

The Legend of Shasta Springs

"The legend of Shasta Springs". *Picturesque Shasta Springs on the Shasta Route of the Southern Pacific Co. between San Francisco and Portland.* Southern Pacific Co. 189-?.

Where the tree tops form perfumed canopies of green,
Where the streams are terraced with pools of limpid sheen,
Where the landscape is with entrancing beauty rife,
Where the buoyant air provides an added charm for life--
There--there is Shasta.

South of Mt. Shasta, in the now famed canyon of the Sacramento, are great natural curiosities, known as the fountains of Shasta--streams of water pure as crystal, cold even in the midst of summer, gushing out from the rock, and falling down the mountain side into the river. They are supposed to be outlets of a subterranean stream fed by the eternal snows that crown the peak, where the Coast Mountains of the west join the Sierras of the east. They include the noted Mossbrae Falls and a number of springs, several of which are mineral in character, one of them being the celebrated Shasta Spring. These remarkable springs, or fountains, as they may with propriety be termed, are accounted for by the following legend, mention of which is also made by Bancroft, who cites from Joaquin Miller's tales of Modoc life:

In the far, far long ago, the Great Spirit concluded to make the world. He created Mt. Shasta first. Using a large sharp stone as an auger, he bored a hole in the sky, through which he pushed down snow and ice until he had reared the mountain. Then he stepped down from cloud to cloud to the peak, and thence to earth. Stooping, he pressed his finger into the ground here and there, and caused the first trees to start. The sun commenced its action, causing the snow to melt and give nourishment to the trees.

The Great Spirit gathered some leaves, breathed upon them, and they became birds. He then broke a stick into a number of pieces. From the small pieces he made fish--from the middle pieces he made the lesser animals--from the large pieces he made the grizzly bear, and gave him the authority to act as master over all the animal creation. The grizzly soon became so large, so powerful, and so cunning that the Great Spirit began to fear him, and, as a matter of protection, made a wigwam for himself out of Mt. Shasta.

The Great Spirit and his family dwelt within, and the smoke curling up from the summit showed that the fire was burning on the hearth. Then a great storm came--the wind blew the ocean against the mountain and made it tremble. The Great Spirit asked his little daughter to go up and quiet the storm, cautioning her not to look out, but to put forth her hand and make a sign before giving the command. The child clambered up to the roof, did as told, and was about to descend, when her curiosity got the best of her; she wanted to see what the world looked like--she put out her head--the wind caught her by the hair, dragged her down the mountain side, and left her in the land of the grizzly bears. Near the mountain base dwelt a family of grizzlies.

The old grizzly was returning from a hunt with a young elk in one paw and a bludgeon on his shoulder. He spied the fair child unconscious on the ground. He lifted the little one tenderly and carried her to his home. The old mother grizzly pitied the child and gave her milk from her own breast, and reared her as one of her own family. The girl grew up and married the eldest son of the old grizzly, and their offspring was man. The grizzlies then were very different from the grizzlies now--they walked erect like men, carried clubs for weapons and talked. When man was born, the grizzly nation rejoiced and was filled with pride. They united and built a wigwam for the young mother near that of the Great Spirit--and it is now known as Little Mount Shasta.

Many years passed away; the old mother grizzly became feeble and felt she was soon to die. Her conscience smote her, because through all the years she had concealed from the Great Spirit the whereabouts of his child. She called the grizzlies together at the new Lodge, and sent her eldest grandson up toward the clouds to the summit of Mt. Shasta, to tell the Great Spirit where his darling might be found. When the Great Spirit heard, he was filled with joy, and ran down the mountain with great speed--so great was his speed, the snow was melted and streams began to flow, and hidden water courses were formed *and the fountain and springs along the Sacramento (including the wonderful Shasta Spring) began to flow, as they continue to this day.*

The grizzly nation had assembled from all quarters of their domain and prepared a grand reception. As the Great Spirit neared his daughter's wigwam he found thousands of grizzlies standing erect with clubs on their shoulders, in two files facing, one on either side of the door. As the Great Spirit sped down between the lines, shouts of welcome rent the air. He reached his child, but when he found her so changed, and that a new race had been created without his consent, he was seized with anger; his rage was fearful to behold. He looked at the old grandmother grizzly with such an awful countenance that she died on the spot. Then the grizzlies began to howl and lament. The Great Spirit lifted his daughter tenderly in his arms, and, before departing, turned to the grizzlies and cursed them in his fury. "Be silent," he cried. "Never again speak. Stand erect no more. Use your hands as feet, and look to the ground till I come again." Then he drove them away, and also drove the new race of men from him. He then closed the door of Little Mt. Shasta and returned to his own wigwam, carrying his daughter with him, and they were never afterwards seen.

The grizzlies are still under his curse; they never speak or stand erect except when life is in danger, when the Great Spirit permits them to stand upright as of old and use their fists like men. The Great Spirit, with his daughter, long since returned to the land beyond the sky. The wigwam is abandoned. The hearthstone is cold. Smoke no longer curls upwards from the summit of Mt. Shasta.

Shasta Spring.

By Prof. Chas. H. Allen, San Jose, California

Hail, glorious Shasta! Silent and alone!
Crowned with a grandeur that is all thine own!

The towering pinnacles are passing fair,
Glistening, resplendent in the upper air.
Thou look'st serenely on the world below,
Decked in thine ermine of eternal snow.

Great frozen rivers creep adown thy sides,
And at thy foot the melted torrents glide;
Loosed from their icy bonds by fires below,
Down through thy bosom, crystal streamlets flow,
And in thy sacred heart, slowly distilled,
Are with life-giving virtues richly filled.

Still on through fissures dark they pass; at length
Carbonic gases add their magic strength;
Charged with new life the water gurgles on,
Seeking an outlet which it finds anon,
And here it gushes forth--a joyous thing,
Sparkling and bubbling--This is "Shasta Spring."

In Nature's grand alembic, thus distilled
It asks no aid from man, however skilled;
Fresh from the fountain's brim it slakes the thirst,
And heals the ills with which poor flesh is cursed.
A grand, a precious boon, far famed and wide,
The world's great blessing--California's pride.

The dun deer sought it for a cooling draught,
And with its water, strength and vigor quaffed;
Thither the red man turned, with fever plagued,
And by its spell the burning heat assuaged.
Ages passed on; yet, silent and alone,
Its work was done, unheralded, unknown.

Its healing virtues were at length revealed,
Like truth, that never can be long concealed;
To-day it stands "The Queen of Waters." Now
All other claimants at its shrine must bow.
Hail, SHASTA SPRING! Thou seem'st in very truth
The long sought "Fountain of Eternal Youth."