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AN INDIAN FISHING CAMP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

The Rev. J. B. McCullagh, missionary of the Church Missionary Society at Aiyansh, writes to the *Gleaner* :—

The event of the year on the Nass river is the Indian spring-fishing. The Oolachan or Straik is a small fish somewhat resembling the sardine, but rather longer, and is chiefly caught for the sake of its oil. These fish usually reach the waters of the Nass in shoals, about the 14th of March, by which time the Indians are on the ground, assembled from all quarters of the country.

The principal camp lies about fifteen miles up the river, near the extreme limit of tide water, on a low strip of marshy land forming a bay at the base of the mountains, which rise up to the height of several thousand feet above it. Here are erected some hundreds of temporary sheds, mostly roofed with bark, in which four or five thousands Indians find shelter for the season.

The fishing operations are carried on by cutting holes in the ice, through which the nets are let down and drawn up again when filled, the fish being taken ashore by dogs and sleds.

Each man's fish are deposited in front of his house in a heap, where

they are allowed to lie till about the middle of April, for, after the catch, the men have to go out on the coast, where the cedars are plentiful, in order to split boards for making boxes in which to store the grease. On their return, they make another expedition for fuel (this time up the river), which they stack up by their heaps of fish. They now begin to make preparations for boiling, by digging a trench, about 8ft. long and 2ft. deep and 3ft. wide, building up the sides with stones and clay to a foot above the ground, one end being open, and the other closed in by an arch, in which

stands a small smoke stack or chimney.

A large wooden box, 6 ft. long by 3 ft. deep and wide, and perfectly water-tight, with a sheet-iron bottom, is now laid upon the walls of the trench, and well set in clay; it is then filled with water, and a fire is started in the trench beneath. When the water comes to a boil, a quantity of fish is thrown in, and again and again fish are added until the contents rise to within an inch of the top. A woman stands by with a wooden spade, stirring until the fish are boiled down to a mash, after which they are allowed to settle. The oil gathers on the

parts by three shallow grooves diametrically out on the inner side, and bent over into square form by steaming, the open angle being secured by wooden pegs or nails. The bottom is then fitted tightly in, and the whole interior fortified against leakage by the application of a putty compounded of fish and decayed cotton-wood fibre. In these boxes the grease is finally stored, and being covered, and made secure by strips of bark, is ready either for sale or transit to the owner's village.

This grease, or delk as it is called in Nishga, is, I believe, very good and useful

(that is, my wife, little daughter, and self) walked a little way down the ice to the open water, where our canoe was in readiness. Our camp equipment, provisions, and medicines having been previously put on board, we quickly made ourselves comfortable with wraps and furs, for a cold north wind was blowing, and though the day was fine, it was freezing hard. The country was still covered with snow, and large drifts of ice were here and there piled up in the shallows, and on the bars, glistening in the sun.

On either side of the river the mountains rose like towering battlements, white and radiant.

Occasionally our sailors would awaken the solitudes by striking their paddles against the gunwale of the canoe to disencumber them of the ice, a proceeding against which both squirrels and crested jays invariably protested by a rattling chatter at us from the adjacent trees.

About 1 o'clock, having lit our oil stove and made tea, we pulled into a sheltered spot and had some refreshment. On starting again we put up a sail, by the help of which we went spinning onwards.

Soon we reached the base of a large mountain where the river turns at right angles, and



CANOEING IN THE WILD NORTH-WEST.

surface, bright and clear, to the depth of an inch or more. The boiler is now skimmed with a large wooden scoop, and the grease poured into vessels set by for that purpose, in which it cools to the color and consistency of lard. The mash is then ladled into a large bark strainer, and pressed with a lever, the fluid extracted being returned to the boiler, and the refuse thrown away.

This boiling is carried on daily for three weeks or more, during which time the boxes are being made. Each box, with the exception of the bottom, is made of a single board, which is divided into four equal

parts by three shallow grooves diametrically out on the inner side, and bent over into square form by steaming, the open angle being secured by wooden pegs or nails. The bottom is then fitted tightly in, and the whole interior fortified against leakage by the application of a putty compounded of fish and decayed cotton-wood fibre. In these boxes the grease is finally stored, and being covered, and made secure by strips of bark, is ready either for sale or transit to the owner's village.

I now proceed to give a short account of my work in the camp during the months of April and May of 1890. On Thursday, April 17th, leaving Aiyansh at 9 a.m., we

where twirled and crunched a vast accumulation of broken ice.

"Let us go right into it after this large piece," shouted Philip our captain, referring to an immense block of ice which crushed into the floe just in front of us. Accordingly in we went, sail and all, the ice immediately closing up behind us. But with the aid of long poles we soon worked a passage through. From this point we had a fair stretch of about fifteen miles to the fishing camp, which we reached at five o'clock in the evening, well pleased with our trip, and thankful to our Heavenly

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