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From these snow houses the men go out every morning when the weather will permit and, by means of their dogs smelling all around, find out the snow-covered holes through which the seal blows in order to get fresh air. As the seal is clever enough to have a number of holes at different places, it is not an easy task to locate the exact one through which to capture him. The men, however, go out in bands and cover all the holes they can find in a certain district. Thus one man is fairly sure to secure a seal and, as the Eskimos live a communistic life, all the village will benefit by his catch. The seals are speared as they poke up their noses to blow. But there is no fun standing or sitting near a seal hole all day, at maybe 50° below zero and a good wind blowing; and if you are not still Mr. Seal will not come near.

It is while the natives are gathered together in their villages that the missionary finds his greatest opportunity. The mission sleds are packed with food for men and dogs, camp and sleeping gear for the party. Dogs are then hitched to the sleds, and one sled starts off in one direction and the other in another, and so commences the never ending tramp, tramp, tramp of the missionaries' life. From snow village to snow village we trudge, ten days here or five days there, teaching, gathering language material, and generally doing all we can to carry God's message. By these means we manage to cover at least once a year the whole of our "parish" of twice the area of Great Britain.

Your representatives live among the people, sleep in their snow houses, often depend upon their food and dress in skins as they do, and maybe wear a surplice once a year.

TABOO.

The natives are fearfully superstitious and live in dread of numerous spirits, which are supposed to govern all the different phenomena of nature. It matters not which way you turn, you will meet with the taboo system which, if broken, will displease some spirit or other.

On one occasion I had camped along with a colleague, Mr. Merritt, in a snow village on the sea ice. With the aid of a primus oil-stove I prepared to fry a piece of seal meat. My companion did not relish this dish, and hunted round the camp until he found a piece of frozen salmon. This, he asked me to fry for him along with my meat. The moment I placed the fish into the pan alongside the meat, a hubbub commenced. Nothing would quiet the situation until I took the fish away. The reason given by the people for their alarm was that the spirit which governed the seals would be angry at the mixing of meat with fish in the same pan, and that in consequence their sealing would be a failure.

While in camp at the mouth of a small river in the summer of 1918, where the natives were engaged in spearing fish, I noticed people sitting on the barren ground about a mile or more away from the camp. On approaching, I found them sewing and repairing clothes, and I inquired why they were so far from camp. The reply was that if they were close the spirit of the fish would see them sewing and be displeased, and the consequence would be no fish.

These governing spirits are propitiated by certain magical songs, dances and séances along with small offerings. When a blizzard has been blowing so long that it has seriously reduced their stock of food, the native doctor will go into a séance, telling the people that he is going up to the clouds to sew up the hole, whence the wind comes. Sometimes the wind stops next day; often it does not, but this in no way shakes their faith in the doctor.

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This intricate system of law or taboo leads to the same result as was the case with the Jews—namely, a great deal of casuistry. When entering one village built near the shore, I had the misfortune to tear my deer-skin coat badly. After fixing up camp I asked a woman to repair it for me, but she replied that it was taboo to sew deer-skin clothes on the sea ice. As the woman's husband was the fortunate possessor of a newly arrived rifle, half a box of cartridges was offered to her as an inducement. She consulted with the local doctor, who said he would inquire of the spirits. The reply came that she could repair the coat if half the promised pay was given to him.


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