

AMONG THE ALASKANS.

"No old people among them"! Why is this? Are they so strong and well that they always keep young? No; it is because they are not allowed to live to grow old. Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a missionary among them, says in *Forward*:

When a man has outlived his usefulness, his oldest son usually undertakes to quietly put him out of the way. A walrus-club is often the implement used, but the filial son sometimes varies the programme by skillfully choking the head of the family with a piece of rawhide. When the mother becomes too old for efficient service, she also, is disposed of by similar uncompromising methods.

Sometimes the dreadful task is consigned to the medicine man, who promptly performs the operation, with the addition of appropriate "ceremonies."

This barbarous custom of disposing of superfluous relatives seems to be accepted by the natives as the merest matter-of-course. One man told Dr. Jackson that he would probably be killed before the doctor returned again to the village.

Slavery was once common in Alaska, but has diminished since the natives have been brought in contact with white men.

The Eskimos are small of stature, but the other natives of Alaska are large and stalwart, both men and women being six feet or more in height. They are great pedestrians; the men are equal to their sixty miles a day, while the women sometimes walk thirty miles, carrying their babies upon their backs or astride their necks.

Native fashions admit of little variety; one set of fur garments does duty in summer, when winter comes the native simply dons an extra suit. The garments are made of the skins of rabbits and other animals, the outer garment having a hood attached to pull up over the head.

The people have no faith in the efficacy of a bath, and pay little attention to the hair. There are natives of the mature age of forty who have never combed their locks. Yet the native of Alaska has his own peculiar views of personal adornment. The men sometimes cut a hole at each corner of the mouth and insert something similar to a sleeve button, and fashion decrees that one of these "ornaments" shall be larger than the other.

Shamanism seems to be the universal belief among the natives of Alaska. This is a belief in spirits who are supposed to be under the control of the shaman, or medicine man. The lower animal world, and natural phenomena in general, are believed to have some intimate connection with these spirits, and as the

whole relation of man to the spirits is full of self-interest and fear, this belief places great power in the hands of the medicine man.

The soul of a medicine man always passes into the body of some infant, and when a medicine man dies, dreams and divinations, or some peculiar mark upon an innocent babe speedily determines into which infant the supreme and mysterious power of the shaman has entered. Thus a child is set apart from infancy and trained to the belief that he is the proud possessor of supernatural gifts.

CHINESE GIRLS AT HOME.

A great many little girls in China, while very young, are able to add their mite to the family income by learning one of the trades which employ the busy fingers of poor Chinese women.

A large number of children are taught to make soles which are used for Chinese shoes. They paste pieces of old rag on a board or shutter till a thickness of about half-an-inch is obtained. The substance is then dried in the sun, and after being stripped from the board is ready for the shoemaker's use. Others, for a short season, are employed in the manufacture of the beautiful lanterns, of all shapes and sizes, which are in such universal request during the festivities of the first month of the year.

Other girls are skilful in making small paper boxes used in jeweller's shops, and many are employed in the plaiting of silk to lengthen queues.

The art of embroidering also supplies work to a large number of women and girls, and many little girls are kept so closely to their frames that their eyes are permanently injured.

But the industry which employs probably the largest number of girls is that of making paper money to be used in the worship of the gods.

Girls in China seldom receive any education. Sometimes a wealthy man will allow his daughter to share in her brother's studies for a short time, but generally it is considered unwise to allow girls to become as clever as their future husbands.

The several volumes which have been compiled for the use of Chinese girls are all very similar, and usually bear some such titles as "Counsels," or "Instructions." Girls are there exhorted to pay close attention to all household duties, and particular directions are given as to the dress and manners becoming to young maidens. They are taught to be respectful to their elders, and very minute directions are given to guide them in their behaviour to their mother-in-law and to their future husband.—*Sel.*