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ALASKA.

A YEAR ALONE IN ALASKA.

BY MR. W. T. LOPP.

Through God's kind providence I have survived the rigor of another winter and to-day am enjoying the warm Arctic sun. The snow is rapidly disappearing, flowers are blooming and myriads of birds are here. Annual mail next month! Think of it! The news of the year in a single day. The Eskimos think some of the steam whalers will arrive here in a few days if the wind continues favorable. How I shall enjoy shaking hands and conversing with these fur-clad countrymen. They have been to sea for three or four months but their news will be none the less welcome for that.

The year's work has been more prosperous and pleasant than could have been expected under the circumstances. Fortunately Mr. Thornton's departure in September left plenty of work to keep me from becoming lonesome.

The Mission House which the schooner had been unable to land at Point Barrow, on accouut of ice, was landed here scattered along the beach at the water's edge. Only a few natives were here at the time to help drag the lumber back to a safe distance on the beach and stack it. This completed, half sick and worn out from over-work, the reaction came. Lonesome does not begin to express what I felt. I began to realize what it meant to pass the winter here without the companionship of my late co-worker, Mr. Thornton. I felt more completely than ever before, my utter dependence on God's kind providence.

Dr. Sheldon Jackson, Agent of Education for Alaska, had advised me to keep "Charley and Mary," two St. Michael Eskimos, whom Capt. Healy had brought down from Point Barrow. As they were still here waiting for a favorable wind to go south to their people, I employed them on the terms Dr. Jackson had suggested. They were fair cooks and housekeepers, honest and faithful servants and could speak English. In February news came that Mary's mother had died at St. Michael's. As they had not seen their people for two years and were homesick, I let them go to Cape Nome, ninety miles south, where Charley's people live. Since then, our boy, So-kwee-na (about thirteen) has been my cook and housekeeper.

As I had anticipated, life was much more monotonous this year than last. The novelty had passed away. But with teaching, doctoring, hunting, repairing, housekeeping, entertaining, reading and exploring, the time has not dragged. My health has been generally good. But at times the stench of the over-crowded schoolroom has affected my throat. As the state of my health seemed to require it, and Dr. Sheldon Jackson and Capt. Healy, of the "Bear," had asked me to explore the country near here to ascertain whether it was favorable for supporting the domesticated reindeer, which the government expects to introduce next year, I took a vacation of ten days, employed a boy, sled, and seven dogs and went to Ke-gik-tuk, a settlement about seventy-five

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Group of Eskimos.

miles up the coast. I visited seven settlements containing in all about two hundred people. Without exception, they were very kind and did every thing in their power to entertain me. After traveling twenty or thirty miles, with mercury at twenty to twenty-five degrees below zero, I found the underground houses very comfortable. Many of the children had never seen a white man. They seemed to know all about our school, and to appreciate the cards, illustrated papers and pencils which I gave them. Some of them had learned from our children to count to ten and to sing "Sweet By and By." Ke-gik-tuk is a thrifty village of eighty inhabitants. They asked me to move our school up there next year; they were all enthusiastic about the proposed introduction of the Siberian domesticated deer. The Cape Prince of Wales traders or chiefs charge them exorbitant prices for deer skins. In fact many of the poorer people can not afford a deer-skin artega (hooded shirt) but are compelled to shiver through the winter in one made of squirrel skins, or sweat in one made of rabbit skins. As these people go into the interior every summer to hunt squirrel (the prairie dog of the Arctic) they could make good charts of the country and assured me there was plenty of moss to support herds of reindeer.

On the whole my trip was an enjoyable one, and when I returned I felt fresh and strong for the five months' work before me.

The school has been too prosperous; with the exception of a few bad days, it has been overcrowded every session of the year. The average daily attendance of pupils was one hundred six; or including visitors, one hundred eighteen. Many of the children know the alphabet, can spell and pronounce simple English words, read in First Reader, write, sing twenty gospel and patriotic songs; are familiar with several hundred English words and try to keep themselves clean. A few of the larger school boys and girls have been taught how to cut and make clothing after our patterns, of hair seal skins. The Eskimos of this and neighboring settlements furnish eight or nine hundred whalers with seal, squirrel, muskrat and deer skin clothing every year.

Pencils, paper, pictures, hard-bread, combs and soap have been given as prizes for punctuality and diligence.

The pupils are silent in time of prayer and sing with enthusiasm if not with the "spirit and with the understanding." On a few occasions it has been necessary to punish pupils by excluding them from the school and house for a few days. Most of the visitors have been as docile and obedient as children, but on occasions it has been almost necessary to use force in dealing with them. Many natives from Kotzebue Sound, Port Clarence, Golovin Bay and Diomedes Islands have visited our school during the winter.

Our new school-bell has not been received with universal favor. In October, a short time after we had put it on top of the house, Doctor Oo-ma-lig-zrok, after consulting the Toon-woks (spirits), informed me that the noise of the bell would keep foxes and seals away and requested me not to ring it. But as white foxes were more plentiful than they had been for years and most of the seal nets were three or four miles from our house, I took occasion to

1. Eskimo Hunter with head shaved. Rifle, &c., on his back.
2. Hunter in Attitude of Spearing Walrus.
3. "Magic-maker" with Drum.
4. Native with Spiked Instrument to secure game.

ridicule his prophecy and request. Again in January, when the season for netting seals through ice was at hand, the people here could not catch any seals, while five miles north of here a great many were taken. One boy netted twenty-six in one day. Many of the older people came to me saying probably there was some truth in what the doctor said, and begged me to stop ringing the bell or give it only one or two taps. The latter request was granted and for several days the bell was given only two or three strokes.

In March there were five hundred twenty-seven people living here. In spring and fall this is probably increased to five hundred sixty or five hundred seventy. Health has been generally good and seemed to vary with changes of food. For instance, in December and January, when they were compelled to subsist on frost fish, the calls for medicine for boils, scrofulous sores and dysentery were very numerous. Mothers came with pitiful stories about sick babies, begging for bread. Since then seals have been plentiful.

This has been a fairly prosperous year for our Eskimos. Many white foxes and eleven white bears have been killed. During the last five days forty-three Oo-ga-rooks (big seals) weighing from eight hundred to one thousand pounds have been killed. In a few days they will chase the walrus, the wild buffalo of the Arctic, as he passes northward through the Straits.

The Oo-ma-liks (chiefs) both fear and hate Capt. Healy, of the "Bear," because of his interference with whiskey traffic. Three years ago whiskey was distilled here. The first year we were here two barrels of whiskey were carried to Kotzebue Sound and bartered and another was kept here during the winter and traded. But we have not been bothered with whiskey or drunkenness this last year. They (Oo-ma-liks) look with suspicion on the proposed introduction of tame reindeer. They refuse to believe that the Alaskan Eskimos are to own and manage these herds of deer in two or three years, but on the other hand, look upon it as a scheme to deprive them of the deer skin trade which they have monopolized for years.

The missionary teacher has been a puzzle to them. "Too poor to trade, too stingy to marry, and too effeminate to hunt." It has been difficult for them to believe that we were sent here simply to teach and preach. As they never do favors or give gifts without expecting others in return, they can not understand why "Oo-ma-liks" in the States give money to support mission schools. Some have imagined we were preparing the way for other Americans to settle here.

They do not seem to doubt, nor are they moved or astonished at the stories of the Bible, not even the miracles of Christ. They tell and believe legendary "stories" which they consider equally wonderful. Every child is familiar with, and can recite many of these legends relating to "is-sok" (ages ago), when their doctors were "un-ut-kooz-ruk" (immortal). The medicine-men have been more active this year than they were last year. In December and January, Doctor Pe-nee-ret (about twenty-five), who was detected stealing ammunition from a neighbor last year, endeavored to con-

vince the people by a series of trials that he was a *big doctor*. While seal hunting, he pretended to shoot himself through the body with an express rifle. When he had recovered and found many still doubting, he had a man to shoot him twice in the presence of twenty or thirty people. Although blood flowed freely from his mouth they still doubted, saying that no one saw that the cartridge contained a ball. Later while hunting, he claimed to shoot himself with buckshot in the head, but the people still pronounce him a fraud.

During the winter a young medicine man at "Ke-gik-tuk" pretended to make money, ammunition, whisky, tobacco, etc. He also was doubted, and in a short time after pretending to do these miraculous things was shot dead, because he had threatened the lives of three or four men (*i. e.*, according to Eskimo custom, "in self-defense"). The power and influence of these spirits seem to be on the decline. Many of the people believe in them only when it is convenient.

The winter has been colder than our first one. Mean temperature; October to May was + 5.6; maximum, + 40; minimum, — 30. We had a late fall, early spring, and no thaws in mid-winter. In February and March the straits were blocked up with smooth ice fields from the North. Five of our people with dog-sleds went across to East Cape for tobacco.

The mission is under many obligations to Capt. Healy of the "Bear" for bringing up our coal and supplies last year, and appointing ten Eskimo police to take charge of drunken natives who might be inclined to be disorderly.

THE TRIP TO ALASKA.

BY MR. H. R. THORNTON.

In conjunction with the Rev. W. C. Pond, D.D., the A. M. A. agent on the Pacific coast, I made all necessary arrangements for our passage and the transportation of our supplies and of lumber for the new school-house. The contract was made with the same whaling firm as on our first voyage. We received bills of lading for our supplies and for the lumber, and no intimation was made that our accommodations would not be at least as passable as on our first voyage.

You can imagine our consternation therefore, when we went down to the wharf at the hour of sailing, and found that not a foot of lumber would be carried, and that all our vegetables (except canned ones), amounting to some eight hundred pounds in all, as well as some of our other goods were to be left behind. The result is that before next summer we may be compelled to live on an exclusively flesh diet—like the natives—an experience that is said to be very uncomfortable, by those few white men who have been obliged to try it.

The only excuse given for the violation of the contract expressed in the bills of lading, was that other parties, whom it was more to the interest of the owners of the vessel to accommodate, had sent much larger amounts than had been expected. As we were entirely dependent on the whalers for the transpor-

tation of our mail and supplies, and this was our only chance of reaching our station, we had to make the best of it. The voyage was, I am sorry to say, not a very comfortable one. Our cabin measured about fifteen feet by twelve, and state-rooms, six feet by four, opened directly from it. As the cabin was occupied much of the time by some of the ship's officers smoking the strongest kind of tobacco, swearing and gambling, the ladies could rarely use their room in the day time. Most of the time we spent on deck wrapped in bed-quilts and blankets, an inadequate protection against cold winds and rains.

We had other annoyances, not serious but very trying, There were two reasons for our troubles, I think: One is that life on a whaling ship is always rough; most of the officers were originally men before the mast, and are, therefore, not accustomed to consider as hardships what would seem intolerable to most people; the other reason is that most seafaring men have a great prejudice against all sorts of missionaries; the cause of this prejudice is not far to seek; it has been the duty of missionaries almost everywhere to expose the debauchery of native women, the introduction of the cheapest, most poisonous and therefore most injurious alcoholic liquors among savage tribes not at all accustomed to self-control, the unscrupulous advantage taken of native ignorance in trading, and other vicious practices indulged in by pioneer seafaring men, who, as a rule are, comparatively speaking, little educated either mentally or morally, and whose natural animal passions and greed are not restrained in far-off lands, either by public opinion enforcing at least an appearance of decency, or by laws and officers to punish them for their crimes.

There were some pleasant features about the voyage, of course; it was interesting to watch the preparation of lines, harpoons, dynamite bomb lances and guns and other parts of the outfit used in whaling; to hear some of the yarns spun by veteran salts; to watch for the occasional spout of a whale or the black fin of a shark, for, although we were not so fortunate as to see even a single "towhead" or "right" whale (the two species from which whalebone is obtained), we ran across a considerable number of "humpbacks."

As we approached the Aleutian Islands, intending to go through Unimak Pass, a dense fog enveloped us for several days, preventing our taking any observations to ascertain our exact position; a slight breeze to the northward carried us along in spite of "lying to," and we passengers felt a little uncertainty as to whether we might not be waked up by feeling the ship run ashore during the night. The next afternoon the fog suddenly lifted a little, and we found ourselves in an unknown bay with an unknown hamlet, at the foot of unknown cliffs; none of the ship's officers, all of whom were more or less veteran Arctic whalemen, seemed to know where we were. As we drew near, sounding all the way, not a human being could be seen; perhaps it was one of the villages where all the natives had starved to death, as we had read, and we should find only grinning and repulsive skeletons in the houses; moving still nearer, we could see Greek crosses standing at the head of each lonely grave on the cliff side, and a building surmounted by a Greek cross, probably a church, showing that the

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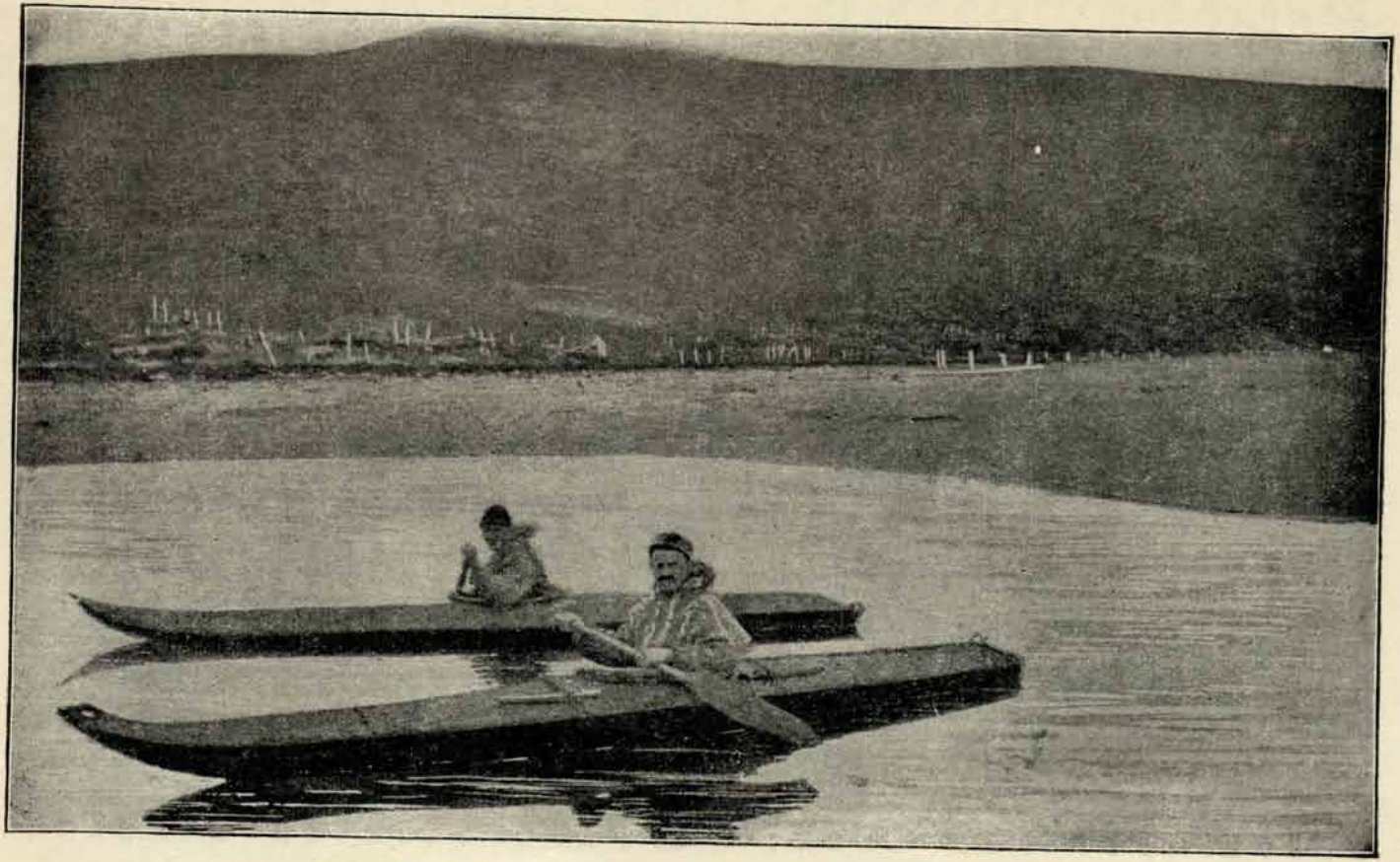


TEACHERS, IN KYACKS. SCHOOL-HOUSE AND NATIVE VILLAGE IN BACKGROUND.

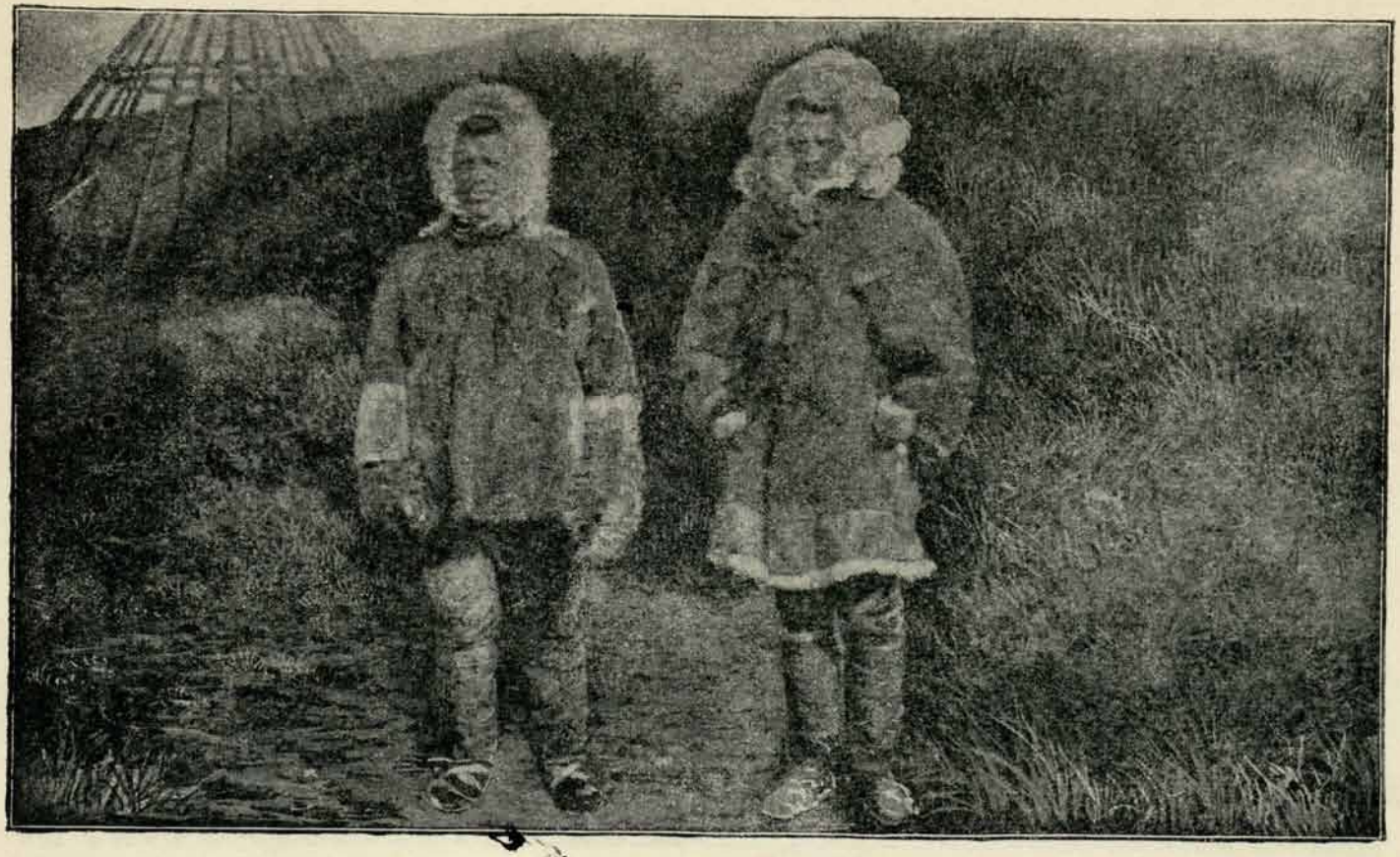
natives had belonged, at least nominally, to the Russian church; the almost mountainous cliffs covered with bright green grass, in spite of the patches of persistent snow lingering here and there, were a grateful sight to our eyes, wearied of the continual sullen gray of that northern sea. At last a single dog was seen, prowling along the beach in search of stray dead fish, cast up by the sea; but no smoke issued from any of the chimneys to show that his master still lived; finally, after creeping along cautiously for ten or fifteen minutes more, we saw a woman come out of one of the houses.

In spite of the rain which was falling, the ladies were anxious to go ashore, and as we had not set foot on land for three weeks we ran all over the village, peeping in at doors and windows of unoccupied cabins, collecting strange flowers and shells, and trying to establish some sort of understanding with the few women and children we found; for all the men had gone away to hunt sea otter for the Alaska Commercial Company—the usual rough trading house with the sign "A. C. Co." standing there deserted for the time being. We found the old church very interesting, too, with its gorgeous altar cloths, its massive silver candlesticks, its bells manufactured in Russia and ornamented with fine bas relief work.

The name of this little settlement, as well as we could understand the natives, was Berka. After leaving it, a few hours' steaming brought us to Onalaska, the most beautiful little harbor I ever saw, I think; we remained there a day, and were much interested in the school for native girls kept there by Mr. and Mrs. Tuck; their pupils have made really wonderful progress considering the time they have been under their charge.

At Onalaska we saw at a distance the herd of nineteen reindeer left there last autumn as an experiment in reindeer raising; they were said to be in a very thriving condition, thus far proving the feasibility of the scheme for helping the natives by introducing domesticated reindeer. It took us twenty days to reach Onalaska, seven days more to make Port Clarence, and one day to reach home, so that our whole voyage occupied nearly a month.

Since our arrival here we have been hard at work to the utmost of our strength nearly every moment of our waking hours. We have had to build a house, you know, as well as get all our goods landed, brought up from the beach, opened, inspected and arranged, not to speak of the difficulties of providing for the daily needs of our household under the usual inconveniences of pioneer life. We anchored here about 6 P.M. By the time all our goods and coal were landed by the native canoes it was midnight by the clock, although the sun had just sunk below the horizon for an hour or two; for ships cannot anchor much nearer than a mile from shore. After the strain of an almost sleepless night at Port Clarence, and of superintending the unloading of our stores, Mr. Lopp and I had to take watch and watch about in guarding our goods as they lay exposed on the beach, for the natives, although fully as honest as white people of the same grade of moral and intellectual culture, are not yet above temptation.



Our Missionaries in Winter Clothing.

It looks as if we were going to have more trouble than I anticipated about the "servant girl question." The natives, like all uncivilized people, are not accustomed to persistent work or to any regular routine of duty, so that even an easy position becomes burdensome after a time. Our boy, Sokweena, has taken it into his head that he wants a holiday, so that we have had to take a new girl and train her; she promises to become very useful after a while, but meantime we have to do nearly all the housework ourselves. I have been interrupted about a hundred times while writing this letter, circumstances demanding that I should give some help about the house, or by having to doctor the natives, or trade with them for necessary supplies in incessant driblets—game, fish, skins for clothing, native boots, etc.

However, we are quite happy in spite of such trials, and continue to look forward to a sort of millennial period when we shall have trained our girl, "Socwoodlet," to take some of the household cares off our shoulders.

As none of our extra lumber or mill work was brought up, we had to do the best we could with the lumber intended for the Presbyterian mission at Point Barrow, and left here last summer because ice prevented its reaching its destination. The A. M. A. had previously empowered us to buy it. We still have the same old trouble with drunken natives and with idle loungers, who are constantly interrupting us on the most frivolous pretexts; this is due in great part to the unfortunate situation of the house just between the two villages; when it was first built we had no reason to suppose the situation would not be a good one; in fact it was chosen in part for its accessibility.

The new house is situated about a quarter of a mile from the old one, on the outskirts of the village of "A-gen-a-mete," much better sheltered from storm winds and blizzards, and commanding a much finer view of Behring Strait, Rutmanoff and Krunestern Islands and the Siberian coast. Another great advantage over our original plan is that the houses not being close together as at first intended, cannot both be destroyed at once in case of fire. The present house would have to be changed to make a dwelling house for us, and as the two are nearly the same size, we decided to use the old house as a school-house.

The organ has been a great source of wonder and pleasure to the natives; every Sunday, and sometimes at the close of our work on week days if we are not too tired, we admit as many as we can accommodate, while others stand about the open window listening to the music.

Poor Mr. Lopp suffered even more than I thought he would from his enforced seclusion for nine months; but he has now fully recovered his health and spirits. He and Miss Kittredge are to be married within the month. This relieves me from the imputation of being a big American chief with two wives, as was at first supposed.

We shall encourage ourselves with thinking that we shall have your prayers for our safety during the coming year, and for an abundant blessing upon our missionary work.

Rooms, American Missionary Association,
Bible House, New York.

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