

VISIT TO ALASKA.

Rabbi Gries Returns From the Far Off Territory.

Not Impressed by the Indian.

He is so Small in Physical Development and Very Meek—Alaska Not the Snow Covered and Ice Bound Region It is Supposed to Be—Some Magnificent Scenery — Valuable Mining Property.

Rabbi M. J. Gries of Tifereth Israel congregation returned on Friday evening from a delightful vacation trip, lasting two months, in which time he went up the lakes and spent a short time in Alaska. His trip was to St. Paul and Minneapolis, out through Yellowstone park, on to Portland, Tacoma, and other points of interest in the northwest, and thence to Alaska.

In speaking of the almost unknown part of Uncle Sam's dominions last evening the rabbi said: "I was not impressed by the Indian of Alaska. He is a small man in physical development and is very meek. He is not in any way the Indian of the novelist. He does not seem to be ferocious at all, but spends his time in work. He is an industrious fellow, and is employed as laborer in the fishing and canning works and in the mines. In the latter, however, not many are employed, as one skilled man can operate several stamps in the mines. We touched at many points, at Ft. Wrangle, Takon, Juneau, Metlakatlah, Killisno and others.

"The common idea of Alaska is that it is a snow covered and ice bound region, but it is not so. It is claimed at Sitka that the climate and the temperature is, by reason of the Japan current, the same as that of New York. That seems to be true, and all the time we were there the foliage was as green as could be, and we picked many wild flowers. They are the same as we meet with here, but they seemed to be larger. The trees are the trees of our climate, and there is no change in the color of their leaves. The scenery is grand. The boats run close to the shore and the channel is selected between the islands. The condition of the wind and the currents causes the channel selected to vary and the ships' officers vary it to suit the conditions from trip to trip.

"The only idea that the region is a cold one is that obtained from the snow-capped mountains, which are near the shore. Some of them come down to the very shore of the sea. The weather was chiefly wet and rainy and some days, when the fogs and the atmosphere were thick, the tops of the mountains could be plainly seen, while half way down hung the veil of mist and fog. At Takon we met with our first iceberg. They vary in size, and the one we saw was said to be about eighty feet above the water and about 150 feet wide. Of course it was impossible to tell how far under the water it extended. The bergs are magnificent sights and the colors are different, depending upon the density of the ice. Some of them are of a very deep blue, while others are of a much lighter hue. We went to the glacier bay on purpose. That is not on the regular run of the steamers, but all steamers go there for the sake of the scenes. I saw the Muir glacier and it is simply indescribable. The frontage on the sea is one and three-quarters of a mile, while the height of the sea frontage is from 150 to 500 feet. The ice is continually breaking off and falling into the sea, and when the small pieces break the sound is like a pack of cannon firecrackers, but when the larger ones break it is like the roll of artillery. There is no danger of the ice giving out, for there is said to be enough there to last for 1,000 years yet.

"At Killisno the chief industry is drying herring. The refuse is used in making guano, the fertilizer. Metlakatlah is a co-operative mission settlement of which a man by the name of Duncan is the head. They have fishing and canning works there and there are about 500 families there, who moved from British Columbia. Other missions are scattered about through the country and in some of the northern parts are missions which only communicate with the outside world once a year. Juneau is the largest town of Alaska and it is a great mining town. We went through the Treadwell mine, which is said to be the largest gold mine in the world. The mines up there are immense and gold and silver are produced in great quantities. When we were there many were starting for the Yukon territory as that is fast being developed into a mining country and many valuable mines are being located. Juneau has electric lights and is quite a town. Nearly all the business in Alaska is in the hands of Americans, but the laborers are Indians. Skilled American labor there receives \$4 per day. The Indians, I was told, receive but little.

"The territory is divided among the different denominations for missions and they are active in the work. The people are clamoring for local government and desire representation. The territorial governor does not meet with their approval. There is a law which forbids the existence of saloons in the territory, or the sale of liquor, yet there are thirty saloons in Juneau and several in the other towns. The missionaries oppose local government, because the people favor saloons and will vote to make them legal, while all the territorial governors have failed to enforce the law against them. I believe the future of Alaska is a great one and that it is capable of great possibilities. While the climate is bad, yet the trip is one that will well repay the tourist and the competition between lines will soon render it one of the most reasonable trips to take. The people are loyal and it is the only country that has paid back the purchase money."