publication at this hour.

When the transfer of the fur seal islands to our possession took place in 1867 by the cession of Alaska not much attention was given to the skins of fur seals; they were not valuable then; they did not average more than \$2.50 to \$4 a pelt. The chief attraction given by our people then was to the acquisition of sea otter and silver and black fox skins; these were very valuable then, as they are today.

But by the lapse of a few years these fur seal skins rose to a value of \$8 and \$10 a pelt, and considerable interest was aroused in raw fur buyers who looked out for that business in San Francisco. They began to regard with jealous eyes the return cargoes of fur seal skins which came down from the seal islands of Alaska and the Russian seal islands, of Kamtschatka; they made mental computations, and the great profit which the lessees of these islands made annually on their catches; they heard of the enormous numbers of seals which annually hauled out there, and which were never killed, since the lessees were not permitted to take more than 100,000 annually.

The result of this jealous survey of the work and profit of the lessees of these seal islands of Alaska and of Russia was to stir up in the minds of several San Francisco and Victoria fur buyers this idea of sending a vessel and men up to raid those islands; to run a party of hunters in upon a rookery under cover of fog, there to so rapidly kill and skin seals that within the limit of a few hours' time this pirating party could retire with two or three thousand skins to their vessels, leaving no sign of their going and coming upon the ground and giving no alarm to the agents of the government or the lessees on the islands.

It was necessary, of course, that such piracy as this idea fomented should be wrought in secrecy or it would speedily bring its authors to punishment. It would not do to hire hunters who could and would babble about the work. Then, were there such hunters to be hired who would not talk after the voyage ended and they were paid for their share in its unlawful success and gain?

It did not take these San Francisco and Victoria traders long to solve that problem. They hit upon the plan of outfitting an English or Victoria schooner or an American vessel in a Japanese port, where they learned her with Japanese papers for a "whaling and hunting voyage in the North Pacific." In this port they hired the 25 or 30 hunters—hardy, perfectly trained Japanese watermen and fishermen—whom they required to go ashore on the seal islands to club and skin fur seals—not one of them able to speak a word of English and all orders given to them

by an interpreter. A Canadian or American skipper would take the helm, with two or three white "seamen" who could alternate at the wheel and manage the vessel (a small 60 or 70-ton schooner) under short sail while the Japanese hunters were out on the raids.

Such in brief was the inception of that "Japanese" piracy which we are noting in the public press today. The first of these "Japanese" raids as planned and promoted was made in a small American schooner known to us as the Mascotte, but which cleared from Yokohama in 1880 under a Japanese name. She was commanded by Captain Beckwith and was owned by a San Francisco firm. She raided Otter island, which lies just six miles south of St. Paul island, the chief sealing island of the Pribilof group.

In this same year another small schooner, the Three Sisters, was fitted up in the same manner at Yokohama by the same San Francisco firm and sent on a piratical errand to the Russian seal islands. She successfully landed on Copper island and made way with a large catch.

The result of these piratical voyages in 1880 to Otter island on our side and Copper island on the Russian side was highly gratifying to the promoters in San Francisco. They had solved the problem of how to have such work done and escape the penalties, while at the same time they reaped the immense profits of the business. These Japanese hunters were paid what was by them an immense wage. They understood that they were to go out again and again, as long as they could find seals in this manner and did not talk about it to white men. The assurance of this employment opened the way to fortunes for these men and they embraced it with all conditions and were loyal to their American and Canadian employers—they never talked.

With special regard to these raids made on the Alaskan seal islands by Japanese hunters hired as described above and which were first made in 1880, the following preliminary statement should be made: The Pribilof islands are enveloped in fog banks nearly all the time from early in June to the end of September annually; not more than four or five clear days occur during that period. This shelter of the fog is the opportunity of the pirate. Under its cover he can slip ashore to kill seals and retreat to his vessel with the skins unseen. But there is one danger which he must take his chances on—these fog banks often suddenly roll up and away for a few moments or a few hours, then as suddenly roll down again. No warning is given of this rising or lowering of these fog curtains.

On account of this peculiarity of sudden lifting and then settling of the fog these fur seal pirates, who have successfully raided the seal islands during that long period between 1880 and July 16, 1906, when for the first time seven of their men were shot to death, were obliged to make their rookeries at the northeast point of St. Paul island. The plan of operation which has been carried out by them was substantially as below stated.

On the day the spars and hull of a small sealing schooner can be distinctly seen eight or ten miles distant from the lookout points on the islands. Therefore the raiding schooners anchored to the westward and northward of St. Paul. This is the chief sealing island of the Pribilof group, on which more than nine-tenths of the fur seal herd existed. Then when the judgment of the steady holding of the fog for the day he would run in close to the shore of a rookery ground, usually at Northeast Point on St. Paul island. Lower five or six boats and send 25 or 30 men ashore armed with nothing but clubs and skinning knives.

The exact area and location of every fur seal rookery on the two seal islands of St. Paul and St. George were known to this captain. He knew the men who represented the government and the lessees on the islands, and he knew what their habits and order of living were. In short he was perfectly well aware of what they were doing and going to do from the opening to the end of the sealing season. He knew every step they were taking to guard the rookeries. If any were taken and when and where he could get in upon the seals with little or no risk of detection by these islanders.

In 1881 and 1882 the first regularly ordered work of raiding the Pribilof islands by "Japanese" manned vessels was instituted. These schooners thus engaged, were two American vessels, the Otter and the Alexander, owned by an old San Francisco firm. They carried American captains and Japanese crews or hunters. They anchored every night to the northward of St. Paul island, some 15 or 20 miles distant; then, during the night hours and



OFF THE VILLAGE LANDING, ST. PAUL'S ISLAND, BERING SEA, PRIBILOV GROVE, ALASKA.

when the fog held darkest, they ran in close to the island and sent their hunters ashore. These small sealing boats were "clinker built" Whitehall models, carrying six men, a spritail and oars with muffled rowlocks. If the landing was on a sandy beach then the boats were drawn up with stems just awash; if it was rocky, then one man with pole and bathook stayed in the boat and held it within jumpy distance of the landing, and so remained in charge until his comrades returned with their spoils.

When ashore these pirates took their clubs, stout oaken sticks, a little larger but exactly like pick handles, and their skinning knives with them to the seal rookery, which was always close at hand. In these early days of this piracy, when seals were in immense numbers, the raiders never killed on their breeding grounds, because it was against the law and would result in loss of time; the old bulls would fight so hard and so defiantly that before they were disposed of much valuable time was wasted.

So these landings were usually—yes, invariably—made on the sandy beaches adjacent to the big breeding grounds, in the rear of which the young male seals were found all hauled out together and by themselves. The old breeding bulls never let them go on the rookery ground with the females, and so they are compelled to herd apart in this manner by the natural order of their lives.

The Japanese hunters would step around and drive out 1,000 or 1,500 of these young male seals, one, two, three and four years old, drive them out like so many hogs or sheep down close to the boat landing, then club them and skin the bodies right at the surf margin, so that when the carcasses were thrown into the sea they sank at once and all traces of this killing disappeared, blood and bodies, as fast as the work was done.

These hunters were careful never to knock down more than a few hundred seals at any one time, so that they would never be caught by a sudden lifting of the fog with a large number of slain seals, which they would be obliged to leave behind them and so furnish evidence of their secret visit and thus put the island agents and natives on their trail to assail them when they returned.

The pressure of the opinion of the legitimate pelagic sealer became so great that by 1892-93 these men who led these raiding parties into the Alaskan and the Russian seal rookeries were publicly denounced in Victoria and repudiated by the pelagic sealing owners and captains. It became so warm for those men who were known to have any interest in this illicit form of pelagic sealing that the business of piracy was abandoned by all interests engaged in it save one San Francisco firm and its correspondents in Victoria.

That this piracy was persisted in by these parties became evident at intervals until the exposure of their chief agent, Alexander McLean, at Victoria, in October, 1905, settled it.

The history of Alexander McLean, as associated with this business of piracy and pelagic fur sealing in Bering sea, reads like a romance. In 1882-3 two Cape Breton (New Brunswick, N. S.) fishermen landed in Victoria with the idea of battering their calling as halibut and cod fishermen. These men, Daniel and Alexander McLean, were brothers, born and raised on Cape Breton, the eldest, Daniel, being some 40 years of age, and Alexander about 24 when they made this change of their lives in 1883, from honest toilers of the deep to become fur seal pirates.

While Alexander McLean has been the most talked of man in connection with that fur seal piracy known to the Russian and Alaskan islands in the Bering sea, yet, in truth, his brother Daniel was the master mind and the bolder of these two hardy men. When the McLean brothers first came over, in

1882, the business of pelagic sealing had not been organized as an industry, and it was not, for that matter, until 1884, that the business of raiding the Russian and Alaskan seal islands had been fairly started by this San Francisco trading house and its agents at Victoria, as stated above. These men were on the lookout for likely, hardy, fit persons to take command of their vessels and push the business of fur seal piracy with secrecy and energy. It was not long before the Cape Breton brothers entered the employment of these American promoters.

Dan McLean took one of the piratical vessels owned by these San Francisco parties aforesaid and made a specialty of raiding the Alaskan Islands. Alexander took another and devoted his wit and seamanship to raiding the Russian Islands.

From the date of their entry into the business of fur seal piracy in 1883 up to the close of the season of 1891 the McLean brothers made a great record for themselves and their employers. The entire relation of their experience would fill the pages of a big volume. It can therefore be only suggested here at this time. And as the career of Alexander McLean happens to be the one most spectacular and notorious we will confine our review to his chief and latest transgressions. He certainly put up a great show of rascality both on his own part and that of his associates.

McLean came up in 1890 from San Francisco, as usual, in a vessel owned by his American masters and promptly went to work on one of the rookeries of Copper island. To the great amazement of his men and himself, the guards did not fire blank cartridges over his head. They shot this time to kill. He hastily put off with one man so badly shot that to save his life and keep his relatives from talking McLean had to abandon the work out and take this wounded shipmate, named York, over to a hospital on Pigeon sound, at Port Townsend. Needless to say, McLean did not lose this voyage, in spite of that immense drawback. He brought into San Francisco at the end of the season 2,312 fur seal skins, out of which 1,438 were taken on Copper island. As each skin was worth more than \$25 to the owners of the James Hamilton Lewis for this was the name of the vessel which McLean commanded, the reader can figure on the huge profits of that piracy when he is told that every cent of \$17 per skin was "pure velvet"—i. e., net profit to the owners of the vessel, and to Alexander McLean. How the division between them was made we will never know. Pirates do not keep books.

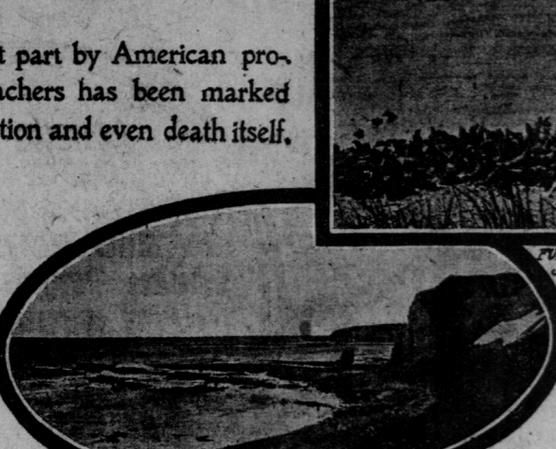
In 1891, as the season opens, is a period in McLean's association with this business, which shows the spirit of a true pirate on his part and the energetic backing of his owners. McLean determined to have an American and Canadian crew, instead of Japanese hunters, for the work on Copper island this year. He knew that the change in guarding the rookeries had

come, so that he could not land there successfully with a doleful crew of Japanese hunters. Indeed, these men said to him that they would not ship to fight on shore for seals. He therefore shipped a crew of white hunters in San Francisco for the James Hamilton Lewis and gave them no idea of what he really intended to do, except that they were to shoot seals on the high seas. He cleared as an "American citizen, lawfully in command of the James Hamilton Lewis," January 10, 1892, sailed out from the port of San Francisco March 3, fully equipped for a six months' voyage into the North Pacific "fishing and hunting."

The next heard from this British pirate, for he was and is not an American citizen and never has tried to be one, is that he is seized and handed, August 2, 1892, off Copper island by a Russian patrol boat—which he did not recognize, or no such seizure would have ensued. The Russians take McLean and his vessel, the James Hamilton Lewis, to Petropaulovsky; the vessel is confiscated and destroyed and McLean and his men are taken to Vladivostok, nominally imprisoned for a few weeks, then sent home to San Francisco in October.

Now what happens? A strange and shameful sequel. When the owners of the James H. Lewis found that their vessel had been seized and the enormous, ill-gotten profits of 1890 suddenly snatched from them they determined to recoup themselves, even if they suborned perjury and forgery. They made up a claim against the government of Russia for the "illegal seizure" of their "American vessel, legally employed on the high seas." McLean, who commanded the Lewis, not being an American citizen, as he must be to lawfully command an American vessel sailing under the protection of an American register, was induced to perjure himself and make oath that he was a Russian citizen and that the vessel was a Russian vessel, and that the claim of the owners of the James H. Lewis was a just and legal one. The official in charge of this business at the department indorsed these fraudulent papers and took them to John Hay as genuine and bona fide evidence; then the seal of our government was put upon those fraudulent papers and they were exploited at The Hague as bearing the indorsement of our government. Upon the strength of this indorsement these pirates, master and owners of the Lewis, actually received an award of some \$50,000 from the Russian treasury November 29, 1892 (made at The Hague November 29, 1902, and paid in March, 1903).

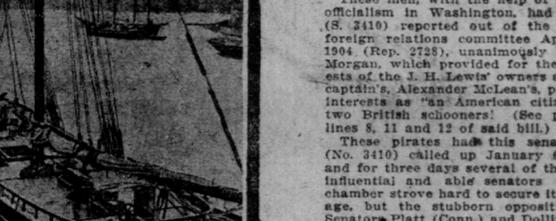
The nerve and industry of these owners of the James Hamilton Lewis and their agent, this British pirate, Captain Alexander McLean, did not subside at all after their success at The Hague. They actually prepared



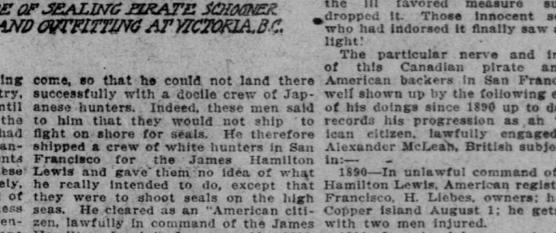
FUR-SEAL ROOKERY, NORTH EAST POINT, ST. PAUL'S ISLAND, BERING SEA.



SOUTH ROOKERY, THE CHIEF POINT OF ATTACK BY FUR-SEAL PIRATES OF THE RUSSIAN HERDS.



THE CONFESSTION AND BEACHING OF A FUR-SEAL PIRATE BY THE AGENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT.



THE AINOBU MARU TYPE OF SEALING PIRATE SCHOOER, DISCHARGING HER CATCH AND OUTFITTING AT VICTORIA, B.C.

1892—In unlawful command of the Rosa Sparks, American schooner, of San Francisco, the crew was reported against him this year, though he may have been heavily engaged.

1893—In (lawful?) command of the steam sealing schooner Alexander, owned by F. Liebes & Co. and flying the Hawaiian flag; he is detected by the U. S. S. Mohican in the act of raiding Northeast Point, St. Paul island, in July, but he escapes in the fog because the propeller of the Mohican is disabled.

In December the owners of the J. H. Lewis and McLean present a claim for damages against Russia to the department of state and urge its collection. 1894—Nothing; no raids reported against him.

1895—Sealing; no raids reported against him.

1896—Is hired to go as an "American pelagic hunter" before the Bering Sea claims award commission, which sat at Victoria, to agree upon the sum which the United States government should pay the British owners of the sealing vessels seized in 1886, 1887 and 1889 in the open waters of Bering sea by United States revenue marine officers. He "testifies at the peril of his life" for the American side as to the real value of these British boats so seized. (See report 3125, senate bill 416, fifty-eighth congress, second session.) The result is, in truth, there to serve his sealing associates, and he does serve them well. These sealers get every cent of the actual damages which they originally claimed; no "consequential" damage claims allowed. The Geneva award denied these claims, and the precedent held good here—not the testimony of McLean.



J. H. LEWIS, CAPTURED AND DESTROYED BY RUSSIAN SCHOONER, CAPTURING THE CREW FOR A FEW WEEKS AT VLADIVOSTOK; RELEASED AND RETURNED TO SAN FRANCISCO IN OCTOBER.

1897—In command of the Acazulco, a "Mexican" schooner, he attempts a raid on Northeast Point, St. Paul island, in July; he defies the United States agents to arrest him at Victoria in October, 1905; he is a British subject and proves it; never has been an American citizen.

1906—In charge of and directs the movements of two "Japanese" schooners which raid St. Paul island in July; sends the Japanese hunters ashore at Northeast Point, St. Paul island, on and some 25 or 30 captured and five killed; he keeps out of sight.

1907—Two "Japanese" vessels and their crews (65 men) are taken July 5 off St. Paul island. The Russian record of 1907 cannot be made up until the close of the season, in December next.

The immense increase of value to these skins of the fur seal since 1880, owing to its steady disappearing numbers, has stimulated the pelagic hunting of the same to the utmost energy and skill of its human foes. This business of fur seal piracy is also likewise stimulated by the high prices and scarcity of the skins. It is plain to the sight of those who look unselfishly that unless there is some speedy concert of action between Canada and the United States government to stop this fur seal question now at issue, the extermination of this fur seal herd and its species even of Alaska is right at hand.

1890—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, American registry, San Francisco, H. Liebes, owner, he raids Copper island August 1; he gets away with two men injured.

1891—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, he is seized while raiding Copper island, August 2; he is busy on this particular raid, with the assistance of his brother, "Dan" McLean, who is in command of the American schooner E. E. Webster, also owned by H. Liebes of San Francisco;

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1894—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, he is seized while raiding Copper island, August 2; he is busy on this particular raid, with the assistance of his brother, "Dan" McLean, who is in command of the American schooner E. E. Webster, also owned by H. Liebes of San Francisco;

1895—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, he is seized while raiding Copper island, August 2; he is busy on this particular raid, with the assistance of his brother, "Dan" McLean, who is in command of the American schooner E. E. Webster, also owned by H. Liebes of San Francisco;

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1898—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, he is seized while raiding Copper island, August 2; he is busy on this particular raid, with the assistance of his brother, "Dan" McLean, who is in command of the American schooner E. E. Webster, also owned by H. Liebes of San Francisco;

1899—In unlawful command of the J. Hamilton Lewis, he is seized while raiding Copper island, August 2; he is busy on this particular raid, with the assistance of his brother, "Dan" McLean, who is in command of the American schooner E. E. Webster, also owned by H. Liebes of San Francisco;

The Strong Man and the Auto

N sight of the mountains of the Tyrol, near Munich, in Bavaria, is one of the most charming spots in that part of the world. On a sparkling stream tumbling from the hills is an old time country mill. A wonderful spring boils from the rocks beneath and for miles around the people come for its refreshing waters in cases of debility of ailments of any kind.

One day the emperor of Austria, who often visited the neighborhood chiefly because his wife, the most beloved Empress Elizabeth, was born there, came riding by with his officers. As on many other occasions, he stopped at the mill for a drink from the famous spring. Great was his surprise on this occasion when one of the miller's sons, young George Lettl, came out with a glass of water on a millstone for a salver. The millstone weighed 475 pounds. The surprising thing was that the miller's boy not only carried the big mass of quartz rock easily and jauntily, but he held it high enough for the emperor on horseback to reach the glass and drink its sparkling contents.

The feat was so astonishing that his majesty dismounted, and with a mischievous twinkle in his eye asked first his aid and then each officer to perform the feat. They not only failed, but the entire staff combined could not get enough purchase on the stone to even lift it from the ground.

When the emperor returned to Vienna he sent young George a token of remembrance—a fine portrait of himself, with his autograph written beneath the picture. This recognition from the emperor soon became known, and the young man began to receive offers from managers in the big cities to show what he could do in public. He finally went into training a lift and soon found himself doing stunts in London. The other day he came to America.

His friend, Attila, who has given him a course of scientific instruction in London, where he also taught Sandow, arranged for a private exhibition of his strength. The Bavarian proposed to stand between two automobiles and hold them fast in spite of the chauffeur and the engine. To have a fair test, without the usual trappings and mechanical aids, he was to stand on a platform, a daylight test was made.

A little crowd of automobile experts was on hand to see the performance. Two cars, one of 14 horsepower and the other 12, were placed back to back, with a space of about three or four feet between them. A rope with an iron hook was fastened to the rear of each machine, and in the middle of this space stood the young Bavarian with his hands looped in the straps attached to the iron hooks fastened to the cars. When everything was arranged for a start under full speed headway George Lettl spread his legs to the widest possible limit for strength and safety, took an extra clutch on the straps looped around his wrists, and then the warping was given for an instantaneous start.

The machines puffed and emitted clouds of gasoline vapor, but had moved only a few inches when Lettl brought the gears to a standstill and began pulling it toward him. The other machine seemed to get the best of him and he let slip the loops, releasing himself from the car. At the next attempt he held both machines a foot or two. Further trials demonstrated that he held both machines fairly and he was congratulated by the spectators.

Attila said that everything was genuine and that Lettl has no aids whatever. He considered him the strongest man in the world. George comes honestly by his strength, he said, his family and ancestors having been millers for 500 years and were always noted for their marvelous feats in lifting. Unlike the "million pound lifters" he does not raise his weights on the installment plan or two or three hundred pounds at a time until the million pound "stunt" is achieved.