

me at great length what a great man I was, how like a father to all the people, comparing me to sun, moon, stars and all other great things; I broke in upon his stream of compliments and asked what he wanted.

Recalled to earth he said: "I wish you to pray to your God."

"For what do you wish me to pray?" I asked.

The old man raised his blanketed form to its full height and waved his hand with a magnificent gesture towards the glacier. "Do you see that great ice mountain?"

"Yes."

"Once," he said, "I had the finest salmon stream upon the coast." Pointing to a point of rock five or six miles beyond the mouth of the glacier he continued: "Once the salmon stream extended far beyond that point of rock. There was a great fall there and a deep pool be-

low it, and here for years great schools of king salmon came crowding up to the foot of that fall. To spear them or net them was very easy; they were the fattest and best salmon among all these islands. My household had abundance of meat for the winter's need. But the cruel spirit of that glacier grew angry with me, I know not why, and drove the ice mountain down towards the sea and spoiled my salmon stream. A year or two more and it will be blotted out entirely. I have done my best. I have prayed to my gods. Last spring I sacrificed two of my slaves, members of my household, my best slaves, a strong man and his wife, to the spirit of that glacier to make the ice mountain stop; but it comes on, and now I want you to pray to *your* God, the God of the white man, to see if He will make the glacier stop!"

I wish I could describe the pathetic earnestness of this old Indian, the simplicity with which he told of the sacrifice of his slaves and the eager look with which he awaited my answer. When I exclaimed in horror at his deed of blood he was astonished; he could not understand.

"Why, they were *my* slaves," he said, "and the man suggested it himself. He was glad to go to death to help his chief."

A few years after this our missionary at Hoonah had the pleasure of baptizing this old chief into the Christian faith. He had put away his slaves and his plural wives, had surrendered the implements of his old superstition, and as a child embraced the new gospel of peace and love. He could not get rid of his superstition about the glacier, however, and about eight years afterwards, visiting at Wrangell, he told

me as an item of news which he expected would greatly please me that, doubtless as a result of my prayers, Taylor Glacier was receding again and the salmon beginning to come into that stream.

At intervals during this eventful day I went to the face of the glacier and even climbed the disintegrating hill that was riding on the glacier's ploughshare, in an effort to see the bold wanderers; but the jagged ice peaks of the high glacial rapids blocked my vision, and the rain driving passionately in horizontal sheets shut out the mountains and the upper plateau of ice. I could see that it was snowing on the glacier, and imagined the weariness and peril of dog and man exposed to the storm in that dangerous region. I could only hope that Muir had not ventured to face the wind on the glacier, but had contented himself with trac-

ing its eastern side, and was somewhere in the woods bordering it, beside a big fire, studying storm and glacier in comparative safety.

When the shadows of evening were added to those of the storm I had my men gather materials for a big bonfire, and kindle it well out on the flat, where it could be seen from mountain and glacier. I placed dry clothing and blankets in the fly tent facing the camp-fire, and got ready the best supper at my command: clam chowder, fried porpoise, bacon and beans, "savory meat" made of mountain kid with potatoes, onions, rice and curry, camp biscuit and coffee, with dessert of wild strawberries and condensed milk.

It grew pitch-dark before seven, and it was after ten when the dear wanderers staggered into camp out of the dripping forest. Stickeen did

not bounce in ahead with a bark, as was his custom, but crept silently to his piece of blanket and curled down, too tired to shake himself. Billy and I laid hands on Muir without a word, and in a trice he was stripped of his wet garments, rubbed dry, clothed in dry underwear, wrapped in a blanket and set down on a bed of spruce twigs with a plate of hot chowder before him. When the chowder disappeared the other hot dishes followed in quick succession, without a question asked or a word uttered. Lot kept the fire blazing just right, Joe kept the victuals hot and baked fresh bread, while Billy and I waited on Muir.

Not till he came to the coffee and strawberries did Muir break the silence. "Yon's a brave doggie," he said. Stickeen, who could not yet be induced to eat, responded by a glance of one eye and a feeble pound-

186 Alaska Days with John Muir

ing of the blanket with his heavy tail.

Then Muir began to talk, and little by little, between sips of coffee, the story of the day was unfolded. Soon memories crowded for utterance and I listened till midnight, entranced by a succession of vivid descriptions the like of which I have never heard before or since. The fierce music and grandeur of the storm, the expanse of ice with its bewildering crevasses, its mysterious contortions, its solemn voices were made to live before me.

When Muir described his marooning on the narrow island of ice surrounded by fathomless crevasses, with a knife-edged sliver curving deeply "like the cable of a suspension bridge" diagonally across it as the only means of escape, I shuddered at his peril. I held my breath as he told of the terrible risks he



GLACIAL CREVASSES

"We had to make long, narrow tacks and doublings, tracing the edges of tremendous transverse and longitudinal crevasses—beautiful and awful"

ran as he cut his steps down the wall of ice to the bridge's end, knocked off the sharp edge of the sliver, hitched across inch by inch and climbed the still more difficult ascent on the other side. But when he told of Stickeen's cries of despair at being left on the other side of the crevasse, of his heroic determination at last to do or die, of his careful progress across the sliver as he braced himself against the gusts and dug his little claws into the ice, and of his passionate revulsion to the heights of exultation when, intoxicated by his escape, he became a living whirlwind of joy, flashing about in mad gyrations, shouting and screaming "Saved! saved!" my tears streamed down my face. Before the close of the story Stickeen arose, stepped slowly across to Muir and crouched down with his head on Muir's foot, gazing into his face and

murmuring soft canine words of adoration to his god.

Not until 1897, seventeen years after the event, did Muir give to the public his story of Stickeen. How many times he had written and re-written it I know not. He told me at the time of its first publication that he had been thinking of the story all of these years and jotting down paragraphs and sentences as they occurred to him. He was never satisfied with a sentence until it balanced well. He had the keenest sense of melody, as well as of harmony, in his sentence structure, and this great dog-story of his is a remarkable instance of the growth to perfection of the great production of a great master.

The wonderful power of endurance of this man, whom Theodore Roosevelt has well called a "perfectly natural man," is instanced by the fact

that, although he was gone about seventeen hours on this day of his adventure with Stickeen, with only a bite of bread to eat, and never rested a minute of that time, but was battling with the storm all day and often racing at full speed across the glacier, yet he got up at daylight the next morning, breakfasted with me and was gone all day again, with Stickeen at his heels, climbing a high mountain to get a view of the snow fountains and upper reaches of the glacier; and when he returned after nightfall he worked for two or three hours at his notes and sketches.

The latter part of this voyage was hurried. Muir had a wife waiting for him at home and he had promised to stay in Alaska only one month. He had dallied so long with his icy loves, the glaciers, that we were obliged to make all haste to Sitka, where he expected to take the

return steamer. To miss that would condemn him to Alaska and absence from his wife for another month. Through a continually pouring rain we sailed by the then deserted town of Hoonah, ascended with the rising tide a long, narrow, shallow inlet, dragged our canoe a hundred yards over a little hill and then descended with the receding tide another long, narrow passage down to Chatham Strait; and so on to the mouth of Peril Strait which divided Baranof from Chichagof Island.

On the other side of Chatham Strait, opposite the mouth of Peril, we visited again Angoon, the village of the Hootz-noos. From this town the painted and drunken warriors had come the winter before and attacked the Stickeens, killing old Tow-a-att, Moses and another of our Christian Indians. The trouble was not settled yet, and although the two

tribes had exchanged some pledges and promised to fight no more, I feared a fresh outbreak, and so thought it wise to pay another visit to the Hootz-noos. As we approached Angoon, however, I heard the war-drums beating with their peculiar cadence, "tum-tum"—a beat off—"tum-tum, tum-tum." As we came up to the beach I saw what was seemingly the whole tribe dancing their war-dances, arrayed in their war-paint with their fantastic war-gear on. So earnestly engaged were they in their dance that they at first paid no attention whatever to me. My heart sank into my boots. "They are going back to Wrangell to attack the Stickeens," I thought, "and there will be another bloody war."

Driving our canoe ashore, we hurried up to the head chief of the Hootz-noos, who was alternately ha-

ranguing his people and directing the dances.

"Anatlask," I called, "what does this mean? You are going on the warpath. Tell me what you are about. Are you going back to Stickeen?"

He looked at me vacantly a little while, and then a grin spread from ear to ear. It was the same chief in whose house I had seen the idiot boy a year before.

"Come with me," he said.

He led us into his house and across the room to where in state, surrounded by all kinds of chieftain's gear, Chilcat blankets, totemic carvings and paintings, chieftain's hats and cunningly woven baskets, there lay the body of a stalwart young man wrapped in a button-embroidered blanket. The chief silently removed the blanket from the face of the dead. The skull was completely

crushed on one side as by a heavy blow. Then the story came out.

The hootz, or big brown bear of that country, is as large and savage as the grizzly bear of the Rockies. At certain seasons he is, as the natives say, "*quonsum-sollex*" (always mad). The natives seldom attack these bears, confining their attention to the more timid and easily killed black bears. But this young man with a companion, hunting on Baranof Island across the Strait, found himself suddenly confronted by an enormous hootz. The young man rashly shot him with his musket, wounding him sufficiently to make him furious. The tremendous brute hurled his thousand pounds of ferocity at the hunter, and one little tap of that huge paw crushed his skull like an egg-shell. His companion brought his body home; and now the whole tribe had formally de-



clared war on that bear, and all this dancing and painting and drumming was in preparation for a war party, composed of all the men, dogs and guns in the town. They were going on the warpath to get that bear. Greatly relieved, I gave them my blessing and sped them on their way.

We had been rowing all night before this incident, and all the next night we sailed up the tortuous Peril Strait, going upward with the flood, one man steering while the other slept, to the meeting place of the waters; then down with the receding tide through the islands, and so on to Sitka. Here we met a warm reception from the missionaries, and also from the captain and officers of the old man-of-war *Jamestown*, afterwards used as a school ship for the navy in the harbor of San Francisco.

Alaska at that time had no vestige of civil government, no means of punishing crime, no civil officers except the customs collectors, no magistrate or police,—everyone was a law to himself. The only sign of authority was this cumbersome sailing vessel with its marines and sailors. It could not move out of Sitka harbor without first sending by the monthly mail steamer to San Francisco for a tug to come and tow it through these intricate channels to the sea where the sails could be spread. Of course, it was not of much use to this vast territory. The officers of the *Jamestown* were supposed to be doing some surveying, but, lacking the means of travel, what they did amounted to very little.

They were interested at once in our account of the discovery of Glacier Bay and of the other unmapped

bays and inlets that we had entered. At their request, from Muir's notes and our estimate of distances by our rate of sailing, and of directions from observations of our little compass, we drew a rough map of Glacier Bay. This was sent on to Washington by these officers and published by the Navy Department. For six or seven years it was the only sailing chart of Glacier Bay, and two or three steamers were wrecked, groping their way in these uncharted passages, before surveying vessels began to make accurate maps. So from its beginning has Uncle Sam neglected this greatest and richest of all his possessions.

Our little company separated at Sitka. Stickeen and our Indian crew were the first to leave, embarking for a return trip to Wrangell by canoe. Stickeen had stuck close to Muir, following him everywhere, crouching

at his feet where he sat, sleeping in his room at night. When the time came for him to leave Muir explained the matter to him fully, talking to and reasoning with him as if he were human. Billy led him aboard the canoe by a dog-chain, and the last Muir saw of him he was standing on the stern of the canoe, howling a sad farewell.

Muir sailed south on the monthly mail steamer; while I took passage on a trading steamer for another missionary trip among the northern tribes.

So ended my canoe voyages with John Muir. Their memory is fresh and sweet as ever. The flowing stream of years has not washed away nor dimmed the impressions of those great days we spent together. Nearly all of them were cold, wet and uncomfortable, if one were merely an animal, to be depressed or

198 Alaska Days with John Muir

enlivened by physical conditions. But of these so-called "hardships" Muir made nothing, and I caught his spirit; therefore, the beauty, the glory, the wonder and the thrills of those weeks of exploration are with me yet and shall endure—a rustless, inexhaustible treasure.

THE MAN IN PERSPECTIVE