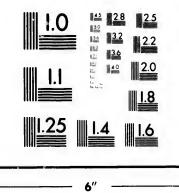
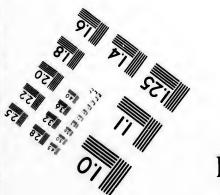


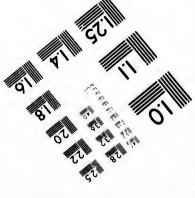
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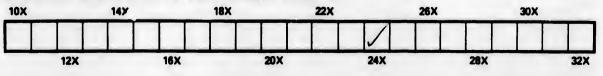


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Overland Monthly

Vot. XXX. (Second Series.) - September 1897.- No. 177

ALASKA BY LAND AND SEA

I.—THE VOYAGE AND THE NATIVES

BY LINCOLN COTHRAN, M. D.



A the morning of April 19th, 1895, I sailed for Alaska to act as physician and surgeon to a large salmon packing company. After a not particularly eventful voya ge of twenty-seven days, we saw the first indications of land in drifting sea-

weeds floating by. The remainder of the sea rip is described in the following notes from diary made at the time.

May 17th, 11 л. м.

We are sailing beautifully this morning, he yards square, before a fair wind. Calglations indicate we shall sight land before light. The vessel just passed a splendid meetimen of the large gray albatross the ondor of the seas. He stretched his giganic wings, measuring ten to twelve feet from ip to tip, and beat against the water many imes before he was able to rise.

4 P. M.

Wind has become stronger and we are trawing close to land, or rather to huge, parren, and desolate rock-islands teninted only by wild fowl. These rocks are slands situated near the western end of the Vaskan peninsula. In order to reach Berng sea it is necessary to pass through a drait only twelve miles wide, the entrance o which is hedged with innumerable rocks ind sunken reefs, to strike one of which

4144

would mean certain destruction. The strait known as Unimak pass lies between Ogomak and Unimak islands. Both of these islands contain live volcanoes. The pass is rendered more dangerous because it is almost constantly enveloped in dense fog with no warning light-house nor fog-horn. Two



A SAGOOYAK BELLE

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hours more will bring us to the pass. It is snowing now and one cannot see half a mile away.

5:30 р. м.

The cry of "Land ho!" made us rush from the dinner table to the deck. Dead ahead loomed up a rugged, snow-clad mountain range, looking spectral and forbidding in the storm of sleet raining down upon us. Captain Peterson yelled: "Luff the rudder! Tack ship!" and as the great vessel slowly turned about, rolling and pitching in a heavy sea, he cried: "Call up the watch below! All hands on deck!" For nearly an hour we watched these white mountains which had so dangerously and unexpectedly blocked our passage, then they faded in the fog and distance.

We had missed the "pass," and nearly gone to pieces on those rocks. Something was wrong. Observations and reckonings were made at noon, so it was thought our exact location was known; and we had steered for Unimak pass. The ocean current setting westward had been taken into account, so the error lay either in some inexplicable deviation of the compass or else the ship's chronometer was wrong, thus putting us off in our longitude.

May 18th, 1:30 P. M. Tall mountains covered with sonwdrifts again came into view at nine o'clock. These were taken to be Unalaska island, so we made off for an hour or two, and then steered northeast, hoping to strike the pass. It was so foggy the altitude of the sun could not be taken at noon, and we don't know where we are.

3 P. M.

We are now sailing in full sight of land that we take to be Tigalda island, one of the Alcutian group that lies along the Alaskan peninsula.

3:30 г. м.

Sighted Ugomak island, which gives us our bearings. On the strait side is a towering bluff, once seen always to be remembered. We are steering boldly into the pass.

10 o'clock P. M.

We are now within the headlands and darkness gathering fast, our course west by north, with a fair wind, flood tide, and calm sea.

May 19th, 3:30 л. м.

The second mate awoke me and I went up on the deck to see the volcano of Pogrumpoi. With all canvas spread we were cutting the waters of Bering sea. The sun was rising and filled the heavens with pale opal luminance. It came up behind a low mountain range on Unimak island, which is composed of a series of rocky pinnacles. High above them all, like the pyramid of Cheops beside children's playhouses, isolated and lonely, loomed the volcano of Pogrumpoi. About every three minutes a cloud of black smoke slowly gathered about the summit and then the wind would waft it away. After we had enjoyed this unwonted spectacle for half an hour a curtain of fog shut off the view.

No land in sight.

May 29th, A. M.

7:30 P. M.

Was just awakened by a noise resembling crushing of bottles. We are passing through an ice-pack formed of small floes which seem to be fast thawing. The sound is produced by the ice grating against our copper sides. 6 A. M.

On all sides of us are innumerable icefloes which project from six inches to six feet above the water. Their tops are covered with snow. This ice is formed in the rivers and along the shallow shores, and carried out to see by the tides and corrents

196



A FRIENDLY CALL AT KOGGINUG

there receiving further increments by freezing spray and snow.

6 P. M.

We have steered a zigzag course all day, to avoid as much as possible these ice masses. They form nearly continuous strings about five hundred yards wide and many miles in length. A clear belt of sea several miles in width intervenes till the next string. At two miles distance they remind me of the San Joaquin plains covered with white greese.

May 21st, 6 P. M. No more ice today. It is bitter cold, the thermometer standing at thirty-two degrees, Fahrenheit.

Bering sea is as smooth and placid as an

inland lake. The water is greenish in hue, and nowhere exceeds ninety fathoms in depth, the average depth being forty-five fathoms. The ship was hove to for an hour and we had fine sport catching codfish. Every sailor and passenger put out a line, and in a short time the decks were covered with flapping fish. A piece of bacon is the best bait. There is only one feature to mar your pleasure. As you pull in the line, which has been let down three hundred feet, the lower half is covered with a yellow, slippery slime, and your 1 ads soon become lacererated and benue. ed with the cold.

May 22d.

Beating around to avoid the ice again today. It is only about fifty miles to Cape

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Constantine. Should the wind turn fair will make the Nushagak river and cast anchor sometime tomorrow afternoon.

May 23d.

Sun shining brightly; sky clear, but head winds drive us out of our course.

2;30 p. m.

Passing now within ten miles of Hagameister island. This white, flattened, rocky waste presents a picture of indescribable desolation. To the southward lies Walrus island, from which the snow has not yet melted.

May 24th, 8 A. M.

Again we are crashing through white icefields before a strong wind. The ship is dismantled of nearly all her sails to lessen speed.

8 Р. М.

As far from Nushagak as three days ago. Headwinds and ice impede our voyage. We are sailing in a salt pond about four miles in diameter surrounded by banks of impenetrable ice. Where the packs have jammed together carried by counter currents, enormous slabs are piled on top of one another like tombstones. We sail alone in this little sea, our wake describing snaketracks and figure eights. It will be the good God's luck if we do not tie ourselves in a knot which we cannot slip through. If a gale of wind should spring up it would drive the ice down upon us, and the old Merom with her eargo of human freight would find her last resting place at the bottom of Bering sea.

May 26th, 7:30 P. M.

Ran through a rift in the ice last evening; sailing all day with a fair wind toward Hagameister island, which lies close to the mainland of Alaska. We hope to sail east by south between the shore and the icepacks to Cape Constantine and then enter the Nushagak river. We are in the same position as four days ago when driven off by contrary winds and ice. Sighted Hagameister island a few minutes ago. Sun sets at 8:45 today, but the twilight is long, lasting beyond 10:30 p. M.

8:30 A. M.

Two more of the salmon packing fleet bound for Bristol Bay district are close by us, sailing on the same tack. Ice on the east again shuts us out from Cape Constantine. May 28th.

Today is exactly like yesterday.

May 29th.

A high wind just sprang up, and the Merom is throwing off the foam like a racehorse. A thick fog exists, caused by the air becoming warmer (forty-five degrees, Fahrenheit), blowing over the frozen floes. A moment ago we plunged by the schooner Lewis, beam to beam. Her sailors blew a hoarse horn — the only human sound we have heard in thirty-nine days beside those made on our bark.

Since headway on our course cannot be made, the main concern is to avoid collision with one of the other ships and to keep safe from being erushed and sunk in the ice. In this far-off unfrequented sea a collision is more to be dreaded than even fire — the two most appalling cries that could ring out on the dock of a doomed ship. The captain poured out a pint of castor oil into an old rusty fog-horn which works with a piston. At half minute intervals all night a sailor on the forecastle deck pumped out long thunderous wails.

May 30th, 3 P. M.

In a thick fog we spoke the bark Kenny at fifty yards distance. She had run up against an ice field and then gone off. We plunged into it past the Kenny, but had not proceeded two hundred yards before we were bumping against icebergs ten to fifteen feet from top to bottom. Soon the ice became a solid mass, and it was a matter of life and death to extricate ourselves. Every minute the old ship creaked and trembled as if her ribs were being knocked in, and the splinters flew while we crashed into large masses of ice, some of them two hundred feet long. Nearly all the sails were taken in to slacken speed. We worked our way slowly and tediously and finally got out of the dangerous situation.

9:30 P. M.

Am writing without aid of artificial light. Still steering a devious way among the icebergs. Thermometer has been at the freezing point all day. Our ship looks like a Santa Claus outfit. The dense fog blowing through the shrouds and rigging is frozen white and presents the appearance of bits of cotton stuck on everywhere. The heavy, damp sails are frozen stiff and crackle and rasp as they are hoisted by the men hauling the halyards.

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A Still Hunt



ESKIMO WIFE OF GERMAN TRAPPER AT KANOOLIK

May 31st.

This morning we are stuck fast in the ice. At 7 A. M.—O, glad sound!— we heard 2 steam whistle, and soon the little steamer Hattie Gage (my friend, Captain Nelson, commander) law along side of us. The steamer took us in tow up the river. We might have lain in the ice two or three weeks in helpless peril were it not for this timely aid.

The steam tender left us clear of ice in the mouth of Nushagak river, and started back to tow the other vessels in. We dropped anchor for the night in twelve fathoms of water.

June 2d, 10 A. M.

It is a wonderful morning, the air is redolent with stimulating ozone, and the sun shines warm, with thermometer at seventy-two degrees, Fahrenheit.

The low river banks on either side of us four miles away are fringed with ruffles of broken ice. The high rugged hills to the northwest are streaked with melting snowdrifts in the ravines and sunless slopes; while the ridges and projecting peaks stand out gray and barren.

Were there only a forest with green foli-

age it would be an ideal picnic time and place, - the sunshine is so warm, the wind so soft and mild. This is written on deck in my shirt sleeves.

0

We sailed up the river opposite to the cannery at the native village of Kanulik (sometimes called Carmel by the Moravian missionaries) and dropped pemanent anchcr.

About three hundred yards away, above the high yellow river bank, surrounded by a crowd of natives and a pack of howling dogs, stood Reverend John Schokert, the missionary. As we came in sight he hoisted the American flag and fired a salute.

In a few minutes dozens of natives came paddling out to us in their kyaks and bidarkas. As they sat in their skin boats watching us it was curious to see them smile and hear them call out: "Che mee! Che mee!" This is their salutation.

These natives are short in stature, averaging five feet. They have the racial characteristics of the Mongol, straight, black, coarse hair, retreating forehead, black or brown eyes with the outer angles elevated, high cheek bones, and dark smoky-yellow complexion, which is doubtless modified by the climate and their habit of life.

They are a simple, trustful, honest, moral, and truth-telling people. Each of the young men is married to a single wife. They have but a small progeny — one to five children. Prostitution among the women is almost unknown. A few white men who live here have taken native wives.

They are never so happy as when giving succor to a white man in danger, who, in return, browbeats, swindles, and endeavors to contaminate them, and even strikes down the hand whose skill, perhaps, has saved him from death in the treacherous rivers, maybe from starvation, or guided him through the trackless snow to shelter and life. It is true they are ignorant of our civilization. They have no luxuries - no telegraphs, no steamboats and railroads, no great cities, no factories, no churches (except of late years those managed by Russian priests and missionaries), no colleges, no newspapers, no books. They also have no mortgages, no landlords, no tenement houses, no sweat-shops, no insane asylums, no poor houses, no tramps, no usurers, no remorseless combinations of capital, absolutely no crime, and hence no need for penitentiaries. Their individual efforts procure raiment, food, and shelter, yet they share readily with one another should any one need help, -not with reluctant and niggardly charity as in alms-houses, nor with the lofty seorn bestowed upon the beggars of modern eivilization.

Their food is derived from seals and beluga whales, and from small fish, which turn the stomach of a starving white man.

The majority of the Eskimos — men and women alike — wear a dress (parka) made of many squirrel skins (about seventy) patched together, with the tails and legs hanging in tassels all over the garment. In shape it is very much like a night gown, reaching below the knees. It has a fur collar. The cap is made of some kind of fur. Their boots are hand sewed from hair-



VILLAGE AT LAKE ELAKNAGAK

after drying without salt are placed in rough boxes (caches) elevated from the ground about six feet to protect them from ravenous dogs. The boxes are covered with moss and turf to keep out the rain. These people are fond of salmon which are buried whole (without removing the entrails) in the frozen ground, and exhume-l in the winter. In appearance they look as when placed in the ground. They do not swell bad, but their taste tempts none other than the native palate, — one monthful would seal skin. A truthful description can but attest to their uncleanliness of person. The raiment of squirrol skins is worn without change until it literally falls from their bodies. Still they are not more filthy than whites in similar destitution.

The village of Kanulik, one of the largest, and typical of them all, is situated on a low hill on the north bank of the Nushagak, about forty miles from the mouth. Except the fish caches nothing is visible of the village on the surface but a slightly

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no 080raised mound with a small hole about two by three feet for the entrance of a "snowhouse." You can enter this hole upon your hands and knees and crawl along a horizontal tunnel eight or ten feet long. You suddenly find yourself in a small outer chamber, then glide along another tunnel for the same distance, when you reach the burrow proper. This contains two or three straw-moss beds, a fire-place with ventilation in roof, and various articles, such as rude cooking utensils, wearing apparel, tools, spears, and bows and arrows.

Each home is the factory and the store house for all needful implements and supplies to meet the exigencies of existence. Every one knows or learns how to make clothing, boats, bows and arrows, spears, fish-nets, sleds, dog-harness, etc. They are versed in woodcraft with its thousand intricacies, the paths through the endless forests and frozen tundras, through swamps and rivers with their perilous rapids and waterfalls. They know the haunts and habits of all animals. Their foresight of the weather-changes and sudden storms is immensely superior to our gimcrack signal service.

In variety and experience of life, in versatility of knowledge and handicraft, the despised native is a paragon of intelligence when compared with the average workingman with his dull, routine, humdrum existence. Contrast the horizon of a laborer in a Massachusetts shoe factory, who spends his life in nailing pegs into the heel of a machine-made shoe.

The bidarkas are twelve to thirty feet long, eighteen inches to two feet in width, and about sixteen inches deep. They contain one to three holes to sit in, and are made of tanned seal or bear skin stretched like a drum over a light birch framework. They are ideal in construction as furnishing the least resistance to passage through water. On account of their extreme narrowness, they are liable to capsize and go to the bottom in other than a native's management; but it is something like riding a bicycle, — when you have learned to ride you wonder how you could once have been so clumsy.

Their villages are invariably located on a river bank, near its mouth or else high up at the river's source by a lake. Two considerations determine the location; first, suitability for catching walruses, whales, seals, and fish (salmon, trout, and whitefish). Second, proximity to land abounding in berries. The mossberry, a small round black herry growing in the moss, ripens in the fall and is then good to eat, and protected by the snow is still good several months later when the snow melts. The huckleberries are as large as big gooseberries and very juicy and palatable. Salmon berries, which look like the roe of salmon, only much larger, are sweet and appetizing. Their little wild cranberries are delicious.

The Eskimos are natural night prowlers, being in this respect like savage animals. They are compelled to take advantage of the changing tides to do their traveling, hunting, and fishing; hence they only sleep when through their work, day or night cutting no figure. Another reason for this unusual custom is the great length of days in summer — over nineteen hours on June 21st — when the shortness of the nights compels sleep while the sun shines. In winter the days are short and nights long, and something must be done in the long dark hours. There are no idlers among them.

Once every year, about October 20th, the natives from many villages congregate at one place for the joyful "give-away" dance. Every able-bodied man brings some of his most valuable effects, as bidarkas, hunting implements, skins, fish, or clothing, and they are all gradually piled up in one heap. Men and women bedeck themselves in barbaric toggery, bear claws about their heads, long hair collars, and other wild ornaments. They form a circle, singing and wildly gesticulating, and each advances in turn into the center and piles his present upon the pyramid. They vie with one another in this give-away dance to bring their best effects. At its conclusion some of those who were the richest have absolutely nothing left but the skin upon their backs.

Those among them infirm or helpless by reason of sickness, old age, or calanity, appropriate according to their needs the articles that have been given away. Thus, yearly, is accomplished that distribution of life's good things, amid overflowing hearts, general rejoicing, and no regrets, which it takes generations of misgovernment and cruelty to approximate in civilized (?) communities, and then only through revolution and slaughter.



The Eskimos have no words signifying, "Thank you." Every generous deed is done simply and naturally, without thought of value of service rendered, or expectation of reward. Every one's door or larder is as open to the stranger as one of his own flesh and blood.

In the family circle whipping of children or forcible restraint is r known. In an intimate acquaintance with more than one thousand of these people, seen under all circumstances, at home, at play, and at work, (of course barring infants,) I have never heard a child cry. No wrong is ever willfully done by one to another; hence no need for penalty or punishment.

Neither do they set up one of their number as king, clothe him in purple robes, and

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encircle his head with a crown, to lord it over them. They maintain no court, do obeisance to no ruler with imaginary divine rights and superior wisdom. It is true that in every village there is a man called the tyok or taion, who by virtue of high intelligence acts in an advisory capacity. He is respected for his knowledge and better judgment, and does what he can to further the general interests. But this man receives no unusual attentions, no compensation, and is not elevated in rank or caste by virtue of being the taion.

The natives are subject to nearly all the common diseases, barring nervous complaints and those of endemic character belonging to other zones. I found no traces, however, of small-pox. Tuberculosis is even more prevalent than in temperate zones. This is owing to the cold and dampness of the climate necessitating close quarters in the snow-houses, which afford poor chance of escaping infection from tubercle bacilli. Syphilis was introduced into Nanek in the summer of 1895 by a white fisherman. Two cases developed while I was there, one in a man, the other in a woman. They are the first authenticated cases occurring north of the peninsula among the natives of Alaska. nis disease. if unchecked by the instrumentality of white physicians, is destined to make frightful inroads with these people - even to exterminate their race! I did everything possible to quarantine these cases and hasten their cure, but any physician knows that in four months very little can be accomplished in dealing with this disease. The shameless white scoundrels, lost to manhood and conscience, who spread this poison can procure relief in charity hospitals upon returning to San Francisco; but the innocent victims of their criminal lust, the Eskimos, must rot above the ground unless further medical aid is soon sent.

Scurvy is very common in spring, owing to the meager, semi-starvation diet, now limited almost solely to fish.

The saddest feature in the life of this cheerless people is their extreme destitution. Their raiment is tattered skins. Their food, little better than carrion, is so scarce that many of them perish every winter from starvation.

It is not because they are slothful, indolent. or improvident. Twenty years ago, their industry in hunting and fishing yielded them an abundance of skins for clothing and food suitable to this icy clime. The life-blood of the Eskimos with their independence and manhood has been swallowed up by three great corporations whose heads are in San Francisco.

About fifty men have grown 'enormously rich to the utter degradation and impoverishment of a virtuous and self-reliant race. An important food and industrial supply, the whale, has been dynamited out of Alaskan waters by the steam-schooners of the Pacific Whaling Company. The seals and other fur-bearing animals have been practically annihilated on both land and sea by the Alaska Fur and Commercial Company. This company, has wrought its purposes in Alaska by fixing a bondage on the natives more galling and detestable than outright slavery, because it disclaims responsibility or care for its wretched serfs.

Under the guise of preserving the game from quick destruction, and to prevent uprisings of the natives against the company's traders at the various posts (they line the mainland and peninsula from Sitka to Bering straits, and extend up the many large rivers), a law was caused to be enacted at Washington prohibiting the sale of repeating arms to the natives of Alaska. This was a ruse to keep outside parties away, and to enable the traders themselves to supply arms at unheard of and almost fabulous prices. The native was not slow in appreciating the superiority of fire-arms over bows and arrows in hunting bears and seals. The method of exchange was as follows: The rifle was set upright on the ground, stock down, and the natives piled skins upon one another flatwise until the stack reached to the muzzle. Thus, often, more than eight or nine hudred dollars worth of fine furs were obtained for a tendollar gun.

There never was any excuse for the law which gave opportunity to perpetrate this shameful robbery. In spite of its ostensible purpose the fur-bearing animals have become almost extinct. The natives have exhibited the greatest forbearance and looked on in all humility at the devastation this company has made. So far from an uprising against the traders (whom, God knows, they ought to have annihilated), there has been but one native homicide in yielded othing . The . indellowed . heads

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thirty, years among a population of many thousands, and in spite of the fact that the company's traders themselves supplied the Eskimos with guns better to equip them as hunters. The law referred to has been only a fimsy mosquito bar to cover the unblushing extortion practised by the Alaska Fur and Commercial Company. This iniquitous law ought to be instantly repealed, then the natives can buy guns from other parties for what they are worth.

These trading posts also supply the natives with cheap-John tea, tobacco, crackers, calico, and worthless gewgaws, such as tin crucifixes and brass rings.

The poor, hungry, half-naked native in his craving for tea and tohacco (they dare not madden him with whisky for fear he will turn upon them) has thus been made the instrument of his own undoing.

Independence and plenty have been exchanged for serfdom and squalor by the destruction of the animals of this land. In the summer the country is covered with high grass and flowers. Unless you go far away in the interior, you will tire yourself wandering over the tundras and through the forests and never see a vestige of life, except very rarely, a frightened ptarmigan. And yet innumerable millions of dollars worth of furs have been taken here. Not long ago the sea, the river banks, the lakes, tundras, and mountains, swarmed with seals, otters, foxes, minx, bears, lynx, martens, beavers, wolverines, and wild reindeer.

It is only a matter of a few years until the last food source of the Eskimos will become ruined by the numerous salmon canneries, which are now under the control of another big corporation ealled the Alaska Packers' Association.

Secretary Seward's purchase of Alaska in 1865, for seven million dollars, has never benefited the common citizens of the United States, who were taxed to pay for it, one iota. It has enriched a few, however, the members of three gigantic corporations, who have literally skinned the land of most all its natural wealth and left nothing in return that could in any way aid its development. These corporations are guilty of reducing a happy and prosperous people to an extremity of destitution and misery unparalleled on this planet.

All the legislation concerning Alaska has been at the behest of the various commercial companies, not from any recognition of the welfare or necessities of the native inhabitants. The Congress at Washington has been too careless and credulous in listening to the siren tongues of attorneys sent by the corporations whose "commerce" with the natives has been carried on at the expense of nakedness, hunger, and human life.

I wish to make a plea in behalf of those who are helpless, whose natural rights have been outraged, and whose happiness and prosperity the government of the United States is in honor bound to employ all its power to protect and promote. The many exclusive and monopolistic privileges granted to the companies that have so flagrantly abused them, ought to be annulled. The Federal government ought not to abandon its Eskimo proteges to the sordid and unrestrained rapacity of these companies.

Owing to the difficulty of communication, the territorial government at Sitka on Romanoff island, at the extreme southern boundary, knows no more of what is taking place in the great mainland of Alaska north of the peninsula, than do the inhabitants of Vermont. Under the policy of the past twenty years more than half of the Eskimo population have perished from cold and starvation. In this article I have only hinted here and there at the rapine that has characterized "government" by the trading companies.

Should President McKinley appoint a competent commission to investigate things in northern Alaska, their report would be the blackest and most sorrowful record that has been written in modern times. At the end of a long tale of unspeakable wrong and outrage, they would tell of the decaying vestiges of hundreds of formerly prosperous villages, deserted now, and marked only by Greek Catholic crosses above the graves.

Let our government fulfil the moral obligation to extend its sheltering and protecting arms over these wild but beautifulnatured people.

JESSIE

By ISADORE BAKER



VERAL years ago there appeared ina leading magazine an article entitled "A Study of Calvin." It would be interesting to know how many orthodox souls were disappointed at finding no new light on controversial

history in the fact that Calvin was a cat once owned by Mrs. Stowe. He walked into her house one day out of the great unknown and seemed to be as much at home as if he had always been a friend of the family. He appeared to have artistic and literary tastes, and it was as if he had inquired at the door if that were the residence of the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and upon being assured that it was, had decided to dwell there. After Mrs. Stowe made her winter home in Florida, Calvin spent many years in the home of Mr. Charles Dudley Warner, and exhibited so many remarkable traits of character that the genial author sent a "Study" of him to the *Century* magazine.

In like manuer, the heroine of the present story is not of the conventional type, but is simply a fox-terrier that belonged to Mr. Eugene Field and was given to him by the husband of Jessie Bartlett Davis, the singer. So fond was the poet of this particular pet, that when Jessie was lost, strayed, or stolen, he was inconsolable. Jessie was capricious and had a propensity for disap-

206

