

## ACCOUNT OF A HOAX.

STORY OF THE MOHICAN'S LOSS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN.

How "Lying Tom Barrett" Came to Tell the Yarn—A Rivalry Had Grown Up Among the Munchensens, but the Mohican Lie Was a Little Too Much.

Very many persons may remember the story that was telegraphed and carried all over the world in the summer of 1895 of the sinking of the United States revenue cutter Mohican by the British seal pirate Belle of the Pacific somewhere in that indefinite part of the north Pacific ocean known to all Alaskans as "the westward." Not so many probably will remember that the story was a fake, because it is the lamentable history of such things that the truth never completely overtakes the lie. It was a lie out of whole cloth, as was demonstrated when the Mohican turned up all right that fall at the end of the patrol season, but the manner of its publication has not been told.

This lie began to have its being years ago when the steamers first began to take tourists from "down below," as Alaskans call the States, up through the gorgeous scenery of the north Pacific coast line for a peep at the northern territory. As a usual thing the tourists spend eight or ten hours ashore at Juneau and as much more in Sitka. Sometimes they make a dash up to Muir glacier. Altogether they see a lot of the country in a panoramic sort of way, and they hear a great deal more about it. It is one of the lands where the blindest bluffs hold good and the wildest tales are true. So when they get back to the States again the tourists begin to unfold to their friends and their friends' friends and to their acquaintances and to anybody who will listen, particularly to overcredulous newspaper men, the wildest tales that human ingenuity can devise.

For a long time the Alaskans did their best to chase down these lies, but they failed. The liar had all the advantages of telegraphs and daily mails and the widespread publicity given by the too credulous newspaper men. Then the Alaskans gave up the direct attack and took up the gentle art of lying themselves. They had so much time to practice when there was nothing else to interfere that every two weeks, when the mailboat came in, a fine new crop of marvelous stories had been carefully harvested for dissemination in the States. The steamship men were always the medium through which these stories were communicated to the credulous public of Oregon, Washington and California. These steamship men rapidly acquired a large reputation with the readers of thrilling newspaper accounts of brave newspaper deeds. The people on the Pacific coast seem to be singularly open minded and receptive. But even they caught on after awhile to the fact that the Alaskans were jollying them. Then resentment took the natural form, and you couldn't find a Pacific coast man with a horse rake who would believe an Alaska steamship man's story if the narrator was literally incased in Bibles.

It developed through the somewhat general competition that as a compounder of able tales Tom Barrett was easily at the head. He won his distinction and his title at the same time, springing from comparative obscurity in the ranks of liars by one successful coup. Barrett was in the employ of a trading company at the westward. He rolled into Sitka one day with the most astonishing stories of the auriferous riches of Middleton island, a little chunk of rock and sand that had been heaved up above the water by some submarine volcanic eruption far out in the middle of the north Pacific ocean. All Alaska that could go started for Middleton island on the strength of Barrett's yarns, and all Alaska that couldn't go grub staked somebody who could. When the excitement was over and those who went to Middleton island had got back and those who didn't go were out their grub stakes, the man who had started the rush spontaneously became known to all Alaska as "Lying Tom Barrett."

"Lying Tom Barrett" told the yarn about the Mohican to the newspaper man in Port Townsend, who telegraphed a column of it to his paper in Seattle and started it around the world. Barrett was coming down from Alaska and on the way put up the job with the steamship men to spring a yarn that should make a sensation in the States. The steamship men knew they couldn't make it go themselves, but they agreed to back Barrett up in whatever he said and to give him a good send off if there was effort at verification. So when the steamer put in at Port Townsend, Barrett got himself interviewed, and the next day the world was reading "Captain Thomas Barrett's" remarkable story of the loss of the Mohican. When the yarn got back to Juneau and Sitka, there were some Alaskans who laughed mightily at the hoax, but others, who knew the officers of the Mohican thought of the cruelty of it to the relatives and friends of the cutter's men, and on the whole Barrett's story did not meet with the approval even of the liars. That was carrying the thing too far. Harmless stories about islands of gold or impossible customs of unheard of people were well enough, but this lie turned the tide in favor of truthfulness, and now Alaskans are more circumspect in their stories about the territory. But Barrett will never be anybody but "Lying Tom" to them.—New York Sun.

A Rossini Mot.

Arditi prints in his reminiscences a pleasant little mot of Rossini. When Mme. Arditi was first presented to him, the great composer bowed and said, "Now I know why Arditi composed 'Il Bacio' ('The Kiss')." Again, when Arditi had done Rossini some trifling service, the composer was profuse in thanks and cordially offered him as a souvenir "one of my wigs," which were arranged on stands on the chiffonier.

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