

craft up the river with short easy scoops. And in the smooth lake, which we soon entered, the canoe shot along like a steamboat.

After a couple of hours on the lake, the Indian turned the boat in to the wooded shore.

I got into my rubber boots, and we strapped our packs on each other's shoulders.

This was my first experience of the Indian's pack-knot, and when, half-choked by it, I squirmed out of it, they greatly enjoyed the joke.

For six hours we pushed our way through the bush, dodging the devil-clubs, whose long spikes add so much to the discomfort of travel in the woods of Alaska; and then I suggested that we should have some grub.

The Indians, scorning to succumb to hunger before the white man, nevertheless halted on the instant, and I set about getting a fire started. I collected a big heap of dry wood, and was about to apply a match to it, when Big Bear held my arm.

"Dat no the way to make fire," he said contemptuously; and he kicked the heap aside, hollowed out a little cavity with the heel, and in this lit a little fire, on which we cooked tea, pork and beans.

Starting off afresh, we soon entered a more open country, as we ascended towards Mt. McKinley. And when I saw a glade up above us, Big Bear, who was always going ahead with his rifle ready, stopped short, swung round and pointed up.

At that moment my eyes fell on a brown bear with a cub by her side.

"You lie down here," whispered the Indian, quite excitedly, in spite of his years; and as I was more interested in ore-hunting than bear-hunting, I took a rest.

The kid followed in the old man's tracks, armed with a 303 Winchester. His grandfather had a 42 Savage. With wonderful agility in such a veteran, Big Bear crawled over the ground, himself, very literally resembling his namesake; and when he came again in sight up in the glade, about 100 yards from his prey, it was hard to tell which was man and boy and which was bear and cub.

The boy very soon made clear the difference, when he laid his rifle over the old man's shoulder.

Both reports rang as one; the bear dropped; and another single shot told that the cub was sent after the dam.

The Indians skinned the bears, hid the pelts in a tree, and took some of the meat with them, and we proceeded.

We travelled on till the northern twilight faded into gloom, the birds stopped singing and a few stars began to appear in the north-east.

Then we had supper, during which Big Bear showed an interest in mining that rather surprised me, and inclined me to the hope that his copper mine might prove a bonanza.

But drowsiness in the heat of the fire made sleep the most interesting thing in Alaska to me at that moment; and piling on more wood, I lay down at the edge of the blaze and drew my blanket over me.

Just then I heard both Indians laugh heartily, and, raising my head, inquired the cause of the mirth.

"Oh, it's at you going to sleep out there," said the kid. And he followed the old man under a root.

I had not been long asleep when I awoke to hear a sputtering sound in the fire. It was raining heavily, and I now understood the cause of the Indians' laughter. But being very tired I went again to sleep, to wake again in the dark soaked to the skin, and shivering with cold.

But, building up the fire, I managed to obtain some warmth till the sun came up over the hills bright and strong, when it dried me.

The Indians slept till six o'clock; then crept out, and looked around for bear while I cooked breakfast of beans and tea.

We continued going in this manner for three days, when our packs became ominously light; and for supper that night we were obliged to eat the smoked salmon which the Indians had taken with them. It was then that I became concerned about meeting the copper mine at

once; and to my anxious inquiries the Indian said:

"Tomorrow at ten o'clock I show you it. I know this mine four years ago, but you white men mostly no good. Keel too many men."

Indeed, it was pathetic to hear his reprobation of the white race. Our conversation was mostly about mining, and to my inquiries if such a place were good to work, he would reply, "No good—too many white men there." But he raised my interest in the copper by instructing me in the best places to try.

In the morning we started early on a light breakfast. The ground we traversed now gave strong indications of the presence of copper, for ironstone continually outcropped.

Big Bear was better than his word. At nine o'clock he stopped at a bluff on the edge of the glacier, and panted out, "Now see that."

As I appeared to be too slow for his enthusiasm he dragged me up to a vein of the same color as the stone in his pocket, and struck it with his hand. "Look!" he exclaimed. But I had already made up my mind about the vein. It was too far out in the wilds to work profitably. "No good," I shook my head.

"Yes, yes!" he persisted. "Good, good! Deep, deep! You can bore a hole and shoot him out."

But it was no good, and I told the Indian we had better get back before the grub entirely gave out.

"No, no," he persisted. "I savvy another like this—two days back from here. Me take you to it."

"And we die of starvation! Not for mine," I told him.

"No, no; we get back to town in six days; and six days without grub—nothing! Plenty time to eat when we get back to town."

But I was so sensible of the necessity of getting back to camp that I thought of the advisability of a short cut. The Indians would live on bears' meat and the rest of the smoked salmon. Besides they wanted to continue the bear-hunt.

So I took my bearings home by a route which, I judged, would cut two days off the journey. The peak above the glacier was north-east from my camp. A long flat that, from the glacier appeared meadow mostly, lay between me and the wooded range that sloped down to the river on which I was encamped, and at the head of the lake and outflowing stream. By crossing this flat I would be following the bowstring instead of the bow, as it were, for such a bend the river took; and at the same time would be avoiding the stream.

As I stepped off with my face to the south-west, therefore, the Indian boy called me, and turning round I saw the old man shaking his head decidedly.

"He is telling you not to go that way," explained the kid. But, as I was sure of my course, and, rather tired of the old fellow's advice, I went ahead.

For a few hours, as I descended through the brush to the flat, the walking was good; but on the level the ground began to get swampy, and I put on my rubber boots and tightened my belt for a tussle, for I had only a few biscuits left and had eaten sparingly of the smoked salmon at breakfast.

Very soon I understood the reason of the Indian's warning against my taking this cut. I was on the edge of a black "slew," too long to go round and too narrow to jump.

It had to be swum; and securing my rubber boots in my pack, I plunged into its icy waters. I landed in the long, coarse grass on the other side, only to sink into a swamp to the knees. The green flat that looked so pleasant from the glacier was an abominable marsh, and now with my head down in its rank growth, it looked terribly broad.

Then another "slew" thrust its long, snaky length in my way, and had to be swam, and the other side gained only to put my sodden feet into quicksands that sucked them down. You may be sure I bitterly repented not having paid heed to Big Bear's advice, as I plunged into "slew," crawled out, and dragged myself through mud and slime, while the mosquitoes in myriads played a war-dance on my skin and the dragon-flies sailed over my head in the warm sun as if enjoying my plight.

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