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Get. by Mrs. J. H.

THE THLING OF ALASKA.

By Bessie L. Putnam.



THE last census report numbers the natives of Alaska belonging to the Thlingit tribe as a little less than 4,800 souls. The majority of them inhabit the southeastern part of the territory, very few being found beyond Yakutat or below Prince Frederick sound. Their skin is lighter color than that of the average Indian, the facial expression usually good natured; the cheek bones are prominent, the eyes small, the face flat and wide. For generations they have spent the greater part of their time in canoes; hence the lower limbs have been only partially developed and exercised, the result of which shows in the ungainly manner of walking. As their methods of living have been greatly modified within the past few years, this defect in physical condition is gradually being corrected; use and exercise of the formerly almost unused members have done much to increase their efficiency, likewise to improve the personal appearance of their owner.

All of these people belong to one of two clans or totems, the Wolf or the Raven. These are divided into nearly forty sub-totems or phratries, as the Bear, Eagle, Shark, Frog, Beaver, etc., each of which has its chief whose power varies with his wealth and personal influence but is never absolute.

A man never marries one of his own clan; that is, one of the Raven clan must make an alliance with a Wolf, and *vice versa*. The children belong to the clan of the mother. (It would seem that the principle of woman's rights is not totally ignored even in the lowest depths of barbarism). A man's heirs are not his own but his sister's children as they belong to his own totem. The individual names, as a rule, refer to the sub-totem to which their possessor belongs. On this subject we find the following interesting note in a circular issued by the secretary of the Alaskan Society of Natural History, Miss Cassia Patton:

"A child receives various names at different periods of its life. The final name, which is purely a personal one, is usually taken from an ancestor on the mother's side. Most names, however, have some reference to the emblem to which the owner belongs, and on hearing it the Thlingites know at once to which totem the person belongs. For instance, at Wrangel, there is a male name, Sa-gatw, meaning voice like a frog. The frog is his emblem, and one knows at once that he belongs to the Raven group. Under one roof may be found people

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