

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The U. S. S. *Thetis* was detailed by the Navy Department to cruise, during the summer and autumn of 1889, in the Behring Sea and Arctic Ocean, for the purpose of looking out for the whaling and commercial interests of the United States in those waters, and also for the purpose of assisting in the establishment of a house of refuge at Point Barrow, the most northerly point of our territory.

During this cruise, in order to make it as broad and useful as possible, several of the officers on board of the *Thetis* were directed to prepare reports upon subjects connected with the waters and regions visited by the ship, from their observation and from other reliable sources. Two reports were submitted to me upon the subject of the Eskimos of north-western Alaska; one on the ethnography of the Eskimos, by John W. Kelly, and the other an Eskimo vocabulary, prepared by Ensign Roger Wells, jr., almost entirely from information and material furnished by Mr. John W. Kelly, the interpreter of the ship. Mr. Kelly spent three winters among the north-western Eskimos, and has been engaged for seven years at various times in acquiring a knowledge of the language. The vocabulary is the largest in number of words that I know of, treating of the language of the Eskimos upon our Arctic coast. It has a short vocabulary of the American Eskimos who are settled upon the Asiatic side of Behring Strait, which, I think, will be found particularly interesting and valuable.

The *Thetis* had the good fortune during this summer of reaching as far east as Mackenzie Bay and as far west as Herald Island and Wrangell Land, thus leaving an honorable name for service among Arctic cruisers. It is to be hoped that the reports, memoranda, and other contributions secured through the ready co-operation of the officers of the ship will serve also to make a permanent and useful record of the cruise creditable to the ship, interesting to the general reader, and of value as contributions to our knowledge of the Territory of Alaska.

CHARLES H. STOCKTON,
Lieutenant-Commander, United States Navy,
Commanding U. S. S. Thetis.

FEBRUARY 17, 1890.