

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 Munchers, but the Mohican Lie Was a Little Too Much.

Very many persons may remember the story that was telegraphed and called all over the world in the summer of 1896 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 held good and the wildest tales are true. So when they got 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 incensed 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 arduous 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 stalked 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 newspaperman 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. Ardit was first presented to him, the great composer bowed and said, "Now I know why Ardit composed 'Il Bacio' ('The Kiss')." Again, when Ardit 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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THE RICHES OF MEXICO.

What the United States Consular Report Says of That Country's Prospects.

Mexico is not only one of the coming coffee countries, but is also a coming tobacco country. Mexico seems soon destined to wear the mantle of Havana in tobacco production, and, once secured, it is safe to predict that it will never pass away, for the soil of the tobacco region is so deep as to be practically inexhaustible, being from 8 to 20 feet in depth, and in some places even 30 feet. Moreover, its extent is probably 100 times that of the Cuban tobacco region, when we take into consideration the fact that, acre for acre, the percentage of cultivated land at the present moment capable of producing tobacco of the very highest grade is greater in Mexico than it ever was in Cuba in its best days. We can from this easily see what will be the amount produced in the future. Mexico's resources in this direction are practically so great as to make it certain that it will become rich from its tobacco alone. No doubt the result will be finally to cheapen Havana cigars and put them within reach of all. Mexico will, however, even then raise the tobacco, but the cigars will be made elsewhere. Why should not the tobacco men of the United States see their way to control this business, which is certain to assume colossal proportions?

It does seem clear that if the United States will follow the initiative set by Frenchmen and French writers, the control of the traffic in Havana cigars can be centered in the eastern part of the United States. The tobacco lands of

Mexico form an immense inverted capital T, the cross stretching from Tuxtla (Oaxaca) and the upper valley of the Papalapa through the southern portion of Oaxaca into the Tehuantepec highlands and thence into the state of Chiapas. The upright of the T stretches from the valleys of the Colorado and the Trinidad rivers (which form the San Juan river) eastward to the San Andres Tuxtla canton.

The cream of the tobacco lands will undoubtedly be found in the valleys of the Colorado and Trinidad rivers, but chiefly the latter. The soil in these valleys is from 10 to 15 feet deep and of the very richest quality and is equally adapted for coffee or tobacco. It may be taken as axiomatic as regards Mexico that the land that is good for one is equally good for the other. This, however, did not prove true in Java, and the tobacco of Java had exactly the qualities and defects of the coffee; thus mixture is required. To the eastward of the main valley of the Trinidad river, in the transverse valleys, the soil is even deeper than 10 to 15 feet, and here one finds mahogany trees of the most astonishing size and of the finest quality. This region is called Las Montañas de Caoba and is very extensive. North of the Colorado river the soil is entirely different, and here is an immense growth of live oaks—Las Encinales. In the open glade it is probable that sugar cane could be produced as advantageously as in any part of Mexico.

A New Achievement.

General Weyler is entitled to another ovation; his troops have killed 2,000 noncombatants.—St. Louis Republic.

TALE OF A RUNAWAY PIG.

His Fondness For Potato Patches Led Him Into Trouble.

In the old home we once had a funny little pig. He was generally to be seen in the act of running away. Hardly ever do I remember seeing his face toward me. He also had a knack of getting away from all the other pigs.

The field next the house—the "home field," as we used to call it—was a kind of common for the hogs, cattle and fowls. The next was a potato field, and the little pig had taken it into his head to get into that one. How he got in no one could tell, for the field was well fenced and there was no opening through which he could enter. How did he get in?

One day I watched. He wandered in a sort of unnoticeable way toward a crooked old log, across which the fence had been built.

Suddenly, though closely watching, I lost sight of my little friend. But before I had recovered from my surprise I was astonished to see him in the potato field.

"Well, now, that is very strange," I said. "How did he do it?"

I went to the old log, and, lo, it was hollow. The whole trick became quite clear to me.

I went into the potato field to drive him out, intending to steer him toward the end of the log so that he might get out the same way he got in. Here he had the best of me entirely. He either could not or would not see the log and maintained such an air of ignorance at that point that I had to give up the task in despair, drive him out by the gate and bring him home by a long, round-about way.

The next day I made up my mind to play a trick on him, and I did. I went out very early and moved the log just a little so that both ends would be in the "home field."

Then I stood at some distance off and watched. I never was more amused in my life. He separated himself from the other pigs and then went toward the old log and got in and through it and (as he evidently thought) got out into the potato field. I could understand this by the way he immediately began to sniff for the potatoes. But, finding none, he seemed somewhat puzzled.

Somewhat it dawned on him that he was still in the "home field," and he concluded that he had not gone through the log. So he went through it once more, but only to find himself again in the "home field."

This seemed to puzzle him more than ever. He looked around in astonishment. I could clearly see that expression on his face. For a moment he stopped and was evidently thinking very hard. Once more he got through the log, with the same result of finding himself in the "home field."

This time, I am sure, if he could have talked he would have cried out, "Spooks!"

He stood quite still for a few seconds, sniffed the air, and I could distinctly see the bristles on his back gradually rising up on end. Suddenly he uttered a peculiar kind of "bock" and ran with all his might toward the other pigs.

The little pig was never seen in that part of the field again. Many a time we tried to drive him to the old log, but we could not get him to go.—Ladies' Journal.

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Winter Races at Hot Springs.

Captain H. O. Price has a scheme in hand with a syndicate of wealthy turfmen and capitalists to invest \$100,000 in a winter race track at Hot Springs, Ark. Price is negotiating with property owners and hotel men, and if he arrives at satisfactory terms the scheme will materialize. The syndicate proposes to build a fine track, a splendid grand stand and stable room for 800 horses. They guarantee to take 600 races to the Springs and race every day from about Dec. 15 to about March 15. They ask the citizens of Hot Springs to donate certain land and to subscribe \$3,000 per annum to be divided into four \$500 and one \$1,000 stakes to be raced for on the proposed track.

Luckless Dee Watt of Mississippi.

Dee Watt, who lives just over the Kemper line in Sumter county, is the most unlucky individual we heard of in many moons. Last spring he had 100 head of fine hogs and 1,000 bushels of corn, and he began feeding them, with the expectation of soon having a carload of fat porkers to put on the market. Just about the time he was getting ready to ship cholera broke out among them, and all but 20 died. During one of the first cold spells we had he escaped 1,500 pounds of those that he called the cholera, and that spoiled. He is now minus his hogs and 1,000 bushels of corn.—Dekalb Press.