

# AN ISLE OF SKULLS.

California Islands That Were Once Inhabited by a Race Now Extinct—A Wful Desolation of Spot Which Once Supported Life.

An expedition of scientific students has been made up in Los Angeles and Pasadena to explore thoroughly the Channel Islands off that part of the coast of California known as Santa Barbara and San Buenaventura counties during the next six months, says a special to the Chicago Record. The party is to be sustained by Stanford University largely, and to a less extent by several denominational colleges in southern California. Anthropological and archaeological students, who have spent several weeks each on these islands, say they are one of the very richest fields for work in that department of knowledge on the Pacific coast. The Channel Islands constitute California's only archipelago, with the possible exception of the rocky and scanty Farallone Islands. They have been objects of romance, legends, curiosity and mystery for a generation or more.

Notwithstanding all the islands are within eighty-two miles of California's shore, they are solitary and unfrequented, and years roll by with visits to them of less than fifty people annually. Each island has its own particular strange, uncanny traditions of the tribes of red men, and each has countless traces of an occupation by thousands and thousands of Indians. When Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the Portuguese navigator, sailed up the coast of California in 1542 he stopped for a day or two at each of the Channel islands, and his records bear testimony that the islands stand as they did over 350 years ago, but the natives are only a memory, represented by immense quantities of stone implements, barrels of fine wampum and literally cartloads of human bones.

## EIGHTY MILES FROM COAST.

St. Nicholas Island lies eighty miles immediately opposite the little city of San Buenaventura (recently called by the more modern and easy name of Ventura) and is the most interesting of all the Channel Islands from many points of view. As far back as the memory of any person in southern California runs hundreds of white skeletons have dotted the valleys and hillsides. Strange utensils of serpentine sandstone, and statuettes are found among the human bones, and the island and its erstwhile inhabitants have a history so curious that it is difficult of comprehension.

In 1835 the Franciscan padres in the Santa Barbara mission, learning that there were but sixteen of the strange and almost extinct Indian race then living there, determined to rescue them from the island. They went over in a sloop and succeeded, as they thought in getting all on board. At the last moment an Indian woman returned for her child and one of the frequent storms of the Channel Islands springing up, the sloop was driven away without her. The sloop went on the rocks off Point Conception and all were lost. Sixteen years later Capt. George Nidever and two men went from this coast on a sloop to hunt otter off St. Nicholas. On land-

ing they were, like Crusoe, astonished to discover human footprints in the sand. They saw no one, however, and a storm compelled them to put to sea. It was two years thereafter that the adventuresome captain, revolving in his mind the sight of the footprints in the uncanny island, determined to go to discover and bring over the lonely woman of whom he had vaguely heard. Men accompanied him, and at length they saw on the surf-beaten shore a woman with long tawny hair, dressed in a queer garb of colored bird skins and carrying with a bone knife the blubber from a seal.

They surrounded and approached her stealthily, and although suddenly confronted, she did not appear in the least afraid, but smiled, and then, falling on her knees, prayed to the sun. The wild woman offered no objection when by signs she was made to understand that she was to go with them in the boat.

## LAST OF HER RACE.

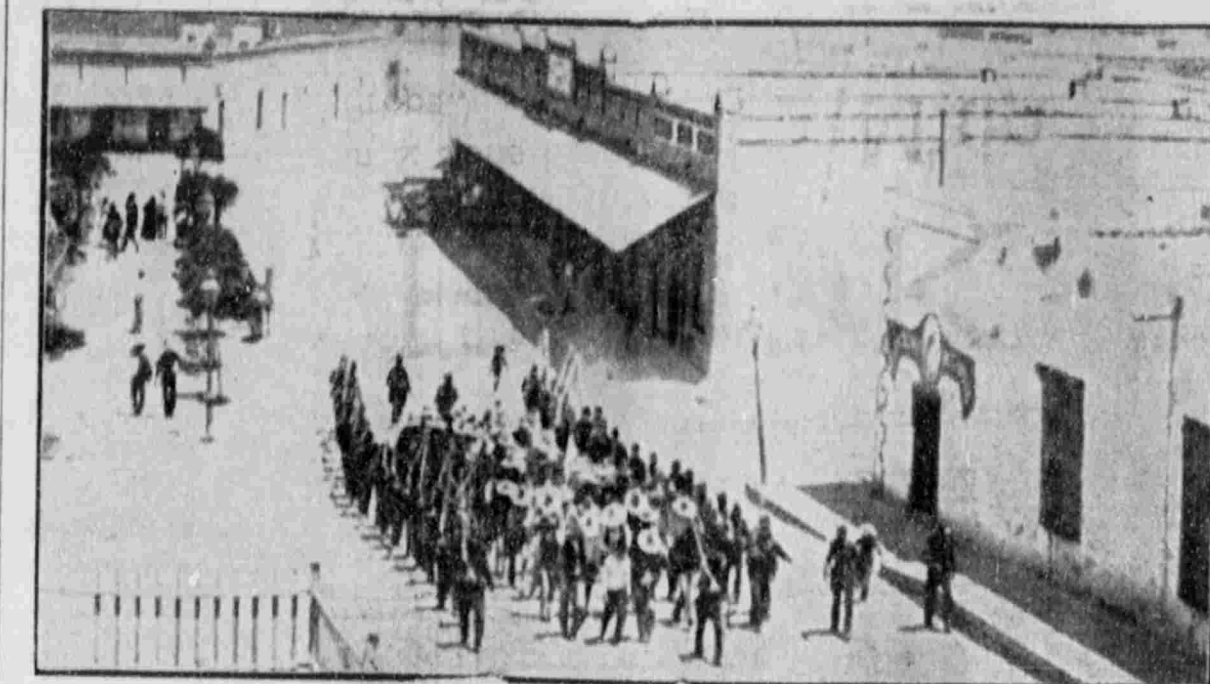
They reached Santa Barbara across the rough sea, and the first thing the Indian woman saw was a man riding a horse. She had never seen nor heard of any object like it, and thought the man and horse were one, and she knelt on the shore and offered her devotions to it. Two weeks afterward the last inhabitant of rock-ribbed, tempest-tossed St. Nicholas died from eating food to which she was unaccustomed, furnished by her rescuers and the curtain fell on her race forever. The woman, known as the "Lone Woman of Nicholas," has been the subject of a score of romances and poems.

St. Nicholas is ten miles long and four miles wide at the widest point. Its topography shows a nearly level plateau, with an elevation of 800 to 1,000 feet. Two-thirds of the surface is covered with drifting sand, and the remainder grows a species of nutritious grass and moss, on which a thousand sheep find pasture. Several springs have been discovered, but their water is slightly brackish. Of late years the island is rarely visited, except by sheep shearers and shell gatherers, who make annual trips in schooners, fishing smacks or Chinese junks.

The only safe landing ground at St. Nicholas is at Coral harbor, a pretty cove formed by two sandstone arms thrust out from the main barrier of the shore. The entrance is but six or seven yards across, and the water within is as placid as a lake and sufficiently deep to float a vessel of twenty tons burden. On the bleak, silvery strip of beach, immense white pelicans are to be seen at almost any season of the year, promiscuously with stately dignity. On the approach of the dingy they spread their heavy pointed wings and vanish over the rocks. Farther up the slope of the beach there is a dilapidated shearing shed, and a weather-worn shanty belonging to Chinese shell gatherers. Nothing more desolate than the general appearance of the island can well be imagined.

## DESOLATION IS COMPLETE.

As far as the eye can trace there are barren levels with innumerable circular depressions, showing where primitive dwellings once stood. Not a vestige remains of the materials used in the construction of these rancheries. Hundreds of shell mounds are scattered about, and are found to consist of astonishing numbers of mollusks, the bones of every species of fish found in



MEXICAN TROOPS CAPTURE APACHES.

the channel, skeletons of seals, sea elephants, whales, sea otter, the island fox and various aquatic birds. Without question these animals were used for food by the tribe that once thronged these boundaries. There are also numerous canine skeletons, several of which indicated a species of bull terrier. Judging from the immense quantities of dead land mollusks everywhere, there must have been a time when the island supported a luxuriant vegetation. Of all this verdure nothing is seen today but a few stunted thorn bushes, and now and then a cactus tortoise reaching its grotesque arms out of the interminable sweeps of sand.

An examination of some of the mounds discloses all sorts of curious utensils—stone cooking pots, ovens, mortars, pestles, drills, bone needles and fish hooks, shell beads, charm stones, pipes, cups and a few arrowheads, spear points and swords made of bone. The absence of many weapons proves the peaceful attributes of the islanders. Small imitation of boats and fish carved from crystallized tale and serpentine also shows a rudimentary knowledge of the art of sculpture. In many places conical piles of small black pebbles contrast oddly with the white sand. In some instances these pebbles are packed in abalone shells. No trace is seen of the "brush pens" in which a woman for years found her only shelter from the cutting winds and sand. Nature, ever unkindly of the individual, long since merged the superhuman efforts of this courageous life into the universal fate of an entire race. Indeed, every foot of the strange island is eloquent of the extinction of almost unheard-of people.

A trip along the west coast of St. Nicholas Island over a vast extent of shell mounds sets one to wondering how it was possible for a limited population to consume such prodigious numbers of mollusks. In fact, the infinite variety of mollusks on St. Nicholas is said by biologists not to be exceeded by any other known region of equal area. The shore line is of coarse sandstone, burrowed by the pounding surf into fantastic alcoves, bridges, columns and caves. Sometimes these savage cuts form rude effigies bearing a surprising likeness to living

creatures. One of the most conspicuous is the exact counterpart of the neck, breast and body of a bird with an alert hooded head. This piece of nature's sculpturing must be forty feet long, and beheld from a distance looks quite as perfect as if fashioned by man. There are hundreds of photographs of this freak of nature sold all over California.

Going westward from this gnarled, surf-lashed wall the ground makes a gentle ascent to a wide mesa, terminating in a steep escarpment. The atmosphere from this elevation is so delicately clear that the eye can readily distinguish the peaked tops of all the Channel Islands, several of them being forty miles away. Immediately at our feet there stretches away a dreary desert of stupendous barrenness. A singular characteristic of the place were heaps of the bones of whales, their arrangement and packing so systematically correct as to have withstood a century's sweep of winds over this exposed point. But one human skeleton has been found here, its bleached, dismembered aspect in keeping with the driven desolation of the spot. The merciless blast had piled the sand dunes all about, but spread no kindly drift over this "rough sketch of man." All around are the casts of roots of trees in the shifting sand, ranging all the way in size from coarse fiber to several inches in diameter. These petrifications are intact, the wind having swept them clean of the loose earth. They yield a metallic ring when tapped with a rock or shell. A still more remarkable feature of this desert is a stone forest, the broken columns composed of indurated sand.

At the extreme west end of the island there is a colossal precipice 1,000 feet in height, its chasmed and slitted face softened by a luxuriant growth of emerald moss and lichens.

## AN ANCIENT BATTLEFIELD.

The most gruesome of all the sights on this strange island is to be seen on the broad plateau south of the Chinese camp at Coral harbor. Here acres of the naked sand are littered with hundreds of disjointed skeletons, and present the most reckless illustration of the "ground plan" of humanity that imagination can picture. Measurements

have been made by several scientists of the thigh, leg and arm bones, and literally bushels of skulls and other parts of the human frame have been brought to Los Angeles from St. Nicholas islands for investigation. The general opinion is that the Indian race that swarmed over the island was much larger than any civilized race of today and that some of the men must have been seven feet three inches tall. The skulls of this extinct tribe often measure several inches more than some of other large skulls of today. Many skulls found lying about on the island show that their possessors must have suffered death from a club or blunt battle ax. No one has ever yet found a skull on St. Nicholas that shows marks of a bullet. There are many collar bones and shoulder blades broken and crushed, so that it is evident their owner was killed by some instrument as a war club or a bowlder. Scientists say that the favorite weapon in warfare with the Aleutian savage tribes a century and more ago was a club or bludgeon, and this fact fits with the stray tradition that the Aleutians came down and completely destroyed the people on Channel Islands.

## "A FRIEND IN NEED."

A Psychological Incident Found in Fiction.

When the sun set there was only the faintest twilight, and the sound of turbulent waters troubled the night on every side. Alan remembered then that about a mile from Dunbrack there was a mountain stream always dangerous after a storm, and that if the bridge was down he would be compelled to retrace his steps for two miles and take the longer route. When he reached the spot it was nearly dark, and he cautiously felt his way down the slight incline which led to the bridge. It was still there. His horse's fore-feet were upon it. He struck the railing with his whip. Then a wild, piercing call arrested him:

"Master Alan, go back! Go back! The bridge is down in the middle." "Is that you, Earnie?" he asked, for he knew Earnie's voice, and in the

# SPIRIT OF UNREST AMONG INDIANS.

Ten thousand Indians, led by a woman, are folding their tents and stealing away in a gigantic exodus from the Southwest Territory provided for them by the United States government and making their way in all the picturesque miscellany of Indian transportation to Mexico, where they intend to set up a government of their own, says the San Francisco Call. The new place is a tract of six million acres, far from the haunts of the Indian agent, and calculated to afford freedom from the restraints of the white man's government. The procession leads out and away over the plains, with the woman at its head. There are Chickasaws, Cherokees, Delawares and Creeks, all full-blooded red men. They are going on foot and on bicycles, in wagons, buggies and buckboards, on horseback and on trailing sleds. The woman in the lead is the woman at the bottom of it. She is a full-blooded Ponca Indian, and her name is Mollie Big Buffalo.

For the past two years she has been going about in a wagon quietly sowing the seeds of unrest among her people. She is a graduate of the Carlisle school, but will have none of the white man's ways. Clad in the wild garb of her tribe she has addressed her people wherever she could gather an audience—in their peaceful lodges, on the wandering trails and in festive assemblages. Suddenly appearing at the weird sundance, or the dance of the wolf and ghost, and leaping, regardless of custom, into the inner circle, she has worked the braves into a perfect fury with wild chants and ballads, all fraught with the spirit of rebellion to the rule of the white man.

"Listen, oh, my brothers! Listen to the words of Mollie Big Buffalo! The red men know her words are good." In the flash of lurid light that illumined the writhing bodies of the dancing braves a slender form with streaming hair sprang through the circle and leaped to the top of a fallen log in the center. The blood-curdling chant of the sundance stopped short with a wild

staccato note. The firelight flared high and illumined a picture of amazing beauty. With long, graceful brown arms uplifted Mollie Big Buffalo began to address her people, her clear voice ringing convincingly to the accompaniment of the short, emphatic gestures of Indian oratory.

"Listen, oh, my brothers! Mollie Big Buffalo has much to say. She knows the red men will be glad to hear. She has hunted with them in the forests. Her hands have built the smoke fires for the drying of winter meat. Her feet have led the way through trackless paths. She is one of their people. The school of the paleface has taught her much knowledge, but her heart could not learn the white man's ways. The heart of Mollie Big Buffalo is the heart of the red men. The tongue of Mollie Big Buffalo can speak no lie."

Grunts of emphatic approval and rumblings of the growing spirit of unrest came from the surrounding braves. The red firelight fell on faces dark with emotions, inspired by the magnetic words of the Indian woman.

"The red man is a worm under the foot of the paleface. The hand of the white man is at the throat of the child of the sun. There is greed in the heart of the paleface. It is death to the red man. It is the red man's country, but the white man has taken it. The fathers of the red men were as many as the rays of the sun. The red man's lodges were like the leaves of the trees. The paleface has destroyed them. The paleface has made war and left but a lodgeful of our people. The red man is a dog to the white man. The red man owns the vast plains, but he is driven back and caged in the burrow of a badger. Will the braves of the red man sit like women in their lodges? Will they endure the whip of the paleface? Will they see their people die out like the flickering torch? No! The red man will go with Mollie Big Buffalo! Mollie Big Buffalo will lead the red men into a new country, where the red men will be red men once more; where the children of the sun shall live in the free glory of their race; where the lodge of the red man will not be led from the hateful hand of the paleface."

clearer light of the space at the bridge entrance he saw Earnie quite distinctly. "Can I not cross, Earnie?" he cried.

"Go back, sir, or you will be drowned."

"Thank you for warning me, Earnie. I will remember this kindness." To these words there was no reply, but he saw Earnie take the road towards the parting of the paths, and he retraced his steps.

When Alan reached home the family were at dinner, and he took his place among them. He was much exhausted and very grateful to be at home and with his kindred again.

"Yet," he said, "I never more should have been here in this body, only for the love of Earnie Macrae. I was just going to cross the bridge at the Deer pass, when he called to me that the bridge was down in the middle, and that if I attempted to cross I should be drowned, so I—"

At this point Alan saw that everyone was looking at him with faces full of amazement and terror; that his mother uttered an excited cry, while his father asked in wondering awe,—"Who warned you of the broken bridge?"

"Earnie."

"Impossible."

"It was Earnie. I am sure of it."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. I could not mistake his figure, and the way in which he lifted his cap, as he called high above the blast, 'Master Alan, go back! Go back! The bridge is down in the middle.' Besides, I should know Earnie's voice under all circumstances. I am as sure of it as Earnie is I am of my own identity. It was just like him to watch for me and warn me. Why do you doubt it?"

"Because Earnie is dead. He was drowned yesterday."—Amelia E. Barr in the Christmas "New Lippincott."

## Good Advice.

The most miserable beings in the world are those suffering from Dyspepsia and Liver Complaint. More than seventy-five per cent of the people in the United States are afflicted with these two diseases and their effects: such as Sour Stomach, Sick Headache, Bilious Colic, Constipation, Painful Heart, Heartburn, Windy Eructations, Gnawing and Burning Pains at the Pit of the Stomach, Yellow Skin, Coated Tongue and insupportable Taste in the Mouth. Coming up of Food after Eating, Low Spirits, Etc. Go to your Druggist and get a bottle of August Flower for 75 cents. Two doses will relieve you. Try it. Get Green's Prize Almanac. For sale at A. C. Smith's Drug Store.

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