

LIFE IN ALASKA.

A Member of the New Country Gives First Impressions of the Country.

An Equitable Temperature, Wonderful Scenery and a Land of Vast Resources.

The Ancient Town of Sitka and Some of Its Notable and Interesting Points.

How the Town is Reached—Mails Once a Month—A Newspaper to be Established.

Correspondence of the Globe.

SITKA, Alaska, Oct. 14, 1885.—The leave-taking with friends and acquaintances at St. Paul six weeks ago involved many promises to write and tell something of this region of high mountains, deep waters and magnificent distances. Through the medium of the Globe I will try to do that. A person could scarcely exaggerate when describing the scenery presented when journeying from Puget Sound to Sitka, the Alaskan capital.

At Port Townsend we took passage on the steamship Idalia, and were on the water for a distance of two days, the steamer crossing the strait of Juan de Fuca, on our way to Victoria, British Columbia. After four hours' run the ship was winding her way into a covey bay on the shore of Vancouver's island, where is situated the ancient town of Victoria. A pleasant little covey bay, the harbor, noted for its perfect climate, fine drives, comfortable suburban residences and its American consul. The chief characteristic of the consul is bombast. His qualification for the position partly consists in a distinct recollection of being the son-in-law of the late Senator Baker of Oregon, a circumstance there is no probability he will ever forget. He is further qualified in being to an eminent degree

WHAT BEN HULLER BOASTS OF not being a graduate of an American university and about Victoria appears decidedly English; unless it be the hackneyed, who undoubtedly were educated at Niagara Falls.

When leaving Victoria the steamer made the passage northward through the Gulf of Georgia, a body of salt water between the large island of Vancouver and the main shore of British Columbia. To all, save a single half-dozen, the scenery was new, the eyes of the single passengers a pleasant surprise, who ran through narrow passages between rocky islands, made difficult and exciting by the rapid flowing of the tide.

After passing the northern point of Vancouver the open sea is encountered for a distance of thirty miles, when the steamer enters a grand archipelago of mountainous islands continuous for eight hundred miles, following a serpentine channel between them and the main lands varying from one-fourth to five miles in width, walked on either side by the towering peaks of the PERPETUAL SNOW-CAPPED PEAKS tower from 2,000 to 15,000 feet above the 150 fathoms of water at their base. This mountainous region has been aptly called the American Alps, yet descriptive writers have not hesitated to compare it to the Alps of Europe, who through the ages are less wonderful. One particular group we passed in plain sight caused the passengers to exclaim with wonder as they gazed on their vast magnitude. Towering side by side for a distance of five miles or more, and with each other in their aerial penetration, one of which, named on the charts Mt. Fairweather, yet presenting but slightly greater grandeur than the other, is thereon marked to be 15,500 feet high. Rising with a precipitous front, their sides clothed with evergreen as far up as the timber line, these are presented a gloomy region of barren rock, black as night and vast in extent, all of which is surmounted by another group of rugged peaks, the highest of which is surmounted with more than silvery whiteness.

These scenes are graphically described in a book written by Miss Seidmore, published by D. Lathrop & Co., Boston, 1885. The volume is profusely illustrated and its pages are filled with pictures of the scenery of the country and its native population.

THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS IN ALASKA are the highest on the continent, if not in the world. Mt. Elias, 19,500 feet; Mt. Crillon, 16,000; Mt. Fairweather, 15,500; and many others nearly as high. Alaska contains a great volcanic system, some sixty volcanoes that have been active since its first settlement by Europeans. It is the great glacier region, some of which are one-half a mile wide, and extend for miles into the Alps. On Lynn channel is a glacier computed to be 1,300 feet thick at its lower projection. In one of the gulches of Mt. Fairweather is a glacier that extends fifty miles to the sea, where it ends in a perpendicular wall 300 feet high and eight miles broad, so says an official report. More intelligently describe this scenery will quote from Miss Seidmore's book:

"The mountain range that walls the coast gives a bold and broken front to the main land, and every one of the peaks that push their fronts down into the sea." From another writer I quote: "The labyrinth of channels around and between the islands, that are in some places less than a quarter of a mile wide, and deep to anchor, the avalanche cutting a broad road, and the certain top to the water's edge, the beautiful cascades born of glaciers, or the overflow of high inland lakes pouring over mountain precipices, or girding like a silver ribbon down their sides, and the majestic, sublime, scenic vistas opening up among the mountainous islets; mountain tops, domed, peaked and sculptured by glaciers, all to make up a scene that

CANNOT BE PLACED ON CANVAS, or adequately described with words."

or extracts truly represent the scenery of this region. We saw many glaciers wedged in between high mountains, whose icy walls reached far up the mountain side; we saw thousands upon thousands of geese, duck, and other wild fowl hovering over the waters, and covering the surface of the bays and inlets. We saw many whales, on one occasion a school of them within one-half mile of the ship, exposing their huge backs above the surface, blowing their tails in high columns, and flopping their tails defiantly in our faces. In ludicrous contrast to the majestic grandeur of the scene, was a dude on the upper deck banging away at a whale with No. 6 shot.

That the mountain ranges of Southeastern Alaska are rich in mineral there is evident probability. Most every person you meet in his pocket a specimen that somebody dug out of a mountain. They are mostly of decomposed quartz, and show free gold in small nuggets and particles. On Douglas island is a gold mine with full one-third-and-a-half-stamp mill in full operation, which is claimed to be producing mineral at the rate of \$100,000 per month. It is the property of United States Senator Jones of Nevada, together with other mining capitalists of San Francisco. The Nevada senator was a passenger on the ship with us from Port Townsend. He is an agreeable, level-headed man, quite confident that he and his associates have in the Douglas Island mine a bonanza that will equal in value his famous Comstock when at its best. He is very enthusiastic in his belief in the future of Alaska as a gold-producing region.

SITKA, the Alaskan capital, is situated at the head of a deep bay indenting the outer shore of Baranoff island. The waters facing the town are studded with double rows of low, rocky islands that afford complete protection, thus providing an excellent harbor. The town is built on a plateau containing about three hundred acres, and about twenty feet above high tide, which rises and falls twenty-two feet. The plateau is walked on three sides by a cordon of

lofty mountains, whose snow region is at an elevation of 10,000 feet above the waters of the bay, thus forming a cosy amphitheater where nestles the quaint little town built of hewn spruce and cedar logs. Many of the buildings are whitewashed, and with its grassy courts and smooth, gravelled walks the place presents a neat and tidy appearance.

SITKA, WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS, its water and islands, its Indians and their canoes, its traders and their stores filled with Indian curios, together with its quaint architecture, has much to recommend it to the old town of Mackinac, at the head of Lake Huron.

The principal hotel or boarding house is well kept, the landlady being a neat housewife and a good cook. The water is naturally applied with the delicacies of food and drink, which this region furnishes an abundance. Deer, mountain grouse and wild duck are among the staples at Sitka, while the waters of the bay are a picnic ground for the fishes of the sea. From the landing wharf salmon, halibut, mackerel, rock cod, flounders, sea trout, sea bass and many other kinds are taken in profusion. Brook trout abound in the mountain streams. There is an abundance of clams, and shrimps are

DIPPED UP BY THE SICKETSU. The Indians take many sharks. They take out their lives and it is a remedy for some of their ailments. A shark's liver is said to be one-half the length of its body. North of the town skirting the beach, is the Indian village, where live about one thousand of the Sitkans including many women and children. They are very sturdy in stature, stout and robust, like a Canada Frenchman, and about the color of a new saddle. They have broad flat faces, and look like a cross between an ordinary Indian and a Japanese. The men are ordinarily away from the place, engaged in some business, where they find employment with the cannery companies, catching and cleaning salmon, and in the manufacture of fish-oil. The women employ their time in picking berries in summer, and in winter they devote their lives to the manufacture of soap, for which they find a ready market with the traders and with the tourists who invade this region in summer. Cranberries are sold to the traders who ship them to Portland and San Francisco in large quantities.

THE ALASKA CRANBERRY is a superior article, smaller and not of the oblong shape of the common cranberry. They look like a tiny red apple. The squaws receive 15 cents per gallon for them in trade.

Near the Indian village is located their cemetery. The graves are in the shape of board houses, generally about three feet by five on the ground, and from three to four feet in height, with gable roofs. They cremate their dead by placing the body between two logs placed about four feet apart, filling the space with red-hot wood, which when fired creates extreme heat. When the bodies are incinerated they gather up the charred bones and deposit them in the little houses. Each well-to-do family has a bone house in the cemetery. They look like a large, irregularly shaped box, with a door, but through the smoke-hole in the roof. Among the population of Sitka are about one hundred and fifty Russian creoles. They are peaceable and industrious people, and many of them are present about one hundred souls, including the officers of the civil government, military and naval officers, school teachers, traders and others. At the lower end of the town, facing the bay, is a square of about two acres, called the green. Here stand

TWO MOUNTED DAHLGREEN GUNS, which, together with about a dozen old Russian cannon, form quite an imposing battery. No doubt but it would present a saucy look to an invading fleet of—canoes. The government buildings form a fine group, but antiquated relics of the reign of the haughty Russian nobles, who for many years maintained a miniature court and entertained handsomely at Sitka. At the eastern end of the town, facing the bay, is located the building of the International Electric Light and Power government patronage. Here little Indian boys and girls are taught to speak English, to read and write and the rudiments of arithmetic. The boys are taught the carpenter's and shoemaker's art, to cook and bake, and other arts of civilized housekeeping. It is a successful and worthy institution. Among the pupils is a six-year-old half-breed boy, with sandy hair. The novelty of

A RED-HAIRED INDIAN was enough to say to him: "What's your name?" The answer came promptly: "Mike Murphy." That settled it, and an Irish Indian is with me no longer a myth. The climate of this portion of Alaska in winter is of about the same temperature as the winter climate of Kentucky. At Sitka, where record has been kept for forty-five years, it has been found that the mean spring temperature was 41.2°; summer, 54.6°; autumn, 44.9°; winter, 32.5°; and for the entire year, 43.7°. The greatest degree of heat recorded was 82.5° and of cold, 4° below zero. The thermometer has recorded below zero only in four of the forty-five years, and above 80° during only seven of those years. The annual rainfall was 51 inches.

Since our arrival the weather has been much the same as that on the shores of Lake Erie at the same time of year, yet not as chilly. Now, in October, rain falls a portion of each day, alternate rain and sunshine dividing the time about equally. There is a peculiarity about the rain in Alaska, inasmuch as it is not a wet rain. IT IS NOT A WET RAIN, the atmosphere remaining dry under shelter. Clothes dry readily when protected. The rain does not pour, but falls easily and quietly; it just rains, and that is all there is of it, as no one pays attention to it. It goes and it is gone, and it is gone. There is no accumulation. There is no muck in Alaska. When the water reaches the earth, it at once starts at double-quick, for the ocean over a decline paved with rock.

Out towards the sea on the north side of the bay are the Aleutian islands, subtitled volcano. It belched out its last quota of hot cladders, ashes and smoke when in an angry mood in 1795. Now, in its old age, it is a very orderly and well-behaved volcano.

We have a colony of ravens, the identical ominous bird of yore, occupying an adjacent mountain side, that make daily visits to town and hold dress parade on the green. Their gyrations are in fair imitation of that of the marines when performing their morning drill. Sea and sun, and clouds and sun themselves on the outer rocks, and the festive dolphin indulges its gymnastic propensities within the inner bay. We have a weather clerk who flies his scientific kites from the roof of the "cafe," their feet in long, soft and fine, and their skins are used for floor mats in all well-regulated households in Sitka. No sleeping room is complete without a bearskin spread before the bed to receive your feet when in a bare state.

At Sitka the market price of a bearskin is large as a common-sized buffalo robe, is \$5.00. Swineford paid \$6 for a fine one. When the seller, an octogenarian squaw, was asked by the governor why she de-

manded an extra dollar, replied: "Big chief pay much!" One day since our arrival an incident took place both novel and exciting to the new-comers. An Indian with a fishing cord coiled in his hand, waded out from the shore and, after having the hook and soon began to haul in at a rapid rate. From his exertions it was

EVIDENT THAT HE HAD A BITE from something having, at least, two rows of teeth, and sure enough he soon began to haul in a large fish, a healthy and full-grown halibut, that made the water boil by the handy manner in which he wielded his tail. When gathering his captive within one hundred feet of the shore, Mr. Indian again waded out and, with a club, then dragged on the head with a club, and then brought to the beach, amid the cheers of governor, marshals, magistrates, squaws and Indian hoodlums, all in chorus. Information is hereby given to the public, the fish and the water boiler, there is to be a newspaper published in Alaska. We have an association formed and in working order, we have the press and material on hand to publish one at Sitka. We have on the ground a

LIVE AND ACCOMPLISHED EDITOR and publisher, to edit and publish; one who has had all the infantile diseases (including a black eye) common to the business; and when his name is disclosed, the public will feel assured that The Alaskan will be edited with a flourish, and the fish and the water boiler, there is to be a newspaper published in Alaska. We have an association formed and in working order, we have the press and material on hand to publish one at Sitka. We have on the ground a

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THE SILLY SEASON. Washington Society Now in the Threeos of Candy Pulls, Broom Drills, Etc., Etc.

Sons of Judges and Senators Engaging in Amateur Theatricals and Minstrelsy.

Diplomats Who Want to be Sociable, But Stumble on the English Language.

Only Now and Then a Sporadic Case of Wedding—Military Ladies Receive.

Society at the Capital.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5, 1885.—This is the "silly season" in the social world. It is a sort of intermission between the close of the winter vacation and the opening of the summer festivities. It is a time when the society people struggle with the meager soundings and events of material with which to amuse themselves. The events of the past few days have been especially illustrative of the state of affairs. To see a lot of society young ladies and gentlemen indulging in "broom drills," amateur "dramatic" entertainments, "gingham parties," "Halloween gingham parties," and that sort of thing, is not surprising. A state in social way, and the presence of a good deal of anxiety to equal it until something better shall make its appearance. One of the events of this week has been a dramatic entertainment by young ladies of St. John's Episcopal church in Georgetown, a very proper and aristocratic old church whose young ladies and gentlemen are quite out of their usual element in broom drills, amateur drama and that sort of thing. Another event of this character was a gingham party, at which the young ladies appeared in their bonnets and old-time costumes, and spent the evening with the details of an old-fashioned fairy-pulling. After all, people in society are rather unwell like other people. They are very unwell.

THESE LITTLE SPORES at which they may unbind, and throwing aside the formalities of the "social" world, have a good time. It is not an unusual thing to find young ladies and gentlemen like to figure in the highest walks of social life, and to appear in the most fashionable circles in public for the sake of dearth, and it has been even known that sons of supreme court justices and senators have enjoyed the experience of appearing on the stage with blackened faces to kick up their heels and to sing a song. It is a fact, according to the time of year at which they usually do it. The consequence is that the present era of a peculiar sort, interesting to those who take the interest, but thrilling to the general observer. There are evidences, however, of the actual opening of the social season. For instance, the ladies living at the Washington barracks, where there are a dozen or twenty married officers, have opened the social season by fixing upon only one thing to do on Monday, and that is to have a party. It is a fact, too, in spite of the fact that the weather was unpropitious. The wives of the supreme court justices are also beginning their usual winter's program and are ready to meet their friends on Monday, according to their usual custom. The number of callers at these homes is not yet very large, however, and it is probable that the

SEASON OF ACTIVE SOCIAL LIFE will not begin until the opening of congress. This bids fair to be a very busy season among the diplomatic people. The Japanese minister has set the example by a couple of well-received parties, and to one of which he invited a large number of diplomats, with their families, while the other was devoted more especially to Washington society in general. The diplomatic world here is a peculiar one. Anybody who is a diplomat will receive a large number of callers, and it is a fact, too, in spite of the fact that the weather was unpropitious. The wives of the supreme court justices are also beginning their usual winter's program and are ready to meet their friends on Monday, according to their usual custom. The number of callers at these homes is not yet very large, however, and it is probable that the

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