

SCIENCE

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COAST SURVEY PARTIES IN ALASKA.

THE United States Coast and Geodetic Survey Office has received a telegram from their sub-office in San Francisco, Cal., giving the information that an agent of the Alaska Commercial Company had arrived by the last steamer from St. Paul, Alaska, bringing mail from the Coast and Geodetic Survey parties who have been engaged in making explorations and surveys on and near the 141st meridian of longitude (the boundary between Alaska and the British possessions). These two parties were commanded by Messrs. J. E. McGrath and J. H. Turner, assistants of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. The party under Mr. McGrath ascended the Yukon River to the boundary-line, and there made its headquarters, while that headed by Mr. Turner went up the Porcupine River to the Rampart House (the Hudson Bay Company's trading-post in the vicinity of the boundary), and there camped for the further prosecution of their work. Both parties were at their posts early in the autumn of 1889; and with the provisions which they carried with them, and those which were to be forwarded by the Alaska Commercial Company's steamer, they would have been provided with an ample quantity for fully fifteen months: but the loss of the steamer "Arctic" in 1889, and with it a portion of the provisions on which they relied, did not leave much margin for "high living" in Mr. McGrath's party; but, as he states, "we might have had to test the virtue of a very spare diet only for two unexpected resources that turned up. The first was a great crop of turnips that Mr. McQuesten, agent of the Alaska Commercial Company, raised at the store on Forty-Mile Creek during the summer: it was the first time he had made a garden there. The second was a greater number of deer crossing the trails they have between the Tan'-a-nah' and the Yukon Rivers (these trails intersect the valley of Forty-Mile Creek) than was ever before known by white men, and a corresponding abundance of fresh meat."

Mr. McGrath's party, however, remained at their post, and accomplished all the work which a very stormy, although not as cold as had been expected, season permitted.

The records made comprise a set of magnetic and of meteorological observations for a year; a set of specimens of sediments obtained from filtering certain measured quantities of the water of the Yukon River, made at regular intervals; certain botanical specimens; and a series of photographs. Mr. McGrath also gathered considerable information from some of the most intelligent of the Indians which he encountered at Forty-Mile Trading-Post, and had them make for him lists of all the Indians from Fort Yukon to Big Lake on the White River, and from the Tan'-a-nah' to the tributaries of the Porcupine. These were drawn up in tallies, and arranged according to families. These he turned over

to Mr. Greenfield (one of Mr. Petroff's deputies); and, as some of the tribes had not been reached by Mr. Greenfield, it was of much service to him in making the census enumeration.

Owing to the stormy weather, Mr. McGrath was unable to obtain a sufficient number of astronomical observations to justify him in returning this fall; and his party will therefore remain until next spring, and then descend the river, doing what work they can in the cause of science on their way down.

Mr. Turner's party were much more favored by the weather than the other party. They completed the necessary astronomical observations for the determination of the geographical position of their station on the Porcupine River at the boundary-line, also a set of magnetic and meteorological observations, and made a topographic map (on a scale of 1:5000) of the river in the vicinity of their camp, and a survey (on a scale of 1:200000) from the boundary to Fort Yukon, a distance of about one hundred miles.

A small scheme of triangulation was undertaken to locate three monuments placed to mark the boundary-line. An exploring expedition was sent during the months of March and April to explore the line northward to the Arctic Ocean. The party visited Herschel Island. During May another trip was made about forty miles to the southward; as far as Salmon Trout River.

Mr. Turner reports that the Hudson Bay Company have this summer moved their quarters to a site within the British domain.

Mr. Turner reached St. Michael's Aug. 30, 1890, with his party, too late to catch the steamer coming south. The party will winter there, and in the spring carry the triangulation toward the mouth of the Yukon River, until relieved by orders from the Coast and Geodetic Survey Office.

Both gentlemen speak in their reports of the uniform and untiring zeal which has been displayed by the officers and men in their parties; and, from this standpoint, it seems as if the subordinates have only tried to emulate their chiefs.

THE LATEST RESULTS OF ORIENTAL ARCHÆ- OLOGY.¹

A YEAR ago (*Science*, Dec. 13, 1889) I gave a short account of the startling archæological discoveries which had just been made in Arabia. The explorations of Doughty, Euting, Huber, and, above all, Glaser, the inscriptions they had found, and the historical facts disclosed by the decipherment of the epigraphic material, have thrown a sudden and unexpected flood of light on a continent which has hitherto been darker even than Central Africa. The members of the last Oriental Congress heard with astonishment that a country

¹ Fr. m The Contemporary Review.