

They do not know who made the sun, the heavens, the waters and the earth; nor whether the person who made these things be dead or alive. They know, however, that there is a bad spirit among them, who causes them to suffer; and they pray to him not to hurt them. They believe, when a wicked man dies, that the bad spirit takes him, and puts him into a hole under ground, where there is a perpetual fire; but when a good man dies, the moon takes him up to a happy place, where he lives as he did upon earth, only he has less to do.

"The Esquimaux was fond of saying that formerly they were as white men—like me. I encouraged him in this idea; but observed that white men now knew a great deal more than his tribe, and that many persons in my country wished them to be taught who made the world, &c. On my asking whether they would like to have a white man live among them, to clothe and teach their children, the Esquimaux and his wife appeared to be quite overjoyed at the question—laughed heartily—and said that they wished to know the Great Spirit; adding, that if I came to live among their people, they were sure they would treat me well; as they would be much pleased in having their children taught what white men knew; and would bring provisions, as there was plenty of musk-oxen, deer and salmon. We parted cordially, shaking hands; and, at the same time, I observed to him, that if white men came to live in his country, it would not be because white man's country was not better than his,—but because white man loved the Esquimaux, and wished to teach them how to live and die happy."

Of another party, who arrived a few days afterward, Mr. West observes, "As some of the Esquimaux were returning to Chesterfield inlet, I assembled them, and had the following '*talk*,' previously to my giving them a few presents:—

"Standing in the circle, I said, 'I speak true. I love Esquimaux; and many in my country love them, and wished me to visit them. As a proof that I love them, I came far across the sea, where the sun rises, to see them—not to make house, and trade with them; but to ask them (and they must speak true) if they should like white man to make house, and live in their country, that he might clothe their children, and teach them to read white man's book, to write, and to know the Great Spirit.'"

Mr. West had no sooner ceased speaking, than they all, with one consent, expressed their approbation of his proposal by laughing and shouting; adding, that they would supply plenty of provisions, and would never steal from white man in their own country, though they were conscious that this was sometimes done at the factories. Our missionary then gave to

each individual a clasp-knife, a little tobacco, and a few beads for their wives.

"The Esquimaux," says Mr. West, "who had accompanied captain Franklin, was very anxious that I should see his countrymen conjure; and immediately after I had given them the presents, he got a blanket and a large knife, and told me that one of them would put the knife through his body, and not die—or fire a ball through his breast, leaning upon a musket, without being injured. I objected to the deception; and told him that if his countrymen could really conjure, they should draw to their shores the whales, which were then appearing in the river opposite the fort. It was with some difficulty, however, that I prevented the exhibition."

About fifty miles north of fort Churchill, Mr. West visited another tribe of Esquimaux, who are in the habit of traversing the coast in the neighborhood of Knapp's bay. "We pitched our tent with them," says he, "for two days; and I never knew Indians behave so orderly as they did. They partook of their meals with great cordiality and cheerfulness; and never came into my tent without being asked. To seven of the oldest men among them I repeated the questions which I had put to the others; and they all appeared overjoyed with the expectation of having a white man among them to make house, and teach their children; promising to furnish him with provisions, and not to steal. I gave to each of these, also, a knife, with a portion of tobacco, and some beads, to take to their wives.

"In parting with these Indians, to return to fort Churchill, I felt a lively interest for their eternal welfare; and shall greatly rejoice if any plan can be devised to accomplish the object of educating their children. They are an interesting race of people, and appear to me to present a fine field for missionary labor, with the hope of much success."

In returning from this excursion to the factory, Mr. West observes, that he had to proceed along a coast the most dangerous to navigate that can be conceived; from the water being studded with fragments of rocks, for miles from the shore, and which are only visible at the reflux of the tide. "The safest course to take," says he, "is to run out to sea, and sail along out of sight of land; but this is hazardous in an open boat, if the weather be stormy, or the water be much ruffled by the wind. The company lost a boat's crew last fall, as they were returning to Churchill, from one of the points of rock where they had been to collect geese, which the Indians had shot, and which were designed to be salted, as part of the winter supply of provisions at the establishment. At first, it was supposed that the boat had been driven out to sea, and