

## A TRIP AMONG THE BIRD ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC COAST OF WASHINGTON

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One bright morning we left Neah Bay, Washington, for a trip among the Roosevelt island bird reserves skirting the Olympic peninsula. We made for the lighthouse at Tatoosh island as we had mail for the government people there. As we neared it, the sea rose and fell and, with considerable effort, we lowered a boat which finally made shore amid the squawking of birds and the glad welcome of the life saving people. After a few minutes stay in the vicinity of this island, we sailed out over the halibut banks where the Indian creator Kwatte is alleged to have killed the destroyer Subbus. As we were sailing over the placid waters watching the Indians haul up their fish, our Indian guide said:

"We are on sacred waters. This was the home of the great evil one, Subbus, a monster shark-like animal of the sea. Being advised about this beast's destroying all the fish of the ocean and even swallowing down whole canoe loads of men, canoe and all, Kwatte decided to kill him. So he came to the shores of this peninsula and built a dugout canoe of large size. This he filled with water. Into it he then threw heated rocks till the water was boiling hot. Then he would dip his body into the heated water as long as he could stand it. Again and again he repeated this performance. He was practicing in preparing himself to stand great heat; for Subbus, who was very hot inside, was to swallow him.

"When he had everything ready and had sufficiently proved himself against heat, he shoved his canoe out into the water. He then put his paddles into it. He also swung his sack of clamshell knives at his side where he could readily get the knives when needed. Then he got into the canoe and paddled out over the 'banks.'"

"You know," continued the guide, "Subbus lay on the bottom of the sea and drew the water down through his mouth with such force while sieving it to get something to eat that a great whirlpool formed from the surface of the

sea down to his mouth, a maelstrom of monstrous proportions. Kwatte knew where the feeding ground was and steered his canoe directly for it. As he proceeded, he sang:

“‘Here I am, Subbus. Here I come. Here I am. Come, swallow me. Here I come to your mouth. Swallow me.’

“As he neared the swirling waters, his canoe began to swerve first to one side and then to the other; but he kept paddling first on one side and then on the other with well balanced strokes to steady it and keep it in its onward, forward movement. At the same time he talked to it telling it to keep steady, not to turn over, but to keep straight ahead with even keel. To the very edge of the great funnel it went. Its prow went forward and projected over the great hollow space above Subbus’ mouth. For a moment it remained suspended in mid air. Then it went down endwise, straight down through Subbus’ mouth into his stomach with Kwatte lying snugly in its bottom. He was inside, now, to do his work.

“He used the big canoe as a ladder or steps to climb upon. On it he climbed to its top in the huge stomach. Then he began to cut with his clamshell knives, cutting at the inner linings and muscles. From side to side he moved his canoe and cut and cut and cut. The infuriated monster was felt to plunge and pitch in his agony, but he could not get rid of his enemy. At last he made one powerful, terrible lunge. Then he rose to the water’s edge and floated on the surface dead. Kwatte had killed him. Since then it has been safe to fish in these waters.”

By this time we were nearing Flattery rocks off the Indian village of Ozette. As we approached these islands, the suspecting birds gathered over us and soared about, screeching to try to scare us away, being fearful lest we would destroy their young. We proceeded. As we did so the Indian guide assured us that the birds’ screeching was the cryings and wailings of the beings that the rocks had once destroyed. He further assured us that the birds were the returned spirits and that each rock was once a mon-

strous living being in whose powerful and gigantic mouth even whole canoe loads of people were swallowed down, canoe and all, at a gulp.

We neared the island we sought to ascend first, tacking our canoe as we came close to it. The canoemen then shoved the craft up to the foot-rock, which shelved somewhat out to sea from the almost perpendicular wall of the island which extended heavenward over one hundred feet. Then by a "swinging" of the boat backward and forward in a side movement with the waves, we jumped from it onto the foot-rock and briskly scampered up the island before the next wave struck us.

Soon we were on top of the island. And such a horrible noise as the birds did make; and who could blame them? From time immemorial their home had been sacked by cruel man. But we were not there for that purpose. The poor birds, however, did not know this. The shrieking of the mothers scared the young and they even jumped off the rocks and perished. We looked over the island and made an estimate of the birds. We also dug up a few of the burrowing fowls to be sure that they were denizens of the place. But the birds did not take to our intruding on their domain. An angry mother petrel spat on us and a sea parrot ruined my coat with her powerful beak while I was trying to photograph her.

Leaving this rock we went over to the Indian village and were lucky to encounter a medicine performance of the old type. An old medicine man was dipping his hands in water and doing a crude massage on the sick one. It seemed to be a case of heart trouble. Finally the medicine man took his pocket knife and cut out the skin in a circular ring about as large as a saucer over the heart region. Then he began to suck on the afflicted parts with his protruded lips as the blood besmeared his face. Suddenly he jumped to his feet as he gripped his hands tightly together and exclaimed: "I've got the 'Skukum.' I've got the sick." He then showed us some hard, black substance of considerable size between his fists. It was something black; but what? This the doctor burned in the room fireplace and the patient was well at once.



After a half hour's stay at this village, we left for another group of islands to the southward. At about four o'clock we came to Carrol Islet; and as it had trees on its top we ascended it. Reaching its top, we prepared to stay there for the night. Also one of the Indians took the canoe ashore and dug up some clams; and we had a clam bake for supper.

That night we slept in the open air and thought we had the place all to ourselves. But not. The night birds found us, the owls, hawks, petrels and parrots. We were strangers. We were trespassing and they were not slow to tell us so. The petrels got so close to us that I caught one of them with my hands. We slept but little till the night birds retired at the coming of the dawn. It was eight o'clock before we awoke.

To sharpen our appetites after we arose, we went to the northeasternmost part of the island. There we examined some birds' nests and took a few pictures. Then we descended down a ledge as far as we could safely go on the footing at hand. But our desires were not satisfied. Far below us was a ledge in hogback shape extending as a bench out from the main body of the island. This was covered with sea birds and their young. Birds by the hundreds were there. We got a rope from our boat and slid down it to the bench. And such a "Niagara" of birds followed. They swooped off the narrow ridge in one continuous stream. We ventured not on the land projection farther than where we first landed, lest we might cause the young birds to commit suicide by dumping themselves over the cliff. But we got some excellent pictures, both of young birds and of the worried mothers. We then returned to the top of the island again.

It had been evident to me that the islands were the jutting remains of promontories and headlands of the coast adjacent and I called the attention of my colleagues to the fact, as we were breakfasting. To our surprise, our guide spoke up saying that that was easily explained. He continued:

"Our people have a myth which explains the origin of the islands, promontories and headlands as follows: It was long ago when people were animals and animals people.

Kwatte was then still living on earth. He had his house on the beach near here; but he did not get hardly anything to eat, for the wolves of the region prowled the coast, caught the salmon, ate all the berries, and devoured all the animals of the woods, and gulped down all the fish eggs that floated ashore. What was Kwatte to do? One day the chief of the wolves came along up the coast. He came to Kwatte's house. Kwatte pretended to be sick. The wolf came in. He made himself at home. Kwatte let him stay. That night he made his bed in Kwatte's house beside Kwatte's fire. Soon he was fast asleep. When he had been asleep for a considerable time he began to snore. He snored loud. This was Kwatte's opportunity. He would now 'get even' with the wolves; and he would also have some meat to eat. He got his knife; looked at it to see if it was good and sharp; then, finding it in good shape, he went to the mat on which wolf was sleeping and severed that animal's head at one blow. He then skinned the carcass and hung the skin up above the fireplace to dry. He then stored the meat safely under his bed and went to sleep.

"The next morning, bright and early, a wolf came tracking his chief up the beach. He tracked him to Kwatte's house. He entered the house. Said he to Kwatte, 'Did you see Chief Wolf?' Kwatte answered, 'No, I am sick. I have not been out of my house. I have not seen him.' 'But he came to your house. We tracked him here,' protested the wolf.

While Kwatte was talking, the wolf's slave, the blue jay, had gone over to Kwatte's fire to warm himself. As he was spreading his hands out before the fire, a drop of something fell on the upper surface of one of his hands. At once he perceived it was a kind of oil. He smelled it. At once he recognized it to have the same smell as the smell of his master. He said nothing but went out of the room. The oil had dropped from the skin that was drying. As soon as he was out in the yard, however, he told all the wolves what he had discovered; many wolves had not followed the tracks to Kwatte's house. The blue jay was crying, mourning the death of his master. The wolves all rushed into the house. Kwatte had anticipated trouble and had hung a basket of

combs near the door. As the wolves entered he made a quick move, seized the basket of combs, and before the wolves had time to lay hands on him, he sallied forth out of the door past them and into the woods nearby and then down the beach. The whole pack of wolves then followed him in hot pursuit. Time and again they nearly overtook him. But as they were just in the act of seizing him, he would take a comb out of the basket and drop it down on the beach in front of them, thus forming a point of land projecting from the mainland across the beach into the surging surf with some of the isolated teeth jutting up above the waves as islets. The wolves, of course, were compelled to climb over the promontories thus formed. Many of them they climbed over; but finally they gave up the chase. But Kwatte kept running till he had stood up all his combs on the beach."

After we had eaten our breakfast, we started to the Jagged Island group. Here we landed and climbed up the jagged rocks to the summit of the highest island. There we found many birds of the Cormorant family, also some Murrs. The mother cormorants flew away at our approach; but the murrs stood their ground and tried to protect their young till we even picked up one of them. But the young cormorants were a pitiable sight. With wings fluttering and mouths open, they panted, expecting their necks to be wrung.

As we were looking at the birds, our guide called our attention to the fact that a herd of sea lion were basking in the sun on the farther end of the island we were on. So we hastened to see them. We crawled over the rocks so as to make the least possible noise. I finally got within twelve feet of a large male. He was sitting on his lower extremities like the fabled mermaid, while he was moving his head from side to side as he bellowed continuously. Near him was a female scratching her head with one of her "flippers." Other males were roaring and shaking their shaggy heads; cubs were playing, and females were basking in the sun. Some one in our crowd "halloed" and a stampede of lions followed. They rolled, tumbled, slid into the water and were swallowed up by the waves; and nothing was left us but the bare rocks and the frightened birds.



That afternoon we went on to LaPush and spent the night in the Indian village there. It was on a Sunday, and that evening we went to the Indian "Shaker" meeting, a Christian service of the crudest type. There in a tightly closed room we saw the shakers performing. Candles and a cross were to view. But the services! A big, fleshy woman was chanting, "Hi, hi, hi" and all—some seventy, were vigorously stamping the floor as they waved their hands in gyratory motion, shrugged and contorted their bodies, wried their faces and muscle-trembled in a self-hypnotic condition till the perspiration poured down their practically nude bodies and formed in pools on the floor. And by this performance these simple hearted people expect to gain entrance into heaven?

On the following day we visited Point Granville and the rocky islets adjacent. Among the latter is "Split" rock. To our surprise, our remarks about this particular rock brought forth another myth in explanation of its origin from our resourceful guide.

Said he: "In the long ago a brother of Subbus lived in Quinaielt lake, and once when Kwatte and his brother Kofish were journeying over the earth, the latter ventured out on the lake and was swallowed by Subbus. Discovering what had happened, Kwatte heated all the rocks in the vicinity and, constructing a huge pair of tongs, he hurled them into the lake till the water became boiling hot and Subbus floated on top of the water, dead. Kwatte then cut him open and secured Kofish, alive, but wished a moment later that he had left him to perish, as he had been changed into a hermit crab, the father of all the hermit crabs of our day. Disgusted at the sight of his deformed brother, Kwatte hurled the tongs into the deep, tong-end up. They are the split rocks you see. Kwatte then seated himself on that rock yonder facing the setting sun, and, drawing his mantle up over his head in hood-shape, he turned to stone. There overlooking the bay he sits with his face toward the land of the hereafter."

Completing our cruise, we returned to our respective homes, but the memory of what we saw will indelibly remain.

The scenery of the region is unsurpassed. Below timber line, except in some prairie districts, one sees and is engulfed in the stately timber. The immense size of the trees strikes awe to the newcomer. Furthermore, the hidden vales and unfrequented hillsides beckon the nature lover to partake of the unmistakable "call to the wild" and its sylvan beauty. To take an ocean trip as we did and visit the hundreds of points and islets that jot above the pounding, surging surf, one sees the broken effort of the land to stay the onward march of the destroying tide. On the islands he sees the homes of thousands of birds, mostly sea species, and hears their warning-fear calls, as his craft moves about here and there. He also sees the sea lion glide off the rocks into the water on his approach. He leaves his boat and climbs about on the stepping stones of the continent. From them he looks out over the deep, blue waters which occasionally take on a tinge of emerald and sometimes a glow of amethyst. He mounts Carrol Islet (275 feet in elevation) in his journeying, as we did, and is greeted by a "Niagara" of murre fleeing from him in their fright. He mounts the highest point on the island and takes in the world about him. To the southward he can discern the dim outlines of Destruction Island with its precipitous coast and "reefs of destruction"; also the low sandy beach and the rugged rocks of the southward curving coast line which extends as far as the eye can see. Added to this view is the almost impenetrable evergreen forest which covers the entire coast; while here and there can be seen curling upward from some settler's cabin a column of black smoke. To the east in the immediate vicinity-foreground there rises precipitously out of the waving waters the forest clad, benched coast; and farther on the serrated tops of the hills rise higher and higher until their mantle of green gives place to a coverlet of glistening, eternal snow, and the summits of the white-robed, snow-capped Olympic Mountains are lost among the fleecy clouds of the azure blue above. To the west the salmon, sea lion, seal, porpoise, and whale jump and play at the surface of the waving waters, and the ships of the world pass to and fro. On every side all objects are pictured in the most delicate tints which seem to magnify them rather than subdue them.