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## A Visit to the Indian Sealers on Barclay Sound, B.C.

"*U-wit-lie-up-me-clip.*" (A north wind, to-morrow,) says Now-wayik on Sunday evening. Accordingly on Monday morning I left the Mission House, Alberni, with bedding enclosed in a rubber sheet and a box containing my provisions, medicines, etc. I take my place in the middle of a sealing canoe, Now-wayik steers, while his son Douglas pulls the oars, forward.

We glide down the Somass river on the ebbing tide, and are soon on the Alberni Canal. My Indian friend, Now-wayik, points out places of interest on the shore. There is the site of the saw-mill, built when he was a young man. The Indians received "two bits," (25c) a day for their work, while he had one dollar a day on the steamer "Thames." On that hillside the Alberni Indians fought the Comox and Nanaimo Indians from the east coast. At that point the heads of the slaughtered enemies were arrayed on poles in triumph. That stream is called "the washing place," for it was there they washed the blood from their wounds after the battle. As we approach the narrows near Coppar Mountain, Douglas standing up in the bow calls loudly: "*U-wit-le-6.*" I do not see the wind, but he prepares his sail. His call is answered and the prediction of last evening is fulfilled. The northwind comes and fills the sail. The oars are laid aside as our canoe darts forward toward the sea like a sea gull. The mountains rise on either side, clothed in fir. We reach the entrance of the canal shortly after noon having made the twenty-five miles in less than five hours. As we pass a village of the "How-chunk-les-alits," more war stories are told. This tribe had not as many fighting men as some of their neighbours, so had a fortified camp. They stretched a cedar bark rope across the entrance so that they might know if their enemies passed during the night. Should the rope be broken, they would remain in camp, if not they would go out fishing. From that towering rock, a young warrior cast himself, after exhorting his fellows to be brave. We do not stop at Ecool—a trading post—as the wind is falling. We are on the eastern channel of Barclay Sound. Turning to the westward we pass through the island into the middle channel. Here the wind falls and we bend to the oars and paddles. The long swells of the ocean are noticed and we can now look out to sea, as this channel is about ten miles in width. Early in the evening we pass within hailing distance of the first Indian "rancherie," (house) on the islands between middle and western channel. These islands are the winter quarters of the Seshalits and Opitchsalits of Alberni, so I know the people.

The usual salutation to travellers is heard. "*Ukuk-oh-yuk-amis.*" (what news?) answered by a few items of news among which that "the missionary has come." Onward we go through the islands, much grander than the "Thousand Islands," and almost as numerous. The snowy peaks rise around the head of the sound. One

mountain is said to have ten heads, and is so called in the Indian name. The booming of the surf now becomes louder as we draw near to the outer islands. Village Island and others are pointed out, where some of our Indians live. As the darkness deepens, our canoe is turned toward an island where Now-wayik's house stands alone. On landing we find four Uchulahts have arrived on a visit. My baggage is carried into the house and placed on a bunk at the head of the house. Now-wayik entertains his Indian friends on one side of the large fire in the centre, Texas John, and family occupy the other side.

My mission is explained to the visitors, and my proposal to visit Uclulalit, it received with words of approval. After the evening meal, which for certain reasons I did not share with my Indian friends, we united in singing some Gospel hymns. I tried to explain them to the Uclulalits and was assisted by my Seshalit friends. God's blessing was asked for all, with the forgiveness of our sins.

As we had a west wind with rain for two days, three nights were spent in this place. I took advantage of the delay to visit my friends on the other islands. Nearly all are at home as the sea is rough. Their canoes are hauled up above high water mark, ready to go forth on the first fine day. Not many seal skins have been taken, owing to the high winds and cold weather. A sealing canoe is about twenty feet long, with a high prow, with a beak like a bird, and is propelled by sail, oars, or paddles. Two hunters man a canoe, one steers, while the other with gun or spear watches in front for game. Guns are generally used now, as spears cannot be thrown very far. However the latter is allowed by the new sealing regulations, while the former is forbidden. The west coast Indians are said to be the only seal hunters on the coast that are accustomed to use the spear. The shaft of this weapon is twelve or fifteen feet long. The point is barbed and is not securely fastened in the shaft. A cord is attached to the point, so that when the spear is thrown, the shaft becomes detached, and the point remains like a harpoon, secured by the cord. Thus when speared the seal will not escape, as it may when wounded by a shot.

Seals are found a few miles off the islands, while occasionally one is taken in the Sound. The skin brings about ten dollars at the local trading posts. The flesh is eaten, and the oil is saved for future use. Some of the hunters make several hundred dollars in a season. Many of the west coast Indians are taken by the sealing schooners as hunters to the North Pacific. Each pair of hunters receives three dollars for every skin taken, and thus may make good wages. Sealing is a wild and dangerous life, but it suits the Indians as they are fond of the sea. It remains to be seen what effects the new regulations will have upon this industry.

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