

THE NETSCHILLUK INNUITS.

THE Netschilluk Innuits, or Eskimo, have been variously spoken of as Neitschilluk, Netschillee, Nachilliee, and Nachilluk, by various writers. The name comes from Netshuk, or Neitschuk, meaning the small seal of the Arctic, and is no doubt due to their being dependent upon the seal as their staple article of food. So important a factor is the stomach of the Eskimo, in his economy, that his diet often determines his tribal name; but the significance of the name has in many cases vanished, either on account of tribal migration, or the extinction of the animals upon which they were dependent.

I found the Netschilluks, in 1879, living on the mainland opposite King William's Land, and along the islands in the vicinity of Simpson's Strait. They were most numerous along the northern shores of Adelaide Peninsula, their villages being scattered every few miles along this coast from the Montreal Islands to Smith's Point. Farther east were the Pelly Bay Eskimo, with whom the Netschilluks get along well enough, and through whose country some have migrated to Hudson's Bay. To the southeast were the Ooguesik Salik Innuits, a nearly extinct tribe, the few remaining members living at the Dangerous Rapids of Back's River, and Salmon Rapids of Hayes River. Between them and the Netschilluk, there exists the deepest distrust. From Smith's Point to MacLaughlin Bay, along the western shore of Adelaide Peninsula and in King-mik-took (Dogs' Inlet), there live the Ookjoolik, or Oojooklik, with whom the Netschilluks are intimately associated. Still farther west are the Kidnelik (copper Eskimo); and between them and all the other tribes I have mentioned, there exists open hostility,—the only case I know among the whole family of Eskimo. This hostility, however, takes more the form of strenuous efforts to avoid each other, than to bring on collisions, though occasionally such do occur.

The Netschilluks, in weight and stature, are above the Caucasian race. The Eskimo of Greenland have been so often described, and are generally so undersized, that this characteristic has unwittingly been attributed to the whole race. Among the Eskimo of North Hudson's Bay I occasionally found a man of even conspicuous size. One of these was the only fully grown Netschilluk on the shore of the bay; and I determined to have him in my sledging-party for King William's Land, as he would be a letter of introduction. He was named Ik-

guesik, stood about six feet high, and weighed perhaps from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and thirty pounds, every ounce apparently serviceable muscle. He proved to be a by no means exceptional specimen of his race, one whom I met standing over six feet six inches. Those of shorter stature were of exceedingly heavy build, with stout frames and broad shoulders. A cadaverous-looking specimen (fig. 1), whom we met for the first time as

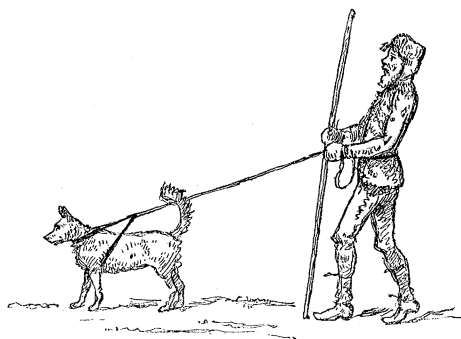


FIG. 1.

we were leaving his country in November, could hardly be called an exception, when his story is told. As soon as the ice in the fresh-water lakes is melted in July, this tribe leaves the coast to hunt reindeer. Our friend, having chosen a very unfrequented sheet of water for his summer reindeer-hunt, was left one day upon an island with his kiak wrecked, and, when rescued many days after, was at the point of death from starvation. He was brought to the coast in the fall, and when we saw him, although unable to walk alone, had overcome this difficulty by harnessing a strong dog, and tying the trace around his waist, and, with a long cane or staff, could make good headway as a pedestrian.

The Netschilluks know nothing of fire-arms. Their bows are made of spliced pieces of musk-ox horn or driftwood, and cannot compare with those of the American Indians. Their method of hunting reindeer is to build a line of stone monuments (fig. 2) of about a man's size, from fifty to a hundred yards apart, on some ridge often two or three miles in length, which runs obliquely (fig. 3) toward some large lake or wide river. If a herd of reindeer is seen between the line of cairns and the water, the natives deploy into a skirmish line across from the last cairn to the river, and walk slowly toward the reindeer, their weapons and their kiaks being concealed near the water's edge.

The reindeer, seeing their enemy, trot away until they come within sight of the piles of stones, when, believing themselves to be sur-



FIG. 2.

rounded, they take to the water. Then the Innuits follow in their kiaks, and easily overtake the bewildered animals. A herd of reindeer, when undisturbed, will repeatedly graze near such a line of cairns without any further notice than a few suspicious glances.

Depending as they do upon such a precarious chase, the Netschilluks are poorly clothed. As they live nearest to the pole of minimum temperature, it is interesting to note their methods of combating the cold. Their igloos are the warmest I saw in the Arctic: they are very low, as shown in fig. 4, the dotted lines indicating the usual height. With such a cramped space, the heat from the lamp and

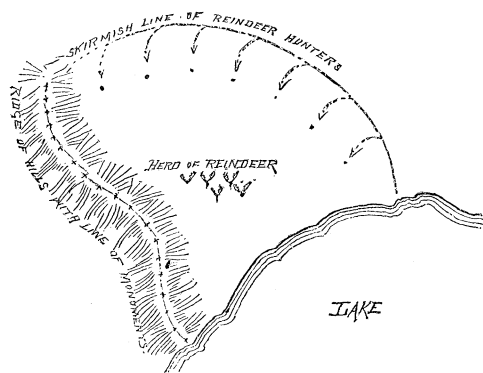


FIG. 3.

from the bodies of the Innuits is naturally economized to the utmost.

They have an unlimited supply of seal and ookjook (great seal) oil for lamp-use, while they devour enormous quantities of seal-blubber. Their consumption of fat, even during the summer and autumn months, when I saw them, was noticeably greater than that of other tribes. Their reputation for thieving is not conspicuous, and they generally tell the truth. They treat their children well, especially the boys, but still practise to a limited

degree female infanticide. They have the usual superstitious beliefs of savages, but are to be credited with having devised a physical theory to account for a physical phenomenon. They never have seen wood growing, and only know it as driftwood scattered on the shore. They see the logs frozen in the ice before they are cast upon the shore, and believe the timber to be a growth on the bottom of the ocean (fig. 5), which, when it reaches to a certain height, is nipped off by the ice, and borne to the land. It was on one of their wood-seeking trips that the Netschilluks learned so much regarding the ill-fated Franklin party. These trips are at rare intervals; and wood enough is secured to

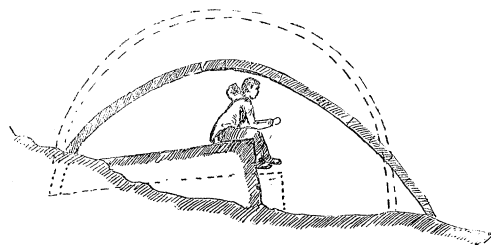


FIG. 4.

last for five or ten years, as this part of the country is almost destitute of game.

The Netschilluks' fear of their western neighbors was well illustrated by their reception of our party. As soon as they discovered us approaching, the women and children withdrew to the snow-huts, while the men formed in line with drawn bows, one arrow fixed, and the whole quiver brought around in convenient position for the use of the others. At my guide's request, I fired a gun in the air to show them that we were white men: this seemed to frighten them more than ever. At last an old woman was sent forward to meet Ikgneesik, whom I had directed to go toward them; and

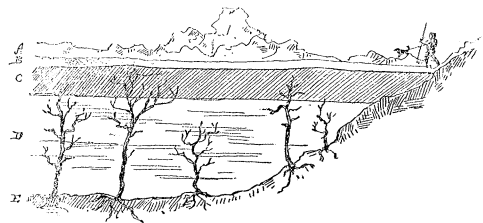


FIG. 5.

the poor old hag came forward, trembling, with a perfect bewilderment of volubility to strengthen her fast-failing courage.

In their marriage relations I found but little difference from those of Eskimo better known. The marriage contract is arranged early in life by the parents, although Ikqueesik bought a wife for his nearly grown brother, who was also of my party, for the consideration of a whaler's jack-knife.

Their pugilistic encounters generally take place between the 'best men' of different villages, and especially of different tribes, so that all my Eskimo were promptly challenged; but being feather weights, compared with these giants, I interfered. Their fights are managed somewhat in this way: one of the combatants, sitting or standing, leans forward with both hands or elbows resting on his knees, when his opponent, with clinched fist, deals him such a blow on the side of the head as he may see fit, the first stroke being usually comparatively light. No. 2 then takes his turn in leaning forward, and No. 1 deals him a blow, generally a little heavier than that he has just received. This operation goes on until one or the other is either knocked senseless, or rendered helpless from sheer exhaustion.

Another danger threatening the natives of my party was no less than the undertaking to assassinate one of them, or possibly a white man, should circumstances favor. Family feuds are not unfrequent; and, when a death results, every male relative of the murdered man feels bound to avenge the death by killing some man of the offending tribe, the murderer or some near relative being preferable. This vengeance may be postponed almost indefinitely, and friendly social relations maintained; but, slow as it is, it is sure to come, sooner or later.

I have known one of these murderers to coolly take up his residence among his enemies, and to all intents and purposes be as one of them. Among the Netschilluks at the last camp we visited was a powerfully built specimen of his tribe, Toolooah by name. Many years before,—so many that he could not count them on his fingers, and therefore could not tell how many,—a relative of his had fallen a victim at the hands of an Iwillik, and had not yet been avenged. Although there was not an Iwillik among us, still my own Eskimo felt that any of us might fall to atone for this ancient crime. They told me that they felt satisfied that many of the natives who watched our sledge-loading the morning we left had long knives secreted in their sleeves, should they need to defend the Netschilluk Toolooah, who still persisted in his idea of revenge, should opportunity offer.

But the sight of our many and wonderful weapons frightened him into a peaceful attitude. Singularly, these feuds never swell into tribal wars.

FREDERICK SCHWATKA.

HOW THE PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGY PRESENT THEMSELVES TO THE ENGLISH MIND.¹

I HAVE seldom, ladies and gentlemen, felt myself in a more difficult position than I do at this moment. Yesterday morning, when we returned from an expedition out into the far west,—an expedition which your president was to have joined, but which, to our great regret, he was obliged to give up,—I heard that at this meeting of the Anthropological society of Washington I should be called upon to make, not merely a five-minutes' speech, but a substantive address; and since that time my mind has been almost entirely full of the new things that I have been seeing and hearing in the domain of anthropology in this city. I have been seeing the working of that unexampled institution, the Bureau of ethnology, and studying the collections which, in connection with the Smithsonian institution, have been brought in from the most distant quarters of the continent; and after that, in odd moments, I have turned it over in my mind, What can I possibly say to the Anthropological society when I am called upon to face them at thirty-six hours' notice? I will not apologize: I will do the best I can.

I quite understand that Major Powell, who is a man who generally has a good reason for every thing that he does, had a good reason for desiring that an anthropologist from England should say something as to the present state of the new and growing science in England as compared with its condition in America,—for believing that some communication would be acceptable between the old country and the new, upon a subject where the inhabitants of both have so much interest in common, and can render to one another so much service in the direction of their work. And therefore I take it that I am to say before you this evening, without elaborate oratory and without even careful language, how the problems of American anthropology present themselves to the English mind.

Now, one of the things that has struck me most in America, from the anthropological point of view, is a certain element of old-fashionedness. I mean old-fashionedness in the strictest sense of the word,—an old-fashionedness which goes back to the time of the colonization of America. Since the Stuart time, though America, on the whole, has become a country of most rapid progress in development as compared with other districts of the world, there has prevailed in certain parts of it a conservatism of even an intense character. In districts of the older states, away from the centres of population, things that are old-fashioned to modern Europe have held their

¹ A lecture delivered by Dr. EDWARD B. TYLOR before the Anthropological society of Washington, Oct. 11, 1884.