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## NOTES ON ESKIMO TRADITIONS.

By HARLAN I. SMITH.

Most of the households in the Eskimo village, belonging to the World's Columbian Exposition, were from localities under missionary influences. Two families, however, were from Nachvak, farther north than the others, and at some distance from Rama, the most northern mission. From Conieossuck, the head of one of these households, through the medium of Georgie Deer, a bright Eskimo from Rigoulette, were obtained the two tales which follow; the narrator reciting a few words at a time, and pausing until these were interpreted and written out.<sup>a</sup>

### I. OLÜNGWA.<sup>b</sup>

In the old times, Sedna<sup>c</sup> came up to the surface of the water, and while there was seen by an old heathen<sup>d</sup> woman named Olüngwa, who

<sup>a</sup>The Eskimo story teller, of which class there is usually a representative in each village, is obliged to narrate the stories correctly, as it is considered a part of the duty of the audience to correct his inaccuracies.

<sup>b</sup>This story seemed to be made up of several short parts, some of which are apparently incomplete and show but little relation to each other. Collected October 2, 1893. Olüngwa, as the writer understands, was a medicine woman, perhaps an *angakok*, or possibly a *pivdlerortok*, "a mad or delirious person," able to foretell events, unfold the thoughts of others, and "even gifted with a faculty of walking upon the water, besides the highest perfection in divining, but was at the same time greatly feared." (Rink's *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, p. 56.)

<sup>c</sup>"Sedna" has been substituted in each case for the following words of the interpreter, "the woman whose fingers had been cut off," as it is supposed that the phrase refers to her. Their Supreme Being is a woman whose name is Sedna." (Boas, "Central Eskimo," 6th An. Rep. Bur. Ethnology, p. 583.)

When telling of Sedna, Conieossuck and his wife would clutch the top of the table, from the side, then letting go the right hand would draw it edgewise over the fingers of the left, or she would hold both hands while he struck them with the edge of his, thus representing the cutting off of Sedna's fingers, the story of which also is related in Boas's "Central Eskimo."

<sup>d</sup>"Heathen" was used almost invariably by the Christianized Eskimo at the village to designate those from the north of Labrador, or even their own ancestors previous to their conversion by the Moravian missionaries. In this instance, however, it was probably used by the interpreter to signify medicine or *angakok*, and in footnote 7 of this tale the reference to "*angakok*" must be understood in this connection.