

WABNO: THE NORTHERN POLAR CONTINENT.

LIFE IN WABNO.

After a few days more of rest I was strong enough to go about, and my first attention was given to the search for more satisfying food. It was evident that the natives lived wholly upon vegetable food, and apparently upon such articles as were naturally produced, for I saw no signs of cultivation. Indeed, the only labor, so far as I could perceive, consisted in obtaining feathers and weaving their sole garment, in constructing huts, and in gathering the edibles, which were very abundant for these people, but I thought that a dozen lasty Germans might have eaten all that this populous village required, and yet been half starved. The small bread-fruit I have mentioned and the large ground-nuts constituted the bulk of their supplies, and berries and plums were abundant through nearly the whole year. I afterwards found that those which grew in the colder region nearest the mountains were quite like the small fruits of Germany. The raspberry was the same, and it was more agreeable to my taste than anything else I could find, partly, no doubt, from its revival of home associations. The natives preferred the fruit growing in the low valleys near the central radiator, which were more tropical, and sweeter, but more dry and tough. The birds which the natives caught among the hills, mostly elder ducks and large white geese, they stripped of their choicest plumage and then threw away. It was from one of the ducks, that a native had just plucked, that I made my first satisfactory meal here. But it cost me a great deal of labor and patience, for these simple children of nature are as ignorant of fire as of most things pertaining to civilization, and when I kindled some moss and sticks among the rocks—for I had fortunately brought a box of matches in my pocket—and cooked, or half cooked, my duck, the process was watched with the utmost astonishment by a crowd of people. Their astonishment turned to disgust when I proceeded to eat my roast duck.

But I have gone ahead of my story, and perhaps may as well abandon the attempt to keep to the order of events any further. Before I made another dinner of duck, I succeeded in making some of the men understand that I wished to visit my boat. They led me a brisk walk to the place, for these creatures have so little weight to carry, and so little of the quick of motion that they scarcely touch the ground when I have a solid German body, which in spite of my long fast, outweighs any four of theirs. It was some eight miles, I should judge, to the spot where I had come ashore, and to reach it we passed up the valley of a small mountain stream to an opening between two mountains, and then down a dry gulch to the ocean on the other side. This was much the nearest point to the ocean from the interior valley. The change of temperature in the short distance was very great. In the valley the air was so warm I had doubted about wearing my coat, here I was chilled by the breeze from the sea, and my companions were in great haste to go back to a more comfortable place. But I induced them by earnest entreaties to stop long enough to help me move my boat higher up under the shadow of an overhanging cliff, where I saw that I could easily build a perfect shelter for it, as I afterwards did, with fir trees out in the gulch. For the present I was satisfied to know my boat was safe and to find in it my leather pouch, a hatchet and the remains of an old ship's log, which our men had taken from the ship to use for wadding for their muskets. White, Edges Island. The turn and dirty leaves have been of great service to me, enabling me to make these imperfect notes of my adventures, and thus to solve many hours that would otherwise have been miserable enough.

[NOTE.—From this point the journal of Forsman is more defective and disconnected, some of it so much so that I am obliged to omit passages from which I can obtain no consistent meaning. I may also say, here, that Mr. Forsman's translator, and who the English much more perfect than Forsman's German, and so more intelligible, but at the expense of the quaintness and simplicity of the original.—A. B.]

LANGUAGE, CLIMATE AND PRODUCTIONS.

I suppose it to be now August, in the year of our Lord 1855. I have been here nearly a year, and have seen considerable of the country, which the natives call Wabno, after the central chasm and pillar of fire which is called Wab or Weyah. The same name is applied to the Delty, whose residence they locate within or beneath the chasm, as they say as I can see. Their ideas are either not very definite or I do not quite comprehend them. The latter is very likely the explanation, as I do not yet know their language well. It is a simple and meagre language, with some eighteen or twenty sounds or letters, and a very limited number of words. The difficulty in acquiring the language is that its lack of words is supplied by gestures and by significant expressions of the countenance. What may be called the language of the eyes is very full with this people, and doubtless it is what gives their eyes such peculiar expression, beyond anything I have ever seen before. They have no words for up, down, over, under, and many other relation of things, but express these by corresponding motions of the hands, so that eyes are quite as necessary as ears to a listener. I have attempted to make a written alphabet of the language, using the German letters to represent like and similar words, and have found it a great help to me in learning the language, which I can now speak pretty well, but do not understand as readily when spoken by the natives, because of their rapidity of utterance and gesture. They make the qualifying gesture or expression of countenance simultaneously with speaking the word. For instance when they would say "over the mountain," they will make a half circular motion with the hand, which signifies over, at the same instant they are speaking the word "mountain." I think a Frenchman would more readily follow them than I can. Though they have no written language, the Wabnos have many mythical and historical ballads, preserved by frequent repetition and singing, some of which I have endeavored to take down and translate into German.

(To be continued.)

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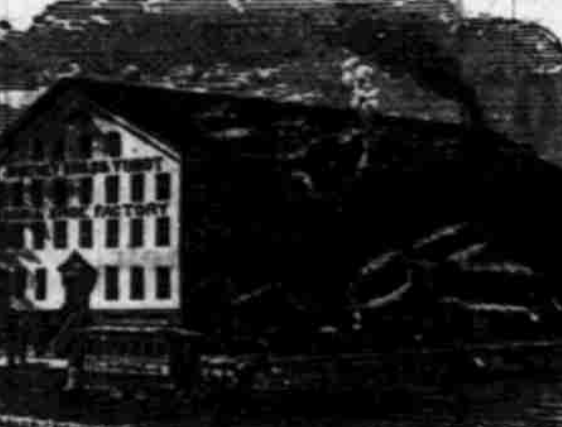
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