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Before I could engage any of them to accompany me they required to be convinced that I was no trader by an inspection of my baggage; to satisfy themselves that I had no materials for barter with the Tagish or Stick Indians, as those who inhabit the interior are named.

Nothing was stolen. I have always found the red man was no pilferer, however fond he may be of duplicity and deception in small matters.

When the natives are all gone, those interior regions which are only attainable on foot with pack-carriers or packers will become more difficult of access, because now these Indians (broken as they are by disease) can yet carry heavier packs than a white man. They can travel farther on foot and endure greater hardships. They do not require so much in the shape of clothes and bedding. Their dried salmon, which they carry as food, weighs little, and they are satisfied with that. They are able moreover to supplement this with many kinds of roots, herbs and fruits which are eatable. I was endeavouring to learn from the Indians some of these useful secrets, for I have not yet met a white man who had much practical knowledge of these things.

The natives are steadily and surely disappearing in many localities along the coast, owing to causes that I will allude to presently. But now, while the Indian still exists, I would personally undertake, with sufficient funds, to reach any portion of north-west America, or to cross the continent from any one point to any other point.

Formerly the different tribes were afraid to quit their tribal territory, but now Indians can be found willing to accompany the white man through regions which are as strange and unknown to them as to him. Some, for instance, have accompanied minors as far as the mouth of the Yukon, and returned home by way of San Francisco.

I have stated that, in some districts at least, if not in all, the Indians are decreasing in number. This is the case as regards the once powerful Chilcat tribe, with whom I had to deal. Their decrease is partly owing to various epidemics and disorders, but greatly (and I fear chiefly) at Chilcat due to the importation of large quantities of whiskey. I represented what I had seen to the Governor of Alaska. The laws dealing with the subject are severe enough, and if they were even partially enforced the evil would be at least mitigated. I am glad to say things are not so bad in British territory along this coast, but at Chilcat they are as bad as they can be.

Indians sometimes came to my camp suffering from the effects of impure spirit—which can be obtained in any quantity in the neighbourhood of certain salmon-canneries that I could name—apparently merely for the sake of the moral comfort and support they seemed to obtain from the presence of white men who had no whisky in their possession, and could not supply them with what to them is poison.

These Indians rate their services at a very high figure. So long as

See opp. p. 72