

Narrative of
Mr. John Simpson,
Surgeon.

all agree in looking upon death as the greatest of human evils, and would invariably "rather bear the ills they have, than fly to others that they know not of." The soul is a turn'-gak, they say, seated in the breast, or rather in the lungs, and seems closely allied to the breath; from it emanate all thoughts, which as they rise the tongue gives utterance to. Even as to its unity they hold different notions, for one person told us a man had four turn'-gaks in his breast; and another, that wherever a man went there was in the ground beneath him his "familiar spirit," which moved as he moved, and was only severed from him in death. However this may be, in death the body sleeps and the spirit descends into the earth to associate with those which have gone before, and subsists on bad food, such as roots, stones, and mosquitoes.

In order not to offend the spirits of the departed, their bodies are wrapped in skins and laid on the earth beside others already there, with the head to the east at Point Barrow; but for this direction there is no general rule. As his clothes and other portions of property he habitually used, including the sledge on which he was carried, would bring ill-luck to any one else who took them, they are left with the body in a torn or broken state, and the family to which he belonged keep within the hut for five days, not daring to work lest the spirits should be offended; and instances can be readily adduced where they believe death to have happened to persons who infringed the custom of mourning five days. Diseases are also considered to be turn'-gaks, and so hurtful do they think the touch of a corpse, that it is unwholesome to smoke from the same pipe or drink out of the same cup with any one who was the wife, mother, or other near relative of a deceased person; this, they say, is because these relatives from tending the sick person become tainted by his breath, and another by using the same pipe or cup might acquire the disease.

JOHN SIMPSON, Surgeon, R.N.

The SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY to Commander MAGUIRE.

Sir,

Admiralty, November 9th, 1854.

HAVING laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the observations made by Mr. John Simpson, Surgeon of Her Majesty's Discovery Ship "Plover," under your command, relating to the Western Esquimaux and the country they inhabit, taken during two years at Point Barrow, I am to desire that you will express to Mr. Simpson their Lordships' satisfaction at the information conveyed.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. OSBORN.
