

## THE PAINTED ROCKS OF LAKE CHELAN.

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THE Pacific Northwest, and in fact the Pacific coast in general, with the exception of Arizona, furnishes few evidences of the existence and works of prehistoric races. There seem never to have been in the Columbia Valley any native races comparable with those who wrought the marvellous pyramids and temples of Central America or the great irrigation systems and cliff-dwellings of Arizona and New Mexico. Yet bits here and there may be found, indicating crude attempts on the part of somebody, at some time, to realize those higher achievements of idealism and advancement which have always been the spur to man's growth.

Perhaps the most curious of these crude efforts at expression are the painted rocks of Lake Chelan. This lake is in Central Washington, and occupies a stupendous cañon in the Cascade Mountains.

This cañon, with its lateral cañons, constitutes the most remarkable group of cañons in the West. Not even the Grand Cañon of the Colorado surpasses it in vastness and grandeur; and Yosemite and Yellowstone, though having features of unique interest that can never be surpassed, do not compare in extent and variety with Chelan.

The cañons are about six thousand feet deep, hollowed out by stupendous seismic and glacial action from mountains of an average elevation of eight thousand feet, with many peaks of ten thousand feet and more. The lake itself is sixty-five miles long and reaches in places a depth of eighteen hundred feet. There are more glaciers in this area than in all the rest of the United States combined.

The rock of this region is granite and porphyry, with occasional lava. On the lake shore vast granite cliffs rise abruptly to an appalling height. In some places these mighty ramparts reach an almost perpendicular elevation of six or seven thousand feet. The wondrous hues of water, sky and forest, added to the bold and majestic outlines of mountains, impart to the lake an incomparable splendor of scenery.

The mellifluous word "Chelan" means, in the Indian tongue, "the beautiful water."

One can readily believe that the lake, with its accessories (and it may be added that both lake and tributary streams abound in fish, while all manner of game is found in the woods adjacent), was always an object of profound interest to the native races, probably of almost superstitious veneration.

Now, as to the painted rocks themselves. At a number of points along the shore the granite walls are white and smooth, presenting a surface most enticing to an artist. They evidently attracted the attention of some prehistoric and incipient Dürer or Rembrandt, for at several such places, notably near the head of the lake, there are groups of rude drawings. These are in some strong and durable red pigment, which must have been laid with remarkable skill and care to endure the passage of the several centuries which have evidently gone since they were placed there. The pictures themselves, while containing no artistic merit, properly speaking, do yet have a fidelity to the objects which they try to portray which is quite remarkable. These objects are men, tents, deer and wild goats. The wild goat (Mazama) is the most conspicuous animal of the Chelan cliffs. Some of the goats are drawn with surprising clearness.

As to the origin of these interesting objects, the Indians say that there is no tradition among them as to this, but that they have been there from time immemorial. Some

people have endeavored to sustain the hypothesis that the drawings were the work of early white men, perhaps the Hudson Bay trappers and *Voyageurs*, who were here early in the nineteenth century. But the opinion of the Indians above cited seems to disprove this. Also, it is seen that nearly all the drawings are at a level of about twenty-five feet above the present high water mark in the lake, and as the work of making them could have, in some cases, been done only from boats or rafts lying in the water, it becomes plain that the work of drawing was done when the lake was at a permanently higher level than now. There is geological evidence at the foot of the lake that a new channel for the outlet was formed a few centuries ago, by which the water level was lowered. The conclusion seems, therefore, good that these drawings were made by some race prior to the Indians and prior to that change in the level of the lake.

There is only one lamentable fact to add, and that is that alleged civilized beings, in the form of white men, have used these curious and interesting relics of antiquity for targets for their miserable rifles, and have shot away some of the best of them. Enough have been preserved, however, to be a source of deep interest and conjecture to the antiquarian.

By reason of the presence of these painted rocks, as well as its sublime scenery, its opportunities for recreation and sport, and its vast though undeveloped mineral wealth, Chelan, now so little known to the world at large, will be sure, within a few years, to become one of the most famous resorts of our country.

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