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INDEPENDENCE DAY.

HOW IT IS OBSERVED ALONG THE YUKON.

Even the British Northwestern Indians Celebrate the Glorious Fourth—A Land Where Squaws Rule—An Incident of Intermarriage—Copper Mines.

[Of 8 International Press Association.]

OLD FORT SELKIRK, British N. W. T., July 4, '91.—Fort Selkirk is an old abandoned trading station of the Hudson Bay company, one that has been deserted for nearly half a century. They found themselves poaching on the paltry preserves of the Chilkats who organized a war party, demanded the river, burned the buildings and appropriated the goods. But while this landmark had almost disappeared another had sprung up alongside in a fine log house built by Mr. Harper, an American trader. I had hoped to find him here, as his influence would have materially assisted us in our further explorations.

Our original plan, in fact, had contemplated that our real explorations would begin at or near this point and bear from here towards the southwest. A straight line from here to previous explorations on the Copper would probably give the longest that could be laid down on this continent, wholly through unexplored country. Mr. Harper was gone for the summer down the river disposing of his furs and the station was in charge of a Takudh Indian, who introduced himself as "Sam." He understood a microscopic amount of English, so his interpretation was often quite aggravating to us, but it was the best we could do. There were also two Indian boys. These were all the Indians in sight, so the chances of getting about a dozen to act as packers for us to the Copper river did not seem flattering. Where others could be found was not so apparent, either. I induced the boys to drum me up recruits from the regions around about, and have them come to confer with me and have a feast. I had no faith in the conference as an inducement, but I knew they would come in from Hudson's bay on crutches for the feast. The boys got away the afternoon of June 27, so there was nothing to do but await developments. Next afternoon "Sam" informed me that a raft could be seen floating out of the Pelly river, and he believed it held some Indians that had probably been sent in by our messengers. They turned out to be our two couriers themselves. They said they found a camp on the Pelly but it contained only squaws. Some other Indians had been seen and they had sent in word they would not miss any feast. They had killed a moose and did not want to pack. I did not see any relevancy between the two, but they evidently did. About an hour after another raft was seen floating out. It had aboard a half dozen Indians who with a vast number of dogs were soon alongside. There was not a man among them fit for packing and they looked more like an ambulance load destined for a hospital than a working party. And sure enough their greatest demand was for medicine, and it never ceased while we were with them. The best we could spare readily, carbolated vaseline, we doled out in homeopathic quantities for everything from corns to consumption and from baldness to bunions, all of which it cured. I never saw a better example of faith cure in all my vast backwoods medical practice.

There was a great deal of free advice offered, but very few applicants for work; maps by the score were furnished as to the trail, but not a whisper uttered as to packing.

One curious piece of information arose, partially as a result of imperfect interpretation and partly from the direction we desired to go—that is to the Copper river. It was that these natives knew of a copper deposit somewhere near this river. Every time we spoke of Copper river they diverged off to the copper deposit. They seemed so persistent and so I finally believed the two places were so near each other, I gave up any other idea except that of the latter, reasoning that if it could be attained the other would be close at hand as a result. There was one hardened old sinner among them calling himself Jackson who professed to know all about the region and the Copper river Chief, Nicolai. (Nicolai he called him.) He said it was eighteen sleeps to the copper and one from there to Nicolai's, but he varied as to the number of sleeps with each map he drew and he was topographically very energetic. The variations as to the copper could be reconciled by assuming an equal number of scattered deposits, but it was hard to believe that Nicolai was so ubiquitous or had such a large number of houses as were needed to tally the other discrepancies in direction. There was no doubt about there being a copper deposit somewhere near by, which was [illegible] by these people, for we found among them copper bullets, arrow-heads, a long spatula for digging [illegible] and on moose and caribou [illegible] and a bag of finely powdered azurite or the blue carbonate of copper. The latter was used by the ladies for tattooing their cheeks and chins, a custom that I think is dying out a little faster than the tribe. They allege that if one of them strikes a boulder of copper with an ax or other instrument he will die soon after. In some mysterious way they seem impressed with the idea there was bodily danger [illegible] at the copper mine. I knew there was financial danger in fooling around any sort of a mine, but had never heard this specific charge before. Next morning "Jackson" volunteered to drum up some Indians for me in exchange for "hard-tack" he took along, but returned in the evening reporting he had been following a fresh moose trail all day and had forgotten everything about the Indians. He evidently wanted some meat to go with his bread. I got the two boys out again that evening, however, for the prospects were dismal. Some suggested squaws if necessary to fill out a quota. Among most Indians the women are practically slaves doing all the work, but the coast Indians of Alaska, however, are a conspicuous exception, their women ruling the property, the regal descent and in many other ways have "rights" unknown elsewhere. These inland natives among whom we found ourselves leaned more towards the former than the coast tribes spoken of. An incident told me illustrates it better than any general description. Two miners of the Yukon valley had married squaws, one (Smith?) having secured his bride from the coast, the other's (Jones'?) sweetheart having been an inland maiden. Their summer's work over Smith and Jones shoved out together in two boats up the river, to reach the coast. My informant passed them where there was good tracking and in the first boat was Mrs. Smith steering and Smith having ahold the tracking rope tugging along the bank, while just behind was Jones stretched out steering his craft and Mrs. Jones playing the part of the tow-path mule. Next day four rafts floated out of the Pelly and the parties camped about a mile below us. There were fifteen to twenty in the whole party and our prospects looked more hospitable-like and less hospital-like than they had. I gave them a day for reflection [illegible] explaining my plan. An idea that has the contract to penetrate an Indian's cranium, not only has to get through a thick skull and tough hide, but also a dense thicket of hair, so it m[illegible] be given time unless shot in with a [illegible]. A few others came in [illegible] to-day, but five packers was th[illegible] all I could reach, and all of these had chain cables and stone windlasses attached to their promises. Worst of all, as tests proved, these weaklings could not be depended on for over 60 pounds each. It was mournfully evident the white men would have to face the music if we ever expected to make a start. A map-maker, photographer or chronicler, etc., is more than handicapped who has to pack and attend to those duties while keeping along with a lot of raving savages who have no more idea of those than they have of cosmology.

Independence day came on the Fourth of July this year and I was greatly surprised to find the savages had anticipated and were longing to celebrate it. I might have expected it in "Sam" who came from the Alaskan side, but where the others caught it the good Lord only knows. Here on the Queen's sacred soil the very savages were turning themselves inside out celebrating another country's separation from their sovereign, while inquiries showed that Her Majesty's birthday was unknown to them.

I think the Indians' desire to celebrate was based on an omnipresent eagerness to burn gunpowder and make noise, and that the patriotism in it, like the result of the explosions, was all smoke. Guns and pistols were banging away at frequent intervals, and in the evening several tough stumps and logs were blown up in lieu of a national salute. I noticed one instance of the economy of physical exertion that rather impressed me. The problem

was to bore a hole in a 100-pound stump with a two-pound auger. Two Indians carried the stump about 100 yards to the auger, bored the hole, then carried the stump back and blew it up in honor of the American eagle. If the American eagle could not manage any better he would need the motto that now reposes between his uplifted wings.

FREDERICK SCHWATKA.
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Horsewhipped Her Defamer.

Mrs. Laura E. Hall, wife of Mining Supt. Hall, of Butte City, Mont., horsewhipped George Moore of Charleston, Ill., at Brown's hotel in Chambersburg, W. Va., recently, for slander. Mrs. Hall had been living with her father-in-law, Dr. J. C. Hall at Charleston, and Moore had worked on the place. He became enamored of her, and endeavored to induce her to elope. She repulsed him and he left Charleston and obtained employment here. Shortly after his arrival he began boasting of his conquest with Mrs. Hall, claiming that she had eloped with him and had lived several months with him as his wife. The reports reached the lady in Illinois, and she came 1,200 miles to protect her reputation. She is a very beautiful woman of about 23, and Moore is a dissipated man of 36.

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