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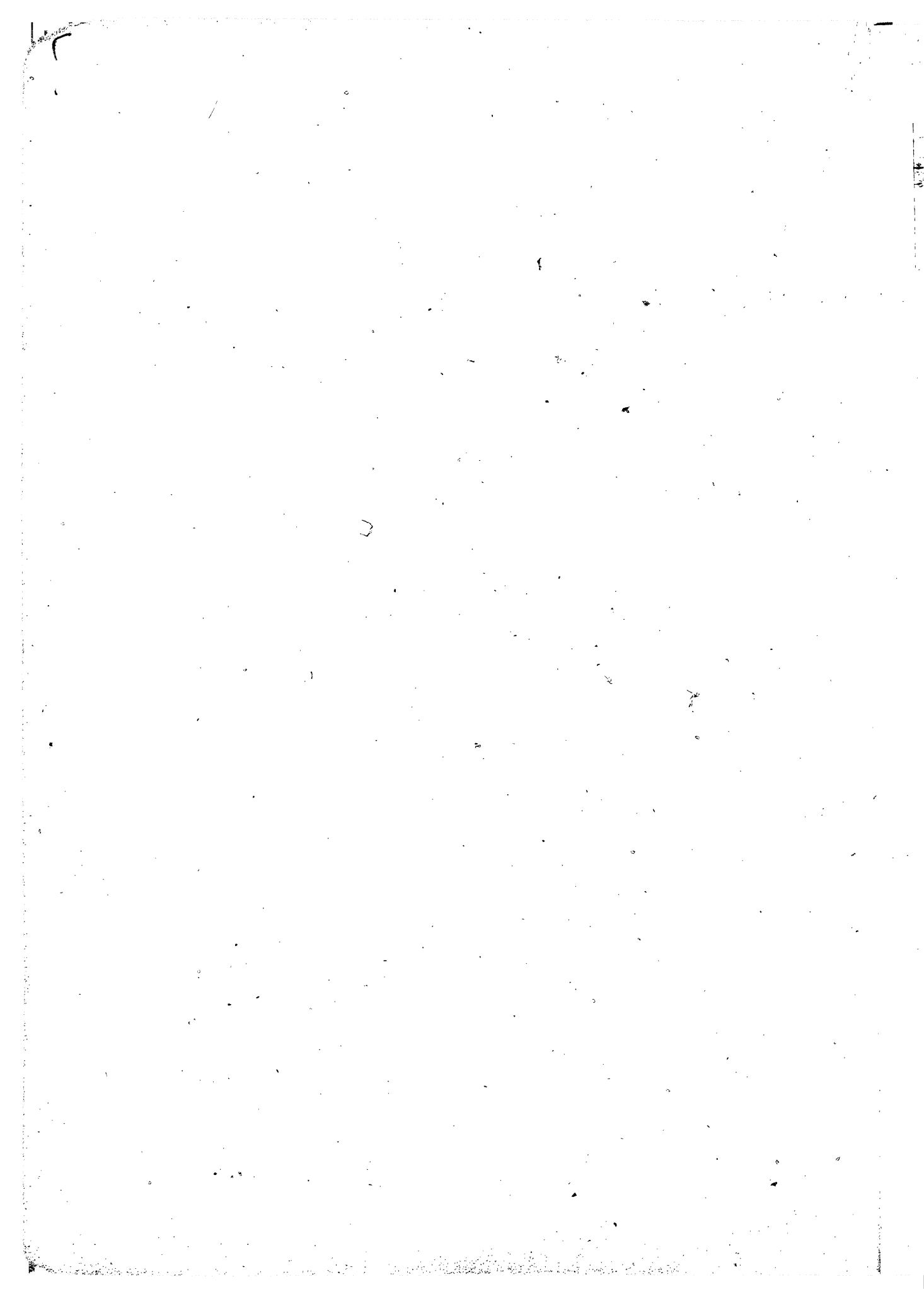
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Wright's Wk.
Nov. 1900

NORTHERN INDIAN AND DOG SLEDGE (Igloos in the background).

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A DAY'S WORK OF AN ARCTIC HUNTER

STARTING BY AURORAL LIGHT AND RUNNING OVER ICE FOR TWELVE HOURS—A 10 x 11 FOOT HOUSE FOR NINETEEN PEOPLE AND THREE DOGS—SLEEPING IN AN AIR-TIGHT HUT

BY

A. J. STONE

ARCTIC EXPLORER IN THE INTERESTS OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

[The experience of Mr. Stone, the Arctic hunter, has been an exceedingly interesting one. Five years ago he was engaged in business in Montana, but his whole interest was in natural history. With the support of the American Museum of Natural History, he prepared himself for an Arctic journey by the most rigorous training—starting out in the morning, for instance, without breakfast, and climbing over the mountains all day long without touching food. He started on his first Arctic trip in 1896. For four years he was exploring the northern interior and coast-line from Seattle to a point about two hundred miles east of Franklin Bay, travelling in one sledding trip, along the coast, more than a thousand miles. Of the country through which he travelled comparatively little was known. Mr. Stone during his journeys corrected and made exact the undefined geography of the northern coast; compiled a list of the region's fauna, and added to our knowledge, among other animals, a new mountain sheep, the *Ovis Stonei*, and a new caribou; and made a close study of the northern tribes, both Indian and Eskimo, most interesting in its detail. Indeed he has observed most carefully two tribes which, we believe, have never been scientifically described. In the present sketch he tells of a unique day's work done on Christmas Day, 1898, near the mouth of the Mackenzie River. This magazine will contain from time to time vivid stories of what "a day's work" means to men in different walks of life, and this lifelike picture forms an excellent introduction to the series.]

THREE weeks passed rapidly at Herschel's Island, with the colony of Noonitagmiot Eskimo to amuse and interest us, and December was already half gone when we started back to Fort McPherson. Progress was slow, and with storms and bad sledding it was Christmas when I reached Oak Pik again.

Christmas comes to the fields of ice and snow as surely as it comes to the land of flowers, but not a Christmas of chiming bells and laughter and play. Out on the masses of ice that break in the wind and current, the great ice-bears of the Eskimo growl and fight over a seal they have caught or the stranded

carcass of a giant bow-head; and in the mountains, the home of the reindeer, the wolves are plotting for their holiday feast; while the traveller, facing the icy wind, tingles at its touch and shivers as he thinks of the South.

The coast was low and treeless, with no living thing in sight except my Indians and dogs. Beyond was the monotonous stretch of country which forms the delta of the Mackenzie River. We were still one hundred and eighty miles from camp, and the hardest part of the journey was before us, for we had hitherto been travelling on hard ice and snow, and the soft snow of the sheltered places was still to be passed.



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A KOOKPUGMIOOT ESKIMO.

On this Christmas eve, however, we were fortunate enough to find an overhanging rock and a few odd sticks of driftwood; and we had house and hearth and Arctic comfort. Over a slow fire on the top of the snow we made our tea, which, with a strip of bacon and two hard biscuits, completed each man's supper. It was far from enough, and the poor dogs had to be satisfied with a small portion of whale-blubber, but we were all used to stinting ourselves of food, and were thankful for what we had. Supper over; the Indians rolled themselves up in a knot, dog fashion, and, winding themselves up in skins, were soon asleep in the burrow we had made in the snow. The dogs were already stretched at full length, asleep, all except Zilla. Poor Zilla, my foregoer, a sturdy, never-tiring fellow, was at last worn out. It is not sentiment but sincere truth when I say that I grieved for him as for a friend.

The night was perfectly fair. A clear moon shone down on the white fields about me, and the stars were bright with an Arctic winter's brilliancy, while just before me glimmered and sank the embers of our fire on the snowtop. To the north was the great ocean; to the east and south the low, flat plain; to the

west the northern ridge of the Rocky Mountains; and all lay a pallid white. The wonder of it all held me awake until long after the fire was dead. For the moment I was perfectly satisfied with the danger and hard usage of the days just past, lost in that great land of white that stretched everywhere about me; and then, finally realizing that such days were before as well as behind, and that I must make myself ready for them, I bundled myself up for the night beside my dogs and Indians in our burrow.

Christmas morning found me up at one o'clock, and two hours later, having eaten a breakfast which differed from our evening meal only by the addition of a few beans, we were ready to start. One of the Indians ran ahead to show the way, the other took the first sled, and I, the second. The dogs ran off briskly, and seemed glad to leave our night camp, for, looking back, we could all see the form of poor little Zilla lying beside

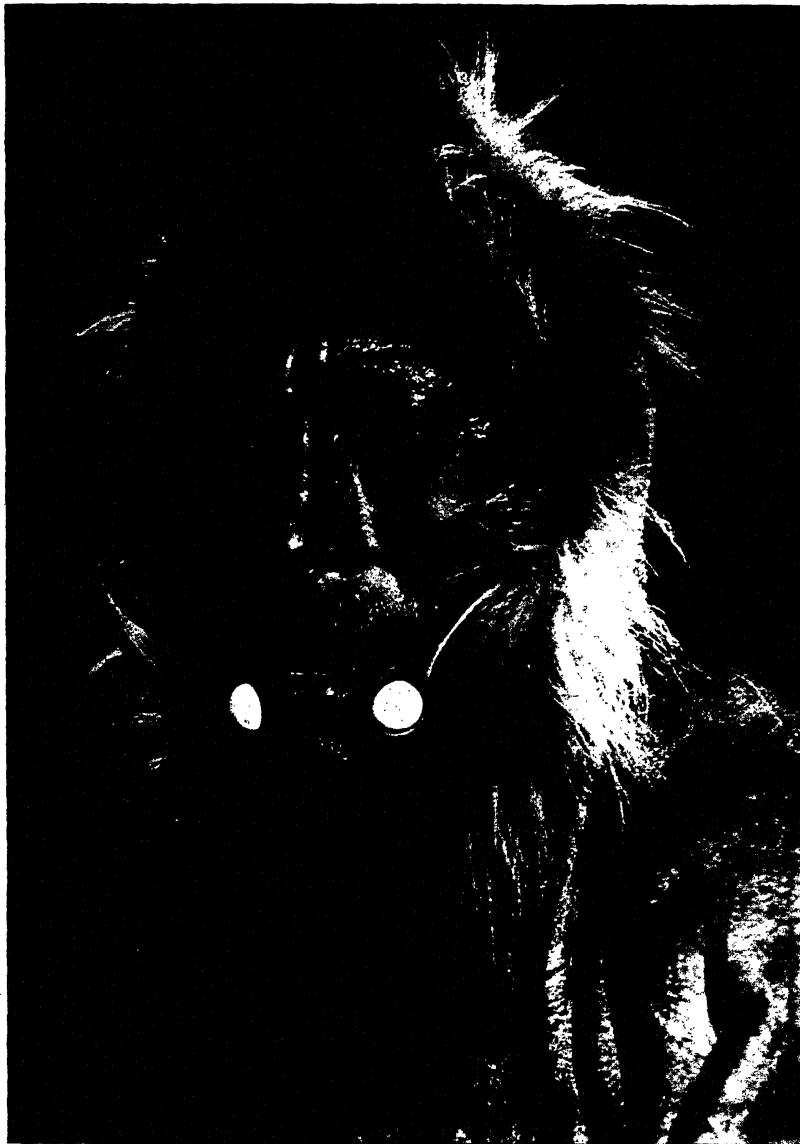


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ESKIMO WOMEN AND CHILD.

[These are of the Kookpugmoot tribe. There is little real difference between the various tribes of Eskimo save in the matter of locality. The women of the picture have rather better and neater furs than the average Eskimo women.]

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A TYPICAL ESKIMO HEAD.

Copyright, 1900, by A. J. Stone.

[This man is dressed in skins and fur in the usual fashion, and wears "tootucks" through his lips. He has lost one eye—a strikingly common disfigurement among these tribes.]

the dying fire. He had died during the night.

AN ARCTIC CHRISTMAS MORNING

The morning was cold and calm, not a breath of air stirring. The moon had lowered and was paler. The sky shaded from a light blue to a deep, dark purple at the horizon. A beautiful aurora swayed its great ribbonlike folds gracefully above us as if stirred by a breeze; then tied itself to the

invisible handle of a brilliant, fan-shaped electrical display that just tipped the purple of the north, as if in preparation for the festivities of the season. There was a breathless hush over all. Even the dogs' harness bells were clogged with frost and completely muffled. There was not the howl of a wolf, the hoot of an owl, the twitter of a bird, or even the breaking of a twig. The soft swish, swish of my Loucheux snowshoes intensified rather than broke the silence.

The snow was yet hard and the dogs travelled rapidly. I ran beside my sled as one in a dream. An illusion of unreality controlled me, and I became an imaginary being following a fancied dog-team over unknown, unreal fields of ice and snow. It was a land made



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ESKIMO MOTHER AND CHILD.

[The women carry their children this way in a deep hood on long journeys. This lady is wearing a suit of "imported" furs.]

by magic, a day which made me glad for what I had been able to do, content with scanty food and no shelter, and fearless as to the future. All day long I ran with the sled. I did not tire, for my running seemed me-

chanical. I knew nothing of exertion or the passing of time, and but little of my surroundings. I remember having seen the moon at the noon hour directly north of me, about five degrees above the horizon, and I wondered at it greatly; but soon I had forgotten it all, and was again running and dreaming beside my sled. Only a few minutes after, as it seemed, I heard the barking of the dogs, and, looking at my watch, was astonished to see that I had been constantly running for just twelve hours, and at a speed of about three and one-fourth miles an hour. It was a strange sort of a day for an Arctic explorer to spend, this of running in a dream over miles of ice and snow; and I cannot explain it, unless it was because the day was Christmas day and I was alone on the north coast.

My dogs turned to climb the sloping river-bank, and I knew we must be approaching Oak Pik Igloo, where some Eskimo were living. Even while I helped the dogs to climb the bank with the sled, we came upon a narrow strip of willows, and passed through them upon the small lake. Pushing through more willows on the farther bank, we came suddenly upon the low, dome-shape igloo, covered with snow. As may be judged from my description of our Christmas eve supper, we had a very limited amount of food. And these Eskimo are very fond of white man's food. It seemed that deception was the only way by which we could obtain lodging and keep food enough to last through our journey. So I told them without any compunction that we were starving, and prepared for a night as a guest of the igloo.

The Indians had already unloaded the bedding, and had started to carry it inside. I followed them, getting down on my hands and knees and crawling through the low passageway. The atmosphere that met me from within was heavy and sickening; but, of course, one cannot be too fastidious in an igloo. While we were shaking hands with our new friends, a few dogs were thrown outside to make more room for us. The Eskimo is really a very courteous host.

A 10 X 11 FOOT HOME FOR TWO FAMILIES,
GUESTS, AND DOGS

The interior of the hut was almost square, with a floor space of, I should say, about



A PARTY OF ESKIMO.

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[Just such a party as Mr. Stone spent his Christmas night with. Among them may be seen the varied styles of furs and skins worn. The third Eskimo from the right of the picture is smoking the short, tiny-bowled pipe so common among all the tribes. It hardly serves for more than two or three whiffs at once.]

ten or eleven feet, and about five and a half feet from floor to roof. It was the home of two families, nine people in all, and numberless dogs and puppies. Two native oil-lamps were burning, and by their yellow light I could see the faces of my companions. A very interesting study they were, too. The youngest was a little girl evidently about nine years of age, with a face that would have been really pretty had it been clean and had her hair been combed, but these are over-niceties with which the Eskimo women never worry themselves. Yet they all complained of their dress, and the scarcity of good furs.

Dead willows made a fire in the centre of the camp, and one of my Indians brought up two kettles of water from the lake, one for the tea and the other for *losli*. These were to make our Christmas dinner: *losli*, the ugliest, most worthless food fish on earth, not fit for the hungriest Arctic dogs, and tea without sugar. One of my Indians broke up the frozen mass of fish into chunks with an axe, and threw them into the kettle without seasoning of any kind. The day had been a long one of continuous travel, and this indeed seemed a poor reward for it all. Then the history of previous travellers in this region and their privation came to my mind. Fifty years ago Sir John Franklin's entire

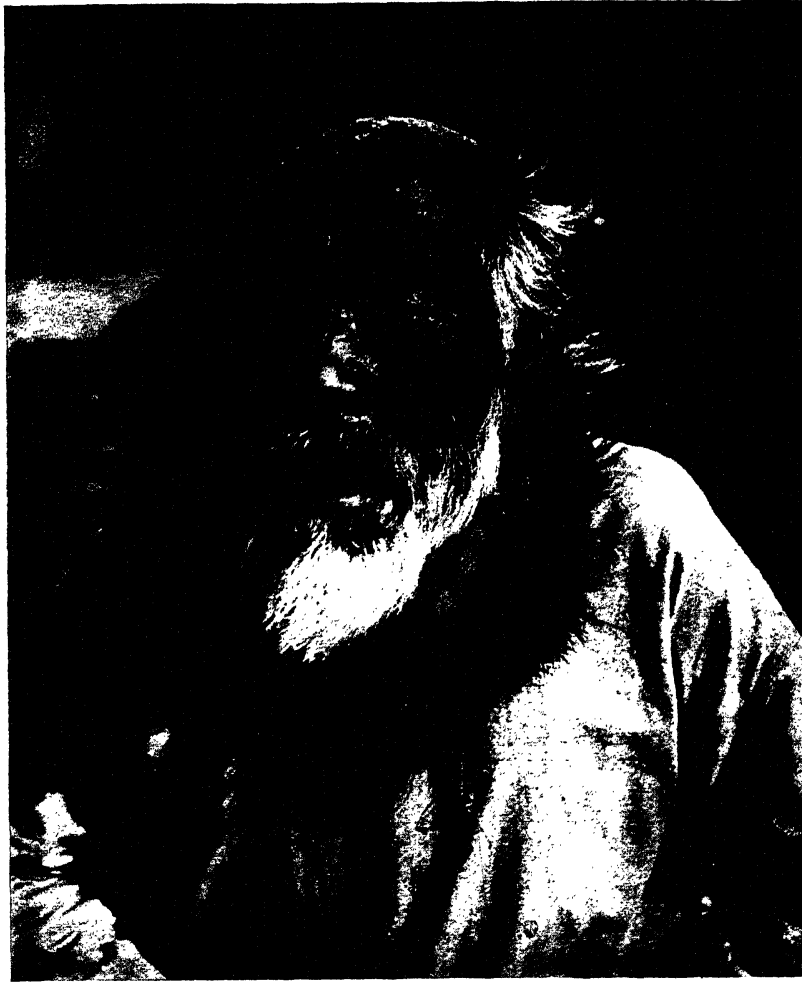
expedition perished in the very latitude of this, my Christmas camp. Of an army of brave, helpless men, one hundred and twenty-nine in all, not one remained to tell us of all the suffering and misery they experienced. Theirs was an heroic struggle against too



AN ARCTIC WHALER IN WINTER QUARTERS.

Copyright, 1900, by A. J. Stone.

[At Herschel Island when Mr. Stone was there at this time the whaler which lay blocked up with blocks of snow for the winter, furnished him with some good companions. Indeed, on the first day of the trip he describes, the men of the whaler accompanied him along the coast.]



AN ESKIMO GRANDFATHER.
[A typical old patriarch of the Igloo.]

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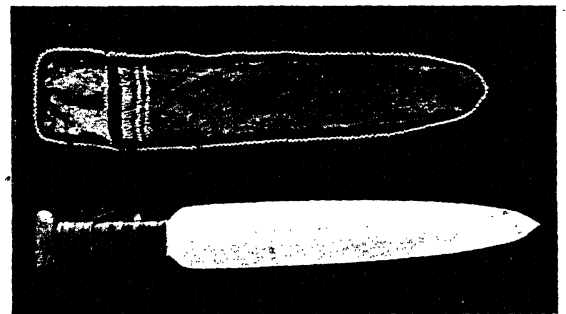
great odds. Mine was a rosy Christmas, after all, full of health and boiled *losh*.

I gave the natives all the tea they could drink, which pleased them so much that my dogs had a veritable feast at their hands. The evening meal was scarcely over when one of the native women brought out a copper kettle almost full of filthy, greasy water, hung it over the fire, and dropped in a mass of fish. When the mass had had time to boil she produced a couple of dirty wooden platters which had evidently been used for years without washing. To appear well before her white visitor, however, she did dip some of the boiling liquid into them from off the boiling fish, twirled it around for a moment, and poured it into the kettle again. Then, taking a greatspoon formed

from the horn of the *Orvis Dallii*, she dipped up the fish, and each family gathered about its platter. I was asked to join them, but refused with as good a grace as was possible, and was watching them enjoy this addition to their meal when there crawled in through the door a party of seven visiting Eskimo, — four men, a woman, and two children, making in all nineteen people and three dogs in the little hut, and a large number of dogs outside.

The woman who had just come was a rather pretty Eskimo woman, and wore a beautiful new suit of "imported" reindeer skins that fitted her exceedingly well. After sitting before the fire for a few minutes, and brushing the frost from her furs, she unfastened her belt, and, putting her hands around to one side, drew out a little reddish brown ball

of human flesh, perfectly bare, and evidently only a few weeks old, from beneath her gar-



AN ESKIMO SNOW KNIFE AND CASE.

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[This peculiar knife was made of a piece of scrap iron obtained from some whaling vessel, shaped and tempered in a rude hand forge. In spite of this it was beautifully polished, with a remarkably exact, tapering groove down the middle. The case is made of very costly undressed skin decorated with beads and porcupine quills.]

ment. Then came its little furs, and into them it went, until, at last, it looked like a perfect bundle of fur.

A SUSPICIOUS BEDFELLOW

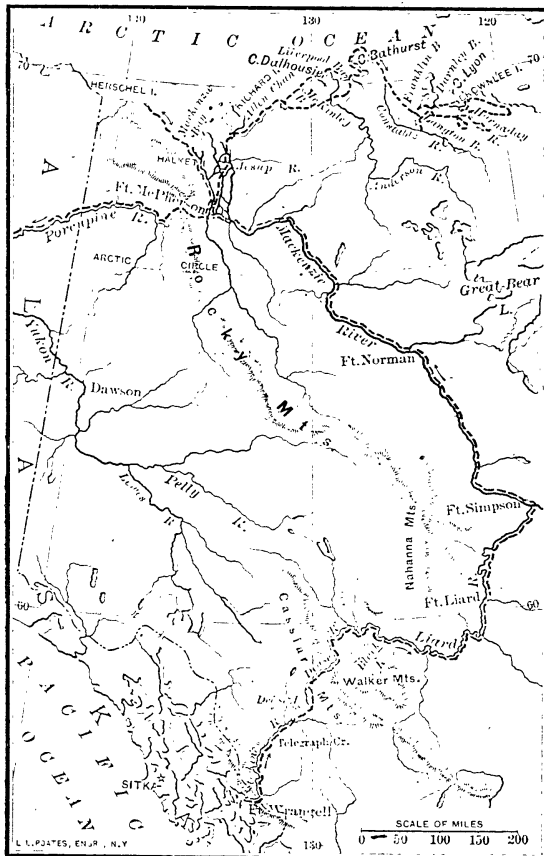
These newcomers, also, were ready for the meal of boiled fish; and, that once completed, they all turned to the frozen fish once more. When they had finally finished their eating, I talked and traded with them, giving tea and tobacco for some trinkets they had made. The evening had passed rapidly, and it was midnight when the party retired. I was allotted a larger space than any one else, in one corner, and a big, villanous-looking fellow, one of the newcomers, whose appearance I did not like in the least, volunteered to arrange my sleeping-gear for me. He succeeded far better than I could have done. Yet I could not help distrusting him, for he had a wild pair of eyes and watched me constantly. In one of the oil lamps they left



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AN ESKIMO HEAD.

[A characteristic head of one of the Eskimos in his prime. The bone ornaments in the lip of this man are particularly interesting. These large "tootucks," as they are called, are considered worth 100 white fox skins per pair. They are stuck through gaping holes made in the lip for the purpose.]



MAP OF NORTHWESTERN BRITISH AMERICA.

[Showing Mr. Stone's route and his geographical discoveries.]

burning a small wick that cast a faint glimmer of yellow light about the dingy hole. I fell asleep quickly, but it could not have been long after when I woke with a start. Luckily I only opened my eyes slightly, for I saw my villanous-looking friend sitting up, bending over me, and looking directly into my face. I was satisfied to lie still and watch him, but not without a thrill of fear. He sat motionless for a while, then leaned back, lighted his pipe, and took two or three long whiffs, Eskimo fashion. All at once, to my surprise, he turned over and fell asleep. Evidently his curiosity was satisfied, and he had decided that the white-faced stranger from the south was not such a remarkable man after all. For myself, I was well pleased with his lack of appreciation.

Notwithstanding my restlessness and the lack of air, — for at night they seal up the igloo entrance, its only ventilation, and make

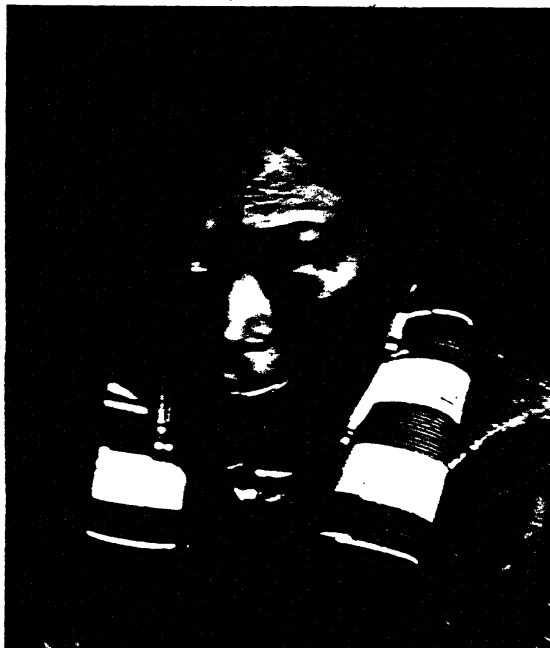
A DAY'S WORK OF AN ARCTIC HUNTER



AN INDIAN HUT NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE MACKENZIE RIVER.

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[While slightly different from the Eskimo Igloos, this gives an excellent idea of the space available for the large party with whom Mr. Stone spent the night.]



AN ESKIMO WOMAN.

[Showing the method of dressing the hair.]

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the hut as nearly air-tight as possible, — I slept well during the remainder of the night, and we started in good spirits in the morning; in good spirits, but without breakfast, for, although the Eskimo offered us more frozen fish, we decided to breakfast en route. That night's entertainment did not whet our appetites.

We bade farewell to our hosts, who had shown courtesies, if not comforts, to us, and were away for the fields of soft snow and hard travelling before us. So passed my Christmas, and when, a week later, I sat beside the fire in my little cabin home at Fort McPherson, while the wind pounded against the cabin walls, I remembered that white Christmas Eve, the unreal dreaming day by the sled, the strange meal and night at the igloo tavern, but, most of all and sadly, my old companion Zilla, who lies buried in the snow of our camp by the overhanging rock. It was the sort of day that so impresses itself on a man's memory as to become fixed forever.

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