



AN AINO MATRON.

it as it was an heirloom. I have since ascertained that in New York such a skin would be worth one hundred and fifty dollars. Had I offered him thirty dollars I think he would have succumbed. I have come to the conclusion since that ignorance is not always bliss.

In the afternoon my host took me a short distance to a hut occupied by three Ainos. This hut resembled the Indian habitations in Alaska, with its central fireplace and smoke-hole above, and the arrangements for drying salmon. The three men were engaged in emptying an enormous kettle full of rice by the aid of chop sticks. Their limbs were hairy, their hair and beards long and thick, and, like their complexion, several shades darker than those of the Japanese, reminding me altogether very strongly of the Spanish gypsies near Granada. I asked my host to send for some rice wine for these Ainos, but they shook their heads and would have none of it. This was rather a surprise, for I had read that the Ainos are greatly addicted to drink, that they spend all their gains on it, consider intoxication the highest happiness, and drinking to the gods the most proper and devout way of worshiping them. But a few judicious questions revealed the true inwardness of their paradoxical temperance. They had been hired to work on the road, and the contractor, being familiar with Aino habits, had made them promise not to drink. Gradually, however, they became assured that our intentions were honorable, the wine was brought, and the three long-bearded men, on being told that it was "my treat," bowed very low and smiled gratefully on me before they filled their cups and eagerly emptied them.

All this, however, was a mere foretaste of what I was to see a few days later. The largest groups of Ainos are to be found in the villages scattered along the south coast of Yezo, east of Mororan, and on my way from Sapporo to Mororan I had to drive almost a day along this coast, in sight of the Pacific ocean. I asked the driver where the largest Aino settlement was on our road, and he replied, "at Shiraoi," adding that I would have plenty of time to see them, as he always allowed his horses to rest there for an hour.

Starting in the direction he pointed, I soon came across Ainotown, which, as usual, was separated some little distance from the rest of the village. It consisted of a few irregular rows of straw houses, of the most primitive construction. I stopped at one of the first to look in at the door, but saw nothing to reward this enterprise except the bare ground with a single mat and a fireplace in the centre. Nobody seemed to be at home, nor did I find anyone in the other houses I looked into. We met, however, several groups of women and children hastening towards the beach, and talking so excitedly that they hardly paid any attention to such a strange apparition as a foreigner. Suspecting that something unusually interesting was going on, I sought the beach and soon beheld a sight which made my heart leap for joy. A large whale had been cast ashore, and around it were assembled all the Aino men, women and children of Shiraoi, two hundred in all. I might have lived among these "savages" for weeks and months without getting an equally fine opportunity to see them in their

element. It was the best bit of tourist's luck that ever befel me. Indeed, the innkeeper told me that such an event occurred but rarely.

The whale had been cast ashore during the night, and by eight o'clock in the morning everybody had appeared to make the most of the opportunity. The whale had been fastened by a strong rope to a stake driven in the ground, to prevent it from being washed out again. It was a monster—sixty feet long, as I was informed by two Japanese policemen who were on the ground, presumably to prevent quarrels. It was no longer as fresh as it might have been; the waves had battered it considerably, and the odor it emitted was so strong and offensive that I had noticed it before we drove into Shiraoi. But it did not daunt the Ainos, who crowded around the carcass, brandishing long knives with which they cut off big slices of flesh and blubber, retreating every moment with wild shouts whenever a breaker dashed over the whale. Their faces were delightfully expressive and animated with the excitement of the occasion, and seeing my chance I dashed recklessly among them and snapped my camera in every direction. Ainos, Ainos everywhere, in all possible attitudes and groupings—did ever a photographic fiend have such an opportunity?

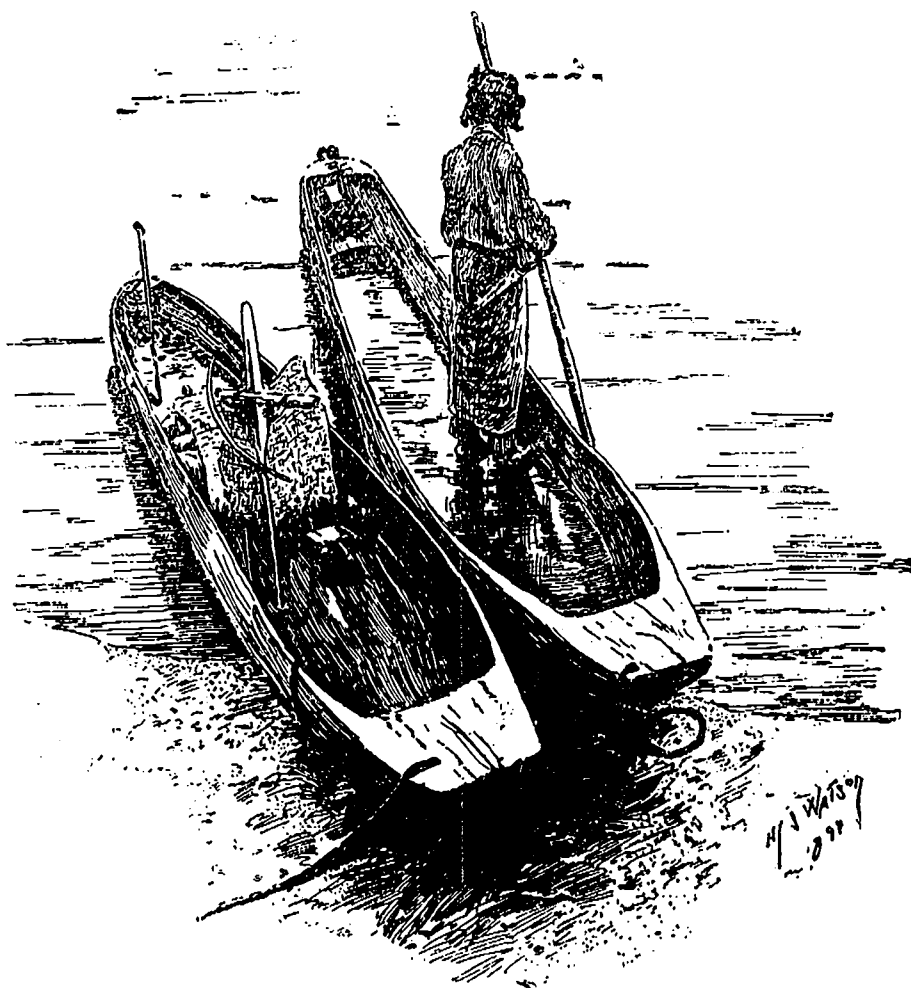
I took at least three dozen shots, and before long my presence with the mysterious little black box, which I kept aiming at them, distracted the attention of the younger ones, especially the girls, from the whale, and they watched me wonderingly, while some even followed me about. One young woman, apparently suspecting what I was doing, put up her hands before her face as I aimed at her; but too late—she did not know the rapidity of instantaneous photography. Among the young girls was one who was really very pretty, with regular features, a light complexion and large, round, wondering black eyes. She was about thirteen. Two or three of the older ones also had pleasing features, and would have been pretty had it not been for their atrocious tattooed mustaches.

Of these groups the most interesting was at the extreme left end, facing the sea. Here a

dozen or more emblems of Aino gods—peeled and whittled sticks with the curled shavings hanging down from the top—had been placed in a row. These gods represent animals and the forces of nature, sun, air, water, etc. Beside them were about twenty of the village elders, dignified old men with splendid black beards and an intelligent cast of countenance which, however, was probably deceptive. They were sitting in a semi-circle, with their hands uplifted and waving in prayerful thanks for the god-send on which they were about to feast. Here was an opportunity—twenty superb specimens of the aboriginal population of Japan sitting in a natural photographic group and needing no instructions regarding pose and expression. I suppose it was a rude thing to do, but I could not resist the temptation to walk right up in front of the venerable group, and when I got to the middle I took two shots at them as undemonstratively as possible.

At first they seemed surprised and interested, and not at all indignant. But when I moved a few more steps toward the religious sticks the chief got up and with a smile and a motion of the hand begged me to keep away. Kind old fellow! I know I deserved a good kicking for my impudence, but I bagged my photographs in safety and congratulated myself on my rare luck. Indeed the whole adventure had been a combination of lucky coincidences; in the first place—most marvellous of all—that the whale should have been beached exactly in front of the Aino village, of all the miles and miles of coast; secondly, that it was customary for the stage to stop there for an hour; and, finally, that the sun shone brightly enough to take good photographs.

The Aino gods, however, had their revenge for my irreverent act of photographing the elders. The climate spoiled nearly all my pictures. I had been warned when I left San Francisco that if I wished to succeed in Japan as an amateur photographer I must do up my films in air-tight wrappers. I did so, but even that was not sufficient precaution, for when the films were placed in their camera they were no longer protected and the moist air damaged them so that the resulting pictures were but shadows



AINO DUGOUTS.