

INDIAN LEGENDS OF MT. RAINIER.

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Among the most interesting and beautiful of all Indian stories, perhaps those connected with the great mountain peaks are first. As is fitting, the most striking are those whose scenes are laid in and around Mt. Rainier.

By reason of the Indian superstitions in regard to the great peaks, the Indians can seldom be prevailed on to ascend their summits. Some people represent that this is simply a part of the general superstition which the red men have for any form of hard work, but I incline to the opinion that it is just a straight superstition. On account of this idea the first explorers of the great peaks have found it very difficult to reach the summit.

One of these legends, the scene of which is Mt. Rainier, may be called the Indian legend of Rip Van Winkle. According to this there was an old man living near the mountain who was very avaricious and desirous of getting much "hiaqua," by which they signify shell money, still common among the Indians of the Sound. This old Indian seems to have been on very intimate terms with Sahale and kept begging him to supply him with more money by magic. Sahale, however, was aware that this greed for money was liable to make the old Indian a victim of Kakahete, the chief of the demons, and therefore he always refused to grant him any magical power.

But once Moosmoos, the elk divinity, obtained a tomanowas power over the old man and whispered magic in his ear, telling him that upon the summit of the mountain he might find much hiaqua and become

the richest of all men. Accordingly, going back to his tent, he informed his wife that he was going on a long hunt, but in reality he was setting forth for the summit of the mountain. He climbed almost to the summit on the first day, and the next morning, at the rising of the sun, he stood upon the mighty summit. There he discovered that there was a great valley in the summit of the mountain, all filled with snow except one place in the middle. Here was a lake of black water and at one end of it were three large rocks. The old man was confident that these were tomanowas rocks, for one was shaped like a salmon's head, the next like a camas root, and the third like the head of his own totem or divinity, Moosmoos, the elk.

Our hero, preceiving these symbolical rocks, immediately concluded that this must be the place where the hiaqua was secreted. At once therefore he began to dig, with an elkhorn pick which he had brought along, at the foot of the rock which was shaped like the head of Moosmoos. At this a number of otters came out of the lake and gathered around in a circle watching him dig. When the man had struck the ground a number of times equal to the number of otters, they began to pound the ground with their tails. Still he continued to dig, and about the time of the setting of the sun he turned over a great block of stone underneath which he discovered a cavity filled with great strings of hiaqua, enough to make him the richest man in all the land.

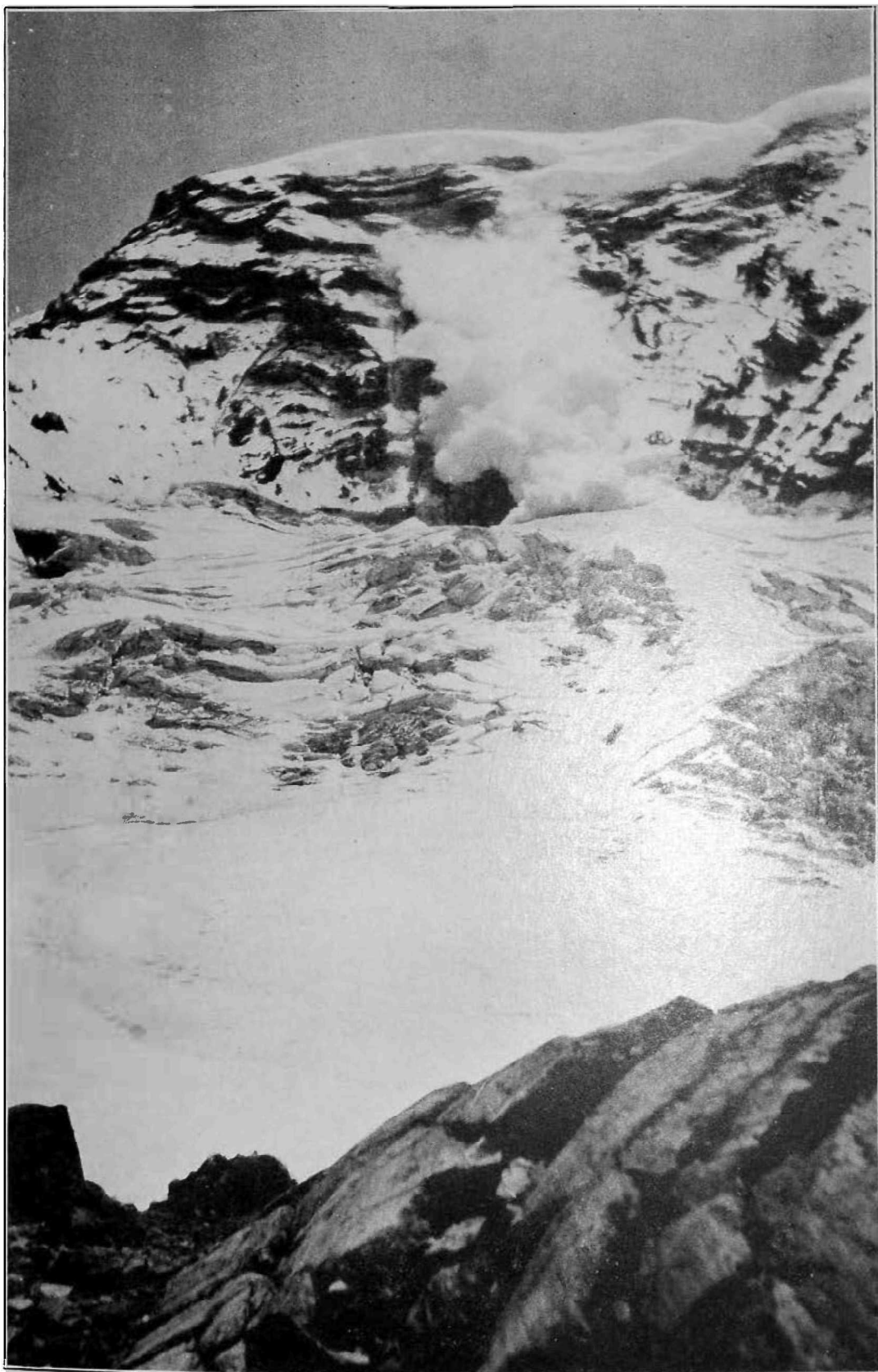
But now the greedy adventurer made a great mistake. He loaded himself down with the strings of hiaqua, but left not a single shell as a votive offering to the tomanowas powers by whose magic he had made the discovery. Sahale was greatly displeased at such ungrateful conduct, and all the tomanowas powers combined to show their wrath. Skamson, the thunder-bird, Tootah, the thunder, and Colasnass, the snow god, all

swooped down from the clouds, turned the sky black, and blew the old man with the strings of hiaqua about him across the rocks and buried him in the snow. Out of the darkness came the awful voice of Sahale denouncing his wickedness. Also the terrified old man began now to hear the mocking voice of Kahatete and his attendant demons. The whole frame work of nature seemed about to disrupt, for after the snow storm there came a burst of volcanic fire upon the mountain summit, the air became thick and hot, and streams of water poured down the mountain side.

In spite of all this confusion of nature the old man seems to have retained his consciousness and he began to think how he might propitiate the offended deities. He accordingly dropped one of his strings of hiaqua as an offering, but this seems to have been a mere mockery and the demons and the winds kept howling at him in derisive tones, "Hiaqua! hiaqua!" Then the old man laid down one string after another of the hiaqua until they were all gone. After this surrender of his treasure he fell upon the ground and entered into the sleep country. When he awoke he found himself at the very place where he had gone to sleep the night before he climbed to the summit. Being very hungry he gathered camas roots with which to refresh himself, and while eating he began to have many thoughts in regard to his life and doings. His "tum-tum," as the Indians would say (heart), was much softened as he contemplated his greed for hiaqua. He found that he no longer cared for hiaqua, and that his mind was calm and tranquil and benevolent. Moreover he went to look at himself in a pool, and discovered that he had marvelously changed. His hair had become long and white as snow. The mountain, itself, had changed its contour. The sun shone brightly, the trees glistened with new leaves, the mountain meadows were sweet with the perfume of flowers, the birds sung in the trees, the mighty moun-

tain towered calm, tranquil and majestic into the deep blue sky, glistening with new fallen snow, all nature seemed to rejoice, and the old Indian found that he was in a new world. And now he seemed to remember where he was, and he made his way without difficulty to his old tent. There he found an old woman with white hair, whom he did not at first recognize, but soon discovered to be his own "klootchman." She told him that he had been gone many suns and moons, and that in the meantime she had been digging camas and trading for hiaqua, of which she had accumulated much. The old man now perceived all the mistakes of his former avaricious life and settled down in his own home upon the banks of the Cowlitz in peace and contentment, becoming a great tomanowas man and a counsellor and adviser to the Indians in all times of trouble. He was worshipped by them for his wisdom and benevolence, as well as for his strange experience on the summit of the mountain.

The prettiest and most poetical of all Indian legends in connection with Mt. Rainier is that of Lawiswis, the queen of the fairies. According to this legend, Nekahni, which is another name for the great spirit, lived upon the slopes of Mt. Rainier in the upper portion of what we now call Paradise Valley. There he kept his flocks of wild goats and from that lofty height he watched and ruled the earth spread out before him. Now there lived in the lower part of the valley a lovely creature called Lawiswis. She was of the nature of both sea shells and roses, so that when she went to the shore the sea shells all worshiped her and caught the dew of the morning as a nectar for her to drink. When she was in Paradise the roses made her like obeisance and served her with like nectar which they caught from the morning dew. She was also the queen of the fairies, and of everything beautiful, a sort of mountain Titania, in fact. Nekahni loved this fairy queen and built her a



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AVALANCHE ON WILLIS WALL FALLING 5,000 FEET

bower in Paradise, which was surmounted with masses of wild roses, and these roses at that time were pure white and had no thorns. Part of the time Nekahni dwelt high up on the mountain watching his wild goats or communing with Skamson and Tootah and Colanass, and part of the time he would descend to dwell with Lawiswis in her fairy bower.

Now there was at that time dwelling in the dark and sullen gorge of the Nisually River a famous Skookum named Memelek. Memelek was a frightful looking creature. She was clothed in strips of cougar skins, fastened together with the fingers of slaughtered fairies. She had snakes around her neck and waist, and when she wished to kill anything she would send these snakes to bite them. Memelek hated Lawiswis on account of her beauty and innocence, and especially because Nakahni favored her so much more than herself. Accordingly, one day when Nekahni was busily engaged with his goats, high up on the rocks of what we now call Gibraltar, Memelek determined to wreak her wicked vengeance upon the helpless and innocent Lawiswis. She therefore stole up out of the gorge to the bower in Paradise and letting loose her snakes bade them go and sting to death the fairy queen who was lying innocently asleep. And now the roses around the bower saw the imminent danger of their adored mistress. What could they do? Nekahni was far away and could not come in person, but by a magical petition they let him know the danger, and instantly, just as the loathsome reptiles were crawling upon them, the roses turned a bright red, and were covered with sharp thorns which pierced the coils of the reptiles so that they turned back in dismay and fled to their hideous mistress. Thus Lawiswis was saved and the discomfited Memelek was forbidden ever to come up out of the deep gorge to the Nisually and there she has remained ever since.