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WHY THE NATIVES DID N'T COME BACK

Told at IGLLOO No. 5, Pioneers of Alaska, Ruby, Alaska, Jan. 13

Along in the early nineties, two prospectors in the circle district were greatly troubled by natives coming to their cabin and always asking for something to eat. With surprising accuracy, they seemed to know when there was a big feed on and would invariably show up at the right time.

Like most prospectors, and especially those of that early date, their supply of grub was none too strong to carry them thru the long winter, and it soon became very apparent that something had to be done with the native question. Even so, and with this grub shortage staring them in the face, their good old pioneer hospitality would not allow them to refuse even a native if they thought him hungry, let the consequences be what they might.

About the middle of November they killed a moose, and with that longing that stays by every man at this season, no matter how far he may have wandered from the home fireside, they wanted a big dinner on Thanksgiving day and decided to have it. Accordingly, the moose's nose (which is the most choice part of the moose) was put aside for the occasion.

Their neighbors, three prospectors down the creek, were invited up and arrived in the afternoon on Thanksgiving day. The big feed was soon all ready, and certainly it was a big feed. There was sourdough bread six inches thick, and butter; there were sourdough doughnuts almost as thick, rolled in sugar; there was a layer cake made of sourdough and Lamont's Crystallized Eggs with Eagle Milk thickened with sugar, for filling; and the good old duff, that duff we have all eaten so often—made of dried peaches and sourdough boiled in a sack for three hours and served with lemon sauce made of citric acid; its running mate, the mince pie, was not overlooked, with its crust shortened with bear grease and moose tallow, and filled with dried apples chopped with moose meat, and whiskey made at Circle City for seasoning instead of Three Star Renssey. But the most delicious dish of all was the Mulligan. They smacked their lips with anticipation, and why not? When a fellow has a Mulligan made with moose nose, kings may well sit up and take notice. As the big granite bucket well blackened by many a camp fire, was set in the center of the table, the warm steam wafted forth the scent of evaporated onions to tickle the sense of smell, and there were big fat sourdough dumplings floating around on top that fairly made the eyes water. No real pioneer would wait for a second invitation as the cook said: "Sit 'em on, boys; fly at it." As they dipped deep into the bucket they brought up heaping spoonfuls of boiled rice, shelled barley and granulated potatoes, well mixed with evaporated soup vegetables. Suddenly the door opened and one of the boys, looking up, said: "Well, here they are." Sure enough they were; natives, men women and children. Soon the cabin was filled with big and little, and the old Medicine Man, in a plaintive, whining voice said, "Me plenty hungry."

All right," was the cook's answer, "bye-em-bye eat" and on second thought added: "Bye-em-bye everybody eat, fine." He smacked his lips to impress the natives with the extra quality of the dinner, which action brought forth grins and also grunts of satisfaction, and the backs squatted themselves on the floor, and the squaws, with a forward duck, slipped the babies from under their parkas and unceremoniously transferred them from their backs to the boys' bunks, preparatory to the big feed, while the older children stood around at the elbows of the white men with watery mouths, beseeching eyes, and noses that made the boys look hard at their plates.

Now the fellows had expected just what had happened and being, like all pioneers, fond of practical jokes, had prepared for them. In the fall when cutting logs for their cabin they had noticed that several Indian skulls had rolled from their leg coffins which had been placed on the top of a little knoll years before that was now being cut away by the river, and lay on the bar below bleached as white as the parramling in midwinter.

A few days before Thanksgiving as one of the boys was making the daily round of his rabbit snares, he picked up one of these skulls, slipped it into his parka front and taking it to the cabin, put it down near the stove, casually covering it with a caribou skin which was used as a rug to keep the wind from blowing in under the door.

As soon as the meal was finished the cook set the granite bucket, which still contained much Mulligan, back onto the stove, poured in a goodly supply of boiling water, as quantity was the main thing now, and threw in more rice, barley, soup vegetables and granulated potatoes, then the sourdough pot was taken in hand and with a pinch of salt, soda, and a few handfuls of flour dexterously applied, dumplings were in the bucket in a "jiffy" and it was again boiling and sizzling and looked as good as new; but in the meantime, unseen by any of the natives, the cook had slipped something else into the pot—the skull.

While these preparations were in progress the natives, of all sizes, had gathered around the table, and very shortly what remained of cake, pie, bread and butter, duff and dough nuts had all disappeared, several of the squaws not forgetting to put a bountiful supply in their parkas for the kids that couldn't come. They all took dishes, some plates, some cups, or whatever was handiest, and the old Medicine Man to show his friendly feeling just at that moment explained: "No wash 'em, him good, all same brother, me." But how they did lay to that Mulligan; they ate the dumplings and meat, and drank the soup and vegetables. All knives, forks and spoons were soon forgotten, or were too slow. Finally an old squaw hooked another bone, grabbed it with both hands and had it nearly to her mouth when suddenly she stopped, her eyes bulged out,

her lips parted, for she was looking straight into the eyes of the skull. With a blood-curdling yell she dropped it. The others, seeing the cause of her excitement, were terror stricken; there was a general grabbing of babies, parkas, caps and mittens and everyone rushed for the door.

When the last had gone and the sound of their excited voices through the timber grew less and less, the cook said, with a broad grin, "I guess everybody had enough Mulligan." And they did, for the natives made a trail several miles around the cabin and it was years before a native was seen in that vicinity again. And even yet, when the natives have been successful hunting, and in the evening the moose nose is being roasted over the big fire out in the hills, while the two stakes, some old squaw will often tell those gathered around about the time they ate the dead man at the white man's cabin, and the children, and some say, the grown-ups, looking behind them into the dark timber where the old spruce tree moans forth its sobs and sighs, will involuntarily draw a little closer to the soft light of the big camp fire.

C. K. SNOW.

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BERNHARDT'S GO WEST
Mrs. M. E. Bernhardt, with her daughter, Anna, and son, Webster, departed last night for the west, where they will make their home. Webster returned yesterday noon from Stanbury, Mo., where he went last Saturday. The family will stop for a visit at Trinidad, Colo., Las Vegas, N. M., before going on to Los Angeles, where they will make their home. Their many friends in Alliance regret to lose them and they leave with the good wishes of everyone.

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| Mrs. Goodley | Miss Iva Glasgow |
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