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A JOURNEY TO THE YOUCAN, RUSSIAN AMERICA.

BY W. W. KIRBY.

I left home on the 2d of May in a canoe paddled by a couple of Indians belonging to my mission. We followed the ice down the noble McKenzie, staying awhile with Indians wherever we met them, and remained three or four days at each of the forts along the route. On the 11th of June I left the zone in which my life had hitherto been passed, and entered the less genial *arctic* one. Then, however, it was pleasant enough. The immense masses of ice piled on each side of the river sufficiently cooled the atmosphere to make the travelling enjoyable, while the sun shed upon us the comfort of light nearly the whole twenty-four hours. And as we advanced further northward he did not leave us at all. Frequently did I see him describe a complete circle in the heavens.

Between Point Separation and Peel's river we met several parties of Esquimaux, all of whom, from their thievish propensities, gave us a great deal of trouble, and very glad were we to escape out of their hands without loss or injury. They are a fine-looking race of people, and from their general habits and appearance, I imagine them to be much more intelligent than the Indians. And if proof were wanting I think we have it in a girl who was brought up from the coast little more than three years ago, and who now speaks and reads the English language with considerable accuracy. The men are tall, active, and remarkably strong, many of them having a profusion of whiskers and beard. The women are rather short, but comparatively fair, and possess very regular and by no means badly formed features. The females have a very singular practice of periodically cutting the hair from the crown of their husband's head, (leaving a bare place like the tonsure of a Roman Catholic priest,) and fastening the spoil to their own, wear it in bunches on each side of their face, and a third on the top of their head, something in the manner of the Japanese who recently visited the United States. This custom, as you will imagine, by no means improved either their figure or appearance, and as they advance in life, the bundles must become to them uncomfortably large. A very benevolent old lady was most urgent for me to partake of a slice of blubber, but I need hardly say that a sense of *taste* caused me firmly but respectfully to decline accepting her hospitality. Both sexes are inveterate smokers. Their pipes they manufacture themselves, and are made principally of copper; in shape, the bowl is very like a reel used for cotton, and the hole through the centre of it is as large as the aperture of the pipe for holding the tobacco. This they fill, and when lighted will not allow a single whiff to escape, but in the most unsmoker-like manner swallow it all, withholding respiration until the pipe is finished. The effect of this upon their nervous system is extremely great, and often do they fall on the ground completely exhausted, and for a few minutes tremble like an aspen leaf. The heavy beards of the men, and the fair complexions of all, astonished my Indians greatly, and in their surprise called them "Manooli Conde," like white people. They were all exceedingly well dressed in deer-skin clothing, with the hair outside, which being new and nicely ornamented with white fur, gave them a clean and very comfortable appearance. Their little Kyachs were beautifully made, and all the men were well armed with deadly-looking knives, spears, and arrows, all of their own manufacture. The Indians are much afraid of them, and so afraid of my safety were two different parties that I saw on my