# THE SOUL OF ALASKA

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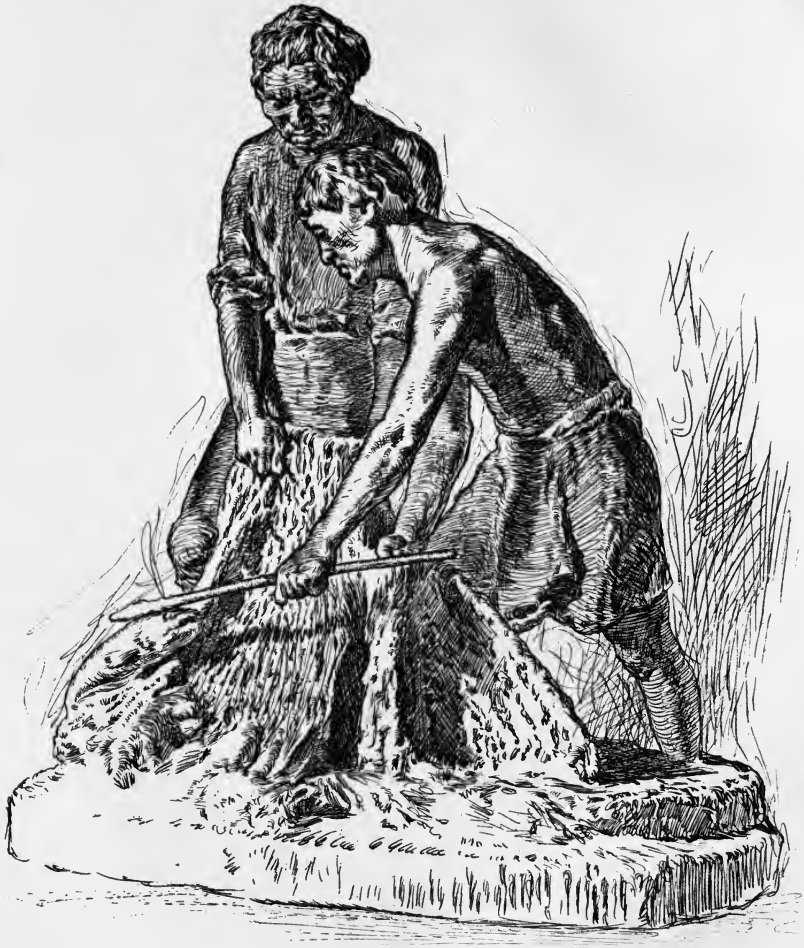

*The Salmon Fishers*

# THE SOUL OF ALASKA

## *A Comment and a Description*

To which is added a Catalogue Raisonné
of a series of bronze statuettes illustrative of
Alaskan Indian characteristics and social habitudes,
modelled by Louis Potter
and cast into bronze by the
Gorham Company

New York
THE GORHAM COMPANY
1905

Arranged and Printed by
The Department of Stationery, Gorham Manufacturing Co.,
New York

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## BY WAY OF PREFACE

IN introducing to the American public Mr. Louis Potter's series of bronzes illustrative of Alaskan life and character, the Gorham Company feel that they are rendering a service not only to Art but to Patriotism. An integral portion of the "White Man's Burden" assumed by the United States when it adopted these children of the Glacier and Fiord, consisted surely of the duty of preserving for future generations a knowledge of the manners, the customs and the folk-lore of their wards. No more useful purpose toward the end could possibly be served than to perpetuate the features, the characteristics and the social habitudes of the interesting people as has been so sympathetically done by Mr. Potter. As for the very similar services rendered to the native Tunisian, Mr. Potter was at the instigation of the French government decorated with the Order of Renown, so it is believed he will be adjudged worthy of a less formal but none the less significant token of appreciation at the hands of his own countrymen.

# THE SOUL OF ALASKA

IF it be true that it is the unexpected which always happens in the affairs of nations as well as of individuals, no more striking instance of the rule can be cited than the story of the acquisition by the United States of the Territory of Alaska.

When some forty years ago, or in 1867, to be precise, the government of this country paid to the Czar of all the Russias a little over seven millions of dollars for the 500,000-odd square miles known as Alaska or Aliakia, from the long narrow peninsula stretching into the Pacific which formed its most distinguishing geographical feature, there was but one view of the transaction taken by the average man of affairs either political or commercial. The United States, swayed doubtless by a sentimental feeling of gratitude toward the Czar for the friendliness of his attitude during the recently ended Civil War, had paid a very generous price for a tract of barren rocks diversified with glaciers and yielding but a comparatively scanty income derived from the handful of seal-hunters and trappers who, with a few tribes of treacherous and discontented Indians, were the sole inhabitants of this bleak and forbidding spot. Even by those

who arranged the terms of the sale but little was known of the property to be disposed of on the one hand and acquired on the other. Their knowledge probably did not exceed that possessed by the generality or ordinarily well-informed people. Alaska was practically an Arctic region discovered about the middle of the eighteenth century by a Russian expedition under the Behring who gave his name to the Straits dividing Asia from America, and during the half century following settled at one or two points by Russian fur-traders until at the opening of the nineteenth century the Emperor Paul practically transferred the administration of the colony to a Russo-American fur company which retained supreme control until their privileges expired a few years before the transfer to the United States.

Who, indeed, at that time would ever have dreamed that less than forty years later the Territory of Alaska would come to be regarded as, possibly, square mile for square mile, one of the most intrinsically valuable dependencies, if dependency it can be called, under the sway of the United States? Yet that is the unexpected which, in this case, happened. From the very outset, indeed, Seward's derided purchase justified itself, the returns from the seal fisheries alone paying something like five per cent. per annum on the two cents and a fraction per acre

which the United States paid for the new acquisition, so that within twenty years this tax alone repaid the entire seven million dollars paid for the entire territory. But it was neither fur nor fin that promoted this ugly duckling of the Territories to the position she was ultimately to assume. It is true that its fisheries have so steadily increased in productiveness and profitableness that last year fish and fish products formed the greater part of the nearly one million dollars' worth of exports. It is true that the coast and forests of Southeastern Alaska are each year yielding more and more of their uncountable millions of feet of lumber, but it is also true that the economic stride forward that Alaska has taken is mainly due, figuratively speaking, to the miner's pick and cradle. It was the discovery of gold that gave Alaska its forward impetus, though it is now universally recognized that the many millions of dollars' worth of the precious yellow metal which the otherwise barren soil of the interior yields is but a small percentage of the value of the mineral treasures which still lie beneath that soil.

For the past twenty years, however, the chief value of Alaska in the eyes of a majority of Americans has been that of one of the most interesting summer resorts of this vast continent. The tide of tourist travel to its picturesque fiords, its quaint towns and villages, its solitary glaciers

and its towering mountain summits increases with each summer, and Wrangel, Sitka Juneau, and Chilkat have, thanks to the returning travellers' stories, become familiar names to thousands of Easterners who have never crossed the Rockies.

But tourist travel has its necessary disadvantages, not the least among which is the purely surface view of men, manners and, in a measure, of nature also, which the hurrying traveler must take. The almost sensational scenery of Alaska, it is true, can be appreciated and enjoyed to the full as the steamer takes its rapid way through the inland waters and along the rugged coast-line, but of the life beyond these rocky barriers, of the manners and customs of the squat, sturdy, slant-eyed villagers, of the myths or legends which help to give them a national individuality, the hurried traveller catches but the merest glimpse.

Year by year, too, it becomes more and more difficult to obtain even this fleeting glimpse of these interesting people. The old, old story of the gradual disappearance of the aboriginal in face of the advancing tide of civilization is being repeated in Alaska. Dissipation and disease have joined hands in wreaking the extermination of the Thlinket, while by the rapidly dwindling remnant, old customs, old myths and old beliefs are being quickly forgotten or allowed to fall into desuetude.

In view of this, then, it is difficult to overestimate the value rendered, not to art alone, but to ethical science also by the sympathetic but arduous labors of Mr. Louis Potter, labors the perfected results of which the Gorham Company is now privileged to display. Mr. Potter has not taken a mere surface view of the life he has depicted in imperishable bronze. He has lived with these people; he has listened to the aged crones as, stretched at full length on their furs, they have crooned out to him the half-forgotten stories of their tribes; he has joined their hunters in the chase and sat with their fishermen in their rude but buoyant canoes. In a word, Mr. Potter has got as close to this strange people as is possible in the case of one alien to them in blood, in feeling and in thought. Only in this way was it possible for him to give that sympathetic and yet absolutely truthful rendering of their character which entitles these works of his to be called the very "Soul of Alaska."

It is fitting at this point to consider what manner of people it is whom we have presented to us in this fashion at once so ethically realistic and yet so æsthetically ideal. The Thlinket or Tlinket Indians are composed of about a dozen tribes who people the coast-lying villages of Southeastern Alaska. They are in no way related either to the Esquimaux or the Aleuts, though by the average white settler in these re-

gions they are indiscriminately classed with these under the generic appellation of "Siwash," a corruption of the French *sauvage*.

The theories advanced as to the origin of these Indians are almost as multifarious as the theorists themselves, and even now there is no very great degree of certainty as to where they actually sprang from. Resemblances, either fanciful or fortuitous, in language, ceremonies and superstitions, to the ancient Aztecs on the one hand, to the New Zealanders on the other, may, however, be very safely disregarded, and a Mongolian strain, hardly pronounced enough to term an ancestry, alone be determined with any degree of certainty. Physically, the Thlinkets are by no means far down on the savage scale. Though hardly to be considered as handsome, their facial characteristics, including the slanting eyes which bespeak their kinship with Chinese or Japanese, are far from unpleasant, and though short in stature they are sturdy and vigorous. Mentally, they are in many respects remarkable, a fact which renders peculiarly interesting a study of their religious ideas and their tribal or totemic organization. It is believed by those who have devoted time and care to the investigation that, prior to the arrival of the Russians, the Alaskan religion was a form of Nature-worship, and that the Universal Spirit had in their minds no one embodiment, but took many forms, including

wind and such like natural phenomena, as well as birds, beasts and reptiles. Almost poetical are some of the old myths. This, for instance, of the origin of Light, condensed from the notes of a well-known traveller, has never yet appeared in print, but seems worthy of record.

Long ere light came, and while the earth was covered with darkness, the rains fell and the whole world was covered with waters. All would have perished: but the "Frog," who was a good man (animals and men are in all the myths interchangeable terms), survived, and his descendants were the Alaskans. And in those days riches of all sorts belonged to the great men of the race, and these riches, which were the jewels of Nature, they kept in great chests in their tepees, from which they only came forth to gather fuel and food, fastening up the doorway when they left so that the only opening from the tepee was the smoke-hole. Now to the richest man in all the land was born a child—a Raven who was beautiful to look upon. Though a Raven, he took the form of a child and was allowed to roam about the home freely, unchecked. The child played with all the rich man's treasures, save those which were kept in a great metal chest whose lid was too heavy to lift. But one day the fuel being low, and the wind from off the great Taku Glacier cold and bleak, the man went out to gather fuel, fastening the door behind him but

leaving the Child-Raven in the tepee. He having by this time grown to giant stature, hastened to the metal chest and with one mighty effort lifted the lid and forth from the chest came his father's chiefest treasures, the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, and straightway escaped through the smoke-hole of the tepee and taking their places in the sky gave light to the whole world. To this day the Raven is held as a sacred bird by the Thlinkets as being in a sense symbolic of the spirit which gave the jewels of the rich and great for the service of all.

Social rather than religious, and yet closely allied with their religion, is the totemic system of the Alaskans. As a system totemism is found in a greater or less degree among nearly all the primitive races of the world, but in Alaska it has retained its aboriginal simplicity to perhaps a greater extent than elsewhere. A totem has been defined, by J. G. Frazer in his "Totemism," as "a class of material objects which a savage regards with a superstitious respect. The connection between a man and his totem is usually mutually beneficent; the totem protects the man, and the man shows his respect for the totem by not killing it, if it be an animal, and not gathering it, if it be a plant." Herbert Spencer believed that totemism took its origin in nature and ancestor worship. "The savages," he says, "first named themselves after natural objects,

and then, confusing the objects with their ancestors of the same names, reverenced them as they already reverenced their ancestors."

The Thlinkets, according to Knapp and Childe, who have written one of the most interesting of monographs on this race, are divided into two general groups or phratries, one of which is called the Raven or Eagle, the other the Wolf or the Bear. Each phratry is sub-divided into clans or sub-totems, these bearing the name of some animal or fish, the frog, the goose, the share, the whale, the puffin and so forth. Comparatively little is known of the subject, and yet what has been learned from the Indians is indicative of the fact that the totem plays a very important part in the social system of the native Alaskan. It affects him at birth, at marriage and at death; it has much to do with his tribal as well as with his personal disputes; it governs his fasts and his feasts; and, as we have seen, is in some measure connected with his religious myths, though not, strictly speaking, with his religion itself. For our present purpose, it is sufficient to look upon the totem in what to the traveller is its most apparent aspect, which may be called the heraldic. The emblem of each man's totem is carved or painted or woven on everything he possesses, and it is thus his crest or heraldic device. The far-famed totem poles which form so striking a feature of every Alaskan village are but the many

quartered coats-of-arms of the dead man in whose honor they are erected. They are genealogical or almost historical records, tracing as they do, by the carved animals springing one from another, the family tree through all its ramifications. The clan emblem of the head of the family is carved at the top, and underneath it his wife's and the children's, while symbolic reference is also made to intermarriages, family traditions and significant family or tribal events. The cost of erecting these totem poles must have been very considerable in olden times, amounting sometimes to many hundred seal-otter skins, the standard of value in those days as the blanket is at present.

Next to the Totem Pole the "Pot Latch" is the Alaskan institution most familiar, by name at least, to the rest of the world. The pot latch is not a feast, as is generally supposed to be the case, but a custom observed not only at private and tribal feasts, but at almost every other ceremony which brings the people together in any numbers. It consists briefly in the giving of presents to all who attend the gathering. Personal property of every description was formerly distributed: blankets and robes, knives and shears, pots and dishes, bowls and spoons, fish-hooks and harpoons, guns and ammunition—everything, in fact, that the Alaskan holds dearest was pressed upon the visitors. Nowadays the pot latch, as a

general thing, is confined to the distribution of blankets and rolls of calico, both of which are torn into strips about a yard long. There is method in this apparent madness of the Alaskan, for he gives only where he is tolerably sure of a return, and is a past master in the art of balancing in the scales of self-interest his generosity. In his case, indeed, that virtue, rather than gratitude, is Walpole's "lively sense of future favours."

The talents brought by Mr. Potter to the perpetuating in enduring bronze of the characteristic manners, traits and customs of this fast-disappearing race were peculiarly adapted to the task he had in view, as a brief sketch of his distinguished career will serve to make manifest. Mr. Louis Potter was born in 1873 in Troy, New York, and graduated in 1896 from Trinity College, Hartford. It was during his college days that Mr. Potter first adventured into the realms of art of which he began the study under Charles Noel Flagg. His vacations for several years he devoted to the painting of landscape under the direction of Mr. Montague Flagg. So encouraged was he to proceed in this direction that in the fall of 1896 he went to Paris and became a pupil of the well-known French painter, M. Luc Olivier Merson. After a year's study of painting, however, he forsook the brush for the modelling-tool and entered the atelier of that distinguished

sculptor (less known, perhaps, in America than his work entitles him to be), M. Jean Dampt. In 1899, Mr. Potter went on a roving expedition to Tunis in the north of Africa. The result of this artistic voyage of discovery consisted of a series of statuettes in which were embodied types of Tunisian life and character, with especial reference to the daily occupations and pursuits of that interesting people. So striking was the artistic nature of these groups, and so interesting their realistic fidelity to nature, that a selection from them was made by French authorities of Tunis to represent Tunisian types at the Paris Exposition of 1900. It is pleasant to record that, after his return to America in 1901, the Tunisian Government sent to Mr. Potter, by the hands of a special envoy, the decoration of the Nicham Iftikar (Order of Renown), an honour due to the attention attracted by his statuettes at the Exposition.

Before his return to America, where he subsequently settled his studio in New York, Mr. Potter exhibited at the Salon of the Champ-de-Mars a portrait-bust of Bernard Boutet de Monvel, son of the celebrated French painter, and himself an artist of reputation. Mr. Potter soon found his hands full of commissions, among the portrait-busts he executed being those of ex-Senators James, Jones, Charles A. Towne and Pettigrew; Professor Elmer Gates and the Rev.

Dr. Pynchon. Among his other works are a group of St. Anne and the Virgin for a tomb, a fountain for Mr. Simon Guggenheim at Elberon, and a portrait statue of Andrew Jackson for the St. Louis Exposition. A memory, however, of his successful campaign in Tunis led him to the belief that a series of works of a similar nature lay ready to his hand among the tribes of native American Indians, and he determined to devote several years of his life to the accomplishment of this design. His journey to Alaska and residence among the Indians of that Territory were undertaken as a fitting commencement of his self-imposed task.

# A CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ OF MR. LOUIS POTTER'S BRONZE GROUPS OF ALASKAN INDIANS

# I–THE AUK CHIEF

# I

## THE AUK CHIEF

RANK among the Thlinkets now as in former times is chiefly dependent upon wealth, though at the same time the lines dividing Thlinket society into its component parts are very clearly drawn. Thus, in old times, if a Thlinket murdered a man higher in rank than himself, his life was not considered a sufficient forfeit. The murdered man's relatives, in place of it, called for the life of one of the murderer's clansmen better born than himself. Yet the possession of money often outweighs in the clansmen's estimation the possession of the Alaskan equivalent of "blue-blood"; dollars are recognized to be "more than coronets," and many blankets atone for few quarterings of the totemic shield. Perhaps a modicum of sound common sense is responsible for this changed view, as in a community such as we are considering material prosperity implies that the prosperous one is a man of ability and energy beyond the common, and by a process of natural selection the chieftainship falls to him who is most fitted to assume its responsibilities. The Auk Chief, Ana-Cla-Hash,

for instance, portrayed by Mr. Potter, is by his natural gifts fully entitled to the leadership of his tribe. In his case, both money and ancestors have combined to single him out for the position he holds. He is looked up to and obeyed by his people, comports himself with dignity, and exercises his authority with admirable self-restraint. Convinced that his portrait was needed by "Government," he consented to pose in his ceremonial robes and carrying the Auk symbol of authority over the tribe.

## II–THE TAKU QUEEN

## II

## THE TAKU QUEEN

LIKE the "Princess Thom" of pleasant memory to visitors to Sitka, the Taku Queen holds her title only by the good-humoured courtesy of the whites. Strictly speaking, of course, she has no claim to admittance to the ranks of royalty, reigning or otherwise. As wife of the head chief of the tribe, however, she is a personage of no little consequence, for, as has before been pointed out, the Alaskan woman holds, as a general rule, anything but a subordinate position in the community. The Totem Poles which form the decorative setting to this tribal aristocrat are studies of those which may actually be seen in one of the so-called "dead" or deserted villages which dot the coast line. It cannot be too earnestly insisted upon, however, that these Totem Poles, though held in no small degree of reverence, by no means partake of the nature of idols or graven images. They serve a double purpose in the Alaskan estimation. They denote, in the first place, the social status of those erecting them, for they cost money, and money is the practical

equivalent of rank among the Thlinkets. In the second place, they are a perpetual reminder of those ancestors held in an esteem amounting almost to worship by their descendants. Finally, they serve as a ready means of identification of the clan, or sub-division of the phratry, to which their owners belong, and to the wandering Indian they are as a sign-post informing him of the house in the strange village to which he can safely apply for food and shelter.

# III–THE MEDICINE MAN

## III

## THE MEDICINE MAN

IN former days, the Medicine Man or Shaman held a position in the Alaskan community hardly less important than that of the Chief. To-day he is less consulted than formerly, and his ministrations are confined to driving away the evil spirit responsible in the Alaskan mind for sickness of every sort, instead of, as was once the case, to hunting down the witch who had induced the spirit to torment the patient. His process of exorcism consists of a grotesque and blood-curdling dance around the sick man, accompanied by a furious shaking of the rattle which is the symbol of his office. He brandishes it aloft, thrusts it in the patient's face, shrieking and yelling in an appalling fashion as he twists and writhes and springs into the air. He continues this frenzied demonstration accompanied by furious exhortations to the wicked spirit until, exhausted, he sinks to the ground. If the patient recover, and, curious to relate, there is no doubt but that the strange ceremony very often seems to exercise a beneficial effect, the glory is the Shaman's; if, on the contrary, his ministra-

tions are of no avail, it is not he but the witch who invoked the evil spirit who is at fault. The Thlinkets themselves realize that the day of the Shaman has departed; not, however, that they admit the falsity of Shamanism as a system, but they declare that its modern practitioners lack the spiritual advantages which made those of bygone times such wonder-workers.

# IV–THE SALMON FISHERS

## IV

## THE SALMON FISHERS

THE Alaskan is a born fisherman, and as soon as the spring opens the entire population flock to the fishing-grounds and prepare for their summer and fall campaign. Halibut, herring, cod and eulachon or candle-fish are all-important items in the Alaskan bill-of-fare, but none of these is of the importance of the salmon. With this king of fish rivers literally teem, and they begin to run up the rivers about the middle of July; in August the Tyee or King Salmon makes his appearance, and until December the fish continue to run. There is an old story of a Canadian Governor-General of the last century who contemptuously refused to trouble himself about the delimitation of British Columbia on the ground that "the salmon would not rise to a fly in those Pacific Coast rivers." The Alaskan troubles himself little about sport. The more southerly "Siwashes," it is true, troll with a very ingenious "lay-out" for the fish, but the Thlinkets spear, net or trap their salmon. The trap is woven of twigs and branches and placed in the path of the sal-

mon as he proceeds up-river. The spear has a detachable head to which is attached a bladder. When the fish is speared the spear-head leaves the light cedar pole, and the floating bladder betrays the whereabouts of the fish. When netting they use a stout gaff, to take the fish out of the water and spare the strain upon the comparatively frail net. Halibut are caught with a hook, skilfully played until they are exhausted, and despatched with a club when brought to the side of the canoe. For cod they fish with a long line carrying perhaps a hundred hooks placed at intervals.

# V–THE FAGGOT GATHERERS

## V

## THE FAGGOT GATHERERS

TO their old people the Thinklets, undemonstrative in all that concerns the affections, are, so far as their natures will permit, far from unkind or cruel. The elderly women especially are held in something approaching esteem, and when, as is often the case, they are the owners of property, they have all the authority that is, among savages as among some civilized races, the attribute of wealth. The totemic system has much to say to this, for when a man marries he assumes his wife's totem, and the children of the marriage belong to the mother's and not to the father's clan and phratry. The aged crone Mr. Potter has, under the guise of a faggot gatherer, presented as his type of feminine old age, is a personage of some distinction among her own people. She became wealthy in the early days of the gold rush and is now the owner of a considerable amount of property. A woman of much strength of character, she lives, notwithstanding her wealth, in a small hut and works as hard and unremittingly as the poorest of her

neighbors. Following an old custom, her face is thickly besmeared with a black paint made by mixing soot and seal oil, a circle around her eyelids alone left bare. Contrary to the generally received opinion, this is not as a protection from mosquitoes or sunburn, but has some deeper significance, though precisely what it is is difficult to say.

# VI–THE AUK MOTHER AND HER CHILD

## VI

# THE AUK MOTHER AND HER CHILD

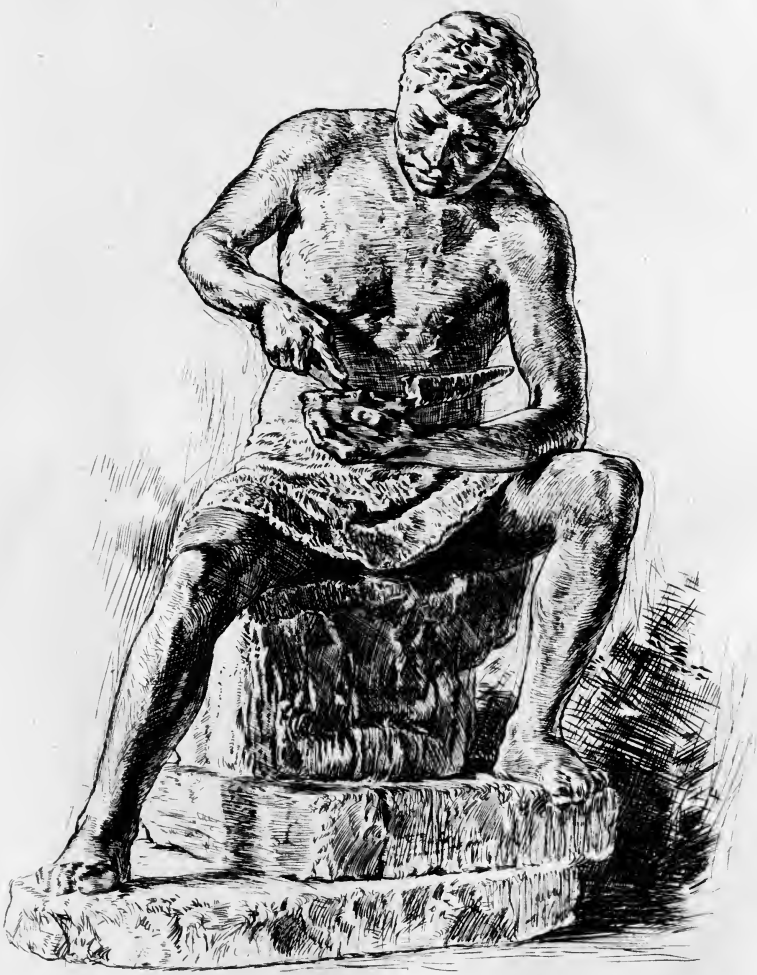
"A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive."

COLERIDGE.

WOMEN among the native Alaskans are held in far higher esteem than among the majority of uncivilized peoples. It is true that there are not many outward demonstrations of affection between the sexes and that the marital bonds are but loosely worn, yet notwithstanding this an acute observer has declared that "strangely enough, the ideal of womanhood with them is extremely high. A woman must possess all gentle and amiable qualities; she must be a quick and diligent worker, modest in her dress and demeanor." Nor is the woman's position a markedly subordinate one. The man is theoretically the head of the household; but when, as is frequently the case, his wife is possessed of greater business abilities than her mate, he is content to meekly follow and govern his conduct by the advice of his "Kloochman" or squaw. That the touch of maternal nature which makes all women kin is

not wanting to the Alaskan, Mr. Potter has made clear by his group of Mother and Child. His model is the wife of a white man whose fortune she materially helped to make but who deserted her as soon as he had gained a competency, leaving her to support not only herself but their child also.

# VII–CARVING THE GREAT HORN SPOON



*Carving the Great Horn Spoon*

## VII

## CARVING THE GREAT HORN SPOON

THE artistic capabilities of the Alaskans are, within certain narrowly defined limits, very marked. With the rudest of tools they contrive to attain an admirably decorative effect in the carvings with which they enrich the surface not only of exterior construction of their houses but also of every domestic utensil they employ. Upon nothing, however, is so much time and care bestowed as upon the ceremonial spoons of carved and inlaid horn which are so cherished as to have an almost religious significance. It is difficult, or rather impossible, to determine just what this significance to the Alaskan mind may be. It is at least certain that the spoon is held in high reverence, and that no pains are considered too great to be bestowed upon the adornment of it. The spoon-maker comes to his office by the right of heredity, and his designs both of carving and inlaying are therefore of a traditionally conventional character. Out of the twisted horn of the wild goat, by dint of patient steaming and straightening, he fashions the bowl and handle. The former is then inlaid, in intricate

designs, with copper, whalebone or mother o' pearl, while the handle is carved into totemic symbols. Sometimes the bowl is fashioned of sheep's horn, the handle of goat's horn, and the two are cleverly and firmly fastened together with rivets of copper.

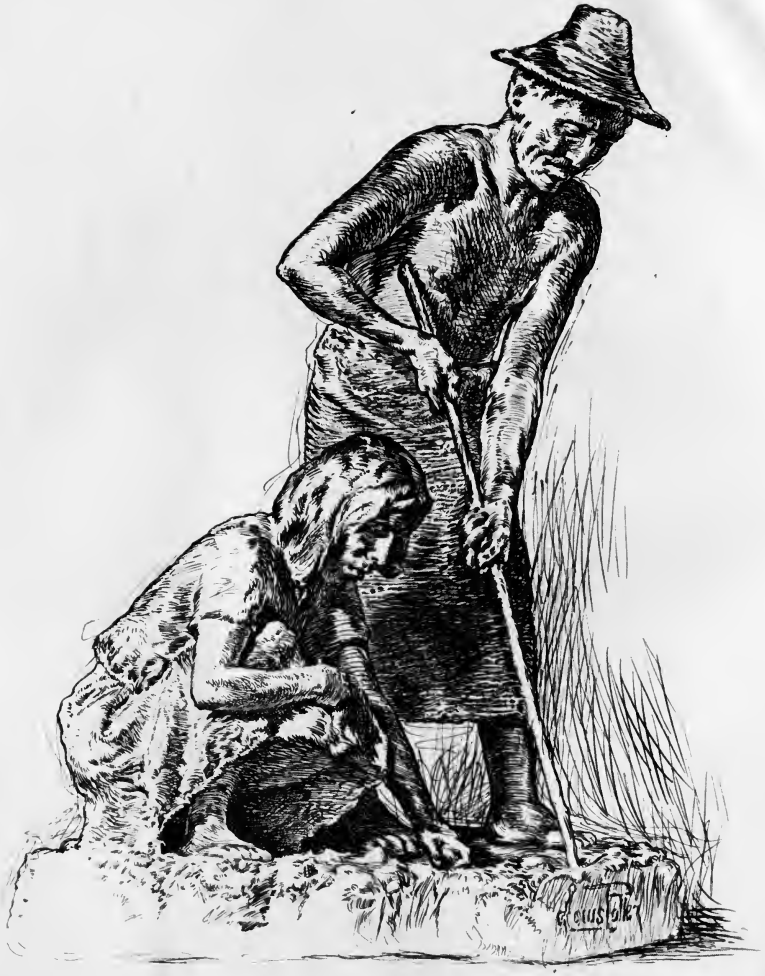
# VIII–THE SLAVES

## VIII

## THE SLAVES

UNTIL quite recent times, slavery was an important institution among the Alaskans. As a rule, the slaves were prisoners of war or their children, but many were bought from the more southerly coast Indians by whom they had been captured or kidnapped in raids upon the inland tribes. The wealth of the rich man was largely estimated by the number of slaves he possessed. Over them he possessed absolute control; they could neither marry nor hold property without his consent, and if he chose he could slaughter them merely to show his importance and indifference to their loss. At his death, his favorites were slain and burnt on the same funeral pyre as the master whom they were to serve in the spirit world. But the slaves were, on the whole, humanely treated. No difference as to food or clothing was made between them and the rest of the family. The drudgery of household work naturally fell to their lot and they were the "hewers of wood and drawers of water." Instead of killing, the master would sometimes manumit the slave on the occasion of some festival. Then the freeman joined the clan to which his mother had belonged and enjoyed all the rights of a native Alaskan.

# IX–THE CLAM DIGGERS



*The Clam Diggers*

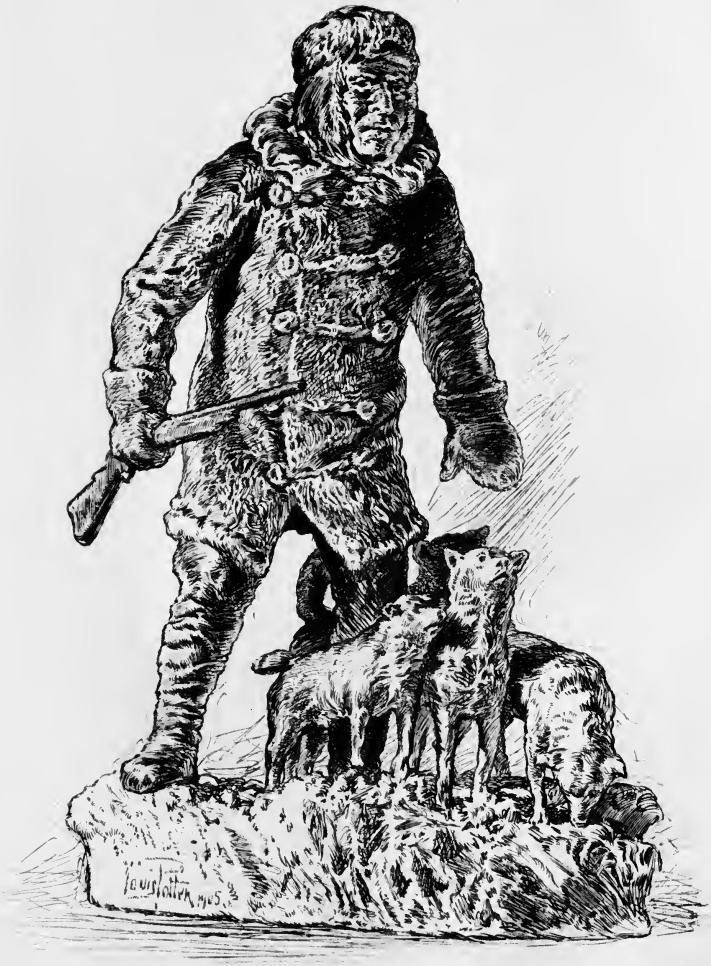
## IX

## THE CLAM DIGGERS

WHILE the men are away from home hunting or fishing, the women and girls are busily occupied in gathering herbs and roots on the land and seaweed and shell-fish at the water's edge. The seaweed, it may be mentioned in passing, when gathered from the rocks, is pressed and dried for keeping and prepared for the table by being chopped into small pieces and boiled. It is not only tasty but nourishing when thus treated. In the Fall and Winter the clams, oysters, mussels and cuttle-fish with which the shores teem form an important item of the Alaskan domestic bill-of-fare. The oysters, like all those which inhabit the Pacific waters, are smaller than our Eastern ones, and more resemble than do ours the European varieties as regards their coppery flavor. The clams differ but little from those which form so important an item in the familiar Rhode Island or Long Island clam-bake. They are gathered, too, as Mr. Potter's realistic group denotes, in a very similar fashion, by the old men and women aided by the

children, when the receding tides have left the sandy shores exposed. The old man and his granddaughter as here shown are also interesting from the characteristic conical hats, woven of fine straw braid, which they wear. These are supposed by some ethnologists to furnish a further proof of that Mongolian origin of the people which is elsewhere referred to.

# X–A HUNTER AND HIS DOGS



*A Hunter and his Dogs*

## X

## A HUNTER AND HIS DOGS

BEFORE the arrival of the white man the tribal hunters were among the most important members of the little communities, for on them depended the very existence of the tribe itself. Though lacking, perhaps, in daring, the Alaskan of to-day is a clever and able hunter on land, though it is on the water that his skill and cunning are chiefly shown. He is patient, however, persevering and intelligent in his pursuit of game. The fur-bearing animals he traps; deer, which are abundant and form a noticeable portion of the food supply, are generally lured by the hunter's call and shot. So also is the sea-otter, which is now almost extinct and so valuable that extraordinarily large sums are obtained by the natives for the few pelts they obtain. Of bears, there are the brown and the black, the former the larger and the more ferocious, but the latter so timid as to be readily brought to bay by the dogs, which keep him occupied until the hunter arrives to end the combat by shooting him. The "Hunter" of Mr. Potter is a portrait of a noted guide, "Dan" Johnson by name. He

and his dogs are well known to visiting sportsmen. He is one of the few Indians who treats his half-wild beasts well and does not starve them. That shown to the rear is a portrait of his favorite hunting dog.

# XI–THE TAKU WIND

## XI

## THE TAKU WIND

THE most characteristic natural phenomena of Alaska, and those which most attract the attention of the visitor, are the glaciers. Of these there are several which are comparatively easy of access, such as the Donaldson, the Muir and the Taku. As a matter of course, to the natives these glaciers have ever been the subjects of an awed and superstitious reverence. Accustomed to account for all natural phenomena by some child-like legends, they tell of the making of the Muir glacier as follows: Two young girls were confined in a little hut to the south of the present glacier. Their clothes becoming soiled, they took them off and washed them, but unaccountably failed to be able to dry them. They then called to the spirit of the North wind to "Come quickly and dry our clothes!" The North wind came indeed, but so vigorously that it froze all the streams and thus formed the glacier. The Indians, when they learned of the girls' foolish invocation of the wind, threw them in the path of the swiftly moving glacier. It stopped at once and

has since been motionless as they imagine, merely crumbling away at the foot.

The Taku Glacier, they declare, is inhabited by evil spirits, and all those who have been rash enough to attempt to cross it have been seized and devoured by these spirits to whom also is due the cutting northeast wind called the "Taku." It is this icy wind rather than the glacier itself that Mr. Potter's striking figure symbolizes.

# XII–SPIRIT OF NIGHT


*Spirit of Night*

## XII

## SPIRIT OF NIGHT

LIKE a majority of those primitive peoples whose mental processes are fairly well developed, the Alaskan Indian's religion is a more or less heterogeneous jumble of nature-myths. The singularly marked physical aspect of his country, with its impressive glaciers, volcanoes, mountain gorges and solitary fiord, has helped to enforce upon his mind the helplessness of man when brought into direct conflict with the vast forces of nature. The inevitable result has followed, and he has finally attributed to those forces a conscious potency for good or for ill that must be conciliated or requited as the case may be. It was but a step from this to a somewhat simple form of polytheism in which these natural agencies have been personified to him in the form of "spirits." Thus all occurrences for which he cannot account, darkness and light, heat and cold, flood and drouth, are set down as the outcome of the malignancy or the benevolence of the spirits controlling them. These spirits or "Yekh" are divided into the spirits of the air, of the land and of the sea. They are continually

present, and under the guise of birds, animals or fish are wont to appear to man. Thus Mr. Potter's symbolization, as a spirit, of the long winter night which plays so important a part in the Alaskans' lives is in direct accord with their mythology.

# XIII–THE BASKET WEAVERS

## XIII

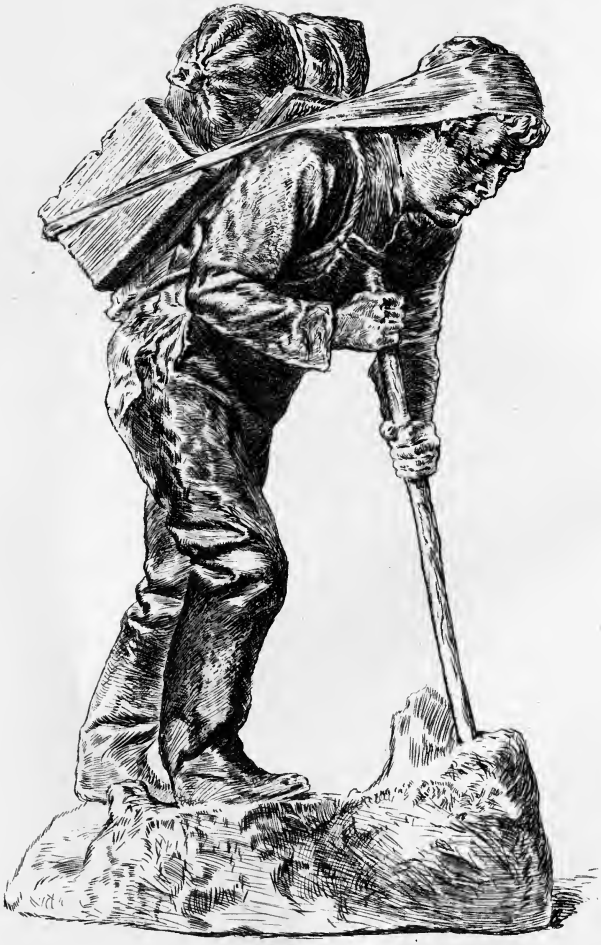
## THE BASKET WEAVERS

THE baskets woven by the Alaskan Indians are perhaps rivalled by none others save those of the Japanese, from whom, indeed, it is quite possible the knowledge of the handicraft originally came to the Thlinkets. The materials of which the baskets are woven are either a coarse, tough grass indigenous to the region or some form of vegetable fibre, such, for instance, as the finer roots of the yellow cedar. In the old days the basket was the principal vessel employed for domestic uses such as water-carrying and cooking. They had, therefore, to be woven so closely as to be water-tight, and this fashion has lasted until the present day. Two weaving methods are followed. The simpler of these is the "twining," in which the strands are twined around each other, and the "coiling," in which the fibres are coiled around a frame-work of stiff but fine rods. The figures into which the variously colored fibres are woven are markedly decorative, some of them being decidedly Greek in feeling. Collectors eagerly acquire the old-time baskets owing to the artistic effect of their dull tones of

reds and browns produced by vegetable dye. The modern work suffers from the garish effect of the crude aniline dyes now used.

The two weavers chosen by Mr. Potter as his subjects are mother and daughter, accounted the most expert of their tribe. The mother refused to pose, and it was only when ordered by her chief that she reluctantly consented to sit.

# XIV–ON THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL



*On the Mountain Trail*

## XIV

## ON THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

THE garment of civilization when donned by a savage is apt to prove a veritable shirt of Nessus: it serves perhaps to cover his nakedness, but while covering it destroys. The story of the North American Indian, of the New Zealand Maori, and of the South Sea Island Polynesian is being repeated under the shadow of the Taku glacier. They have benefited beyond doubt by the arrival of the white man physically as well as morally, but even more have they suffered. Disease landed on the Alaskan shore with the first boat-load of Behring's sailors, and it has been steadily thinning the ranks of the natives ever since. The white man's dissipations, too, drunkenness in especial, flourish like evil weeds and help in the work of extermination. But on the other hand the material prosperity of the people has been undeniably increased. On their part, they form a very efficient aid to the white men who are so rapidly supplanting them. As hunters, as guides and as trappers they are invaluable, but it is as carriers or packers that they

fill a place which no white man disputes with them. The Indian packer takes the trail leading from settlement to mining camp, carrying on his back, and supported by the characteristic head-band of the savage, some two or three hundred pounds of supplies, provisions or what not, and forms to many a small mining camp the only link between the "boys" and the outside world.

# XV–THE PROSPECTOR

## XV

## THE PROSPECTOR

THE romantic memories of '49 still cling around the prospector who, with his outfit strapped to his back, plunges into the trackless wilderness with only his own hardihood, woodcraft and endurance between him and a lingering death by starvation and exposure. It is he who taught the rest of the world the value of the frozen detritus which forms the surface of the Klondyke district; it is he who first spied the glittering yellow flakes in the gold-bearing sand of Nome. It is the prospector to whom the world owes it that the supply of the precious metal year by year keeps pace with the demand, and that the wheels of the gigantic machine of commerce and finance are enabled to revolve without a jarring stop. No more typical presentment of this scout of civilization was ever put forward than Mr. Potter's figure of the keen-eyed, broad-shouldered and lithe-limbed American setting out to spend the brief Alaskan summer in his search for a rich "pocket" or a gold-bearing "ledge." A blanket, a frying-pan, a gold-trying pan and a few pounds of bacon and of coffee are the main feature of his outfit in addition to the gun upon which he relies for his main supply of food.

# XVI–THE SLUICE MINERS

## XVI

## THE SLUICE MINERS

WHEN one considers that last year nearly twenty million dollars' worth of Alaskan and Klondyke gold was deposited in the United States Treasury, and that this year the output promises to exceed this by some three million dollars' worth, one cannot fail to realize the prominence of the part among Alaskan industries played by gold mining.

In public estimation, at all events, although the official figures are hardly in accord on this point, the production of gold far outweighs in importance either the enormous fishing industry or the fast dwindling fur trade of the Territory. Gold and gold mines form the staple subject of conversation both among the natives and the whites wherever men gather together for a friendly chat. Many of the natives, as a matter of fact, are successful gold-seekers, and not a few own valuable gold-mining interests. The romance of the subject undoubtedly centres around the placer-miner, who is usually the prospector also. It is placer-mining that enables the poor man, by a stroke of his pick, to join the ranks of

riches; placer-mining that attracts the "younger son" of all nations to follow the *ignis fatuus* of luck throughout their adventurous lives. Anton Marks, for instance, the sluice miner whom Mr. Potter has chosen as his type of this romantic character, is an Austrian who joined the first white men's party that prospected in the Yukon district. He once owned a share in the most important mine in that region, but sold out his interest for a small sum. Nevertheless, he is now fairly well off, though with a thrift peculiar to himself he is clothed in garments of his own manufacture: coat and trousers fashioned of skins, wooden buttons, and a cloth cap made by himself.

# XVII–THE QUARTZ MINERS

## XVII

## THE QUARTZ MINERS

THERE is little of the romantic element about quartz mining, but what it lacks in this respect is more than made up for by its more solid advantage as compared with placer mining. There is many a ledge which offers its owners the possibilities of practically unlimited riches, while the "lucky streak" of the placer miner has an unfortunate habit of disappearing with a most disappointing unexpectedness. The placer miner, as is generally known, relies on extracting the free gold from the gravel with which it is intermingled by the simple mechanical process of "washing," and so separating the heavy grains of the metal from the lighter detritus. The quartz miner, on the other hand, has first of all to reduce the gold-interpenetrated rock to fragments which are then "stamped" or crushed to a fine powder from which the gold is attracted by mercury, to be subsequently gained from the resulting amalgam by various processes. The placer miner trusts to his pick, his shovel and his own strong arms; the quartz miner to the

co-operation of many and the investment of greater or less capital in machinery, and so forth.

Mr. Potter has depicted two experienced miners, one of whom has the reputation of being one of the best drillers in the district. They are drilling in the hard rock, by this slow and laborious hand process, the holes for the reception of the dynamite cartridges which are to rend the quartz into small fragments. Both of them are men of substance, owning an interest in the mine in which they are working. Indeed, one of them is a joint lessee of the property, which is situated on Nevada Creek.

# XVIII–THE CHILD

## XVIII

## THE CHILD

THE first years of an Alaskan's life are perhaps his happiest. As soon as he is able to leave his hammock-like cradle and to make an attempt to walk he is taken down to the beach and initiated into the art and mystery of sea-bathing. From that time onward the salt water is as much his home as is the dry land; while for the next few years the beach is his play-ground and its inhabitants his play-fellows. In the summer, life for the tiny Alaskan is full of pleasures. Not over-burdened with clothes, he lives in the open air and has no tiresome educational duties to distress his juvenile mind. Instead of attending school he devotes himself to keeping out of his elders' way and to having a "good time" with his fellow urchins of both sexes. Big and little girls and boys play together or separately as the humor seizes them, but in either case they have an infinity of games with which to occupy themselves. Of these, one of the chief favorites is entitled "Ha-gos." Sides are chosen, and the leader holding a brightly colored banner calls

out one of the opposing force. It is then the place of the first party to make him laugh, and his to keep a serious face. If he succeed he takes the banner; if not, he falls out of the game. Victory belongs to the one who keeps the banner longest. Guessing games are popular, too, and while the boys play ball and tag the little maidens nurse their dolls and keep make-believe house. In fact, the young Alaskan is a child and follows the unwritten laws of childhood the world over.