

him. I put my mouth to his ear, and, as with a knife I cut the cord that held his feet, I said :

“Now, run for your life !”

He started to his feet and ran like a hound for the gulch, without once looking behind him. All followed in pursuit ; even Sandy jumped from the gory ground where he had been lying in a double sense, and joined in the cry of—“Hang him ! shoot him !” and several shots were actually fired over his head to hasten his speed. Down the steep sides of Whiskey Gulch he flew out of sight of all pursuers. Amid roars of laughter the company soon gathered from the chase, and an extraordinary amount of coffee was prepared and a general re-

joicing held, that at last Saint Jo would not disturb us any more. All thought what few would confess, that it was a wonder such a coward had bullied them so long.

Two days after, some one happening to stroll down the gulch where Saint Jo disappeared from view, was startled to find him lying there as if drunk ; he attempted to turn his face upward, but to his horror he was in the rigid embrace of death, his eyes staring and glassy, though sunken.

An inquest was held in our rude way, and, as an expert, I was called to give my opinion as to the cause of death. In accordance with that opinion a verdict was rendered of—*Frightened to Death.*

EIGHT MONTHS AT SITKA.

THE cession of the Russian possessions in North America to the United States by the Emperor of all the Russias—devised for the purpose of strengthening, if possible, the good understanding existing between the two nations, gratified the great American heart. The sympathies of the large majority of the natives of the great Republic clung to the cause of Russia during the Crimean war, and that sympathy was reciprocated in the time of their own distress. There existed no recollections save of international congruity, official courtesies, and personal friendliness. The eagerness with which our people sought every scrap of intelligence pertaining to the new domain, revealed an interest exceeding that which might attend an achievement merely of the prehensory proclivity, charged as a national habit ; it was rather of satisfaction that some tangible evidence appeared of an alliance, cherished for years, with so friendly, so progressive, so potent an empire.

Concerning all Alaska it is not proposed in this writing to attempt a description, but simply to give an account of a trip to Sitka, or New Archangel, its capital, at the time of the official transference, and to note some observations and impressions which obtained during the first eight months after their advent and under the *régime* of the Americans.

In compliance with a provision of the treaty, appointing agents for the formal delivery and reception of the territory, Captain Alexis Pestchouroff, of the Imperial navy, was happily designated on the part of his Majesty the Emperor—the President selecting the late General L. H. Rousseau, of the United States army. Those officers and others connected with the specific duty assembled at San Francisco, where the United States sloop-of-war *Ossipee* was awaiting to convey them to Sitka. Friday, September 27th, 1867, despite the superstition of mariners, was the day of departure, and that fairest and balmiest of mornings the *Ossipee* was under way,

bound upon the interesting expedition. Steaming by the flag-ship *Pensacola*, her band saluted with the Russian national hymn and our own familiar airs—the officers and crew manifesting an enthusiastic interest in our mission, which was echoed along the wharves and among the shipping throughout the harbor's extent. Passing through the Golden Gate out by the Farallones, our course was shaped direct for Sitka. Though fresh from the passage from New York in a paddle-steamer, the soldiers and civilians of our party found that aboard a screw with heavy armament, breasting the long and grand swell of the Pacific, they had to endure a new motion compounded from a roll, a pitch, and a wallow, and to suffer a relapse of the *mal de mer*: and so distressingly prostrating was its effect, that the medical officers seconded their entreaties to put in for Victoria. Accordingly the course was changed, as much to the gratification of the advisers, desirous of enjoying the scenery within the islands, as to the satisfaction of the sufferers.

The sixth morning from departure the ship entered the Juan de Fuca Strait, which separates by twelve miles the kelp-fringed shore of Vancouver's Island from our Washington Territory, where from the water's edge high up the majestic Olympian range grow stately firs and pines sufficient to spar the shipping of the world. At evening we were at anchor amid the English fleet in that gem of a harbor, Esquimalt—shut in by rocks covered with mosses and foliage, then gaudily tinted by the frosts, while over against them were pretty groves, within which, half hidden, are the tasteful residences of the officers, whence winding roads and paths lead out by the government buildings, to which dock-yard paint and primness could not impart an official aspect—it all seemed better befitting an oriental than boreal clime. Besides serving as the depot and rendezvous for the English squadron,

Esquimalt is the principal port for Victoria, four miles distant, to which a fine hard road leads between fragrant hedges, by well-tilled farms with fruitful orchards, and snug cottages with their lawns “like we 'ave at 'ome,” and over the long bridges spanning the estuaries, and into the *city*—once the western seat of power of the Hudson Bay Company. But the quiet of their immense warehouses and long wharves betokens that the dynasty of that consummate monopoly, which had ruled a region equal in extent with the United States, is ending. Tenantless and shabby-appearing buildings in unfrequented streets, stand as monuments to the Cariboo delusion; but there are some elegant residences. The churches and government buildings are of agreeable aspect, and the natural surroundings and vistas of the loveliest. Our unusual presence and mission was sufficient to excite a fresh discussion of the political future of British Columbia; indeed, it would be difficult for an American to suppress expression of his “views,” after personal observation of the topography and resources of Vancouver's Island—the key to Puget Sound, the harbors of Washington Territory for hundreds of miles, and interposed as an irritating geographic wedge in our extending coast line.

Two days sufficed for coaling and interchanging the usual ceremonious visits, when our voyage was resumed, and by the inside passage—nature's safe highway through these tempestuous seas. A drizzling autumn rain had set in, but it was disregarded for the enjoyment of the novel and marvellous scenery—in some places the channels leading under bases of mountains rising abruptly out of the deep waters, till their silvered tops mingled with the mist and clouds; at others, winding among islets with every variety and fashion of leafy and mossy covering—through strange haunts of wild fowl, until night closed in upon us in a snug cove at Active Pass. The

next day, Sunday, running through the Gulf of Georgia, the service was read on deck amid scenes of grandeur which seemed hushed in reverent observance, and while the icy peaks were still glowing in the sunlight, our anchor was let go in Duncan's Bay, within Vancouver's Island. We had next morning to pass a strait, through which the flowing tides run nine knots per hour. Waiting for the favorable moving of the waters, a party landed to try their new guns upon the game which alone possesses the locality. After a few hours unskillfully employed, a gun and the cornet recalled all persons and boats, and the perilous passage was essayed. But the pilot had started a little too early; the eddying waters were still madly rushing through the narrows, on which our ship was whirled and tossed, unheeding rudder and propeller, as if she had been a toy of cork. Nearly three hours were consumed in making as many miles, through the successive whirlpools and rapids, then the way became smooth, though tortuous, to the night's anchorage in Alert Bay, Cormorant Island. All next day the rain poured down and fogs drew close about, rendering it unsafe to proceed. The Indians found us out, as they had at other stopping-places, and came alongside clamoring for whiskey and tobacco—most stultified, unhealthy-appearing wretches, and in uncouth and untidy garbs; one with a fur cap and a pelt about his shoulders, the rest of the body bare; another in high boots and an old bit of carpeting—red and black paint completing the covering; the squaws attired even more fantastically—some in the cast-off garments left them by miners the spring before; one crumpling around her, in the canoe, the largest size tilting hoop-skirt—the necks of all shingled in with beads. The distortion of their heads was the most repulsive. Lower down among the islands were the *flat-heads*; here, the standard of beauty is the *sugar-loaf*—

produced by tightly bandaging the head in pappoosehood—and the height of squawish loveliness, about twenty-one inches from chin to apex of cranium. Rubber-cladding ourselves, we landed to visit a burial-place near. Some years since, many of the tribe were swept off by small-pox. Where the victim was seized, there, supplied with food and water, but unattended, he was left to live or die. After the abatement of the epidemic the corpses were burned and the ashes collected in little boxes covered with blanketing, and lashed up among the branches of the trees. Besides this species of sepulture, their favorite chief was placed in a mausoleum of hewn logs, about twelve feet square, with blankets nailed over roof and sides, which, now mouldy and worm-eaten, were dropping off. In the centre, upon a trestle, was the rude box in which the body was closely doubled, and around it were deposited such personal effects as hunting, fishing, and culinary apparatus, clothing, trinkets, etc. The trees surrounding had been cut away, save one, from which the branches were lopped; from its top the remnant of a pennant was flying; at its middle was fastened a board bearing his "crest," and lower down another, inscribed with hieroglyphics, possibly a flattering epitaph. In front of this sepulchral wigwam, and driven into the ground about three paces apart, were slabs hewn to resemble sentinels, with blazings for features, and about, as it were, the shoulders, pieces of blanketing were wrapped. A number of canoes of different sizes and fashions, drawn up in line, were rotting near.

After the storm had ceased we crossed over a portion of Queen Charlotte's Sound, an unsheltered stretch of thirty-five miles, and the anchorage at night was in Safety Cove, around the points of Calvert Island. Surfeited as we were with magnificent scenery, the beauty of this spot exacted lively expression from

every beholder. A deep nook scooped out, as it were, from the mountain's side as a hostelry for benighted ships; the waters of the little basin teeming with fish and fowl, and the thick woods with game, while down the mountain's sides noisy cascades descended—never could have been found more superb a wild. Our next harbor, Carter's Bay, was also a beautiful one, but less secure. The night was wild, and through the gorges the "willi-waws" would come swooping down, straining our cables and lashing the little bay into foam. Through Finson's Strait and Grenville Sound, next day, the panorama on either hand surpassed all heretofore enjoyed—it was the region of mists and rainbows and waterfalls. Starting amid mountain-peaks elevated from 1,500 to 2,000 feet, or, as it seemed, from the clouds themselves, hundreds of silvery and ribbon-like rivulets wound down over rocks, through mosses and trees; lower down, from rocky reservoirs, larger streams rushed foaming forth, took a Niagara-like leap, then roaring on over lesser falls, plunged seething into the tide. By scores and hundreds could these cascades be enumerated. For two days we were weather-bound at Fort Simpson, the northernmost post of the Hudson Bay Company, and questionably proximate to the parallel fifty-four degrees forty minutes. Surrounding the fort is the village of the Chimpseans, whose lodges present a most novel heraldic system and style of ornamentation. Above and around the oval hole of entrance to each is rudely carved a grotesque representation of some animal or animals—the "crest"—and in this manner is expressed all the family and tribal crossings—the "bar" sinister predominating. In addition, before each chief's or first family's lodge is erected a huge spar covered from top to bottom with figures of men, beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles—all conglomerated into one grand *chef d'œuvre*. Com-

pared with those met below, the Indians of this tribe seemed vastly superior; a process of *enlightenment* has unquestionably been going on among them, dating from the establishment of the post. Their squaws do not distort the head; but the fashion is to make a slit through the under lip, parallel with the mouth, in which, in early years, a silver stylet is worn, but the aperture gradually dilating the old dames come to sport a plug of bone or wood (technically, *labret*), of an inch or two in width, and of half that thickness. In their employment of cosmetics, red paint is streaked on the scalp at the parting of the hair, and smeared over eyebrows, nose, and chin—a few radiating lines of black from the eyes consummating their irresistibility.

From Fort Simpson our course led for two hundred and fifty miles through a labyrinth of channels in the Prince of Wales Archipelago and Clarence Strait, containing numerous snug retreats, one of which afforded us refuge for thirty hours while a storm raged. Passing by Cape Ommaney into the broad ocean still bounding under the pressure of the late gale, our destination was seventy miles distant; but the *Ossipee*, washing her own decks and striking her own bell, was twenty-four hours in reaching it. The morning was clear and mild, as heading toward the concave line of bright, snow-crested mountains we entered Sitka Sound—passing in under that most distinctive of landmarks: the extinct volcano Edgecombe, with its cone 2,800 feet; crater, 280 feet deep, three miles in circumference, and nearly filled with snow. From its rim, radiating downward with almost geometric regularity, are the deep gorges scored by the lava less than a hundred years ago. From the base, till meeting the snow half-way up, evergreens grow evenly as if cropped by gardening rule. The Sound is eleven miles wide at this entrance, and Sitka fourteen miles distant. Slow-

ly working our way in between lines of breakers, and in such deep waters that lead and anchors are alike useless, we glided through a gateway left in the maze of islets which form a perfect breakwater—and there, nestled under the beetling mountains which circumscribe three-fourths of the vista, on marshy lowlands (comprising, perhaps, one thousand acres), was Sitka.

And what a wonderful prospect was opened—the amphitheatre of mountains, surmounted by masses of ice and snow, with striated sides, suggestive of avalanches; the chains of symmetric cones of volcanic type; the lesser and graduated spurs, with vestures toned from the gray moss that pushes out under the glary ice, through the different depths of perennial green, to the neutral hues of the annual leaves still clinging to the gigantic trees at their bases. And tumbling down through rocky passes, and rushing on between banks thickly hedged with alder, the Indian River pours its cold and sparkling water out into that pebbly bay, as peculiar in outlines and intricacies as it is unequalled in beauty by any port of which tourists write, or sailors sing. The harbor is marked out and maintained by triple rows of islets lappingly interspersed, which stretch before the town, leaving a channel about three hundred yards wide, within which all vessels must moor, with anchors from each bow and quarter. Here, intricately tied up, we found the United States ships, *Jamestown* and *Resaca*, sent thither for climatic purification, after their scathing by yellow fever at Panama; the transports with our troops aboard; and not an inconsiderable fleet of merchantmen flying the bunting of many different nations. After many tedious evolutions the *Ossipee* was finally secured, Friday, October 18th, three weeks from day of departure from San Francisco. That same afternoon our troops were disembarked and drawn up alongside the

Russian garrison, on the little plaza, left upon the table-rock on which is the Governor's residence. The Commissioners, attended by officers of the services of their respective countries, advanced to the flag-staff; Captain Pestchouroff ordered the Russian flag hauled down, and thereby and with brief declaration transferred and delivered the territory of Alaska to the United States; the garrisons presented arms, and the Russian batteries and our men-of-war fired the international salute; a brief reply of acceptance was made, as the stars and stripes were run up and similarly saluted—and we stood upon the soil of the United States.

The town of Sitka, founded in 1799, contained at the time of transfer less than a thousand inhabitants, and, in its every appearance and arrangement, was totally un-American. There was this uniformity and appearance of order only—that the government buildings, which comprise the Governor's residence, See-house, club-house, hospital, barracks, and warehouses, were very large and constructed of ponderous hewn logs, painted yellowish and roofed with red metal. The other buildings and residences are also of logs, and smaller, but unpainted, and straggled along one street or thoroughfare. Adding to the general incongruity of arrangement, there was commenced, when the fact of the cession became public, a sandwiching in, *ad libitum*, of rough board shanties for Jewish traffic, numerous flaring saloons, and other structures for congruous purposes. In the centre of the town, the one street bifurcated around it, stands St. Michael's, the Cathedral of the Oriental or Russo-Greek Church, built also of logs, painted white, with bright-green roofings; dome and spire surmounted by the distinctive triple cross; the tower containing a chime of bells; on the northern and head wall is hung a large and weather-beaten painting of St. Michael

and the Dragon. At the palisades is a chapel for Indians, and a Lutheran meeting-house is used by the post chaplain, or serves for general assemblies. There is a square enclosure containing willows and firs, and upon a high rock in the centre a sort of pagoda—this is known as the Princess's Garden. A few buildings in by-ways, and some venerable hulks drawn up on the beach, complete the general features of the settlement. There is a beacon atop of the Governor's house, and there are numerous workshops, and a strong wharf, with stone steps, suited for the tide which rises some sixteen feet; but the foregoing enumeration will suffice for a description to which more minuteness cannot add interest.

Russian America, so isolated from the Empire, had been swayed almost as a separate monarchy: its potentate—the Fur Company—whose Court was at Sitka—any policy or interest at variance with its rule—rank treason. Emigration and enterprise, other than for its established purposes, were restrained. The Imperial Governor was salaried by it; his administration subject to the Company's approval; tenure of office, positions, and all but life, subservient to it. Still, to all appearance, the reign was grateful to the inhabitants, and the change of dominion distrusted. The Prince Maksoutoff, for gallant services in the Imperial navy, had succeeded to the governorship, and possessed the confidence and affection of all classes. Among the subalterns and in the church establishments were persons of rank and refinement. Many speak the English language, nearly all either French or German, and a well-selected library was accessible to all. In their domestic establishments were observed the elegancies of society, and the comforts and luxuries abundantly possessed. Pleading guilty to a solecism upon their hospitality, most cordially exercised, I will note some few peculiarities. One

or more antechambers interpose between the domiciliary apartments and the dreaded external air; instead of stoves, one or more cylindrical brick furnaces heat and encumber each room. Mats, pieces of thick carpeting, or robes of fur, are disposed in places, but not entirely covering the floor; the furniture, of rich material though cumbersome; the piano, an indispensable article; numerous mirrors and pictures panel the walls. Across an upper corner of each apartment is placed a small painting of our Saviour, the Virgin, or heads of Saints, surrounded by gold or silver filigree; and no Russian home but presents this token of their faith. The upper part of the Governor's house was arranged for a theatre, and, at their numerous gatherings, plays, music, dancing, cards, and billiards, relieved the monotony of the hyperborean nights. At such times the varieties and quantities of substantial refreshments and choice wines and liquors would astonish dyspeptic Americans. Tea of delicious flavor seems constantly prepared, and a tumbler of it, placed in a saucer, is presented to the caller, and to the visitor, repeatedly; the cheroot, which follows, is enjoyed alike by both sexes. The transition from this society to the condition of the lower order is very abrupt. The employés comprised Russians, creoles, and a large class with bloods interminably mixed. Their pay was small, and requirements few; small rooms, proportioned to the numbers in the families, were allotted, free of rent, in the untidy barracks; medical attendance was provided, and schools, and an asylum for orphans. Their rations were issued daily; whatever else was required could be purchased at low rates—established at St. Petersburg, and paid for with the sheep-skin money: their only circulating medium. The common winter garb for the men is a long sheep-skin coat worn

"With the skinny side out and the woolly side in."

for the women, robes of cheap and mixed furs, though on festivals there are as struggling attempts at finery as may be elsewhere observed. The church calendar provides over a hundred holidays, which they honor and enjoy proportionate to the amount of *vodka* procurable; but whether from temperament or discipline, it seems to excite in them suavity and subordination, rather than incivility or riotous conduct. But, though passing their simple lives in such a secluded place, it does not follow necessarily that innocence and modesty are their especial characteristics. A large bathing establishment is kept for the employés (all classes must enjoy their bath every week or alternate ones), to which it is not uncommon for parties to resort regardless of sexual distinctions. That super-heated, steamy, sudsy, birch-twig-flagellating process called a Russian bath, must be too generally understood to warrant a description of the torture submitted to by the writer in fully acquainting himself with the institution.

The Oriental Church, integral in the authority of the Empire, maintained an establishment at each of the Fur Company's posts. It is represented here by a bishop, three priests and two deacons, who, with numerous acolytes, serve in the cathedral church. Those in the two lower orders of priesthood may marry—but for *once*; celibacy, however, is required of a bishop—that he has never married or is a widower. From its exterior, one is unprepared for the richness of decoration within St. Michael's; vessels of gold, inlaid with precious stones; candelabra and other implements of silver; rich paintings within embossings of silver and gold. The sanctuary, occupying the head of the cruciform edifice, is shut off at times during the service by curiously ornate and latticed folding doors—in either arm a chapel—within the dome, silver bas-relief representations of the

principal events in the life of our Saviour. The vestments in richness and design are in perfect keeping; and the flowing locks and beards of all holding holy office impart a fitting feature in the ceremonials. A service continues seldom less than two hours, and is almost entirely antiphonal; instruments of music are never employed, but often the chiming of the bells adds consonance to the responses of the choristers and the impressive ritual. If a sermon is given, it is very brief and read by an acolyte from a printed book—none “for the times” are issued by the sacred synod. There are no seats in the church; the men stand in one part, the women in the other, side by side, prince and fisherman, officers with sailors and soldiers, Russian and half-breed, factor's wife and servant, all earnestly and devoutly rendering worship and honor to the Holy Trinity. On special festivals, the floor is strewn with evergreens, and wreaths and banners and ribbons are additional decorations; the profusion of candles floods the building with light, and at all services the air is heavy with incense. The genuflections are frequent and extend to touching the forehead to the floor. In Lenten time when the lights were dimmed and all was expressive of woe, and night and day the services scarcely intermitted, priests and congregation would remain for many minutes with faces to the ~~dark~~ murmuring their penitential supplications. The service is essentially symbolic, and though rendered in the Slavonic tongue, its significance cannot be misunderstood nor its gorgeous richness unappreciated. What if there may have been gathered “accretions during the Dark Ages, from its contact with ignorance and heathenism,” reverence cannot be withheld from the Eastern Church, most venerable for its antiquity in the world, and which has kept up a succession of bishops in the same sees from the time of the Apostles till now. Holding to the

Julian calendar, the Russian dates are twelve days later than ours of the Gregorian, and their Sunday commences at sunset on our Friday; but on both holy days full services are rendered. Christmas was observed with magnificent church ceremonials and merry domestic festivities, when from the laden Christmas trees the orphans and children of the poor exacted cheerful tribute. Till Ash-Wednesday was a continuous holiday and carnival, and masking the standard amusement. But their gladdest festival was Easter, at which they enthusiastically portrayed their emotional and religious transition from penitential grief to hope and joy. Easter-even, at midnight, the bells chimed forth their liveliest, and the church, so long dark and funereal, blazed forth in dazzling light; the congregation in gayest attire, each one bearing a lighted candle, seemed in the greatest exhilaration. "Christos vaskrasce!" "Christos vaskrasce!" Christ is risen! was the inspiring refrain repeated and echoed over and over throughout their triumphal celebration which continued three hours, terminating with the ceremony in which, after the clergy, each of the laity exchanged with the bishop the salutation *Christos vaskrasce!* and a kiss upon each cheek and the chin; after which the same was interchanged generally among the congregation, promptly and cordially, uninfluenced by station or condition. All Easter-week the bells seemed never to cease chiming, and, as the days were sunny and balmy, the populace would stroll down by the river, and, with the inseparable tea-apparatus, arrange a picnic and follow with sylvan sports, quite irreconcilable with ideas of an hyperborean clime. Of the peculiarities in the sacraments and rites, baptism is celebrated at home to avoid exposure to cold, as the child is stripped and three times immersed. The name is then bestowed by the priest, and is supposed not to have been before re-

vealed even to the parents. At funerals the corpse is borne in an open coffin over evergreen boughs, strewn from the residence to the church, and thence to the cemetery; and there is carried with it, in resemblance to the old classic custom, a dish of rice cooked with raisins, which, after the interment, is returned to the home and partaken of daily by the mourning relations while it lasts. A wedding is an elaborate affair, and decidedly a trying ordeal, for the ceremony requires nearly an hour for its performance. The pair, followed by proper attendants, and all bearing lighted candles, are met at the church door by a priest, who leads them to an altar beneath the dome, where, after many genuflections and responses, an elegant crown is placed on the head of each and they are then led slowly three times around the altar, reciting the obligations they are about assuming. It is the bride's privilege at any time before completing the third and last circuit, to withdraw from the engagement; that Rubicon passed, the plighting of troth is completed by exchanging rings, drinking from a goblet wine three times in alternation, and then, after repeating their vows, they kiss the Bible, the cross, and their crowns; the bride furthermore kneels, and thrice crossing herself before the image of the Virgin, kisses the feet. The ceremony terminates with a general embracing of the couple by their respective friends. On board every Russian vessel before sailing, high mass was celebrated, but though in general very interesting and unusual, the festivals and ceremonials are too numerous to warrant in this space even enumerating.

Outside a line of palisades, and straggled along the water front, are about fifty square log huts or lodges comprising the Indian village. Within them, for the most part of the time, the population of about 1,000 are squatted, and in all stages of dress and undress, from

verminous blankets to a coating of soot; while without a corresponding number of wolfish-faced dogs doze in day-time, and dolefully howl in concert throughout the night. A disgusting and distinctive stench pervades the locality and all pertaining to it. A descriptive summary (which would apply to and include representatives of numerous other tribes, which from curiosity or for traffic thronged to the capital) must specify that they are indolent, besotted, diseased, thieving, and offensively impotent. When other means for procuring liquor fail, they may work. As a shag or gull is eaten with as much relish as venison, their hunting is graduated by convenience. They do not possess sufficient ingenuity to manufacture curious trinkets. Laws and regulations concerning the sale of spirits yet lack efficient stringency, for never a day or night passed but were seen drunken Indians, or their disgusting orgies disturbed the night. The Governor had been compelled, from prudential sanitary considerations, to separate and immure the sexes. Their thieving extends from adroit shop-lifting to stripping copper from ships' bottoms. It is most extraordinary how their prowess and importance have been overrated; they live on the coast or by rivers where fish abound, with no means of transportation save their rude canoes hollowed from logs; to retreat from the coast would be but to starve; they have no stock of supplies or ammunition, and possess but a few guns, and those ill-conditioned and of obsolete pattern. Distinct and dwindled tribes, all unallied and generally tamely warring with each other, occupy the insignificant villages referred to. The Russians were first astonished at our force sent to occupy the territory, so much larger than they had ever maintained, and then drolly amused that reinforcements should follow! The language of the Sitkans differs from the Chinook, and is a succession of unpleas-

ant gutturals; they make no stint in paint or ornaments for their tawny bodies, though many went through the winter barelegged and barefooted. The bodies of their dead are burned and the ashes preserved in small hive-like structures at the rear of the lodges, adorned with paganish art; some of the ashes, however, are mixed with soot, which the relatives smear over their faces (to wear, not to be washed off), and this, with closely-cropped hair, constitutes their garb of mourning. The medicine-men possess perquisites superior to the chiefs; the ceremony of constituting their office is termed *tomanoss*, and was witnessed at the coldest period in the year. The aspirants, some thirty young bucks, had been kept fasting and practising incantations for two days, until wrought up to an almost frenzied condition, when they were brought out, and in the presence of the entire population, stripped and plunged into the harbor; after remaining in the chilling water ten or fifteen minutes, they were called out and set to whipping each other, which they did vigorously and competitively; then into the water and out again for "a course" at the hands of the "Board." This process continued an hour, and resulted in the "plucking" of about two-thirds; the others returned to resume their heathenish charms and maintain the fast. Next day the water and whipping tests were repeated and continued until one-half of the remainder of the "class" "bilged"; then the enduring ones, conducted to the principal chief's lodge with great clamor and rejoicing, were admitted to a grand hoo-doo, which signaled and completed the conferring, *secundum artem*, of the degree of medicine-men and bestowal of the power of sorcery. Some certain animal is held sacred by every tribe; this "emblem," with the Sitkans, is the crow, and consequently those confident and garrulous birds sit at ease and caw in doorways and on window-sills. Their

vocation of scavengers now protects them rather than the superstitious indulgence sanctioned by the Russians. Slaves are held among the tribes—captives and their descendants—and the Dahomey custom of sacrificing them, at the deaths of their owners or chiefs, still prevails. During the past few years the Russians had been accustomed to ransom the victims by ample outlays of stores and ammunition; since the advent of the Americans, one selected for the pyre took refuge and obtained protection within the garrison.

It requires an extensive stretch of the commonly accepted opinions concerning climatic characters, to appreciate the peculiar conditions at Sitka, so usual is it to fancy isothermal lines united and continued with those of latitude. Following the parallel fifty-seven degrees thirty-five minutes (that of Sitka) eastward, it crosses the fies in Hudson's Bay, the northern part of frigid Labrador, and passes within less than two degrees of Greenland's icy shore; but the isothermal line extended, emerges at, or below, the capes of Virginia; as well might Chesapeake Bay be cited as the region of icebergs and the habitat of the walrus and polar bear, as Sitka Sound. A great stream of aqueous vapor perpetually rising from the western waters, and borne over that part of the Alaskan coast, maintains a high mean temperature and of moderate range. Striking the vast mountain barriers, condensation as constantly results, and that its product, rain, does not continuously descend, is but from meteorologic accidents, which deflect the currents and vary the susception of the condensing surfaces. Those "little accidents," however, are not of frequent occurrence. Statistics may show that in other localities a greater amount of water falls during the year, but at none could be recorded more frequent showers. In winter, even, the fall of rain greatly exceeds that of snow. Nor is there any considerable

product of ice; upon the artificial lake but seven inches formed, and that porous and unmarketable. Glenboke (deep) Lake, beyond the first eastern range, remains open except about the shores. In the harbor once only was noticed a few thin patches of ice, not sufficient, however, to retard a boat's progress. Beyond gardening, no agricultural attempts had been made, and it is yet to be demonstrated if they are inadvisable. In that alluvial soil trees attain tropical dimensions, and the thickets are almost impenetrable; and to meet the most distant advance of spring, the grasses and wild flowers spring forth with astonishing forwardness.

Before the ships which transported our expedition had discharged their cargoes, there occurred a storm unprecedented in the memory and traditions of the inhabitants, reports of which were ominously mingled in the accounts of the inauguration of the new domain. It was terrific; bursting forth suddenly in the full fury of a northern storm—stranding ships, razing buildings, besoming the coast. After that, and until the vernal equinoctial, winds were not more violent than at lower latitudes on the Pacific. In midwinter the daylight was diminished to six hours and a few minutes' duration. For weeks neither sun, moon, nor other heavenly body would be visible. In best weathers the diurnal light, for a good portion of its continuance, but faintly streamed forth from behind the mountains, where the mists drift and dull clouds hang. Lacking the stimulus of light; the dampness affecting animal spirits barometrically; intercourse with the outer world almost cut off; restricted, necessarily, in exercise; even gustatory sense palled by unchanging diets of game—through such an hibernation "the contented mind" might brave nostalgia, but the sensitive body scarcely hyperæmia!

Exhibitions of the aurora borealis were less frequent than we had inferred,

but on one occasion, late in spring, occurred a display exceeding our excited expectations. Brilliant and symmetrical arches first spanned the heavens; then, rows of perpendicular flaming columns extended up from the horizon as if in support; then, again, all would dissolve, glide off, or sink down among the side scenes the mountains provided. Next, from a glowing spot at the zenith, concentric discs diverged, rapidly revolving, expanding, contracting, intermingling; some whisking away from the nucleus and waltzing off across the sky, and all displaying lustrous variations of the prismatic spectrum, from faintest amber to deepest, softest violet. The morning's advancing light dimmed those gorgeous pyrotechnics of nature ere our enjoyment approached satiety.

The change of season from damp and darkness to light and warmth, seemed more marked and genial in influence than that which in lower latitudes tardily dispels the snow and frosts, and difficultly lures spring from the lap of winter—the daylight expanded so rapidly; the foliage so promptly and gratefully responded to the warmer showers; the animating industry of the fisherman preparing their tackle for a harvest scarcely short of the miraculous; the incessant clanging of the augmenting swarms of sea-fowl; the long lines of wild geese (dwindled to faintest trace on the southern sky), returning to their native fastnesses—all, were not less exhilarating than diverting. By the last of May there was no night; the evening and morning twilights intermingled and merged into the day, and all through the twenty-four hours were heard the cheerful chirpings of the migratory singing birds.

Concerning the products and resources of our new possessions outside Baranoff and adjacent islands, the writer obtained no more reliable information than that which has been collated and extensively circulated by correspondents

and pamphleteers, from the marvellous recitals of voyagers, hunters, and Indian traders; but with such tangible evidence as the fisheries afford, and the packages of valuable furs which fill warehouses and laden ships, and such a vastness of forest surrounding, one is at a loss as to what is not credible.

Nimrodian excursions, necessarily undertaken in boats and often conducted for leagues, beyond the usual successes, discovered to us many rare, and some unrecognized, ornithological specimens, and afforded wonderful varieties of scenery. In one mazy region we landed and visited the (to the Russians) famous Klutchy—a series of hot mineral springs issuing from the rocks at least fifty feet above tide mark, and with a temperature of one hundred and forty-eight degrees, Fahrenheit. Suitable buildings were erected there by the Fur Company, whither were sent intractable cases of rheumatism, scorbutic and other diseases common to the climate, and the report is unvarying of benefits experienced.

To this changed dominion flocked in amplest proportion, a herd of all sorts and conditions of men—Alaskan pioneers, aspirants for colonial emoluments and honors. Before our first sunset gun was fired, their preëmpting stakes dotted the ground, and ere long they had framed a city charter, devised laws and remunerative offices, and by an election, at which less than one hundred votes were mustered, gave publicity to, and inaugurated their schemes. Their squatter claims were confirmed and recorded; next cropped out a judiciary. Though first confined to disputes among themselves, it soon extended to passing final judgment in cases involving life and liberty, and even in matters of nice international complexity, utterly ignoring in act and appearance the military presence and only legally constituted and competent authority. Some such a course, perhaps, is unavoidable in the incipency of colonization, though

it reflects humiliatingly upon the nationality of those concerned. Speculation became rife and unreasonable, and suspicion rested upon the commonest commercial transactions—while the prices for the veriest necessities of life were so inflated, that actual distress threatened the poorer classes and the unwisely venturesome. Whether influenced by

these conditions or not, the large majority of the employés did not accept the beneficent provision of Article III of the Treaty—admitting them “to the enjoyments of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States”—but returned within the Empire as transportation could be provided for them.

MR. COLUMBUS CORIANDER'S GORILLA.

MY article on the Origin of the Human Species had been months in preparation. Much of the fame which I have since secured by its publication in that widely-circulated magazine, the *Interoceanic Monthly*, is due to the fact that I spent weeks in deep investigations in ethnological science, comparing results, and especially examining the points of resemblance which exist in the brute creation and the nobler race of man. To say that I utterly overthrew the Darwinian theory, and quite demolished the tribe of pretenders who have since attempted to imitate that great apostle of error, may not be strictly in accordance with modesty, but hosts of candid friends will admit that it is strictly true. I know very well that, though my untiring labors in the cause of science are not yet thoroughly appreciated, an admiring posterity will dwell with delight on the name of Samuel Simcox as the benefactor of his race, who showed where that race had its birth, and from what primitive elements it sprang. For further particulars, see the *Interoceanic Monthly* for June, 18—.

My favorite haunt during the progress of my article was Coriander's Menagerie; having resolved that this should be the masterpiece of my life, I spared neither labor nor expense upon it, and actually procured a season ticket to the menagerie, and passed many pleasant

hours in watching the wild animals, studying their habits, and drawing many valuable conclusions from their points of resemblance and difference. Consequently, though the apes and monkeys had furnished me with an inexhaustible fund of amusement and interest, I was delighted beyond measure when it was announced that Coriander had secured a live gorilla for his collection of wild beasts. An agent had been despatched to Africa and had sent home, with great secrecy, a real live specimen of this dreadful beast; and so well had all the negotiations been kept that nobody knew of what was being done, until the monster was fairly caged and on exhibition at Coriander's Menagerie. I entered with zest upon a study of the creature's habits and peculiarities; and, while the idle curiosity of mere wonder-mongers kept a vast crowd about the cage wherein the furious beast was confined, I calmly surveyed it from a safe distance and made my scientific observations for the benefit of mankind. And when vulgar wonder at the strange beast had somewhat subsided, and I could get nearer the cage and watch the gorilla, I was more and more impressed with the human traits which I discovered in the extraordinary animal. His manner of reclining was, though impish, half human; and his grotesque gait, as he