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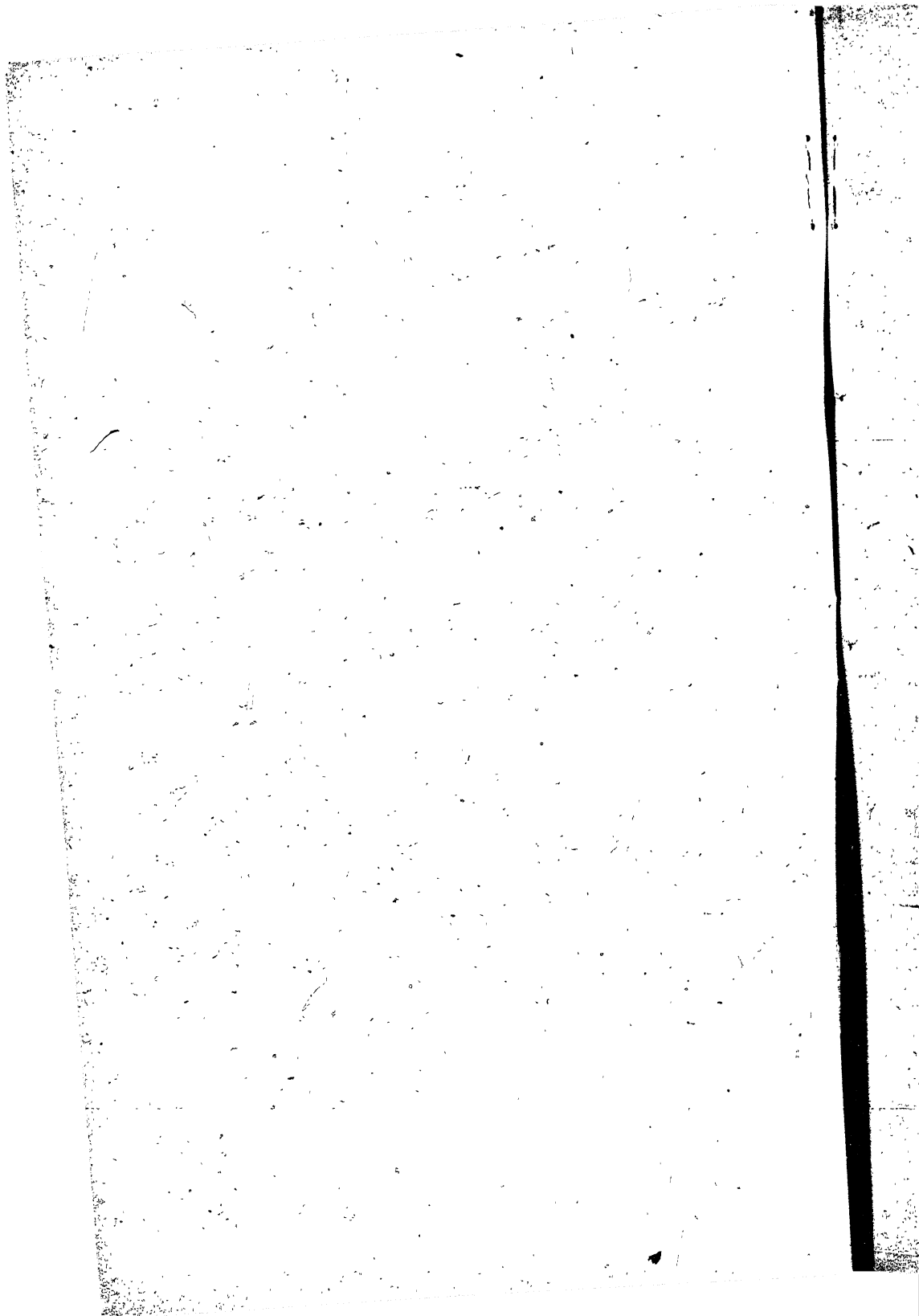
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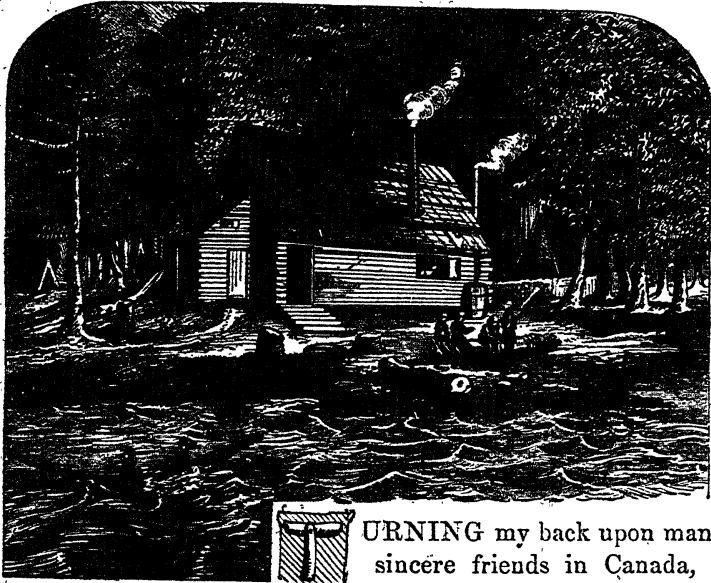
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TWO YEARS AMONGST THE INDIANS OF
QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S ISLAND.

(By A. F. POOLE, Mining Engineer.)



TURNING my back upon many sincere friends in Canada, I hastened to catch the first steamer from New York to Aspinwall, not without considerable difficulty, owing to the great rush of gold hunters for Cariboo. I secured a berth by paying a premium. The steamer was an old one, of about 1500 tons register, and carried over 2000 passengers. Under British laws, I may mention, such a steamer would not have been allowed to carry more than 800. With this great crowd on board we obtained very slight comfort or accommodation; huddled together for eight days and twenty hours, we at last reached Aspinwall (2338 miles).

Glad we were indeed to get on shore for a few hours. At Aspinwall we had now to pass over to the Pacific by crossing the isthmus to Panama by railway, a distance of about forty-seven miles. When this railway was constructed some years

ago, ague and other fevers raged terribly; it is reported that every yard of rail laid, was at the cost or sacrifice of a human being; even now the bones of the victims may be seen jutting out from under the railway sleepers and bleaching in the sun. Fortunately for travellers in the present day those malignant fevers are in a manner unknown, or have wholly ceased. It is well it is so, for this is the most delightful and interesting part of the whole voyage.

The chief characteristic which a stranger observes on landing here is the deep green foliage of the cocoanut tree and palm. Pine-apples were selling at ninepence each, such beauties! All the tavern or storekeepers have monkeys at their doors. Turkey-buzzards are as common here as crows are in Britain. A good supply of delicious fruit is always to be had from the natives in this wonderful vegetable kingdom, where at every stoppage of the train the women and children crowd into the carriages crying, "Bananas, my dear," "Oranges or pine-apples, my dear," &c.

What a wonderful contrast is here presented to the eye of a stranger from more northern latitudes—every point of the compass discloses magnificent vistas of leaf, bough, and blossom, while all outline of landscape is lost under a perfect deluge of vegetation. No trace of the soil is to be seen. Lowland and highland are the same. Mountain rises upon mountain in graceful majesty, covered to their very crests with every variety of vegetation and floral beauty. The loveliness of nature here is indescribable; she seems decked out in her richest and most costly garb to welcome the adventurous pioneer to that Eden of the world and the Eldorado beyond. You simply gaze upon the scene before you with delight.

I would strongly recommend all those who are lovers of matchless scenery and fond of botanical research, to spend a few weeks in the vicinity of the railway which crosses the "Isthmus of Panama," and divides the Pacific from the Atlantic. Here all the gorgeous growths of an eternal summer are mingled in one impenetrable mass, whilst from the rank jungle of canes and gigantic lilies, and the thickets of strange shrubs that line the water, rise the trunks of the mango, the cocoa, the sycamore, and the superb-palm.

Arriving at Panama we went immediately on board the steamer's tender, and were conveyed out to the California steamer, anchored about two miles from the shore in the "Bay of Panama." She was a magnificent four-decker, and American built, with much less crowding on board, though we had 200 more passengers *direct* from Britain, by West Indian steamer, which is *much the best route* from Europe.

We kept close in towards the Mexican shore, stopping only once (at Acapulco) before we entered the "Golden Gate" which protects the harbour of San Francisco. This being the end of the second steamer's voyage (thirteen days and eighteen hours), all the passengers landed to reship by another steamer for Vancouver Island. We had a very pleasant passage from Panama to San Francisco, there being only one thing that I regretted much, namely, the want of Divine service, especially on Sundays, on board ship, such not being the custom under the American flag. However, a few Canadians and myself took possession of the bow of the steamer, and here we joined in reading and singing Psalms morning and evening during each Sunday. There was a great difference in the social habits and national characteristics of the passengers, many of whom, like myself, were in the pursuit of health or the acquisition of knowledge, but the majority of them were braving the dangers of the deep and enduring the privations of the passage for the sole purpose of amassing wealth at the gold fields of California or British Columbia; a large majority intending for the latter place were Canadians (with the exception of the 200 before mentioned), and a more steady, hard-work looking set of men I have never seen together in such numbers. They were all Protestants, and spent much of their leisure time on board in reading religious books and in singing sacred music.

Those Canadians are the very class of men wanted in such a country as British Columbia, and who are certain to prosper there; in fact, I have good reason to know that nearly all those Canadians have since secured good positions, while a few of them have amassed large fortunes. The contrast, I may say, between the Americans and Canadians on board ship was very striking; the former, seemingly, were without religious sentiment or devout impressions upon their mind, displaying

much discontent about some trifle day after day, while the Canadians were of an agreeable and sociable disposition, cheerful and humorous, gay and grave by turns, or like men who could be brotherly to their race and mindful of and dutiful towards their God. Committed to the mercy of a kind Providence, in spite of capricious elements, and such regrets as the sensitive mind cannot fail to indulge in, for all that had been left behind in the land of our birth, I am confident a happier and more joyful company never pursued the trackless path of the deep.

We had four days to wait for the steamer in that bustling go-ahead city, San Francisco, with its gold-loving population, and another five days took us the remainder of the voyage, landing us in the convenient little harbour of Esquimalt, distant about three miles from the capital, Victoria.

The day we arrived at San Francisco was the anniversary of the fire-brigades; there was a magnificent turn-out of all the firemen and engines in Portsmouth Square, the brilliant silver and brass mountings of the engines, with their profusion of gay flags and wreaths of natural flowers, looking very dazzling and imposing to a stranger; added to this the reflection of the sun's hot rays upon the many different glittering uniforms of the men, at once gave a good idea of the wealth and prosperity of San Francisco. "Frisco" is most decidedly a flourishing city, and well worth a visit, or the delay in stopping for a few days before proceeding by steamer to British Columbia.

I went one Sunday afternoon to visit the "racecourse," one of the great and many attractions to be found on the island. The afternoon was calm and clear while I lounged on the crest of the hill that forms the centre of the "course," gazing on the picturesque scenes around. Southward, washing the base of the hill, are the Straits of "St. Juan-de-Fuca," with the wide white pebble shores, bounded on the north side by Vancouver Island, and on the south by long high mountain chains that form the northern boundary of Oregon Territory. It was a sight which, once seen, can never be forgotten! I felt amply repaid for the little hardships attending the long voyage to this beautiful spot. I paid the course a second visit; indeed it is worth a dozen visits, just to stand on the top of that elevated

grassy slope in the centre of the course, and get a commanding view of the city and "strait," with the snow-capped hills of Oregon towering high above the highest clouds. The climate is delightful, resembling the south of Scotland, but with a much purer atmosphere; and it is easy to predict that at no distant date this beautiful island will become a perfect Eden! The soil in general abounds with inexhaustible forests of fine timber, rich undulating small prairies, extensive fisheries, and large deposits of coal, copper, and other minerals. The island is about 250 miles long and from fifty to seventy miles wide. The chief timbers are the pine, spruce, red and white oak, cedar, arbutus, poplar, maple, willow, and yew, particularly the first many of which I have measured and found five feet in diameter by 300 feet high, perfectly straight, and without joints. There are many lofty hills and mountain peaks in different parts of the island, some of them beautifully wooded to their very summits; and others craggy, barren, precipitous, and full of dark caverns and frightful ravines, which add to the marvellous beauty and solemnity of the grand scenery around.

Eight times have I been *round, in, and at* every accessible point of this island; and I can truly say, without hesitation, here is a site, a beautiful and profitable home for the surplus labour of the British Isles, where more than 100,000 men could find immediate homes and live by the gun and fishing-net, and by cultivating its marvellous productive soil. There is only one thing which this island lacks, namely, convenient and safe harbours for large *sailing* ships; there are, in fact, only two, but with an enterprising population and assistance from the Mother country this *only difficulty* could be easily overcome.

I must pass over the rest of the journey to Queen Charlotte's Island. The first thing is to colonise this island. It is, as I have said, teeming with the richest and most valuable mineral ores, wooded throughout with the stateliest pines and cedars of the world—an island which is, as to extent of surface, as large as Scotland, but the habitation at present wholly of Indian tribes.

The Bellaçoola Indians now number about 500; they are a very industrious people, and encourage the "whites" to live

among them. This is an advantage, as these Indians are remarkably successful fishermen, and can be always employed in catching any quantity of fish in the river for the supply of the settlers. They are a hardy race of people, but rather dirty in their habits. Their houses are very substantially built, and many of them are entered by an opening of a circular form about two feet in diameter which is made in the building *after* it have been erected; others are constructed with doors, after the white man's system. These houses vary in size, from thirty to eighty feet in length, and from twenty to forty feet in breadth, are one storey high, with nearly flat roofs. The whole building is constructed of wood (cedar), the boards generally two inches thick, and averaging from six to eighteen feet in length by eighteen inches in breadth, remarkably regular and smoothly cut. When I first examined them I was under the impression they were sawn and planed by white mechanics, but such was not the case, as I shortly afterwards saw the mode by which the natives manufactured the timber into boards previous to their erecting a house for a newly-created chief. The tool which they use for planing is a simple piece of iron fastened to a round wooden handle by a piece of cord manufactured from the inner bark of the cedar; this tool is shaped and worked like an "adze," and is their principal working implement. Their next tool of importance is an awl-shaped knife, the point of the blade is bent up in the form of a half-circle; this instrument they hold like the tool held by English blacksmiths when cutting horses' hoofs, that is, with the back of the hand down and drawing the blade towards the body. It is really remarkable the number of articles for general purposes and for ornament which they make with this last simple implement, all beautifully and artistically finished. I was shown a perfect facsimile of a sovereign carved on a piece of ivory of the same size as the gold coin.

But to complete my description of their houses. The frame is supported by posts driven into the ground, an open space of about eight feet in depth being left between the floor and the ground. This space is used for *general purposes*, all filth, refuse, &c., being dropped through the openings in the floor; and when, in course of time, this "space" gets filled up, the house or "frame" is removed to another spot, and placed again

on the top of new posts and there it remains till the space is again filled up. Thus they continued from time to time to remove their abode. The roofs of these houses generally consist of two great logs or trees, the full length of the building and about three feet in diameter. Each of these requires at least a hundred Indians to hoist it up to its place. On these huge logs rest the boards, *unfastened*, so that when the house inside is full of smoke, or the weather is fine, they can be pushed aside. This, however, is seldom done, owing to the lazy habits of the people.

On the centre of the floor is spread a quantity of gravel to protect the wood from catching fire; on this is placed the fire, before which is placed or spread the mats, which serve as seats for squatting on during the day, and are used as mattresses at night, the sleepers lying with their feet towards the fire. Overhead, amidst the dense smoke, hang their uncured fish; while at the far corner of the room are piled up in large boxes their winter stock of dried and cured fish, berries, and their various articles of merchandise.

These Indians are very superstitious. They will not allow the whites to wash, or throw any water or rubbish into the river, under the impression that it will cause the fish to leave it. The fish when caught are strung on a rope and moored to a pole stuck into the bed of the river, while on the top of the pole are fastened bunches of feathers to charm them, and after they have remained in the water for several hours they are taken on shore, one at a time, and as they are being landed a crowd of children keep crying at the top of their voices, but in a solemn strain, "Vil-o-o-o." They generally banish one of their tribe to the mountains during the fishing season, there to exist on berries and what he can find. He is not allowed to have a fire, and none of his tribe may hold any communication with him "while the spell lasts," it being their belief that if the banished Indian once sees any part of the river the fish will depart from it for ever. This is a cruel fate, even for an Indian, and I shall never forget the first time I heard one of those poor Indians' heartrending and most piercing wails as they came echoing from cliff to cliff. Once heard they are never to be forgotten.

On reaching Queen Charlotte's Island I built a log house, in

which I resided about twelve months, a sketch of which is seen at the head of this paper, and which is one of the most comfortable of houses to live in, and can be quickly and cheaply built after the Canadian bush style. The trees, *growing in the morning*, are cut down and converted into a comfortable house *by sundown*. It generally takes about fifty men to build one, every man giving a day's labour free, while you give him his food and pay for a fiddler, to wind up with a merry dance, this being called a "house-warming." Of course, in the event of your neighbour requiring a house, a barn, or stable built, ten acres of bush cleared for crop, or fifty acres of potatoes dug up and put in pits in one day, you have to reciprocate, and in this way you may have to give your *services free* two or three days in the course of a year. But if the section in which you are located becomes thickly settled, your services are not required. In a few years, say five or six years, you are neither called upon to give nor take, but become perfectly independent, and pay for your own labourers.

Of the climate I may say that it is much milder here than at the capital (Victoria), and milder than in any part of Scotland, the summer being not quite so hot during the hottest days, while the winter is much warmer, and the atmosphere always clearer and more pure.

Fish are perhaps more plentiful than in any other part of the world. The quantity of game is really marvellous.

The natives have been justly considered the finest, most savage, and warlike Indians on the Pacific, but they are well disposed towards the whites, and wish us to settle amongst them. The chief, Kitguna, believing that he had the right to do as he liked with his own islands, actually made me a present of them, on condition that I lived amongst them and induced all my friends, the "English," to settle with me—not a very small gift, considering that the island is nearly 200 miles long and averages about thirty miles wide!

The population (*all natives*) is about 4500; they are exceedingly industrious; they make very creditable earrings, nicely carved, besides pipes and flutes, cut out of wood, ivory, and slates. The majority of them, male and female, wear only a small-sized half-blanket loosely thrown over their shoulders, more for the purpose of warmth than any sense of

decency. They live for the most part on bears, ducks, geese, and such shell-fish as they find near their camps.

Some of the women are exceedingly handsome and symmetrical in shape, but unfortunately they are in the habit of disfiguring their breasts, arms, ears, and under lip. One particularly fine woman, the daughter of the little chief "Skilley-gutts," had her arms tattooed with figures representing chiefs and fish.

When they have resigned their husbands (who take to another wife) and gone into widowhood, their under lips are put between two pieces of ivory, each the size of a halfpenny piece, and these are rivetted together; sometimes it will be one solid piece, and this is let into the hole, which has been gradually enlarging during her younger lifetime, causing the lip to project straight out at least two inches from the under jaw.

Among these simple and primitive tribes marriage is unknown, nor is polygamy one of their institutions. Woman is a creature purely of purchase to be had connubially for a month's trial, and if the man is dissatisfied with her (which is too often the case) he returns her to her parents, and receives back what he gave for her—a trinket or a blanket. I may add that there are no ceremonies whatever performed such as are customary among many savage tribes on the occasion of a man and woman undertaking to live together for a short or a long period. It is a simple matter on the man's part of purchase and possession. The beautiful attachment and heroic constancy of affection, ending only in death, amongst civilised or Christian nations, is to them unknown.

The men are in general a fine race of men, and only look hideous when they blacken their faces with charred wood. Many of them are notoriously lazy and given to gambling, and I have always observed that this gambling class were the most troublesome to the whites (we are called "whites" to make a distinction, yet it is a well-known fact on the American Continent that the natives in Canada and British Columbia are nearly as white as we are; the "dusky Indians" stain their skins with the bark of trees, and those in our colonies on the North Pacific paint themselves black with charred wood).

It is painful to be reminded of those unfortunate and benighted, creatures, with no religious faith, no elevated principle of duty; and in bringing these cursory remarks to a close, I may perhaps state the mode which I would suggest should be adopted for the colonisation or early settlement of Queen Charlotte's Island, and in doing this, it will answer the inquiries made by a correspondent in a former number of this Magazine.

After the emigrants had arrived at the island all hands would be set to work to build a large one-roomed log house, in which all could lodge temporarily, and which could be used afterwards as a Mission station or school-house. When this is accomplished, positions for fifty houses might be staked out, and then all hands could be employed in building log house No. 1. When "No. 1" is completed, No. 2 could be commenced and completed, and so on till the completion of the whole number required; and thus within two or three months after landing on the island, every family would be comfortably housed. Thus domiciled in substantial wooden erections, the attention of the emigrants would be directed to the cultivation of the soil, which is most rich and fertile.

Each family could begin farming operations on a small or extended scale, seeds and implements being provided from the general stock, and my impression is that at the end of the first year they would find themselves not only with every comfort, but on the road to independence. Of course the Government would require to grant 200 acres free to each *family* emigrating, or more land if wished by them under stipulated conditions. I will merely add that I have every confidence in the success of such an emigration scheme under Government authority.

All that I crave is the sympathy of my countrymen and countrywomen on behalf of those poor "Hydah" Indians on that isolated island, discovered by Captain Cook nearly a hundred years ago, and explored so recently by me; and I do trust that I may be the means through the present channel of awakening a public interest in their fate.

In conclusion, I may add that I ask nothing for myself but the pleasure of helping so noble a cause with my own presence, personal labour, and little capital. To the earnest con-

sideration of the industrious surplus population of Great Britain, I offer these remarkable facts in the hope that they may induce them to better their condition by settling on the beautiful and promising Island of Queen Charlotte, which, under the elevating influences of Christianity and civilisation, would eventually become one of the brightest and most precious jewels in the British Crown.

CHURCH WORK IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

(Continued from vol. iv, page 159.)

LIFE ON A MINING CREEK.*

AUGUST 11th.—An express came over to-day from Antler Creek, with letters and papers for the magistrate. The Government profess to have established a regular mail service this season between the lower country and Cariboo: that is to say, they have given an express man several thousand dollars to convey letters from New Westminster to Antler Creek, at the rate of one dollar per letter! They forgot, however, to include William's Creek in the contract, and so the contractor charges half a dollar more for the sixteen miles between this and Antler—six shillings a letter, not including the extra colonial postage! Last year, one of our brethren had to pay ten shillings a letter for some which were carelessly sent up country to him contrary to his instructions.

I walked a mile or two down the creek this afternoon, notifying to miners the fact of there being Sunday services. Returning again to the "town," as I passed a drinking saloon, I was told that a man lay badly hurt in a back room. I asked if I could see him. He had been engaged in a drunken

* The incidents contained in the accompanying paper, continuing a former paper, are chiefly notes taken from the writer's private journal for 1862.