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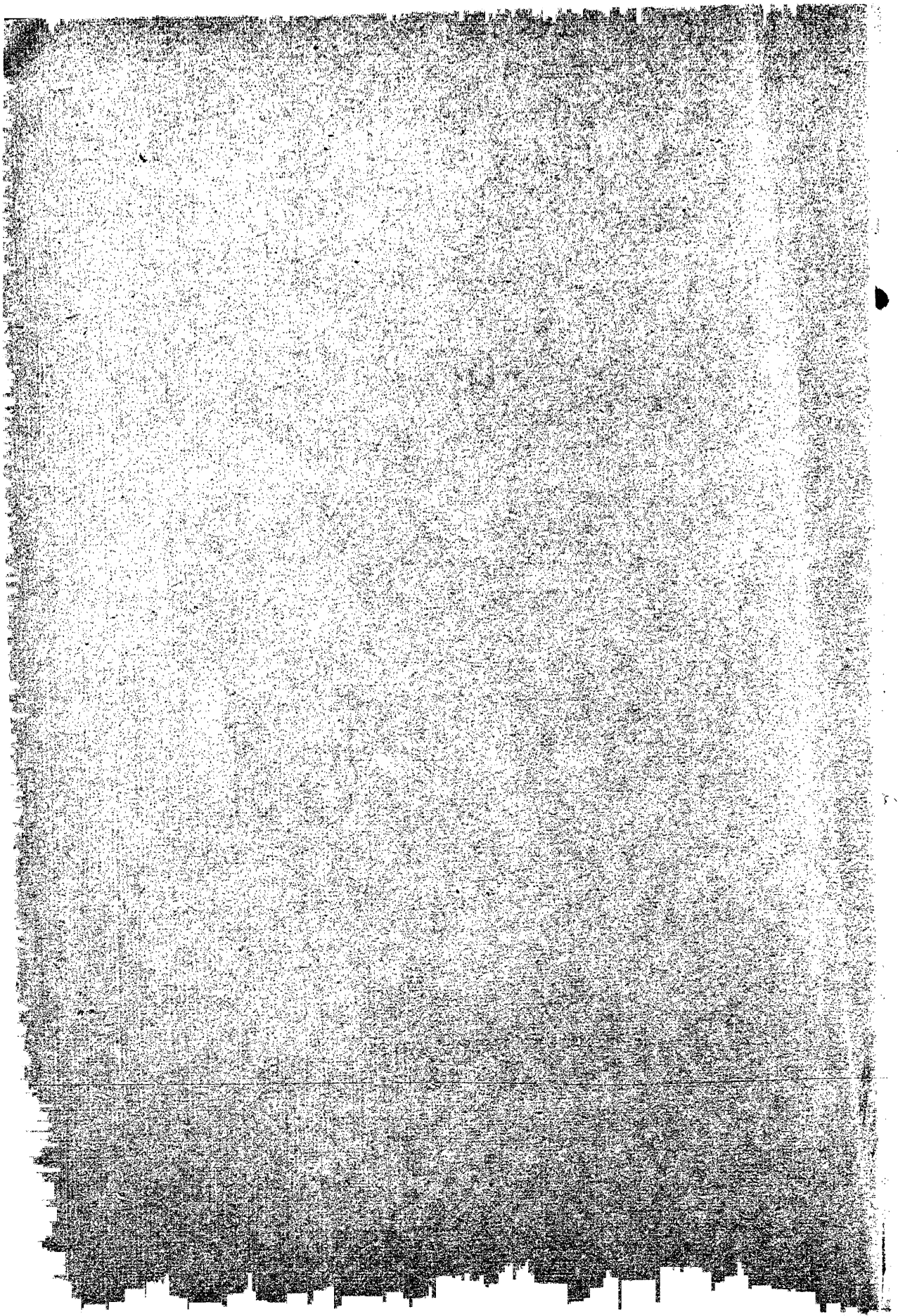
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THE AMERICAN ARCTIC SAVAGE.

BY FREDERICK SCHWATKA.



SKIRTING the rim of the great Arctic Ocean with its area about equal to that of the United States, are to be found several savage communities differing in racial, tribal and other ethnographic elements; and to describe those which are confined to the American continent, or the American Arctic savage, is the object of this article.

While Lapland and Siberia give a number of different tribes having no common language, customs, etc., as the Lapps, Samoyedes, Tchukchees, and others, it is a somewhat singular fact that the American continent gives but one, the Eskimo, although its length of Arctic coast-line is nearly equal to that of the eastern hemisphere, making up in sinuosities almost what it lacks in longitudinal spread. Where the mighty Mackenzie River sweeps into the Arctic, and Alaska's noblest stream, the Yukón, just tips the circle of that zone, both water-courses carry with them the American Indian for a very short distance within the polar regions; but to where this race occupies a mile along the polar parts of these rivers, the Eskimo extends a hundred miles beyond the Arctic circle into the temperate zone. In fact no savage race in the world, or within historic times, has spread over and held such a vast extent of territory as the Eskimo. And yet this vastness, reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and facing both those great bodies of water, is insignificant in depth, being merely the coast-line which stretches from one ocean to the other around the northern part of America, and from which the Eskimo dare not depart any distance, as from the sea come three-fourths of the sustenance he manages to wrest from a niggardly nature. From half-way down the cheerless, ice-bound coast of Labrador (once beyond the straits of Belle Isle), the Eskimo is found in straggling numbers and interrupted intervals

along the shore of the northern Atlantic, northern Hudson's Bay, all the Arctic Ocean, the American side of Bering's Sea and the Pacific Ocean to about the mouth of the Copper River of Alaska—from the St. Lawrence to St. Elias.

Politically the Eskimo are under four flags of civilized powers; those of Greenland owing Danish allegiance, the British cross of St. George being over all to Alaska, where our own stars and stripes occasionally greet their sight, while a very few that have found a foothold on the nearest Asian shores are under the great White Czar. Yet with this vast longitudinal stretch of country encompassed, I doubt if all the Eskimo of America would outnumber many of our western Indian tribes which find their homes within much narrower limits of territory.

Why human beings have been found living in this lone land of desolation has given rise to no little theorizing and speculation, the bulk of which seems to be that they are cruelly forced to abide here by the supposed greater strength of the savages to the south of them. My own ideas are with the "respectable minority" which believes that they are found in these regions for the same reasons that we find the reindeer, the musk-ox, and the walrus; that is, it suits their peculiar temperament and disposition better than any other climate or condition possibly could, and they are no more forced into the frigid zone by other savages than the animals named are held there by the antelope, buffalo, or caribou of lower latitudes. When they are taken from their Hyperborean home they are as restless to return as the castaways in their own land are to get back to civilization, and singular enough, despite all their desolate surroundings, they are the most happy and contented race, savage or civilized, in the four corners of the earth; although it is the coldest corner. The tale told by Captain Hall of the deep longing of the sick and sinking Eskimo, Kudlago, to see his land of ice and snow before he



THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE ESKIMO PEOPLE.

(This map, at the best, can only claim to be approximately true, owing to the nomadic character of many of the tribes, the migration of the animals on which they subsist, and other causes. Were all the places marked where old Eskimo ruins have been found, it would cover nearly all the great Arctic Archipelago and extend the other coast-line limits considerably. Their sea-coast abiding character is well shown in following their habitat, although a very few tribes live inland and seldom visit the sea. It should be noted also that some few hybrid types of the Eskimo race are found on the Asiatic coast of Bering's Sea.—THE AUTHOR.)

died, and his joy on being carried to the deck of the Arctic-bound ship when the first iceberg was sighted, is as pathetic as any ever told of the return of Arctic refugees to their land of flowers and forests; and clearly shows that patriotism and love of home is circumscribed by no parallels of latitude nor influenced by climatic conditions. Wherever the Indians and Eskimo have come in contact in an aggressive way, the northern nomads have steadily pushed back their copper-colored neighbors, and the only places where they—the Eskimo—have penetrated far inland to reside, is along the Yukon and Kouskoquim Rivers of Alaska. Here they have elbowed out the Indian for some hundreds of miles, and find a luxuriant living on the swarming fisheries of these streams.

It has been urged by some scientists, with no small degree of ingenious reasoning that the prehistoric cavemen of Europe were the progenitors of the present widely dispersed Eskimo race. At that time much of Europe was overspread by a huge sheet of ice (the glacial epoch of geology) and along its edges a hardy race of people hunted the reindeer and lived in caves. Being a cold-climate-loving race they followed the ice-sheet as it retreated northward until the Arctic Ocean stopped their polar pilgrimage. Then they followed its flat coast east and west until they came to mountainous

country where elevation gave them the cold denied by northern migration, and they stopped in the hilly land of the northern Scandinavian peninsula where the Lapps live, and in the Arctic coast of America, much of which is high and precipitous.

The Eskimo, the Lapps, and ancient cavemen, have many points in common. They are nearly all small in stature, while, more important from a scientific standpoint, their crania are so similar as to point to a common origin. The Eskimo are noted for their love of rude sculpture with and drawing on walrus ivory, reindeer horns, and such materials as their lone land furnishes, and this primitive art is found among the relics of the European cavemen; one engraving on a reindeer horn of the prehistoric mammoth exciting a deep interest as showing that that huge animal was contemporaneous with man before history was begun, except by such fragmentary links as this very engraving recorded.

While the Eskimo undoubtedly are a short-statured and small race of people, a two years' residence with them on the Atlantic side and a summer's experience among them on the Pacific coast has convinced me that they are not of such a pygmy growth as popular belief pictures them; and this has been spoken of before by some who have had extended contact with them. One tribe I saw, in fact,

seemed to me to average well with, if not surpass, the Caucasian race, at least in weight. They were located in and around the mouth of Back's Great Fish River, living off seals that there abound, and from which diet they get their tribal name—the Netschilluk, or seal-eaters. Those of the west coast of Greenland, from their accessibility to travelers, have been described the most, and being below even the average height of the Eskimo as a whole race, our general notions have been derived too much from this source. The Eskimo of Alaska, or such as I saw of them, are larger framed than those of Hudson's Bay, Hudson's Strait or Greenland, and yet I do not think they will compare in this particular with the intermediate Netschilluk.

Although the Eskimo are smaller than the white races, I think they will compare very favorably with them in bodily strength, which means, of course, for equal weights they are more muscular. When returning from my sledge journey to King William's Land in the good muscular condition resulting from a walk of over 3,000 miles, and even then weighing 219 pounds, I do not think I had the strength of one of my Eskimo sledgemen, Toolooah by name, who weighed but 20 or 25 pounds over half as much. This was evidenced by our respective handlings of the loaded sledge in "tight pinches," and giving full allowance to him for greater experience in such matters, and amply acknowledging that many assumed feats of strength have more of dexterity and practice in them than that which they are claimed to prove.

When we started on our northern trip Toolooah's sledge had a weight of over 3,000 pounds on it, hauled by nineteen fine dogs, and when he was at its head, with a tight grip in the seal-thong lashings, he would readily sway the head of the vehicle backwards and forwards as it went over snow where occasional projecting stones made it dangerous for the shoe-runners unless quickly and promptly avoided by good guidance. I must say that he was about the average in strength of his own race. Their constant out-door life, winter and summer, doing the hardest work in the healthiest of

climates, is probably sufficient to account for their great muscular development.

Their universal clothing is made from the skin of the reindeer, which animal is fortunately abundant in their land, as a usual thing, for its peculiar fur is undoubtedly the warmest in the world for the same amount of weight. There are often many variations in the trimmings made of other furs, as that of the polar bear, musk ox, Arctic fox, wolverine, or even the downy breasts of the eider-duck, dovekie, or auk, and in some instances they replace the reindeer fur largely; but among the bands of central Eskimo, where the most of my northern travels were cast, the reindeer was the only fur used to warm them as covering day or night, for it was equally used as bedding or clothing, while the flesh of the animal gave them their most delicious meat. Their palates are not very exacting, however, and I doubt if



ESKIMO HEAD.

one-third the reindeer that are now slain would be killed were meat the only object in view, and not the clothing, without which their country would be almost uninhabitable, and with which they can spend the winter far more comfortably than can the savages of so-called temperate regions with their deficient appliances.

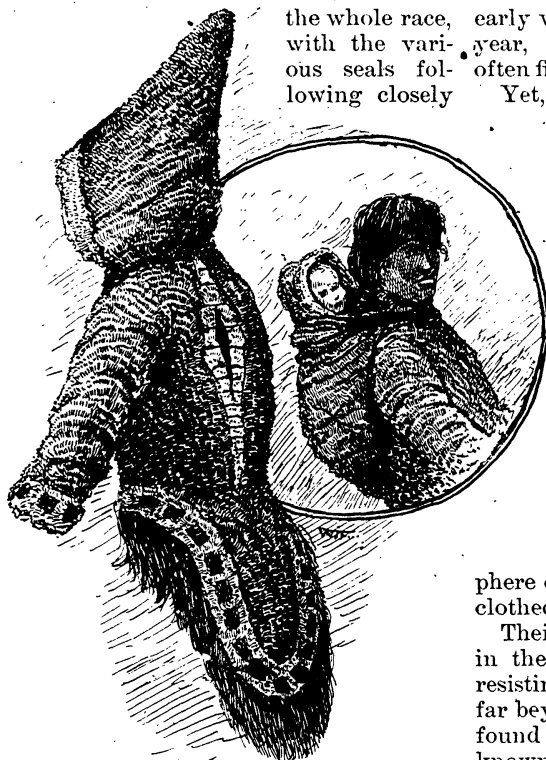
It is about equally difficult for the Eskimo hunter to secure a walrus or a reindeer, and as the former will give about a ton of meat, and the latter only about one-tenth as much, it is clear why the walrus would be selected if only the meat and its palatability were concerned.

The walrus forms the principal food of the Eskimo race wherever it is found, and it is so generally distributed over the Arctic part of the North American continent that it undoubtedly makes up the bulk of sustenance for the whole race, with the various seals following closely

the year, although varying appreciably in this respect during the different seasons, while the reindeer—for musk-oxen are nowhere numerous enough to enter largely as food—are only in good condition for a few months in the fall and early winter, the coldest months in the year, January, February and March, often finding them livid in their leanness.

Yet, in spite of all this, my northern travels threw me in contact with a fair-sized tribe of Eskimo that lived largely on this kind of meat, catching only enough seal from an inlet that cut deep into their country to supply their stone lamps with a little light during the long dark winter night. Those living on seal and walrus had enough oil to warm their houses—though made of snow—many degrees higher than the intense cold outside, and would take off their outside suit of reindeer clothes when in the house, while the reindeer hunters seldom had a temperature even a little above that of the atmosphere outside, and often remained double clothed as if in the open.

Their homes were cold and cheerless in the extreme, but they had powers of resisting it that seemed phenomenal and far beyond human endurance as we have found it limited in our own zone. I have known one of these cold-weather cavaliers to take a reindeer hide that had been soaking in the water, and that was frozen as stiff as a plate of boiler-iron, and put it against his bare body, holding it there, not only until it was thawed out, but until it was perfectly dry. The skin was to be used as a drum-head for singing and dancing exercises, and had to be dry and hairless to answer that purpose, the soaking ridding it of the hair, while there were apparently no other means of drying it than the heroic method adopted. From the large number of reindeer killed by these Eskimo they are abundantly supplied with skins for bedding and clothing, and in the making up of these necessities they have displayed so much tact and talent with the limited means at hand that they are the best dressed natives in the North. From one of their fancy dis-



REINDEER COAT OF ESKIMO WOMAN.

behind, and both these kind of meats amply supplemented by salmon, cod, whale, musk-oxen, reindeer and polar bear, with an occasional tribe here and there preponderating in some of these latter foods over the walrus and seal. The walrus will not live where it is so cold that all the water channels are frozen over in the winter, as he cannot cut a breathing hole through the thick ice like the smaller hair-seal, which is found in about every part of the Arctic that man has penetrated, and at about all seasons of the year. The greater amount of fatty tissue in the animals of the sea make them more acceptable as food to the northerner whose system craves such diet during the rigorous winter of that zone. The seal and walrus are fat throughout

plays on certain garments—the boot-tops—they get their distinctive tribal name, the Kinnepetoos.

As I have already hinted, the winter houses of these central Eskimo are built of snow, and I think from a two years life in them that they are healthier and more comfortable than any of wood, which must be peculiarly constructed and generally void of proper ventilation to withstand such a rigorous winter. In some of the portions of territory covered by this widely distributed race timber is found, as along the Yukon and Kouskoquim Rivers of Alaska and where a few of their numbers face the Pacific Coast. In other places also drift-wood is thrown upon the shores of their country, as all over the Alaskan coast and for some distance east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River, as well as parts of Greenland; and wherever these conditions obtain, there these polar people build their winter homes of logs and poles, the most of them being half-subterranean structures to conserve the warmth. In all other parts of their

among us in lower latitudes, and which makes it eminently adapted for the comfort and protection of these northern nomads. These snow-houses are called *igloos* by the natives, and have been so often described by polar travelers that I will only allude to a few of their more interesting features. They vary much in size according to whether they are to be permanently occupied or only for a night or two, for the wandering hunter of that lone land will make a score of *igloos*, in which he will spend only the night, to where one is made for a longer residence. Even the permanent *igloos* are so only relatively to their nomadic habits, and are seldom occupied over a month or six weeks, as in their constant use the snow, by the warmth of the stone lamp, is slowly converted into ice, and then the snow-house becomes chilly and uncomfortable, and is abandoned for a new one that it takes the Eskimo builder but two or three hours to make.

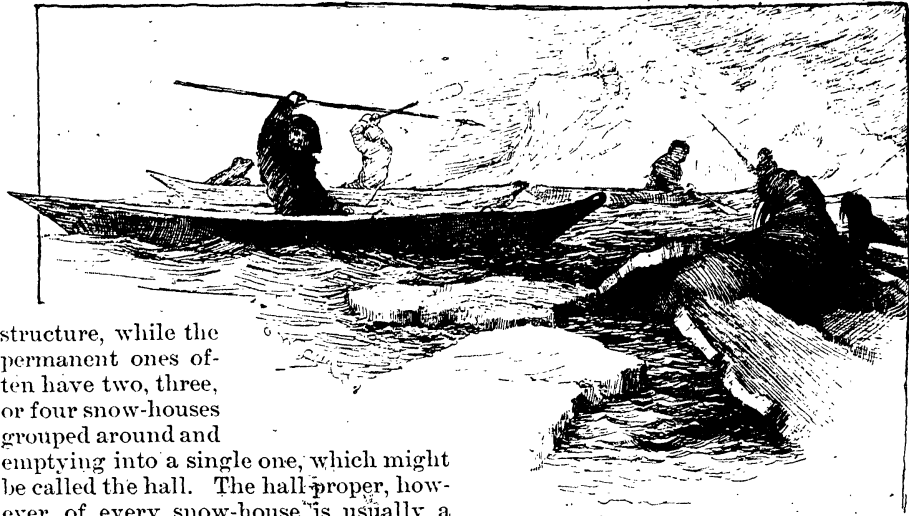
The temporary *igloos* are but mere kennels, where one can hardly turn around without scraping the snow off



ESKIMO VILLAGE OF SNOW-HUTS.

desolate, timberless land they make their homes of the hard snows which the fierce Arctic gales and low temperature have converted into a density and texture unknown in the same material

the walls with the elbows or shoulders. The permanent ones are more commodious, often from fifteen to twenty feet in diameter and half as high. The temporary *igloo* is generally a single

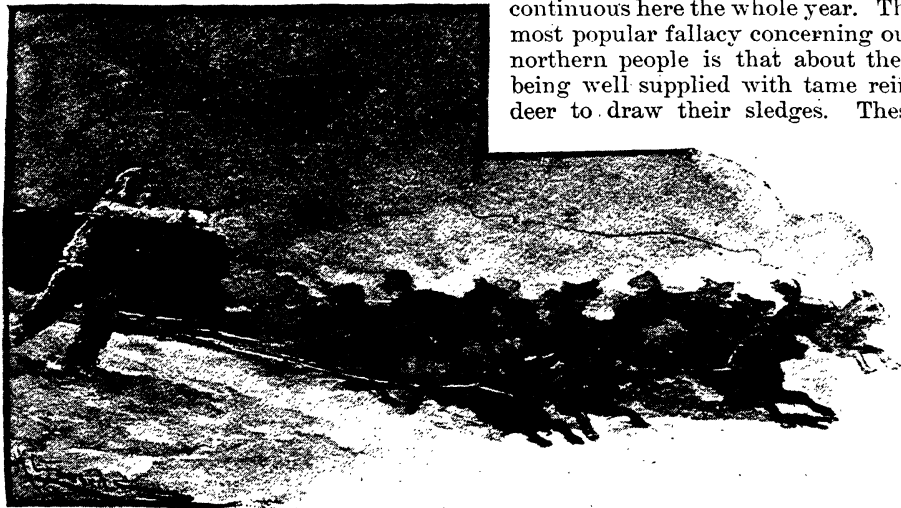


SEAL AND WALRUS HUNTERS.

structure, while the permanent ones often have two, three, or four snow-houses grouped around and emptying into a single one, which might be called the hall. The hall proper, however, of every snow-house is usually a low passage-way of five to twenty feet in length, through which a person has to crawl on his hands and knees, and which is chiefly useful in excluding the intensely cold winds outside, and as a refuge for the numerous dogs whenever particularly stormy weather prevails.

Their almost universal method of transportation is by dogs and sledges, for the good and sufficient reason that the average winter season in Eskimo land, when sledges are used, far exceeds the summer time, when the streams and channels are open, and skin canoes and

boats are employed. In fact, when I was on King William's Land, in 1879, we did not give up sledging on the land until June 22d, and after that used the shore ice of the sea until July 24th, when it broke up. In the early part of September, the first snows again allowed us to resume sledging: McClintock reported that the sea-ice near this point broke up with him as late as August 10th, and the natives told me that occasionally it happened that the ice did not break up at all, so that sledging could have been continuous here the whole year. The most popular fallacy concerning our northern people is that about their being well supplied with tame reindeer to draw their sledges. These



ESKIMO SLEDGE AND TEAM.

trained animals are confined wholly to the Arctic regions of the eastern continent, the wild variety alone being known on the American side.

There is considerable diversity throughout all Eskimo land in even such simple matters as a dog-team and sledge would appear to be. In the far northwest the method employed is to have the dogs in one or two lines harnessed to a double trace on either side, or to a single trace between the two lines. In Greenland they radiate outwards like a fan, each dog having his own trace meeting at the sledge, while among the central Eskimo, where most of my travels were cast, the same general arrangement is maintained, but the traces are of unequal length, the longest one belonging to an unusually well-trained and intelligent dog, called the leader, whose movements as to going to the right or left, faster or slower, stopping or starting, all the others follow. The rate at which a team will travel is about as indefinite as that at which a horse will go. A number

of good dogs, on a light sledge with nothing but the driver to be hauled, can make 50 to 75 miles a day on smooth salt-water ice in the spring months, while a heavily laden sledge of 100 pounds to the dog on the rolling hill lands will do well at 15 to 20 miles a day, if it is to be kept up for a number of days. I have seen a sledge with 3,600 pounds on it, dragged by nineteen fine dogs on smooth salt-water ice.

The northernmost inhabitants of the earth are the Itanese Eskimo of Greenland, numbering between 100 and 150 people. Their wanderings are known to reach to the 79th parallel of latitude, where they are seemingly barred by the huge Humboldt Glacier. The highest reached by white men is not far beyond this, and Eskimo ruins have been found between; and, considering their far greater superiority to the Caucasian in traveling in those regions, it is more than likely that they have extended their excursions beyond any point ever attained by civilized explorers.



FREDERICK III. OF GERMANY.

NOT the bold Brandenburg, at Prussia's birth:
 Nor yet Great Frederick when his fields were won
 And her domain stretched wide beneath the sun:
 Nor William, whose Sedan aroused the earth,
 Was hero, conqueror like the king whose worth
 And woe subdued the world beside his bier.
 Serene he walked with death through year and year
 Slow-measured: bearing torture's deeps in dearth
 Of hope—the faithful, steadfast, lofty soul!
 Ah, chant no dirge for him, but joyful pean!
 While Baltic laves its borders, Rhine doth roll.
 No truer life will seek the empyrean
 Than his whose fame nor realm nor age can span—
 The manliest Emperor, the imperial man!

Edna Dean Proctor.