

will be readily seen, then, that where any other northern Indian tribe would starve or freeze to death, the Eskimo live in warmth and with plenty. A Chippewyan or Tinné Indian hunting party, overtaken by a winter storm on the barren grounds, would have no resource for safety and shelter but to lie down and let the snow drift over whatever covering they may happen to have, and often freeze, where an Eskimo party similarly circumstanced would build a comfortable house of the snow which threatened to destroy them.

It is as difficult a matter as with other Indians to obtain from them an idea of their religious beliefs, and with the Eskimo more so perhaps than with the others, so great is their fear of appearing in any way ludicrous to strangers. To get an idea at all, their language must be mastered and their confidence gained, and even then they are apt to refer you to their "angekoks," corresponding to the "medicine men" of the neighbouring Indian tribes, who alone are supposed to have seen and held converse with the spirit or spirits they worship, or rather, in most cases, endeavour to placate. As may be imagined, these angekoks are not anxious to give much information of their methods of dealing either with the Eskimo or with the higher powers, and even they (the angekoks or shamans, as they are sometimes called) vary in their opinions as to the greater deity or great spirit, some asserting that he is without form of any kind, others asserting that he is shaped like a great bear, but, with or without form, nearly all agree that he resides at the centre of the earth, where there is continual warmth and sunshine, seal, deer, whales, fowl and fish in abundance. He teaches, they say, the "special ones" their arts. There is, however, another great spirit, having no proper name, belonging to the other sex, and having a very bad and envious disposition. The angekoks boast of close intimacy with the great spirit, and from him they obtain on initiation their *familiar spirit*, who accompanies them on their journeys when they go to seek advice from the great spirit about the curing of diseases, procuring good weather, or dissolving the charms of some evil spirit by which land and sea animals have been protected from the hunters. When the angekok is employed to cure the sick, he erects a tent over himself and his patient, singing over him for several days, abstaining from food all the time, and blowing on the affected part, which is one of the chief remedies of these physicians, who employ ventriloquism, sleight of hand, swallow knives, extract stones from various parts of their bodies, and various other deceptions to impress their countrymen with a high opinion of their supernatural powers; and some of them, generally women, pretend to have acquired the power of stilling the winds and causing the rain to cease.

Though the majority of angekoks are mere jugglers, the class undoubtedly includes a few Eskimo of intelligence and penetration, and perhaps a greater number of genuine believers whose understanding has been subverted by the influence of some impression strongly working upon their fervid imagination. These sensible persons, who are best entitled to the name of "wise men" or "angekoks" (the meaning of the word is "great" and "wise"), have, either from the instruction of their fathers or their own observation and long experience, acquired a useful knowledge of nature, which enables them to give a pretty confident opinion to such as consult them on the state of the weather or the success of the fisheries. They show equal sagacity in their treatment of the sick, whose spirits they keep up by charms and amulets, while as long as they have any hope of recovery they prescribe a judicious regimen. Their blameless deportment and superior intelligence have made them the oracles of their countrymen, and they may be classed as the physicians and philosophers of this arctic race. Persons of this class, when closely questioned, often avow the falseness