

in some intangible way true stories of the native people. This holds good even of Sitka, that much-visited, much-talked-of relic of old Russian times :

"With its ancient Castle, stained and brown,  
Like a yellow sea bird, looking down  
On the dingy roofs of the quaint old town."

After three years of residence there, sent on official duty, I came to think of it as a familiar friend. I did not believe there was a legend connected with it or its people which had not been confided to me, and some of them I have carefully treasured as one guards a secret or the key to the cupboard where the family skeleton is locked up. I fondly imagined that within a radius of many miles no nook was left unexplored by me which gave promise of a story—and I was quite sure that no legend of the elder time had escaped me. One summer day, when the ambient air and the silver sea were too seductive for denial, I employed an aged native with a battered canoe to paddle me wheresoever fancy dictated. Now, my knowledge of Thlinket is very limited ; and for good comradeship, and because of his proficiency in the native tongue, I asked my interpreter, Metinoff, to accompany us. He gladly assented.

Just below the present native village, and near its north-west boundary, a bold but not very commanding promontory runs out into the sea. It is thickly wooded from base to summit, and all overgrown with clambering vines, clinging mosses, graceful ferns and devil's clubs, and all those myriad growths that give the coast-line almost a tropical appearance. Something, I know not what—some intuition, maybe, in which I have abiding faith—made me greatly desire to go ashore at the foot of the promontory and explore its summit. I noticed that the native hesitated, and it was not until Metinoff had sharply reproved him that he beached his canoe. The native characteristics in some ways are similar to those of the Americans : when they hesitate about anything, be sure it is something worthy of your curiosity ; when they are radiant and quick and willing, evidently there is little to learn and less to see ; and so I knew that somewhere on that rocky outlet was a hidden mystery, or else some legend hallowed it in the heart of this native, whose name was Klanaut ; and we pushed our way through the tangled undergrowth. It was tiresome labour ; many trees had fallen, and year after year the fading foliage from the living had covered with a gentle tenderness the prone forms of the dead. At last we reached the top ; and there, embowered in shade, and so overgrown with woodland greenery as to make it difficult to distinguish from nature's own handiwork, we found a native "Kaht Tah ah Kah ye tea," or, small house for the dead. It was built quite carefully of sturdy timbers, but here and there the vandal breath of the winds had blown away the roof and left the interior exposed to the elements. Beside the structure on the ground, and almost level with its surface, lay a large canoe, and inside of it a smaller one. Both were lichen and moss covered, and broken, and half filled with leaves and decayed vegetation, from which innumerable ferns and wild flowers drew rich nourishment.

To me there is much of pathos in a stranded boat, even near tide water ; but a canoe on a hill top, shattered and verdure-clad, and resting beside a grave, is very like a poem in the saddest of minor keys. A native "dead house" is usually a chief or a "Shaman's" place of sepulture, and when Metinoff said "Some big *tyhee* lies here, but I do not understand the little canoe," I was not surprised. Together we approached the enclosure, and lifting a plank from its low roof we looked in. There we saw two bundles securely wrapped in *katch*, the native name for matting, and tied with the split fibres of some sinewy root.

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