

ALASKA,

AND

MISSIONS ON THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST.

BY

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FULLY ILLUSTRATED.

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“FORT WRANGELL, ALASKA, March 26th, 1878.

“DEAR BROTHER: On Sabbath morning Rev. Mr. Brady married, in the church, Toy-a-att (our Christian chief) and his wife, and Moses and his wife. The service was performed with the ring and all.

“On Monday some Indians came to my school-room and asked us to go to ‘Shakes’ and have a funeral service for a young man that had died the night before. Upon receiving the word Mr. Brady came up, the school was dismissed, and taking some of our people with us we went over to the house. They received us very kindly, and we had an interesting meeting. The heathen portion of the audience seemed to be very much impressed. They had intended to burn the body, according to the customs of their fathers. But before we came away the most prominent man among them made a speech, saying that he was ‘going to have a hole made and bury the dead man as white men did.’ He said if a minister came to live at Fort Wrangell, the missionary was to be the head, and they were bound to do whatever he told them. The hearts of these heathens seemed to be opened in a most wonderful manner. Everything seems to be ready for a great work to be done for Christ among this people, if we only had a minister here to carry it on. Mr. Brady goes by the steamer to Sitka.

“About two o’clock yesterday a messenger came with an invitation for Mr. Brady and myself to a wedding feast that Toy-a-att and Moses were giving in Matthew’s house. Of course we accepted the invitation. We were agreeably surprised to see how nicely

they had everything arranged. Their tables were neatly set with clean white cloth. Two long tables extended clear across the house. You remember that Matthew's house has a raised platform extending around the wall of the building and three feet above the main ground floor. Upon this platform they had set a small table for Mr. Brady and myself. The dinner was good. They had crackers, butter, salmon, apricots, pies of different kinds, plum-pudding, tea, coffee, condensed milk, and white sugar. I have eaten plum-puddings made by white people that were not near as good as theirs. They had prepared great quantities of everything. The two long tables were filled three times, and every one had all they could eat. It was surprising to see how orderly and quietly everything was carried on in such a crowd.

“There were several of the Tongas and Hydah chiefs present. Mr. Brady had a long talk with them. A very fine and intelligent looking Tongas chief, who did most of the talking, asked when his people were to have schools and preachers. Mr. Brady replied by asking if nothing had been done for them. We were much surprised at his reply. He said that an English missionary had been there and offered to do something for them, but that they belonged to the United States, and did not want King George's people coming over to teach them; that they would wait and look to American people for help. Mr. Brady assured them that they should have teachers as soon as they could be secured. This talk was had while the second and third tables were being served.

“After all had eaten, and the tables were carried out, Toy-a-att proposed that they should have a regular Indian dance, to show us how they did before they knew about God. They then dressed up in their Indian costumes, masked their faces, then came out and danced four different kinds of dances. After the dance they played a game called the flag-game. They drew us both into this game, which amused them very much. At the close Toy-a-att made a speech, saying that this was their last dance, that they had learned a better way, and did not intend to dance any more. He then turned around and presented us each with one of their musical instruments, saying they would now have no further use for them. The party then broke up, and all went home before dark.

Yours truly,

“A. R. MCFARLAND.”

“FORT WRANGELL, ALASKA, June, 1878.

“DEAR BROTHER : Shaaks (the head chief of these people) came home sick with a hemorrhage of the lungs, and died in four days. They kept the body lying in state (or rather sitting) until Sabbath. On Saturday they sent for me to decide whether they should burn or bury the body. Of course I decided that it was better to bury it. They said then it should be buried. On Sabbath they sent for me to take charge of the funeral, saying “they wanted me to come and pray like white people.” So I took some of our Christian Indians and went and had religious service. They seemed very much pleased. None of Shaaks’ people have ever attended church.