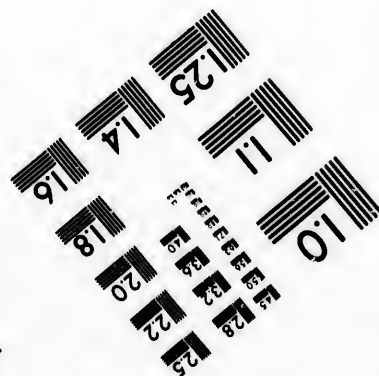
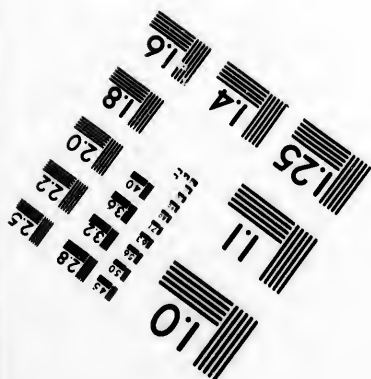
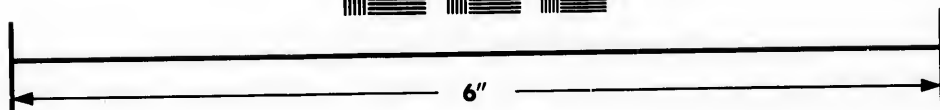
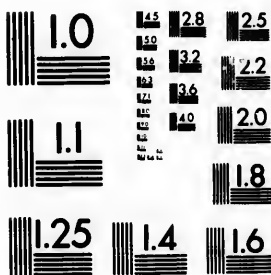


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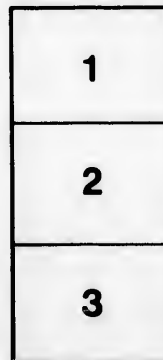
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“THE INLAND OCEAN OF THE NORTH.”

BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

THE history of human effort to pierce the ice-defended mysteries of the Arctic Zone is invested not only with the deepest interest, but with the most moving pathos. Franklin and his gallant shipmates battling bravely, but alas! helplessly, for life amidst the pitiless, pathless ice floes, and Henry Hudson thrust forth from his own ship in a tiny skiff by his mutinous, murderous crew, to find a grave in the waters of the mighty inland sea, that would also preserve his remembrance, are names associated in our minds with feelings of tenderest sympathy, not less than of warmest admiration. Those who bore them were to our Continent what Livingstone was to Africa; and to their self-sacrificing heroism we are indebted in like manner for additions to the sum of human knowledge whose worth cannot be estimated.

Seeing that the first motive which impelled men to pit themselves against the terrors of those thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice was the hope of discovering a safer and speedier passage to the wondrous treasures of the East than the storm-beset route around the Cape of Good Hope afforded, it is exceedingly interesting to find that an important question of to-day is whether or not a practicable commercial highway can be established through the inland ocean which bears the name of Hudson to the very heart of this American Continent. The hope of a north-west passage to the Indies has long been abandoned. Indeed, the cutting of the Suez Canal would have finally superseded the enterprise, even though there had been prospects of a successful issue. But a north-west passage to the North-west itself is an altogether different thing, and it is some account of the extensive explorations which have been carried on to this end that I shall seek to give in the present paper.

Looking carefully at the map of North America, and noting how far the vast bulk of Hudson's Bay thrusts itself inland, it is evident at once that the examination of this mighty sea, with a

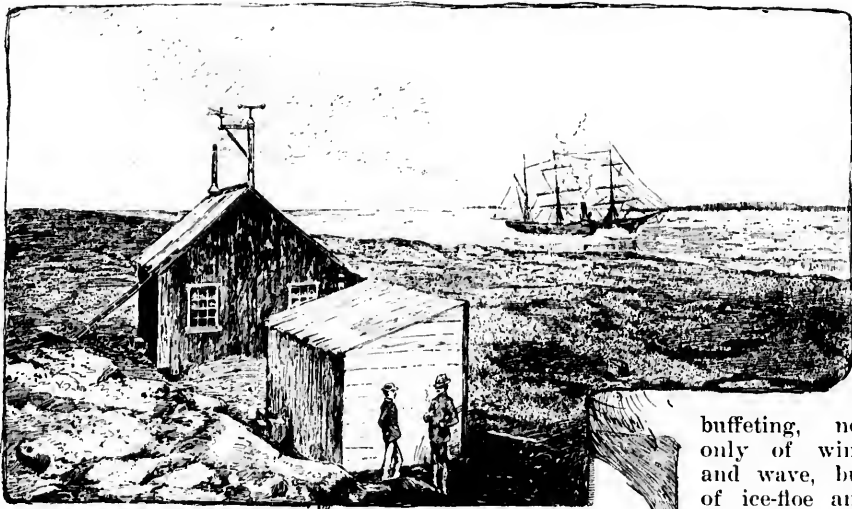
view to determining its possibilities in the way of navigation, must be simply a question of time. So long as only the eastern and central parts of Canada were settled, the St. Lawrence did well enough; but once the tide of population began to flow over the boundless prairies of the West, and to garner from them such harvests as not even Egypt might surpass, the men who chafed at the long and costly overland passage their grain must undergo, turned their eyes toward the great bay that seemed to promise a means of relief, and they demanded that the Government of Canada should take measures to ascertain whether the promise could be fulfilled or no.

Parliament is proverbially slow to move. You must be very much in earnest, very persistent, and, above all things, have some influence over a constituency or two, in order to gain any favors from it. Fortunately for their enterprise, those who were interested in Hudson's Bay, possessed all of these valuable qualifications; and so in the early part of January, 1884, we find a committee of the House of Commons appointed to take into consideration the question of the navigation of Hudson's Bay, with power to send for persons, papers and records. The committee sat for nearly two months, examined a number of persons who either had, or were supposed to have, some knowledge of the subject; plunged deep into the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, which went to show that for two centuries their vessels had navigated the bay every year; and altogether carried out their instructions in a very thorough and creditable manner, concluding their labor by bringing in a report which the Government considered ample justification for granting a sufficient sum of money to cover the expenses of systematic investigation.

The first exploratory expedition set forth from the harbor of Halifax, in the month of July, 1884. It comprised a single vessel, the Newfoundland steam whaler "Neptune," under command of

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PORT DE BOUCHERVILLE.

Lieut. A. R. Gordon, Assistant Superintendent of the Meteorological Service of Canada, and having on board Dr. Bell, of the Geo-



ASHE INLET.



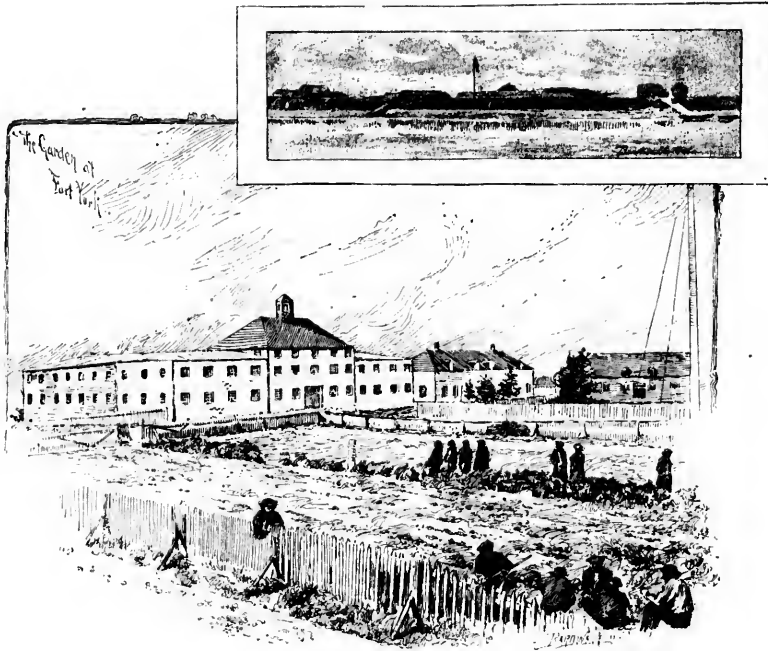
PORT LAPERRIERE.

logical Survey (upon whose excellent photographic work many of the illustrations to this article are based), seven observers, and twelve station-men. The "Neptune" was not just the most desirable sort of a vessel for the purpose. She was as slow as a snail, afforded at best very cramped accommodation, and moreover, having seen long service in the odoriferous occupation of whaling, was rich in reminiscences of the business, which could never by any possibility have been mistaken for scents from Araby the blest. Her redeeming feature was her sturdy strength which enabled her to submit unharmed to the fiercest

buffeting, not only of wind and wave, but of ice-floe and rock-reef also. Setting forth from Halifax, on July 22nd, 1884, the "Neptune," sailing up through the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Straits of Belle Isle, coasted along the bleak, forbidding

Labrador shore until she arrived at Cape Chudleigh, which forms one of the lips of the mouth of Hudson's Straits. Many icebergs were encountered on the way, and constant vigilance had to be exercised to guard against their coming to too close quarters.

At Cape Chudleigh a dense fog enveloped the vessel, and kept her a close prisoner for several days. When it cleared away she pushed on through the strait, and looked about until a fine harbor was discovered on the north-western shore of the cape, which was evidently just the place for Observatory Station No. 1. As some slight consolation for having to spend the winter there, the station was called Port Burwell in honor of the observer who was placed in charge, together with two station-men to keep him company. The same pleasant compliment was paid each of the other observers left behind during the progress of the expedition, and future geographers will therefore please



FORT YORK AND GARDEN.

take note of Ashe Inlet on the north side of the strait, a little more than midway between the ocean and the bay; Stupart's Bay, immediately opposite on the southern shore; Port De Boucherville on Nottingham Island; and Port Laperriere on Digges Island. At each of these places an observer and two station-men were established in snug huts taken up for the purpose, and fitted out with unstinted stores of food, fuel, furs, and every necessary comfort, besides, of course, a complete list of such instruments as would be required for the observations as to movements of the ice, tides and winds. The observers were also instructed to note down carefully, everything of importance as to the migrations of mammals, birds and fish, and also as to the growth of grasses. In fact they were to find out every thing they possibly could; and it may be said here that without exception they discharged their duties in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, and thus accumulated an immense mass of information about a region of country hitherto almost unknown.

Having established the stations one by one, the "Neptune" then turned north-

ward to visit Chesterfield Inlet and Marble Island, thence southward to Fort Churchill, the future Liverpool of that region, if the hopes of the Hudson's Bay Railway promoters shall ever be realized; and southward still to Fort York, the present commercial metropolis of the bay, if so fine a term may be applied to a place whose business activity is compressed into a week or two out of each year, and is then limited to receiving a cargo from and providing a return cargo for a single ship.

All this took from August 6th to September 12th. On the evening of the latter day the "Neptune" struck out across the broad bosom of the bay for Digges Island, and beginning with Port Laperriere made a farewell tour of the various stations, after which her course was shaped homewards; St. John's, Newfoundland, being reached by October 11th, when the voyage came to an end.

The results of the expedition were very considerable, although, of course, they were only preliminary. In reference to the ice, which had hitherto been supposed to be the most formidable barrier to the navigation of the waters, Lieut. Gordon,

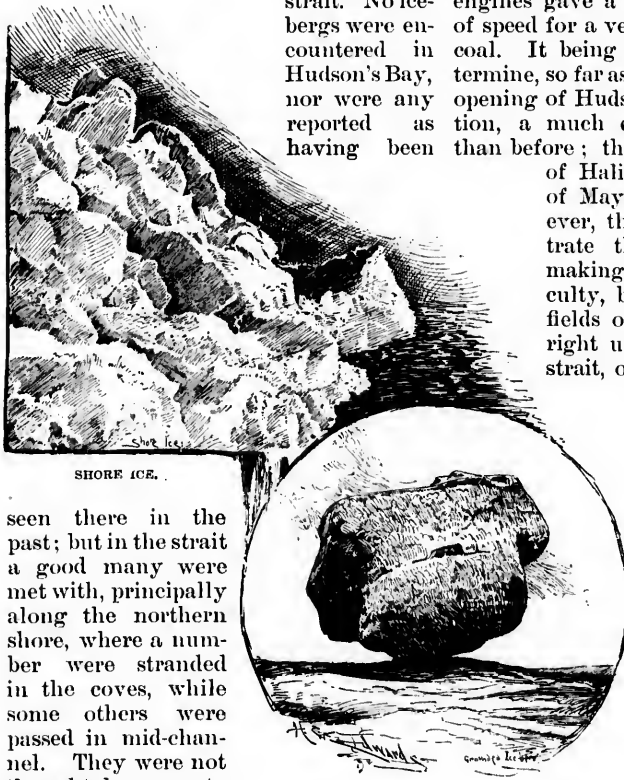
the commander of the expedition, reported that on close inspection its terror very largely disappears. The ice met with during his cruise could be divided into three classes, each class having a separate origin: namely, icebergs from the glaciers of Fox Channel, heavy Arctic ice from the channel itself, and ordinary field ice, being that formed on the shores

of the bay and strait. No icebergs were encountered in Hudson's Bay, nor were any reported as having been

in a much superior vessel, H. M. S. "Alert," which had been lent for the purpose by the British naval authorities. In every respect, except, perhaps, speed, a better vessel than this steamship could hardly have been selected. She had been specially rebuilt for the Nares Arctic expedition of 1876, and was so constructed as to be capable of resisting great ice-pressure, while her engines gave a very creditable amount of speed for a very small expenditure of coal. It being deemed essential to determine, so far as possible, the time of the opening of Hudson's Straits for navigation, a much earlier start was made than before; the "Alert" steaming out of Halifax Harbor on the 27th of May. Unfortunately, however, the fates saw fit to frustrate this design; for, after making her way with much difficulty, but no mishap, through fields of ice and banks of fog right up to the mouth of the strait, on the 16th of June the

ice set solid to the ship fore and aft, rafting and piling up all around her, and the next day it was discovered that the iron stern-plates had been broken off some distance below the water. This was a most serious injury, as Lieut. Gordon did not dare drive his ship at all hard through the ice, and from that day until July 6th was compelled to let her drift about, the plaything and sport of the

pitiless ice-king. Thus, much precious time was lost, and a still further delay occasioned by the necessity of returning to Newfoundland for repairs, which took until nearly the end of the month, so that August had come before the first station, Port Burwell, was reached. The observer and his assistants were found in excellent health, and reported having passed a very pleasant winter, even if the cold did happen to freeze the mercury solid sometimes.



SHORE ICE.

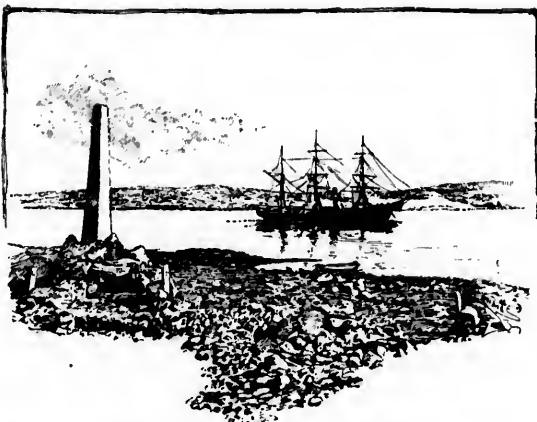
GROUNDED ICEBERG.

seen there in the past; but in the strait a good many were met with, principally along the northern shore, where a number were stranded in the coves, while some others were passed in mid-channel. They were not thought, however, to form any greater barriers to navigation than do those met with in Belle Isle Strait, nor were they more numerous than they frequently are in these waters. The field-ice encountered, although it would have compelled an ordinary iron steamer to go dead-slow, gave no trouble to the "Neptune," the vessel running at full speed between the pans, and rarely touching one of them.

The following summer a second expedition, in charge of the same commander as before, went up to the bay, this time

The round of the different stations was then made, and men who had spent the winter there were replaced by fresh garrisons, the number in each case being the same as before. With two exceptions the men were found in perfect health, the exceptions being one of the observers, who was suffering from a slight attack of scurvy, and one of the station hands, who had fallen a victim to that disease. In the latter case the fault lay entirely with the unfortunate fellow, as, during the winter months, he spent the greater part of his time in bed, and persistently neglected every precaution against an attack. After visiting Fort Churchill, where, as may be readily supposed, the advent of the "Alert" was hailed with delight by the little band of residents, and her departure was delayed by a violent storm that lasted over a week, the return voyage was entered upon, the parting round of the stations made, and their tiny garrisons were left to the cold and darkness of a long and dreary Arctic winter.

The third expedition, in which the "Alert" was again used, sailed on June 24th, 1886, and had far better luck than its immediate predecessor, as no special difficulty or cause of delay was experienced, the season proving to be somewhat earlier than the previous year, and the ice, consequently, in a much more disorganized condition. It is true that while ramming at a taut bar of ice a little more than half way through the strait, the screw got worsted in the encounter to the extent of one blade, but as the same accident had occurred on both the previous trips, Lieut. Gordon knew exactly how to repair the damage, and little time was lost. The stations were visited in turn, and all their occupants taken off, as they were to be maintained no longer. This duty accomplished, an excursion was made to Marble Island, in the northern part of the bay, a great resort of whalers, in whose chief harbor there is a spot called Deadman's Island, because of the num-



STEAMER "ALERT" OFF DEADMAN'S ISLAND.

ber of graves dotting its bleak and barren back with pathetic memorials of those who had gone out from their New Bedford homes to return no more forever.

Forts York and Churchill were then called at, and a survey made of the latter place with a view of ascertaining its commercial capabilities, the result being that it was pronounced admirably suited for the water terminus of a railroad system, and easily convertible into a port fit for doing a business of great magnitude. The estuary of the Nelson River, by the shores of which Fort York stands, is, on the other hand, declared by Lieut. Gordon to be one of the most dangerous places in the world for shipping; so that, if Hudson's Bay ever does become the summer outlet for the commerce of the Great North-west, Churchill harbor must undoubtedly be the shipping port. Some day or other there may be a boom up there, and this little bit of information may prove very valuable, but I present it freely to my readers notwithstanding, and they can use it as they see fit.

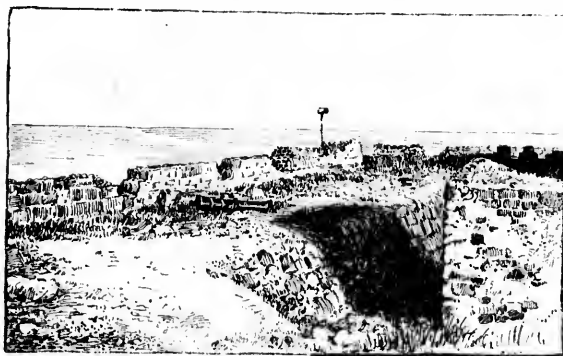
Having thus glanced briefly at the movements of the three expeditions, my next business is to rescue the more important results of their explorations from the quick oblivion of the blue-book, and make them public property; a task that has been rendered materially more interesting through the kindness of Mr. W. A. Ashe, observer at Ashe Inlet, in placing at my disposal the

extensive and valuable notes made by him during his winter sojourn, as well as his helpful collection of photographs, taken during the same period.

First of all, a word or two in reference to Hudson's Bay itself. The proportions of this inland ocean are such as to give it a prominent place among the geographical features of the world. One thousand three hundred miles in length by six hundred miles in breadth, it extends over twelve degrees of latitude, and covers an area of not less than half-a-million square miles. Of the five basins into which Canada is divided, that of Hudson's Bay is immeasurably the largest, the extent of country draining into it being estimated at three million square miles. To swell the mighty volume of its waters there come rivers which take their rise in the Rocky Mountains on the east, and the Labrador wilderness on the west, while southward its river-roots stretch far down below the 49th parallel, until they tap the same lake source whence flows a stream into the Gulf of Mexico. Strange as it may seem, it is yet perfectly possible that a passing breath of wind should determine whether the ultimate destiny of the rain-drop falling

a conflict, its possession being fiercely disputed by the French and English for a period extending over two centuries. An interesting relic of those tumultuous days is still to be seen in what is without doubt the largest ruin in North America—Fort Prince of Wales, whose battered walls stand out prominently upon the point at the west side of the entrance to Churchill Harbor. Begun in 1733, it occupied several years in building, and when completed must have looked very imposing with its lofty stone battlements and two-score menacing cannon. Yet strong as it was, Governor Hearne, who had charge in 1782, surrendered without firing a shot, to the French Admiral La Perouse, when he appeared before him in a seventy-four accompanied by two frigates, and summoned him to yield. La Perouse spiked and dismantled the guns, partially destroyed the walls, and then sailed away with his prisoners, leaving the fort to a neglect and silence that have not been broken since, except when perchance some curious visitor explores its fast crumbling ruins.

The chief reason for the deep interest manifested in the bay by the two great rivals was their desire to control the lucrative fur trade for which it offered so excellent an outlet. The famous Hudson Bay Company was formed under the patronage of Prince Rupert in 1688, and forthwith proceeded to establish forts along the shore, beginning with Moose Factory at the foot of James Bay. Forts Albany, York and Churchill followed in due time, and regular communica-



RUINS OF FORT PRINCE OF WALES.

into that little lake be the baby bosom of the Mexican Gulf, or the chilly grasp of the Arctic ice-floe.

Although seemingly so remote from the needs of humanity, Hudson's Bay has been the scene of many



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FALLS ON THE EDITH RIVER, ASHE INLET.

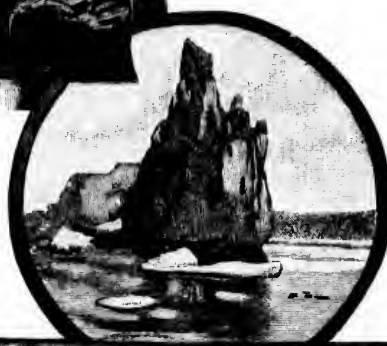
tion has been maintained between them and Great Britain, the records showing that with the exception of one year (1779) a ship has annually visited Moose Factory for 151 years, and York Factory for 97 years.

The native Indians and Eskimo were from the first delighted at the establishment of these forts, and at no time have the relations between them and their white brethren been otherwise than perfectly harmonious. They scour the country far and wide for furs, and bringing them to the fort, obtain in exchange, ammunition, guns, hatchets, knives, beads and other articles dear to the savage heart, and essential to their wild life.

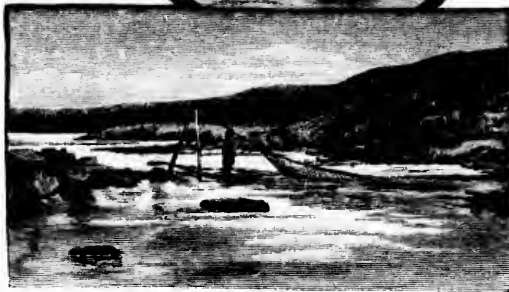
They are a harmless, inoffensive people as a rule, and have readily listened to the missionaries sent to minister unto their spiritual necessities, the consequent improvement in their life being easily perceptible.

The Indians of these regions have so much in common with the ordinary red man as to call for no special remark; but the Eskimo present an individuality and interest that render them peculiarly attractive, as a subject of study at all events, and Mr. Ashe's acute and sympathetic observations help us greatly to-

ward a better understanding of these little known people. For more than a year he dwelt amongst them on an island on the north side of the strait at about the middle point of its length, his home being a frame house, sixteen by twenty feet in dimensions, in which he and his two men successfully endured a climate whose



ICEBERG IN ASHE INLET.



FISHING WITH NETS ON THE EDITH RIVER.

mean temperature was nineteen degrees below freezing point, permitting snow to lie in shady places the whole year round, and making a snow-storm possible in the height of summer.

It is a sad and gloomy land. In winter the world lies buried beneath its monotonous robe of white. In summer it reminds one of a Doré illustration to the "Inferno," for without a sign of vegetation save a sickly growth of moss in sheltered nooks, the bare, bleak rocks lie tumbled about in chaotic confusion, wearying the eye and chilling the soul





CAMP OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS.

with their unmitigated sternness. Amid such surroundings do the Eskimo spend their life, passing from cradle to grave without one faintest gleam of the glorious beauty of flower-strewn meadow or billowy verdured forest. And yet they are far from being an unhappy or unintelligent race. On the contrary, they are both cheerful and bright by nature to a degree that puts them upon a higher level than many of the Indians who have much greater advantages. In the matter of mechanical ability, for instance, examine the tool-box of an Eskimo when he considers it well furnished, and what does it contain? A well-worn file, an indifferent saw, a few rusty nails, a cheap pen-knife, and a very inferior sheath-knife. What would the ordinary mechanic of civilization accomplish with such implements as these? Yet with these poor tools the Eskimo will repair the locks of their guns, make harpoons and spears, put together their kayaks and umiaks, and manufacture all sorts of things out of walrus ivory. They will take the blade out of one pen-knife, alter it so as to be of suit-

able size, and place it in another handle, drilling with a broken needle the hole for the pin on which the blade turns, having first by means of fire carefully untempered the part of the blade to be drilled.

The appearance of these Eskimo is suggestive of patience and perseverance. They are short and squat of figure, the men averaging five feet three inches, and the women five feet in height. Their breadth is apt to vary, according to whether the fates have sent them plenty of seal or not. Their eyes and hair are of the very blackest, the latter being as straight and not less coarse than horse-hair. A favorite amusement among the women is for two of them to select a hair out of their heads, and looping one through the other, to pull on the ends held in their hands until one of the hairs gives way, to the vast delight of the fat little lady whose capillary strength wins in this odd tug-of-war.

The men generally sport a moustache, and occasionally a beard, the usual thing, however, being a tuft on the chin. They have very flat noses and high cheek-bones, so that if you were to hold

a straight rule from one of their eye-balls to the other, it would in many cases fail to touch the bridge of the nose. Their eyes have an upward tendency at

according to the old song, having no breeches to wear, got him a sheep-skin to make him a pair, and then

With the skinny side out, and the woolly side in,
He was fine and warm was Brian O'Lynn.

The pattern of their garments varies not a whit from generation to generation. The coat, which does not button but is hauled on over the head, has a large capuchin, in Eskimo language, "amook," at the back of the neck. The only difference between the coats of the men and the women lies in the latter being graced with a tail, both "fore and aft," so to speak, upon which the feminine fondness for ornamentation is indulged to the full extent of the wearer's means, so that they may be seen adorned with numerous rows of beads and bits of brass or copper, such things as the works of a clock not being despised, for instance. A very popular form of decoration consists of table-spoons, which they break in two, and arrange in various devices, grouping the handles in one place and the bowls in another.

In the summer each family has its own home, but in winter two or more families live together for the sake of increased warmth and economy of fuel. The summer residence is a tent

made of sealskins with the hair scraped off, giving much the appearance of yellowish parchment, which is stretched over poles of drift-wood arranged in the ordinary cone shape. The door always faces



the corners; their complexion is of a light brown tinge, often dashed with red; their mouths wide, but not thick-lipped; their teeth very irregular, and considerably more like rusty iron than gleaming pearl in color, while in the women they are apt to be worn down almost to the gums by their custom of chewing, until it is soft enough to be easily sewn. The sun-stiffened seal-skin out of which their garments are made. However lacking in attractive qualities the Eskimo belle may appear to the civilized eye, she possesses one element of beauty which even the most charming residents of Madison Square or Beacon Street might fairly covet, and that is exquisitely small hands and feet. While her southern sister compresses her understandings into the tightest of French bottines, and yet is not satisfied, the houri of Hudson's Straits puts on first a sealskin stocking with the fur inside; then another, made out of the skin of a duck, loon, or raven, with its feathers still on; then one or two more of sealskin, and lastly, the boot itself; notwithstanding all of which wrapping, her foot seems small and dainty.

The Eskimo costume consists in summer of seal-skins, and in winter of reindeer-skins, the latter being always worn in duplicate, one set with the fur next the body, the other with the fur outside, an arrangement that is even better than the famous one of Brian O'Lynn, who,



toward the water by whose side they are camped, and at the opposite side of the tent is the bed, composed of moss covered with sealskin. As they sleep with head



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pointing doorward, they necessarily lie down-hill owing to the natural slope of the land toward the shore. This does not seem either a comfortable or healthy position, but apparently they are none the worse for it. On either side of the doorway is their larder, consisting of exceedingly repulsive-looking piles of seal meat and blubber, which give forth an odor that Samson himself, with his hair at its longest, could hardly wrestle with successfully, so overwhelming is its strength.

The winter habitations are made entirely of snow, and are generally built under the sheltering lee of a rock, in the drift that accumulates there. The builders begin by marking out on the snow a circle about fifteen feet in diameter, which represents the inner side of the walls, and with a saw or long-bladed knife they cut out blocks of snow from three to six feet long by a foot thick, and high, from inside the circle they have marked; then, placing the blocks around the circle, they carry the walls up spirally (not in tiers), until they meet in a keystone above, at a distance of about nine feet from the excavated level of the floor. The result is, except, of course, as to color, the production of a gigantic beehive, over the door or in the centre of the roof of which is set a big block of fresh-

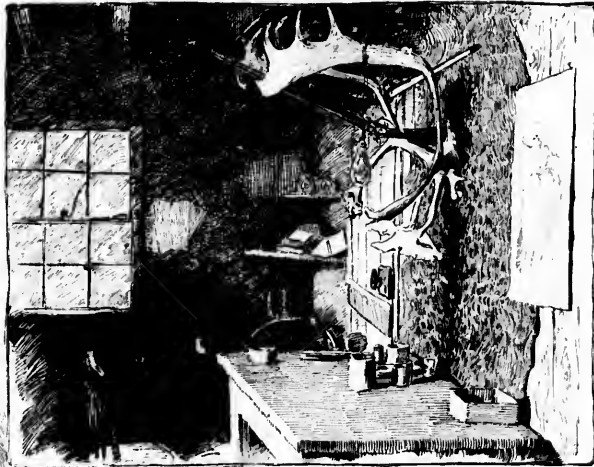
water ice to serve the purpose of a window in lighting an interior that, although stainless white at first, is soon blackened by the ever-smoking, evil-smelling lamps the inmates use.

The furniture of these human hives is very simple, as may be readily supposed. It consists of a bed-place or divan along the side of the "igloo" opposite the door, and two fire-places, one on either hand as you enter. These are made of firmly packed snow, and raised about three feet above the floor, the divan having its outer edge faced with a pole to prevent it from crumbling away when used as a seat in the day-time. The beds are made up in the following manner: first, a layer of moss spread over the snow; next, a layer of sealskins; then a layer of bear or deerskins, and finally the sleeping bags, which resemble exaggerated pillow-slips, only that fur takes the place of linen, and the fur is double, so that there may be hair both inside and outside. Into these bags, of which each adult has one, the Eskimo, stripped to the bare buff, creeps for the night, and sleeps very comfortably. Up to the age of ten the children share their parents' bag; after that they are promoted to having one of their own.

Their fires are nothing more than lamps rudely fashioned out of soap-



stone, and so arranged as to be self-supplying, a mass of blubber being hung in such close proximity to the flame that the fat is converted into oil, which, dripping into the bowl below, is consumed by means of a moss wick. As the lamp has no chimney, and both oil and wick are of the poorest, the result is the reverse of brilliant; neither light nor heat being obtained in what we would consider a satisfactory quantity. Just above the lamps a sealskin is stretched to



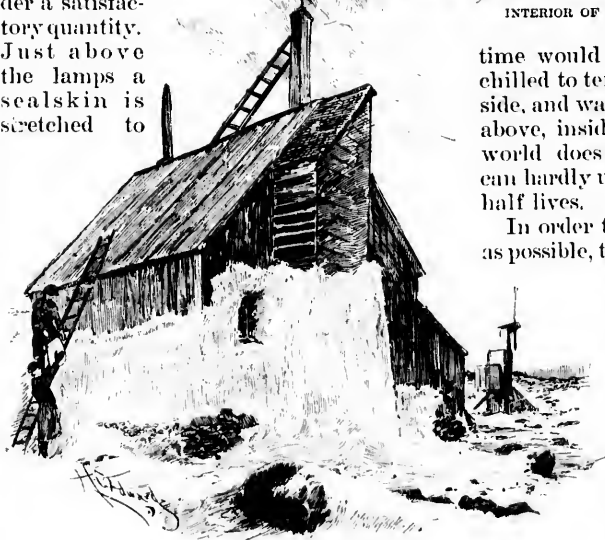
INTERIOR OF OBSERVATORY AT ASHE INLET.

time would you have with the air chilled to ten degrees below zero, outside, and warmed to only twenty-five above, inside? Verily, one half the world does not know, and indeed can hardly understand, how the other half lives.

In order to keep out as much cold as possible, the doorways are very low and narrow, a fact which explains the curious phrase with which the hosts speed their parting guests, namely: "Tabourke aperniak in atit" —that is, "Good-bye: do n't bump your head."

Next to his children, the most important members of an Eskimo's household are his dogs, they being essential to his hunting in summer,

and his traveling in winter. They are very wild, wolfish animals, only half-domesticated, and possessing marvelous digestive powers. A pup that Mr. Ashe was rearing, being left to amuse himself in the house one day, did so, very effectually, by devouring stockings, gloves, the greater part of a top-boot, and many smaller articles of a similar nature, none of which, apparently, disagreed with him. In traveling the dogs are harnessed to the sledges by traces of white whale-skin, the



PREPARING FOR WINTER.

prevent the heat thawing the roof away, a precaution that seems hardly necessary, seeing that the ordinary temperature of these snow-huts is 27 degrees at the roof and 24 degrees at the level of the beds; in other words, from 5 to 8 degrees below freezing-point. Pray pause for a moment, good people, as you read this by cosy firesides, or in register-heated chambers, where the thermometer keeps comfortably near the seventies, and try to realize what it means. What sort of a

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oldest and most trustworthy on the lead, the others in pairs on either side of his line; a dozen constituting a full team, and the whole being controlled by a driver who runs beside them, wielding a whip with a lash thirty feet long, which, in his hands, can take a tuft of hair out of the most distant dog, with unflinching accuracy. Where there is no beaten track some one must precede the dogs to show them the way, but on a well-defined route they will trot along merrily by themselves at the rate of five or six miles an hour.



Often, when a pause is made for a rest or to ice the runners of the sledge, a discussion will arise among the dogs as to whether all are pulling their fair share. From barks they soon come to bites, and a scrimmage ensues which would cast the liveliest corner of Donnybrook Fair into the shade; the dancing driver with his cracking whip, the snarling, struggling dogs entangled in their traces, and the overturned sled combine to make up a scene that defies description.

The Eskimos are very good to their dogs, sharing their last bite with them when food is scarce. So fond are they of them, too, that it is exceedingly difficult to purchase a good team. The Hudson's Bay Company employees find these dogs very useful in their work, and there are large packs of them at every fort. They are famous fish-eaters, and great are the rejoicings in dog-town, when a catch of porpoises or white whales is effected; for

then they may gorge themselves to their hearts' content upon the rich and juicy meat of the marine monsters.

The Eskimo language is very soft and pleasing to the ear, but difficult to acquire, principally because of the peculiar use of the accent, and the difference a wrong placing of it makes, as a word incorrectly pronounced seems to be quite unintelligible. Mr. Ashe's first attempts at conversation were so conspicuously unsuccessful that he was much discouraged. For instance, he once said to a young neighbor: "Ibbe micky tiddleman pickanminy petuang-a-too," meaning thereby to remark in a friendly way: "Your dog had five puppies—they are dead;" but in reality testing his visitor's self-control by the offensive assertion: "You are a dog—you have not got five children."

Although known to the world as Eskimo or Esquimaux, these dwellers in the far north call themselves



DOGS WAITING TO BE FED.

"Innuits," which means "the people," as if they were the only people in the world. The generally accepted derivation of the term Eskimo, is from the Indian word "Eskimautsic," signifying "eaters of raw meat," but Mr. Ashe suggests another derivation that is at least very plausible, and worthy of notice. The whaler of to-day calls the Eskimo "Huskies," a word that is not far removed from "Husickie," and that again from "Isickie," which is the Innuits word for a male. Now, what seems more probable than that the earliest visitors to those icy regions in seek-

ing information as to what the inhabitants called themselves were understood as wanting to know whether they were males or females: and, receiving the reply "Isiekie," have turned it into Eskimo before handing it down to us? The Eskimo call their white visitors, whom they are always so glad to see, "Kedloonah," that is, the "crested people;" they at first supposing that the hats worn by them were part of their physical constitution.

In reference to their religious beliefs and superstitions, the Eskimo are remarkably reticent, for the reason probably that their intercourse has chiefly been with rough, rude sailors, and they are afraid of having their cherished ceremonies made the butt of the white man's ridicule.

As regards matrimonial matters, they generally have but one wife, and never more than two at the same time. No formal preliminaries in the way of a marriage service seem to be presented. When a couple come to the same way of thinking, the man takes the woman from her home, sometimes even without asking the parents' consent, and installs her in his own igloo as the fire-tender and "slavey" thereof. Usually the relation is a happy one. Sometimes, however, incompatibility of temper reveals itself, and then the uncongenial wife is returned to her former home, having been taken only "on approval," and no formal divorce being required, which shows that in this one respect at least the otherwise slow-going North has advanced farther even than Chicago herself.

Eskimo parents are not apt to be overburdened with children, five being considered a large family. This is due to the lack of farinaceous food, which renders it necessary to postpone weaning until the children are five or six years old. What poor, dear Artemus Ward would call "episodes" are quite unknown among them, and when assured that triplets, or even quartets, were not impossible in the South, their admiration of the white man was vastly increased.

The dead are buried in the snow in winter time, and among the rocks in the summer, piles of stones being heaped upon them to keep off the wolves and dogs. With the male dead, they bury a

knife and spear. Before the era of guns they buried also a bow and arrow, but when these became obsolete, they did not put a gun in their place, arguing soundly enough that he must be a poor hunter indeed who cannot get all the game he needs in the happy hunting-grounds with a knife and spear as his only weapons. It would appear as if there were advanced thinkers, moreover, who hold that even the knife and spear are not necessary in a land of such unlimited plenty, and who accordingly deprive the dead man of both, for it is very rarely that graves are found still containing these articles. With the women they bury nothing, holding that some body will hunt game for them in the next world just as they have done in this.

The Eskimo pantheon is pretty well occupied, there being gods to preside over the different natural phenomena, such as the rain, snow, ice, tides and so forth, and others controlling human destiny in the chase, at home and elsewhere. Their explanation of the tides is very naïve. The genius of the waters, it seems, wishing to cross the straits dryshod, caused the water that filled them to heap itself up at one side, and then, when he had passed over, to fall back into its place again, which it did with such momentum as to go on oscillating to and fro ever since. They have no lack of priests, and under their direction make various offerings to propitiate the deities, particularly when the season is bad, and seals are scarce.

Their social customs are full of interest and individuality. Their way of eating, for instance, is decidedly peculiar. Cutting a long strip of gory, greasy meat from the mass before him, the Eskimo gourmand takes one end of it in his mouth, and then pulling on the other until it is strained tight, with a quick slash of the knife past his mouth and nose, he severs a mouthful and swallows it without mastication, repeating the operation rapidly until the limit of his storage capacity is reached. A civilized spectator watching an Eskimo family at dinner cannot fail to be struck with the wisdom of Providence in giving these people such short noses, as were the features any longer they would infallibly suffer early abbreviation.



PORTAGING A YORK BOAT.

In the matter of amusements the Eskimo are not badly off. They have a form of cup-and-ball, the ball being a block of ivory pierced with holes at different angles, into one of which the players strive to insert an ivory peg as the block falls, the position of the hole determining the value of the stroke. Another game closely resembles dominoes, and contains pieces running as high as "double-thirties," but the sequences are not regularly carried out, the breaks in them seeming to be without system. When they can borrow or purchase a pack of cards, they will play euchre and high-low-jack with considerable skill; and they also enjoy draughts, having learned these games from the whalers. They have a game exactly like solitaire, with the exception that ivory pegs take the place of the glass balls. The special amusement of the women is a species of "cat's-crack," which has been brought to such perfection that they develop from twenty to thirty different figures in it. Indeed, they are extremely clever in performing tricks with string, winding and twisting a piece in and out among their fingers, and then disentangling it by a single pull on one end.

Such are some of the manners and customs of the quaint harmless and—despite their dirt—lovable people whose home is among the dreary regions to

the north and south of Hudson's Straits. They have many admirable traits of character. They are wonderfully patient and enduring in times of trial and suffering; honest and intelligent to an unlooked-for degree; perfectly fearless in the chase, yet so peace-loving in their disposition that quarrels are almost unknown; hospitable, docile, keenly appreciative of kindness, and ready to share their last bite with their white visitors; willing to work when opportunity offers, and content with small remuneration. So many good points have they, indeed, that the sad certainty of their gradual extermination is rendered all the sadder thereby. The most careful estimate of their numbers in the Hudson's Straits region at present is 1,500, but this, of course, is only an approximation, as their own system of counting, which generally runs "one-two-three—a great many," renders anything like an accurate census impossible. Each year finds their food-supply diminishing, thanks mainly to the enterprise of the whalers and sealers. As the number of the seals decrease the number of the Eskimo must decrease also, and the end, though it may be long delayed, seems inevitable.

Although the region inhabited (if that term can be rightly applied to tiny settlements scattered at vast intervals over boundless wastes) by the Eskimo is ut-

terly worthless for agricultural purposes, the waters it surrounds contain sources of wealth which, strange to say, have hitherto been monopolized by the Dundee and New Bedford whalers, just as the fur trade has been monopolized by the English Hudson's Bay Company; the Canadians, to whom the region belongs, deriving scarcely any benefit from it whatever. Formerly, the whale fisheries of the bay were extremely valuable, but of late years this leviathan has so decreased in numbers as to render his chase precariously profitable, and his extinction an early possibility. From a table prepared by Dr. Boas, it appears that between 1846 and 1875 inclusive, the United States sent 113 vessels to the Hudson's Bay whale fishing, and that they obtained 1,620 barrels of sperm, 56,019 barrels of whale oil, and nearly a million pounds of whalebone, which, considering that the average size of the ship is only 240 tons, makes it clear that there has been a handsome margin of profit. The right whale, which, in consequence of the high price of whalebone, viz., about \$12,000 a ton, is by far the richest prize a whaler can capture, attains a size of from fifty to eighty feet. It was once readily found in the northern part of the bay, but now is rarely seen and the pursuers have to go farther and farther north every year. The white whale, on the other hand, still abounds at the York, Nelson, and Churchill rivers. They go up with the tide every day in great numbers, and seem quite tame, bobbing up serenely and blowing within twenty feet of the boats. They are caught in nets and also by rows of stakes driven into the mud, and taken to the forts where they are flensed, the blubber

tried out, the skins cured, and the carcass put by for the food of the dogs in winter. As these whales average about forty gallons of oil each, and their skins are valuable, they are worth from twenty to thirty dollars apiece. The narwhale or unicorn, and the walrus still exist in considerable numbers, and well repay the trouble of hunting them, while the seal, it need hardly be said, swarms upon the ice in countless numbers during the greater part of the year, and to a large extent constitutes the Eskimo's commissariat. Of smaller fishes, the salmon is the only one having commercial value. It is caught in large quantities by the Company, and sent to England fresh in a refrigerator ship specially built for the trade.

There are not many species of land animals, the polar bear, wolf, wolverine, arctic fox, reindeer, polar hare, and lemming being the principal ones. They are all pretty numerous still, but their ranks are undoubtedly thinning, as the demands of the fur trade increase; and some day or other they will be so scarce as to render the business of catching them no longer remunerative. Indeed, as it is now, no matter how hospitable, genial, or talkative an official at one of the Hudson's Bay Company's forts may be, under no circumstance can he be seduced into the admission that his post is run at a profit to the company; according to him it is kept up just for the benefit of the Indians and Eskimo; in other words, for philanthropic rather than for commercial purposes. Accordingly, if this showing be true, the end of the fur trade is already within sight.

But it is not because of its human inhabitants, nor of its quarries for the hunter on land or sea that the Hudson's Bay region has special interest for us to-



LOOKING SOUTH ALONG THE MERIDIAN LINE, LENNOXVILLE, P. Q.

day. We might be content to leave it to the chill obscurity which has been so long its lot, were it not that, as already indicated, the Central part of Canada, and the North-west of the United States are asking whether it does not afford a solution of the problem how to secure for their products the cheapest and most expeditious road to the best markets. A glance at the map will be sufficient to make clear that the shortest possible route between the region referred to and Europe lies through Hudson's Bay. Careful calculations have shown that the city of Winnipeg, for instance, is at least eight hundred miles nearer Liverpool by the Hudson's Bay route than by the St. Lawrence, and the difference in favor of the former increases, of course, the farther you advance north-westward. If, as has been pointed out, you take the central point of the agricultural lands of the Canadian North-west, you will find that the distance from it to Winnipeg is about the same as to Churchill, the finest harbor of the bay. Now the distance between Churchill and Liverpool is a little less (about sixty-four miles) than it is between Montreal and that great entrepot of commerce. The conclusion, consequently, is that as between the said centre and Liverpool there is a saving of the whole distance from Winnipeg to Montreal, by the use of Hudson's Bay, which means in miles no less than 1,291 via Lake Superior and 1,698 via Chicago.

The people of Manitoba having become fairly alive to the importance of the subject, not only called upon Parliament to help them, but, like sensible folk, set to work to help themselves. A charter was obtained for a railway from Winnipeg to York Factory. The line was surveyed and found to be easy of construction. Some eighty miles of it have been already laid down. Two powerful steamers of 6,000 tons each have been ordered to be built expressly for the route, and two others have been chartered. It is intended that these vessels shall begin running between England and Hudson's Bay early in June, 1888. They will finally solve the all-important question as to how early a powerful steamer of the freight-carrying class may be able to penetrate the straits, and they will also furnish the supplies required for the prosecution of the road from York Factory

southwards, meeting it in its progress from Winnipeg northwards.

Seeing how ardent, energetic, and hopeful, Manitobans have been in this matter, it is not a little disappointing to find that such competent authorities as Lieut. Gordon and Mr. Ashe, are by no means sanguine as to the success of the route. The latter has pointed out that, apart from the ice question, which is quite serious enough of itself, there are other difficulties which have to be reckoned with, such as the dangers attendant upon a passage along an unknown, unlighted coast-line, with few harbors of refuge, and very little room to ride out a gale; extreme depths of water, one hundred fathoms being often found right up to the shore, with generally very defective holding ground where the depths are more moderate. In foul weather, no sounding being possible that would be of value, a vessel would receive no warning of her proximity to the coast until it was, perhaps, too late to save her from destruction. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the proximity of the straits to the Magnetic Pole renders the ordinary compass perfectly useless, and even the Thompson compass becomes liable to aberration if there are any disturbing elements on shipboard.

The most serious objection of all, however, to the Hudson's Bay route, is the ice that fills these waters with its destructive floes and bergs. No ordinary steamer could safely venture into its midst. The bow must be armored, and the whole frame strengthened to withstand the rude buffeting that is so inevitable. All this, of course, means increased cost and decreased carrying capacity; and even then the lesson of the three expeditions would seem to be, that the period of navigation for such a vessel is from the 15th July to the 15th October, with a possibility of navigation from 1st July to 1st November. Whether a railroad system eight hundred miles in length, and a fleet of steamships of a very costly kind can be employed with profit where the season for transportation is not more than three or at the most four months in duration, constitutes the problem upon the solution of which depends the future of the Inland Ocean of the North.

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