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# Some Ethical Phases of Eskimo Culture

BY

ALBERT NICOLAY GILBERTSON, A. M.

Fellow in Anthropology, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
CLARK UNIVERSITY, WORCESTER, MASS., IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, AND  
ACCEPTED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF  
ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN, CHIEF INSTRUCTOR



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# SOME ETHICAL PHASES OF ESKIMO CULTURE

By ALBERT NICOLAY GILBERTSON, A. M.,

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A very common attitude toward the moral life of primitive peoples is that illustrated by the English gentleman, who, according to the story, wrote a book about certain tribes which he had

visited, one chapter of which, dealing with "customs and manners," consisted of four words: "Customs, beastly; manners, none." But a broader, truer view is fortunately coming to prevail, the result of study at once scientific and sympathetic, of peoples whose practices and standards differ from our own. A slight contribution to the understanding and appreciation of some ethical phases of the culture of one of the most interesting of the world's peoples is the aim of this study of the Eskimo.

In the study of morality, as well as of other phases of human culture, there are two general methods of investigation and presentation. One of these methods is best represented, in the field within which the present inquiry falls, by Westermarck's great work, *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*. Thomas aptly compares this method to that developed by Pitt-Rivers for arranging specimens in a museum. By the Pitt-Rivers method,

"All the knives, throwing sticks, and other articles of a particular kind were brought together in one place, with a view to exhibiting the steps in the development of this article—and some very pretty effects were secured." (64: 857.)

But, as this authority goes on to say:

"Our great museums are now recognizing that it is, on the whole better to arrange materials on the principle of presenting the culture of a given region as a whole. No object can be completely understood when separated from the whole culture of which it is a part."

For a keen criticism of the first method, which is that employed by Spencer, Frazer, and many others, especially earlier writers, reference may be made to Dewey's essay on "The Interpretation of the Savage Mind." The advantages of the regional study of cultures is coming to be generally recognized. Cultural phenomena should be studied "in situ," in connection with the physical and social environment in which they are found. Haddon well sums up this position, in the conclusion of his *History of Anthropology* (23: 154):

"Comparisons made within a given area or among cognate peoples have a greater value than those drawn from various parts of the world. What is most needed at the present day is intensive study of limited areas."

In the present study, the writer has endeavored to present the moral ideas and practices of the Eskimo in their relations to each other and to the physical, social and economic conditions. While



it is hoped that the facts recorded may be of value in throwing some light on the deeper and larger problems of the moral life of mankind, I have studiously tried to avoid alike unnecessary theoretical assumptions and conclusions unjustified by our present state of knowledge. "Premature generalizations" Haddon rightly regards as "the chief danger" to which anthropology is at present liable. It was Tylor who said that

"It is of as little use to be a good reasoner when there are no facts to reason upon, as it is to be a good bricklayer when there are no bricks to build with." (68: 56.)

It is sometimes painfully evident that those are not wanting who proceed upon the contrary supposition in many an erudite pretentious discourse on "primitive man" (i.e., what, according to the particular pet scientifico-philosophical scheme, he must logically have been).

The data used have been gathered largely from the accounts of men who write from personal experience with various branches of the Eskimo stock. Of course, no one man ever has, or likely ever will, come in actual contact with the Eskimo in *all* parts of their domain. The authorities are chiefly of two classes, Christian missionaries and Arctic explorers, among whom we include trained ethnologists, who went mainly, or exclusively, for purposes of anthropological investigation, as, for example, Boas. The literature on the Eskimo is perhaps, on the whole, more trustworthy than that on most of the other North American aborigines, as the geographical location and climatic conditions of their habitat have prevented the influx of the "summer vacation" type, hence there is not such an abundance of mere "travelers' tales." But even here fact and fancy are undoubtedly mixed in ways which it is often difficult or impossible to determine. The available material is of very uneven value for scientific purposes. I have taken into account factors which might influence the accuracy of the reports given, such as religious or racial prejudices, expert training and critical method, opportunities for observation, etc.

Another source from which material has been drawn is Eskimo folk-lore. Matthews says that (41: 2) "perhaps the safest way to discover the ethical notions of savages is by the study of their myths and traditions; but," he adds, "even here we must proceed with caution and employ the critical methods of modern

science." As to the value of folk-lore for the study of historical events there is the widest difference of opinion. (See 55:307.) But, be that as it may; let us take, for the sake of argument, so to speak, Swanton's view that

"The major part of these tales record, not objective fact, but subjective belief, the popular conception of what ought to have happened, the sense of 'poetic justice' as it existed in the tribe from which it was obtained" (62: 4.),

and the importance of their study for our present purpose is as evident as if every detail had happened "just so." Also, to quote Rivers,

"The significance of the social setting and of incidental references to social events is very great, is obvious and generally admitted." (55: 311.)

So, all questions of history aside, folk-lore reflects the life of the people from which it sprang and reveals the ethical ideas of that people, although to interpret it correctly in this latter respect may often be difficult. I believe it was Ruskin who said that more important than the question whether there was a real Cincinnatus who left the plough in the furrow at a particular time is the knowledge about the ideas of manhood and patriotism of the ancient Romans which we get from that legend, if such it be.

The folk-lore of the Eskimo is peculiarly susceptible to this kind of study, for, as Boas has pointed out, in his excellent discussion of the general character of Eskimo folk-lore, "the most striking feature of Eskimo folk-lore is its thoroughly human character." With few exceptions, "the events which form the subject of their traditions occur in human society as it exists now." (7:2.)

A word may be said of the copious use of the extracts in the *ipsissima verba* of the sources of my information. One reason for this has been to present an author's meaning in the most unambiguous way, and avoid possible misconstructions of his words. If the present writer has misunderstood any statement, the original will enable the reader to make necessary corrections. Then, too, as Haddon has expressed it, "a quotation brings one more face to face with the author than does a mere abstract" (*Evolution in Art*, Preface, p. vi).

Also I have not hesitated to give numerous concrete examples from Eskimo life, letting the Eskimo speak for themselves in

word and action whenever possible. Marett gives a quotation from Seligman, in which a Vedda cave-dweller says:

"It is pleasant for us to go out and dig yams, and come home wet, and see the fire burning in the cave, and sit round it."

Upon this Marett comments thus:

"That sort of remark shows more light on the anthropology of cave-life than all the bones and stones that I have helped to dig out of our Mousterian caves in Jersey."

He emphasizes the importance of such "human documents," in these words:

"We need to supplement the books of abstract theory with much sympathetic insight directed towards men and women in their concrete selfhood. To study the plot without studying the characters will never make sense of the drama of human life." (39: 242, 243.)

## 2. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Eskimoan linguistic stock is the northernmost branch of the human race. It is also one of the widest distributed of the world's peoples. Its territory extends from the east coast of Greenland and Labrador to the eastern part of Siberia, a distance of 5,000 miles. Thus, in the language of Latham (quoted, 15: 261) "the Eskimo is the only population clearly and indubitably common to the two Worlds, the Old and the New." The present study is confined to the Eskimo proper, not including the cognate Yuits of Siberia, or the natives of the Aleutian Islands.

The Eskimo were the first American aborigines to come in contact with Europeans. It is now the general consensus of authorities that the *Skrællinger*, described by the early Norse discoverers, were Eskimo.

The two leading theories of the original home of the Eskimo are that of Rink, who regards it as the interior of Alaska, and that of Boas, who considers it probable that it was in the region west of Hudson Bay. The latter is now the more commonly accepted view.

Mason recognizes on the American continent, north of Mexico, twelve "ethnic environments" (28. 1: 427-430), in each of which there is "an ensemble of qualities that impressed themselves on their inhabitants and differentiated them." The characteristics of the *Arctic* environment, inhabited by the Eskimo include

"an intensely cold climate; about six months day and six months night; predominance of ice and snow; immense archipelagos, and no accessible elevations; good stone for lamps and tools; driftwood, but no timber, and little fruit; polar bear, blue fox, aquatic mammals in profusion, migratory birds, and fish, supplying food, clothing, fire, light, and other wants of an exacting climate."

In this environment, in the words of Chamberlain:

"The Eskimo have conquered a severe and thankless climate by the invention and perfection of the snow-house, the dog-sled, the oil-lamps (creating and sustaining social life and making extensive migrations possible), the harpoon and the *kayak* or skin-boat (the acme of adaptation of individual skill to environmental demands)." (14: 468.)

Their ability to successfully master such an environment has aroused the wonder and admiration of all who have studied them.

"We should be wrong" declares Amundsen, "if from the weapons, implements and domestic appliances of these people, we were to argue that they were of low intelligence. Their implements, apparently so very primitive, proved to be as well adapted to their existing requirements and conditions as experience and the careful tests of many centuries could have made them." (1. 1: 294.)

And the world will never forget that of the six human beings who first reached the earth's north pole, four were Eskimo, and Peary voices the conviction of explorers of the frozen north when he says that "no more effective instruments for Arctic work could be imagined" and "their help is one of the elements without which it is possible that the North Pole might never have been reached." (48: 42, 47.)

There is good reason for Haberlandt's opinion that

"When we consider their technical and nautical skill, their peaceful companionship and their works of art, it is impossible to regard the Eskimo as one of the lower types of civilization." (22: 144.)

A sympathetic, yet impartial, survey of the life of this people, will, I think, force everyone to agree with Chamberlain that "to the student of America's past, there can be no tribe, no nation, so interesting" as the Eskimo. (15: 261.)

### 3. SOCIAL ORDER

The conditions of their habitat and the struggle for existence have necessitated, if the Eskimo were to survive, the two most salient features of their social order—isolation and solidarity,

that is, living in small scattered groups, the members of each of which are bound together by intense unity. As Nansen says

“The men of some tribes or races are driven to combine with each other by the pressure of human enemies, others by inhospitable natural surroundings. The latter has been the case with the Eskimo.” (43: 119.)

And the scarcity of the food-supply likewise forces them to observe the rule, “Divide et impera.” Sutherland, in his ingenious and suggestive classification of the world’s peoples (61. 1: 104), puts the Eskimo together with most of the North American aborigines, in the class of “higher savages,” who, according to his scheme, live in groups of 50 to 200. The number given is, I believe, fairly correct for the Eskimo communities.

The gentile system of social organization, so prominent among many Indian stocks, seems to be foreign to Eskimo culture (42: 42; 35: 21; 17: 145). With the possible exception of the Western Eskimo, Rink regards its maintenance as “incompatible with the extraordinary dispersion, the scanty intercourse between the small communities into which the nation always tends to divide” (52: 22), also,

“a strict rule of a married couple living with either the relatives of the husband or the wife, could not be preserved by people whose sustenance was dependent on choosing the most favorable hunting stations.” (52: 23.)

Nelson claims to have found among certain Alaskan Eskimo “a regular system of totem marks and the accompanying subdivision of the people into gentes” (p. 322; for his evidence see pp. 322-27). This, especially in the presence of contradictory evidence, does not seem to be conclusive. (See 42: 42; 35: 21; 17: 145; 3.) Even less probable is Gordon’s theory that the custom of tattooing employed by the Eskimo is “a surviving evidence of a full totemic system.” (Quoted by Chamberlain, *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 20, p. 80.)

Consequently, when we speak of “tribes” among the Eskimo, we do not use that term in the sense of an organization built on a certain relation between clans or gentes. The usage is primarily geographical. To quote from Rink’s *Eskimo Tribes*, “as to the Eskimo it will imply the possession of a territory and generally of a dialect in the strictest sense.” (52: 24; see also 3. Introduction, xii; 30: 143.)

Peary’s statement that the Eskimo are nomads, and “seldom

live more than a year or two in one place" (48:42), does not seem to hold as a general characterization. Rather it appears more correct to hold, with Barnum that, while "on account of the difficulty of obtaining food, the Innuits are forced to travel about a great deal, yet they are not a nomadic race" (3. xii). So too Rink asserts that

"the Eskimo may more properly be classed among the people having fixed dwellings than among the wandering nations, because they generally winter the same places through even more than one generation, so that love of their birthplace is a rather predominant feature in their character." (53. 9; for a use of love of home in folk-lore see 53: 466.)

Crantz suggests that their belief that the soul may remain at home, while the man is away on the chase, is due to homesickness.

The subdivisions of Eskimo society fall under three heads, the *family*, the *housemates*, and the *place-fellows*.

The *family* consists of the parents and children, together with relatives by adoption, also by marriage, whenever a married child remains in the parental home. The father is regarded as the head of the family, but as Murdoch says, his rule is "founded more on respect and mutual agreement than on despotic authority." (42:427; cf. 66:190.)

Boas emphasizes the place of kinship in Eskimo society when he says, "the social order of the Eskimo is entirely founded on the ties of consanguinity and affinity between the individual families" (5:578). According to Holm, "the bond of blood is regarded as an obligation to stand by each other under all circumstances." (30: 87.) Rink cites the rather complicated system of kinship terms and the ability to remember relatives several generations back as evidence of the importance of relationship to Eskimo thought. (52:22.) Even if the family is divided by removals to distant settlements, the obligations of kinship are in force whenever mutual aid is required. (See 53:25.)

Holm narrates an incident from real life, illustrating the bond between brothers and sisters.

A hunter at a village named Nojarik had caught a narwhal. In a village called Sermilik he had a married sister. In the winter no one goes to visit between these two places. But this brother undertook the long and perilous journey, carrying a large package of meat in a band about the forehead. "He was very much afraid that she should suffer

want, while he had abundance." In a sharp north wind and over a difficult country, he covered the 8 miles (Danish). It was toward evening when he came to the lodge of the Danish expedition. He was invited to remain over night. "He did not have time to stay, but continued his way into the falling darkness." (30: 174.)

Folk-lore also gives frequent expression to this feeling. The beginning of a Greenland tale, "Several brothers had an only sister, whom they loved dearly and were very loth to part with' (53: 404), is typical. In another,

A young wife, who has given birth to her first-born, on being asked why she looked so sad, said, "It is because of our baby boy; I would like him so much to go and see his mother's brothers. I cannot forget those dear ones, and that is why I have grown so silent." When her brothers were informed of her arrival at the old home, "each of them cried, 'Oh, my dear sister! ye have not cared for her as I have! ye have not missed her so much neither; ye have not longed so much for her as I have done.' And each of them wanted to be the first to greet her, and to take hold of her. . . . The brothers stayed at home all day, and for joy at the meeting could do naught but sit down together and regard each other lovingly." (53: 209, 211.)

Folk-lore also tells of brothers who defend their sister against her husband. (53: 431.)

An interesting custom is reported from Bering Strait. In warfare, "if a man had relatives in the opposing party, and for this reason did not wish to take part in the battle, he would blacken his face with charcoal and remain a non-combatant, both sides respecting his neutrality." (45: 329.)

For further data on kinship see under "*Children*," "*Marriage*," "*Punishment*."

The second kind of community comprises the *housemates*. In this case more than one family live in the same house. For such a plan to be carried out, the agreement of all the families concerned is required. As a general custom, this form of community seems to be confined to Greenland, where it has been described by numerous writers. (16. 1: 165, 170; 53: 26; 52: 25; 54: 142; 30: 85; 43: 79.) The most highly developed form of this community-house is found in East Greenland, where there is only one house at each settlement. There is thus no difference between housemates and place-fellows. The number of inmates in one house described by Holm ran as high as 58. The Greenland common house consists of only one room, marked off for the

several families. In a space four feet wide lived a man with two wives and seven children.

Each family maintains its own household, but "among the heads of the several families one was generally found who was held in higher esteem than the rest by all the housemates." (53: 26.) This man acts as a kind of head of the house-community. "His position rests mostly on a tacit recognition of his authority." (30: 86.) He is generally the oldest man, if this particular person is or has been a good hunter or has sons who are good hunters. He is regarded as the host when visitors come to the house; he determines the dividing and ordering of the house. He enjoins when they are to move into the house in the autumn, "for all the families must move in simultaneously, in order to warm up the house." (30: 86.) In the summer, when the Eskimo live in tents, the families have separate quarters. (See also 16. 1: 165; 52: 24-26.)

The third and largest community is made up of the *place-fellows*, that is, inhabitants of the same village or wintering station. According to Rink,

"still less than among the housemates was any one belonging to such a place to be considered as chief, or as endowed with any authority to command his place-mates."

He points out that

"The folk-lore in many cases shows how men who had succeeded in acquiring such power were considered as usurpers of undue authority, and vanquishing or killing them ranked as a benefit to the community in general." (53: 27.)

Nelson states,

"The Alaskan Eskimo have no recognized chiefs, except such as gain a certain influence over their fellow-villagers through superior shrewdness, wisdom, age, wealth, or shamanism. The old men are listened to with respect, and there are usually one or more in each village who by their extended acquaintance with the traditions, customs, and rites connected with the festivals, as well as being possessed of an unusual degree of common sense, are deferred to and act as chief advisers of the community." Such a leader is known by a term, meaning "the one to whom all listen." (45: 304.)

"All Eskimo villages have a headman, whose influence is obtained through the general belief of his fellow villagers in his superior ability and good judgment. These men possess no fixed authority, but are respected, and their directions are generally heeded." (To the same effect, 42: 427; 66: 193.)



Nelson adds that, "in some cases, a headman may be succeeded by his son"—note this clause—"when the latter has the necessary qualities." Boas reports that on the west coast of Hudson Bay cases are known where the leadership passed from father to son; but there, too, the latter succeeds as leader "on account of his ability." The blessing invoked by an aged leader on his grandson was "that he might become a great hunter and whaleman." (6:115.) Nowhere does there appear any leadership by right of birth. Holmberg's statement about "hereditary chiefs," among certain Alaskan tribes, can be accepted only as perhaps referring to cases like those recorded by Nelson and Boas. (32:78. See also 47. 2:236; 3. Introduction, xii; 1. 2:27; 21:390; 48:65.)

#### 4. CUSTOM IN RELATION TO MORALITY

The study of morality is intimately bound up with that of custom. As we know, the term "ethics" comes from the Greek "ethos," meaning custom or usage. Of like signification is the Latin "mores," from which we have our word "moral." As Westernmark says, "Society is the birthplace of the moral consciousness," and "tribal custom was the earliest rule of duty." (71. 1:118-119.) We should, however, be rather critical toward attempts to draw distinctions between "primitive" and "civilized" people on the basis of the relative importance of instinct, custom, and reason in determining conduct. (See Kroeber, 36:437.) This is not to deny the force of custom in primitive society, but to point out its operation in civilization as well.

The adherence of the Eskimo to custom has been noted by most observers of their culture. For example, Rasmussen states that they

"base their ideas of life on a series of legends and customs which have been handed down by oral tradition for untold generations. Their dead forefathers, they said, enshrined all their experiences in what they related to those who come after them. And none may accuse the dead of untrustworthiness. *Wisdom goes in retrograde direction* [italics mine]; none can measure himself with the fathers of the race, none can defy sickness and misfortune, and therefore people are still subject to the old prohibitions." (50: 99.)

Nelson says,

"The only feeling of conscience or moral duty noted seemed an instinctive desire to do that which was most conducive to the general good

of the community, as looked at from their point of view. Whatever experience has taught them to be best is done, guided by superstitious usages and customs." (45: 294.)

The Greenlanders' conception of evil, was, to quote Rink "all that was contrary to the laws and customs, as regulated by the angakoks." So when the Danish missionaries presented to them the Christian views, the Eskimo "conceived the idea of virtue and sin as what was pleasing or displeasing to the Europeans, as according or dis-according with their customs and laws." (51: 201.)

The Eskimo are pronounced a very conservative people. In the words of Boas,

"The language, as well as the traditions of the Eskimo, points out an exceptionally high degree of conservatism among this people. The tenacity with which small peculiarities in the type of implements are retained by each tribe throws a new light upon this conservatism, which, while characteristic of most primitive people, is in few cases as well developed as among the Eskimo." (6: 375; Cf. 33: 316; 3. Introduction, xvii.).

### 5. "ETHNOCENTRISM"

Closely connected with this conservatism is the trait which Sumner has called "ethnocentrism," the basis of what is known in civilized countries as patriotism, with its perversions in "chauvinism" and "jingoism."

Peary remarks:

"Much nonsense has been told by travelers in remote lands about the aborigines' regarding as gods the white men who come to them, but I have never placed much credence in these stories. My own experience has been that the aborigine is just as content with his own way as we are with ours, just as convinced of his own superior knowledge, and that he adjusts himself with his knowledge in regard to things in the same way that we do."

It is a question how much racial egotism should be read into the well-nigh universal usage of an ethnic group's calling itself "human beings" or "people," in the Eskimo language, *Innuvit*. It is perhaps only a natural and convenient term for designating their own folk, sometimes the only human being of whom they know. Among the Point Barrow Eskimo, "Inuin" includes white men as well as Eskimo, and Murdoch is of the opinion that this is true everywhere (42: 42), even though there are special names for other nations, the most common word for Europeans or white men being "Kablunak." Language does undoubtedly

reveal a mental attitude in such cases, as at Norton Sound, where the Eskimo speak of themselves as the "fine or complete people," and their neighbors, the Tinné Indians, by a name meaning "louse-egg." Cartwright considered it the highest honor that could be paid him by the natives of Labrador when they dubbed him an Eskimo. (12:110.)

Crantz says,

"The Greenlanders consider themselves as the only civilized nation in the world" (16: 149); "they are far superior in their own estimation to the Europeans, who supply an inexhaustible subject of railleury for their social parties." (16. 125.)

The Eskimo of Point Barrow consider themselves the equals if not the superiors of the white men with whom they have to deal;

"they do not appreciate the attitude of arrogant superiority adopted by many white men in their intercourse with so-called savages." (42: 42.)

Even Nature is regarded as partial to the Eskimo. "Our world up here does not love strangers," they told Rasmussen; that was the reason the water did not freeze over at the usual and desired season. (50: 83.)

There is also a disposition for a local group to look down upon other Eskimo; there is what we would call sectionalism. Of course one factor here may be ignorance, re-enforced by imagination, as in Stefánsson's experience. (59: 176.) "Only here in this place are to be found the big storytellers," of a song recorded by Thalbitzer (63: 309), is typical of a common Eskimo attitude. The following curious experience of Holm is *à propos*.

"Before we reached Angmagsalik, the other Eastlanders told us that only bad people lived there. When we came to Tasinsarsik on the Angmagsalik fjord, the inhabitants said that the people on the other side of the fjord were bad people. . . . When we later spoke with the inhabitants of the other part of the fjord, we were told that at their settlement there were only good people, but that people we had not yet seen were bad. At last, it turned out that there were only good people on Angmagsalik fjord, and that the bad ones were dead or had moved to Sermiligak." (30; 167.)

Several writers admit that, even from a Kabluna point of view, there is not a little justification for the Eskimo's self-esteem. Crantz, who is not disposed to exaggerate the Eskimo's good qualities, gives as the reason of their sense of superiority that "many improprieties which they observe too frequently in the

conduct of Europeans, seldom or never occur amongst them." He assigns this as the cause of their "usual remark on seeing a foreigner of gentle and modest manners: 'He is almost as well-bred as we,' or 'He begins to be a man,' that is, a Greenlander." (16. 1: 126.) In like manner, Paul Egede, also a missionary, observes that

"they lived less culpably than most of the Christians sent here," and quotes an Eskimo as saying, "Perhaps if we got the knowledge you have, we would become as bad as your people."

Egede adds:

"They have even thought there could not be found decent people among us, unless they had been some months in Greenland and learned good manners, and it is certain that these heathen put many of our Christians to shame by their good behavior." (20: 150; cf. 49.)

The "ethnocentrism" of the Eskimo, like their other mental traits, is bound up with what Dewey has described as the hunting psychosis, which is one type of what we may designate the occupational psychosis. This furnishes the key to many otherwise puzzling ideas and practices. They make ability in the sphere of their peculiar activities the standard of both individual and national worth. Of the Greenlanders we are told that

"their own inimitable dexterity in seal-catching, the main business of their lives, and the only pursuit which is indispensably necessary to them, supplies sufficient food for their over-weening self-conceit." (16. 1: 125.)

In order to be respected, Europeans had to learn their arts, especially the use of the kayak with Eskimo dexterity. They inquired if the king of Denmark and Norway had captured many whales, or if he was a great *angakok*, the two supreme attainments known to them. (20: 30; cf. 12: 123; 46: 52, comments by Eskimo.)

## 6. TABOOS AND THEIR RELATION TO RELIGION

A prominent place in the customary morality of the Eskimo is occupied by the prohibitions known as taboos. They are restrictions chiefly of diet and work, food-taboos and rest-taboos. The occasions which are hedged about with taboos are various critical events, such as birth, death, and the chase. So-called *puberty* rites, with accompanying taboos, seem to be unknown, except among certain Alaskan Eskimo, and then only pertaining to

girls. (2: 1: 82; 32: 121; 45: 291.) Holmberg states that the customs he describes are identical with those of the Tlinkit Indians, and like so many other features of Alaskan culture, they are likely borrowed from the neighboring peoples. The behavior of women during *pregnancy* (6: 143) and *menstruation* (5: 516; 6: 120, 150, 478; 20: 116; 32: 122) is strictly regulated. Rules about the conduct of women after *child-birth* are numerous and complicated. (5: 610; 6: 125, 143, 158, 484, 514; 26: 217, 351; 19: 115; 42: 415; 53: 54; 16: 1: 199; 34: 233.) *Premature birth* calls for particularly rigid rules. (6: 121, 125, 358, 504.) The occasion for more taboos, perhaps, than any other event, is *death*. (5: 610, 613; 6: 120, 125, 144, 148; 53: 299; 30: 105, 113; 19: 82; 16: 1: 216; 26: 186, 265; 43: 137; 34: 207; 66: 191; 32: 122; 42: 424; 1: 1: 334.) Lastly, there are regulations immediately connected with the chase, aside from taboos prescribed for other occasions, affecting the activities of the hunter. (5: 578, 587, 596; 6: 147, 149, 595; 42: 264, 274, 434; 26: 64; 69: 432, 440; 16: 1: 199; 34: 123; 30: 76; 66: 201; 1: 1: 277.) We cannot enter into any detailed description of these unnumbered taboos. Reference must be made to the original sources for such information. But we will, however, touch upon some of the reasons assigned for these rules, as being of interest to our present study.

This leads to a consideration of the religious beliefs of the Eskimo, as far as these are related to the customs we are now considering. In the words of Rasmussen, "These rules form the nucleus of their religious ideas." (50: 83; cf. 53: 63.)

The beliefs of the Eskimo about the supernatural are extremely difficult to determine, both because of the inherent difficulty of learning their exact thoughts on this matter, and the apparent vagueness and fluidity of their concepts about the extramundane world.

They have no idea of a creator, or one supreme being (19: 108; 69: 437; 45: 427), but have a belief in a multitude of supernatural beings. The most important of these are known as "inua," or owners, a word which has a common derivation with *innuit*. (See 43: 225; 69: 437; 42: 430; 19: 110; 66: 193; 45: 427.)

"Some of these spirits are more powerful than others just as some men are more skilful and shrewd than others. Their ideas of the invisible world are based on conditions of the present life with which they are familiar." (45: 428.)

The "inua" are imperceptible to the ordinary organs of sense, except in rare instances. They manifest themselves to particularly gifted persons, such as the angakoks, or to animals, that are endowed with a peculiar sense, described by a word meaning literally "not being unconscious of anything." (53:43.) Rink says:

"Strictly speaking, any object, or combination of objects, existing either in a physical or spiritual point of view, may be said to have its inua, if only, in some way or other, it can be said to form a separate idea." (53: 37; cf. 43: 225.)

The angakoks, or magicians, have intercourse with the supernatural world by the aid of familiar spirits, called tornaks. There are traces of a rather indefinite belief in a great spirit, who has minor tornaks under his control. He is called Tornarsuk. Nansen thinks that the identification of this being with the devil by the missionaries has a great deal to do with his exalted position in Eskimo thought. Paul Egede tells of a dispute concerning Tornarsuk's immortality, some saying he cannot die, others holding that he can be killed; special care must be taken during incantations not to cause his death. (43: 73, 197.)

The most conspicuous character in Eskimo mythology is a woman, generally known, from her name among some of the Central tribes, as Sedna. One of the most widespread of Eskimo myths is that of the origin of Sedna. She is said to have refused to marry the man selected for her by her father, so the latter threw her overboard. When she tried to save herself, he cut off her fingers. These became various marine animals. She lives at the bottom of the sea and, to use the words of Boas, "she has supreme sway over the destinies of mankind," (6:119) through her control of the offshoots of her hand, which are the Eskimo's principal means of subsistence. (19:111; 69:440; 33:43; 30:114; 52:17; 5:583; 43:150; see Miss Wardle's study of the Sedna cycle, 71:568-580.)

A large place is held also by the souls of the dead. Honor must be paid to them and the death-taboos must be observed, for the dead are very powerful. A human being, according to the Eskimo, consists of at least two parts, *body* and *soul*. Sometimes a third part is spoken of, identified with the *name*. Also there is found a belief in several souls. Thus in East Greenland,

"a man has many souls. The largest dwell in the larynx and in the left side, and are tiny men about the size of a sparrow. The other souls dwell in other parts of the body and are the size of a finger joint. If one of them is taken away, its particular member sickens." (30: 112.)

The soul can be seen under certain conditions by the angakoks. There is evidence, linguistic and otherwise, connecting the soul with the shadow and the breath. (43: 226.) The soul can leave the body, as in dreams. It can be lost, or stolen by witchcraft. Refusal to be photographed can be thus explained. Nelson tells an incident where an Eskimo, on seeing the figures on the ground glass of a camera, shouted to his fellows, "He has all of your shades in his box," whereupon "a panic ensued among the group and in an instant they disappeared in their houses." (45: 422; cf. 1. 2: 11; 33: 41. For similar fear of having writing in a book in their presence, see 4: 396.) The loss of the soul results in illness, which can be cured by the angakok's fetching the soul back again:

"The strangest thing of all is that the soul could not only be lost in its entirety, but that pieces of it could also go astray; and the angakok had to be called to patch it up." (43: 228; cf. 50: 101.)

Animals too have their souls, with similar attributes to the human. (45: 423; 50: 111.) Indeed the two soul-species, if we may so call them, appear to be interchangeable. The angakoks sometimes provide a man whose soul has been lost beyond recovery, with a new one obtained from some animal. (43: 228.)

Now the animals, like the souls of the dead, are offended by the transgression of taboos. The best account of this feature, in its relation to the Sedna belief, is given by Boas, in his description of the Eskimo of Cumberland Sound and Hudson Bay. The violation of a taboo, proscribed after the killing of certain sea-animals, becomes attached to the soul of the slain animal, that takes it down to Sedna. The attachments cause her pain, for which she punishes the guilty people, by sending them sickness, bad weather, and starvation.

"If, on the other hand, all taboos have been observed, the sea-animals will allow themselves to be caught: they will even come to meet hunters."

This shows as Boas points out, that

"The object of the innumerable taboos that are in force after the killing of these sea-animals is to keep their souls free from attachments that would hurt their souls as well as Sedna" (6: 120).

But not only offences which directly pertain to the animals bring about these consequences. Among all the Eskimo is found the dread of touching dead bodies and rules for those who have from necessity or accident done so.

"The souls of the sea-animals are endowed with greater powers than those of ordinary human beings. They can see the effect of contact with a corpse, which causes objects touched by it to appear dark in color; and they can see the effect of flowing human blood, from which a vapor arises that surrounds the bleeding person and is communicated to every one and every thing that comes in contact with such a person. This vapor and the dark color of death are exceedingly unpleasant to the souls of the sea-animals, that will not come near a hunter thus affected. The hunter must therefore avoid contact with people who have touched a body, or with those who are bleeding, more particularly with menstruating women and or with those who have recently given birth. If any one who has touched a body or who is bleeding should allow others to come in contact with him, he would cause them to become distasteful to the seals, and therefore to Sedna as well. For this reason custom demands that every person must at once announce if he has touched a body, and that women must make known when they are menstruating or when they have had a miscarriage. If they do not do so, they will bring ill luck to all the hunters." (Cf. 5: 583-595.)

"The transgressions of taboos do not affect the souls of game alone. It has already been stated that the sea-mammals see their effect upon man also, who appears to them of a dark color, or surrounded by a vapor which is invisible to ordinary man. This means, of course, that the transgression also affects the soul of the evil-doer. It becomes attached to it, and makes him sick. The angakok is able to see these attachments with the help of his guardian spirit, and is able to free the soul from them. If this is not done, the person must die. In many cases the transgressions become fastened also to persons who come in contact with the evil-doer. This is especially true of children, to whose souls the sins of their parents, and particularly of their mothers, become readily attached. Therefore, when a child is sick, the angakok, first of all asks its mother if she has transgressed any taboos." (Cf. 26: 243.)

"One of the most remarkable traits among the Central Eskimo," as Boas calls it, is the belief that "a transgression, or as we might say, a sin, can be atoned for by confession." (5: 121, cf. 5: 491, 504, 512; 6: 592.) He notes some features of Greenland religious beliefs, which indicate a similar faith in the efficacy of confession. (53: 45, 391, 440.) The angiak, or spirit of a child born prematurely, he regards as "originally identical with attachment of the soul produced by transgression, more



particularly with that produced by the unconfessed secret abortion among the central Eskimo." (6:358.) The dire consequences of concealing or denying crimes other than taboo-violations, in this case murder, is illustrated in a tale recorded by Rasmussen. (50:128.)

Boas is of the opinion that this idea that the confession in itself is the atonement for transgression has been derived from "the importance of the confession of a transgression, with a view to warning others to keep at a distance from the transgressor," in order to avoid contamination in the way we have noted. (6:121.)

He concludes that "among all the Eskimo tribes the underlying idea of the taboo is the protection of the souls of the dead, men as well as animals." He observes that, while taboos are found in all parts of the earth, "they are not, however, always primarily connected with the idea of protecting the souls of the deceased." He recognizes, therefore, in the Eskimo belief

"a specialized form of a more general belief. It must have existed in this specialized form among the ancestors of all the Eskimo tribes, since it is found now among all the tribes of this people."

"Among the Central tribes this group of beliefs appears still more systematized by combining the idea of the protection of the soul with that of a protectress of the sea-animals. Not only is the soul of the dead animal hurt by the infraction of the taboo, but the protectress of the animal herself is affected." (p. 365.)

The historical origins of the taboos are hid in obscurity. The Eskimo themselves rarely have any tradition as to how they arose. As we have seen, their all-sufficient answer is the immemorial usage of their ancestors. One tradition is reported from Cumberland Sound, according to which "in the early times of our world two beings gave advice to the people, saying that when they should become numerous they would have to obey certain customs." (6:143.)

One striking feature of the Eskimo taboos we may note here. As Boas says, "it seems that practically everywhere among the Eskimo a considerable number of taboos have the effect of preventing contact between land-animals- and sea-animals." (6:569.) There is a tradition among the central Eskimo which accounts for the origin of the walrus and the caribou and a supposed dislike between these two animals. (6:122.)

Boas has presented what, he himself rightly says, "seems an attractive hypothesis" (6:570), and it may be added, a very suggestive one, for the explanation for this group of taboos. To state it in his own words:

"The Eskimo taboo forbidding the use of caribou and of seal on the same day may be due to the alternating inland and coast life of the people. When they hunt inland, they have no seals, and consequently can eat only caribou, and of course, when they hunt sea-animals, this is reversed.

"From the simple fact that for a long period the two kinds of meat could not be eaten at the same time, the law developed that the two kinds of meat must not be eaten at the same time." (9: 222.)

A good summary of the fundamental ideas of the Eskimo on the *raison d'être* of this striking feature of their moral and religious life is furnished in the explanations given Rasmussen.

"We do not believe in any God, as you do," the Eskimo said. "We do not all understand the hidden things, but we believe people who say they do. We believe our magicians, and we believe them because we wish to live long, and because we do not want to expose ourselves to the danger of famine and starvation. We believe, in order to make our lives and our food secure. If we did not believe the magicians, the animals we hunt would make themselves invisible to us; if we did not follow their advice, we should fall ill and die." (50: 123.)

"We observe our old customs, in order to hold the world up, for the powers must not be offended. . . . We observe our customs in order to hold each other up; we are afraid of the great evil. Men are so helpless in face of illness. The people here do penance, because the dead are strong in their vital sap, and boundless in their might. If we did not take these precautions we believe that great masses of snow would slide down and destroy us, that snowstorms would lay us waste, that the sea would rise in violent waves while we are out in our kayaks, or that a flood would sweep our houses out into the sea." (50: 124.)

Typical of the legends which are related to show "the recoil of the action on the doer," as it is aptly called, is one recorded by Rasmussen, "The man who did not perform his penance."

This individual had buried his wife, "but refused to observe the penances that are imposed on those who have handled corpses. He did not believe in the precepts of his forefathers, he said." He deliberately did many things which he was forbidden to do, in order "to fling defiance at what his countrymen believed. It was all lies, he said." But one day he was found torn to pieces, "just as the spirits always do treat people," so the tale ends, "who will not believe in the traditions of their fathers." (50: 133.)

## 7. "LIBERALISM"

It would not be fair, however, to leave the consideration of the attitude of the Eskimo on customs at this point, as many are inclined to do, in the case of the Eskimo, as of primitive peoples in general. For there is another side to the matter. The Eskimo mind is not so "ethnocentric" and "conservative," unsusceptible to new influences or unappreciative of the good in others, as the foregoing might lead one to conclude, if that were all that was said. First, what is the cause of conservatism among them? Is it the inherent state of the brain of primitive man? The answer is rather that we must look for it in the conditions of their environment and history. In their hand-to-hand struggle for existence it is indispensable to survival that they adhere to those things which have been tried by the experience of generations. "Is it not wiser to bow to it, and obey, when you are too ignorant to draw up anything better for yourself." (50:99.) They admit that even their wisest angakoks are not omniscient nor the traditional means of controlling destiny infallible. As Rasmussen tells us, their religious conceptions "*are to them, not the only possible ones, but merely the best that they know*, through the traditions of their forefathers." (50:124.) He quotes the Eskimo as saying;

"If any one with a better teaching would come to us and demand that we believe his words, we would do so willingly, if we saw that his teaching was really better than ours. Yes, tell us the right, and convince us that it is right, and we will believe you."

Appreciation of the advantages of the white men is not wanting. They confided to Paul Egede:

"You know so much, for you go about the whole world both by land and water. We know nothing but what our ancestors have told us." (20: 164; cf. 20: 23; 46; 52; 12: 123; 16. 1: 125.)

The Eskimo are noted for two traits which are avenues of new influences, curiosity and imitateness. Murdoch writes of the natives of Point Barrow, "Their curiosity is unbounded and they have no hesitation in gratifying it by unlimited questioning." (42:42.) Their extreme politeness tends to counteract the expression of their curiosity. Stefánsson found Eskimo who had not been in contact with white men, did not pry into others' affairs. (58:200.) Peary says that

"an intense and restless curiosity is one of the peculiar characteristics of these people. If confronted with a package containing various supplies unknown to them, they will not rest until they have examined every article of the lot, touched it, turned it over, and even tasted it." An old woman walked a hundred miles to see a white woman (Mrs. Peary). (48: 45.)

The same authority attributes to them a "marked capacity for imitation." (48: 61.) They very soon master the use of the tools and mechanical arts of civilized people, and readily adopt such as serve their purposes, as for instance, the rifle. Their ability "to do the white man's work with the white man's tools," as Peary puts it, has been an indispensable factor in Arctic exploration. (48: 62, see also 30: 181; 42: 41.) Dewey's words, concerning the mind of a hunting people, can be applied literally to the Eskimo:

"Their attention is mobile and fluid as is their life; they are eager to the point of greed for anything which will fit into their dramatic situations so as to intensify skill and increase emotion." (18: 225.)

Hutton speaks of their imitativeness as

"a peg to hang things on in teaching them new ways." He exclaims, "Imitate! I have never seen any one to equal them, and they imitate so thoroughly too." (33: 313.)

Indeed, there appears to be more danger from too ready imitation of the not always desirable traits of the white men than from too great adherence to their own time-honored ways. (See 30: 172; 1. 2: 62, 91.)

That the Eskimo manifest not only imitativeness, but inventiveness, no one will question who is familiar with their remarkable triumphs in that line, an inventiveness no less, when their environment and resources are considered, than that of our own branch of mankind. They are even experimenters in theoretical problems, as is evidenced by an account given by Mason.

"They often make invention a part of their sport. They go out to certain difficult places, and having imagined themselves in certain straits, they compare notes as to what each one would do. They actually make experiments, setting one another problems in invention." (40: 23.)

Our position that it is environment and not heredity, to use that much overworked antithesis, which accounts for their conservatism, especially in matters of religious belief and practice, where it is most pronounced, is strikingly supported by Ras-

mussen's account of the breakdown of the ancient religion among the natives of the extreme north of Greenland.

While "the great majority," writes Rasmussen, still "believe blindly in the magician's capacity to make use of supernatural forces, and the few sceptics who, in an ordinary way, represent a certain opposition, are equally *keen adherents of the mysteries at crucial moments* [italics mine], yet "their magic arts are degenerating and growing more and more simplified. The Polar Eskimo are well-to-do folk; there are animals enough in the sea and meat in abundance; they are strong, healthy, energetic people, possessing a sufficiency of the necessities of life as demanded by an existence which is, according to their ideas, free from care. This state of things is doubtless the reason why the angakok system is not so highly developed there as, for instance, it has been on the east coast, where the struggle for existence seems to be much more severe, and where the failure of the fishery, and as a consequence famine, have been more frequent."

"The Polar Eskimo do not require to make constant appeals to the supernatural powers, and that is why their magicians have gradually forgotten the magic arts of their fathers." (50: 156.)

## 8. LAW AND PUNISHMENT

The Eskimo have, of course, no documentary code of laws, nor have they any established tribunals of administration and judication. But, among them, "customs have, by their long standing, acquired the force of laws." (16. 1:168.) With regard to the execution of these traditional laws we may quote Rink (53: 32; cf. 52: 24):

"With the exception of the part of the angakoks, or the relatives of the offended person, took in inflicting punishment upon the delinquent, *public opinion formed the judgment seat.*" (Italics mine.)

The common method of punishment is the putting of the offender to shame in the eyes of the public; in some more serious cases, he is expelled from the community; only in rare and extreme cases are forcible measures taken. It is, however, incorrect to say that "crimes, if committed, go unpunished." (24:80.)

The chief reason for adhering to custom, even when the individual may doubt the efficiency of some of the traditional rules is given as "fear of ill report" among his fellows. (16. 1:168; 25:569.) The Eskimo are said to be very sensitive to the opinions of others. According to Nansen:

"It now and then happens that some one or other wounded, perhaps, by a single word from one of his kinsfolk, runs away to the mountains, and is lost for several days." (43: 267; cf. 16. 1: 157; 45: 300.)

A remarkable and effective method of putting offenders to shame is the "drum-dance" or singing combat, described by many writers on Greenland. (19: 85; 52: 24; 53: 53; 51: 141, 150; 30: 87, 157; 16. 1: 164; 43: 186.)

"The so-called nith-songs were used for settling all sorts of crimes or breaches of public order or custom, with the exception of those which could only be expiated by death." (Rink, 52: 24.)

These contests took place at "the public meetings or parties, which at the same time supplied the national sports and entertainments." (52: 24.)

The procedure was briefly as follows: If a person (women as well as men could carry on the contest) felt himself aggrieved by another, he challenged the offender to meet him at a certain time and place to hold a singing combat. Each of the parties then prepared satirical songs about his opponent. At the appointed time, before the assembled people, the contestants, by turns, attacked each other by these satires, until one or the other had exhausted his resources. In the words of Rink, "the cheering or dissent of the assembly at once represented the judgment as well as the punishment." (53: 34.) It appears that, in East Greenland at least, the issue is not always decided by one performance, but the contest is repeated, so that it can stretch over many years. (30: 7, 157.)

On the value of this judicial system, it is interesting to note the verdict of the Moravian Crantz (16. 1: 161.):

"It is an excellent opportunity of putting immorality to the blush, and cherishing virtuous principles. Nothing so effectually restrains a Greenlander from vice as the dread of public disgrace, and this pleasant way of revenge even prevents many from wreaking their malice in acts of violence or bloodshed. Here they cite each other to appear without risking their lives in the duel, or wounding each other with envenomed pen."

In an East Greenland tale (31: 257), the parties in a blood-revenge agree not to kill each other, but settle the matter with a drum-dance.

While, in the contest, they are at liberty to lampoon each other to their hearts' content, as soon as the performance is over they

must not let it appear that there has been any trouble between them. Also before and during the contests no bitter feeling must be manifested. It happens that one plays the part of host to his opponent. (30:87.) An appearance of perfect calm should be maintained by the one under fire. One "made his indifference known by calling on the spectators to shout and amuse themselves over him." (53:332.)

The word "nith-song" is of Norse derivation. Tylor was of the opinion that the institution itself had been introduced into Greenland by the Norwegian colonists. (See 67:353.) Its native origin is now generally accepted. (For similar customs among the western Eskimo, see 52:30; 45:347. Consult also Chamberlain, 28. 2:77; for examples of nith-songs see 11:287; 63:305; 31:330.)

A drastic measure for maintaining order and punishing delinquency, and one very rarely employed, is *expulsion*. Typical is the case of a young man who was turned out of the house in the middle of winter. (52:26.) Rink says, "As to the possibility of maintaining the authority of law, it must be remembered that the members in these isolated communities are more immediately dependent on their fellowmen than the members of a civilized society, and that what is considered at the most a trifling inconvenience in the latter, may be a severe punishment in the former" (52:24), and we must agree with him that few punishments could be more severe than "being suddenly abandoned without shelter in the depths of an Arctic winter;" between this and "the disagreeableness of being shamed by a song in an assembly, several degrees of punishment may be imagined sufficient to deter malicious individuals from ordinary offences or disturbances of order and peace." (52:26.)

Crimes involving *punishment by death*, of which practically the only ones are murder and witchcraft (which latter, according to Eskimo belief, may cause death) are dealt with in one of two ways; usually by blood-revenge on the part of the kindred of the victim, or, in a few cases, by the concerted action of the whole community.

Blood-revenge is considered a duty, as well as a right, among all Eskimo. It is one phase of their conception of justice. What Kropotkin says of the Dayak "head-hunter" may be said also of the Eskimo.

"The avenger is not actuated by personal passion. . . . He acts under what he considers as a moral obligation, just as the European judge who, in obedience to the same principle of 'blood for blood,' hands over the condemned murderer to the hangman." (38: 109.)

There is a belief that the soul of the murdered person does not get rest till he is avenged. (66: 186.)

The proper agent of revenge is the nearest male relative of the victim, although other relatives and even place-fellows may join. (5: 582; 53: 35, 287, 446; 19: 69; 50: 61; 45: 292.) The primary object of the revenge is the death of the murderer himself. It is said to be usual for the avenger to explain to the murderer the reason for his taking-off. (16. 1: 177.) But, especially if the slayer cannot be apprehended, some of his relatives are also liable to be put to death. There appears to be a definite idea of *personal* responsibility, although with that goes communal liability also. Rink classes revenge carried out on some kindred or place-fellow as "neither decidedly admissible nor altogether unlawful." (53: 35.) If a murdered man leaves an infant son, the latter is obliged to avenge his father's death as soon as he arrives at puberty. (45: 292.) This is a frequent theme in folk-lore. (e. g., 53: 368, 450.) The boy's training has this as its chief end. "Now thou hast seen thy father killed, it will not do for thee to grow up in idleness," is a grandfather's admonition. (53: 355.) At the conclusion of a tale of this type, Rink gives us what he calls the "very characteristic remark" of the native narrator:

"It is generally supposed that if his foster-father had not continually excited him [to revenge the murder of his parents], he would scarcely have grown to be so immensely strong." (53: 207.)

Boas tells us of a strange method of executing the blood-revenge among the central Eskimo.

"Strange as it may seem, a murderer will come to visit the relatives of his victim (though he knows that they are allowed to kill him in revenge) and will settle with them. He is kindly welcomed and sometimes lives quietly for weeks and months. Then he is suddenly challenged to a wrestling match, and if defeated, is killed, or if victorious he may kill one of the opposite party, or when hunting he is suddenly attacked by his companions and slain." (5: 582; cf. 53: 340.)

Often the blood-feud consists of a long series of retaliations, the first revenge calling forth another, and so on. It may even



be handed down to successive generations. (5:582; 16. 1:178; 45:293; 50:62.) Rink is of the opinion that continued blood-revenge is less decidedly admissible than the first retaliation. (53:35.) Such a feud may be concluded by mutual agreement. (5:582; 34:70.)

In a Greenland tale, a man planning revenge was advised by an old bachelor, "Thou hadst better give it up and leave thy father alone. He was only paid back according to his deserts, being himself a man-slayer." And the son replied, "Let it be as thou proposest; perhaps I shall only get new foes if I carry out my thoughts of vengeance," and so the parties were reconciled. (53:340.)

Capital punishment, as the result of deliberation by the community, was inflicted on witches, and persons regarded as dangerous to public welfare. (53:35; 6:117.) According to Nansen, "in cases of extreme atrocity, the men of the village have been known to make common cause against a murderer, and kill him." (43:163.) A very interesting procedure is described by Beas,

"If a man has committed a murder or made himself odious by other outrages he may be killed by anyone simply as a matter of justice. The man who intends to take revenge on him must ask his countrymen singly if each agrees in the opinion that the offender is a bad man deserving death. If all answer in the affirmative he may kill the man thus condemned and no one is allowed to revenge the murder." (5:582.)

As stated before, the Eskimo believe that people may be killed by witchcraft, so that witches would be only a special class of homicides. (16. 1:177; 19:113; 6:117.) A missionary was explaining how God punishes wicked people, when an Eskimo remarked that "in that respect he was like God, for he had killed three women who were witches." (43:170.)

## 9. SOCIABILITY AND POLITENESS

"If we take the term *savage* to imply a brutal, unsocial, and cruel disposition, the Greenlanders are not entitled to the appellation. They are not untractable, wild, or barbarous; but a mild, quiet, and good-natured people." These words of Crantz (16. 1:169-70) are borne out by the unanimous testimony of all students of the Eskimo. Their experience has been comparable to that of Cartwright, who, on leaving for Labrador, noted that the Eskimo "have always been accounted the most savage people upon the whole continent of America." (12:13.) At the end of his sixteen years' sojourn among them he wrote in his journal, "They are the best tempered people I ever met with, and the most docile."

As an example of their disposition we may cite their behavior in the communal houses, such as those of East Greenland. In one such house, Holm found thirty-eight persons, of eight different families. This room, be it remembered, was the only refuge of all these people during the long darkness of the Arctic winter, here they did their sleeping, cooking, eating, working, dancing and merrymaking.

"And yet," we are assured, "no quarrel disturbs the peace, there is no dispute about the use of the narrow space. Scolding or even unkind words are considered a misdemeanor when not produced under the legal form of process, viz., the nith-song." (52: 26; 30: 74; 20: 150.)

Crantz declares

"There is less noise and confusion in a Greenland house inhabited by ten couples with numerous children of different ages, than in a single European one, where only two relations reside with their families." ( 16. 1: 156.)

Nansen writes,

"The Greenlander is of all God's creatures gifted with the best disposition. Good humor, peaceableness, and evenness of temper are the most prominent features in his character. He is eager to stand on as good a footing as possible with his fellow-men, and therefore refrains from offending them and much more from using coarse terms of abuse. He is very loth to contradict another even should he be saying what he knows to be false; if he does so, he takes care to word his remonstrance in the mildest possible form, and it would be very hard indeed for him to say right out that the other was lying. He is chary of telling other people truths which he thinks will be unpleasant to them; in such cases he chooses the vaguest expressions, even with reference to such indifferent things as, for example, wind and weather. His peaceableness even goes so far that when anything is stolen from him, which seldom happens, he does not as a rule reclaim it even if he knows who has taken it." (43: 101; cf. 30: 182; 4: 372, 385; 21: 385; 66: 180.)

So, too, Crantz says that "they are patient of injuries, and will concede their manifest rights rather than engage in dispute." (16. 1:126.) "No one interrupts another in the course of a conversation, nor do they willingly contradict each other, much less give way to clamorous brawling." (16. 1:157.)

Of the Eskimo at Point Barrow, Murdoch states:

"They are generally peacable. We did not witness a single quarrel among the men during the two years of our stay." He had reports of fights, due to white men's liquor. "Many of them show a grace of manner and natural delicacy and politeness which is quite surprising. I

have known a young Eskimo so polite that in conversing with Lieut. Ray he would take pains to mispronounce his words in the same way as the latter did, so as not to hurt his feelings by correcting him bluntly." (42: 41 sqq.)

It is said that the Eskimo language does not contain a single epithet of reproach or abuse. (16. 1: 158, 170; 19: 69.) On this point, Hutton writes:

"However aggravating the seals may be, an Eskimo does not lose his temper over his hunting; and as for swearing—why, the Eskimo language contains no oaths, and the few mild remarks that an Eskimo can make in his own language as 'Kappianarmék' (how dreadful) or 'ai-ai-kulluk' (that miserable thing), he makes where they can be applied literally. Useless expletives are as foreign to his nature as to his vocabulary." (33: 247.)

Some of their customs are indicative of their civility. Thus they never enter another's house without being invited. When they come in they do not sit down till the host assigns them a seat. (19: 70.) The guests do not enter the house until the host has gone in first. (30: 173.) When a stranger comes to a house, he must never ask for food, no matter how hungry he may be. Nor is this necessary, on account of the universal hospitality. When food is set before the visitor, he does not begin to eat immediately, lest he be thought gluttonous. All the people of the house must retire before the guest takes to his sleeping-place. "It is regarded ill for the guest to retire before the host." (19: 70.) Also it is not polite to depart while the host is awake. "When the host began to snore, the guests crept quietly away," says Rasmussen (50: 42.)

A common form of salutation is rubbing of noses, a custom which is falling into disuse (42: 422; 2. 1: 67); also embracing and caressing (1. 1: 116, 122, 160). Salutations of welcome are not known in East Greenland, but farewell greetings are common, such as "Be careful on the journey," or "May you sail in open water." (30: 173.)

We have already referred to the Eskimo's patience under injury. Now the cause of this is not insensitivity to the opinions of others, for as we have pointed out, the Eskimo seems to be very sensitive. But any expression of wounded feelings, outside the drum-dance, is inhibited in the interests of public peace and concord. Crantz' statement that "When a Greenlander considers himself injured by a neighbor, he retires without reprisals into

another part of the house" (16. 1:156), is significant as showing their manner both of suppressing their own feelings and of preventing trouble. Rink strikingly sums up the matter when he says, "The general mode of uttering annoyance at an offence is by silence." (Cf. 1. 1:62.)

Hans Egede tells us that when they saw the sailors quarrel and fight they regarded their conduct as inhuman. "They do not consider each other as human beings," they said. When an officer struck one of his subordinates they said, "He treats his fellow-men as dogs." (19:69.) A Cumberland Sound tale gives an example of how they regard ill-humored and quarrelsome people. (6:285.)

Their disinclination to dispute an argument leads to an appearance of great credulity, even when they themselves have their doubts. Paul Egede relates an incident when, "from courtesy, everybody believed all I said. Then women requested needles from me for their willingness to believe." (20:123; cf. 19:126.) When a missionary expressed skepticism about their assertion that they had killed a bear which was so big that the ice on its back never melted, they said, "We have believed what you tell us, but you will not believe what we tell you." (43:310.)

#### 10. SENSE OF JUSTICE AND MERCY

We find evidence not only of forbearance with injuries but actual forgiveness, even in cases where severe punishment would be justifiable. Hall tells us of an old man who confessed the wrong he had done another years ago (deserting him when starving). The latter avowed that he no longer retained any ill-feeling. "Then the two men sealed their renewed friendship with jests." (26:278.) Two Greenland tales strikingly illustrate the principle of returning good for evil.

In one a father had been tormented by suitors for his daughter, because he would not give her up. The family had to move away. But "intelligence reached them that the men who had once scorned and abused them were living in great want, and the old man determined to help them," which he did. "Ye said that ye would deny me your assistance if ever I came in want, now help yourself, if ye please, and eat as much as ever ye like." (53:185.) Another tells of a poor orphan boy, whom a wicked man scorned and scared. The boy, by magic, secured the man's harpoon and hunting bladder. He invited all the men to come to a

feast, the bad man among them. He had hung up the bladder-float along with the harpoon-line on the peg in the wall, and while the old man was prating of his chase and loss, he pointed to them, saying, "Look, there are all thy hunting tools, and thou canst take them away with thee when thou goest home." "The old man looked quite abased and left the party in a somewhat confused state." (53: 124-126.) A primitive David and Saul motive.

As showing their sense of both justice and mercy, some recorded conversations are instructive.

They asked Paul Egede, if the new religion was so essential, why God had not given them the instruction before, so that their fathers could have come to heaven (20:24). The missionary said that perhaps God had seen that they would not accept the Word, but rather despise it, and thereby become more guilty. One old man said he had known many excellent people; his own father had been a pious man.

They could not understand how the sin which Adam and Eve committed could be so great as to involve such dire consequences, as that all mankind should be condemned on account of it. "Since God knew all things, why did he permit the first man and woman to sin?" they asked. On the other hand, they were of the opinion that Adam and Eve were very foolish to chatter with a serpent and "they must have been very fond of fruit since they would rather die and suffer pain than forego a few big berries." But then it was just like the Kablunas; "these greedy people never have enough; they have, and they want to have, more than they require."

They inquired why God did not help the children of Israel to overcome their enemies, the Egyptians, and spare the Canaanites, who had done nothing against them. (20: 162.)

They also wanted to know if God can't do what he wants men to do, viz., forgive offenses, without such terrible punishments. (20: 17.) One said if the Son of God is such a terrible being as to put people in everlasting fire he did not want to go to heaven. (16. 2: 41,) Others thought the Son must be matchlessly good, but the Father have a hard and ferocious disposition. (20: 17.)

A girl told a missionary she could not believe that God was so cruel as he represented him to be; he had said that all her forefathers were to be tormented to all eternity, because they did not know God. She defended them on the ground that they did not know any better and finally said "it was horrible for her to learn that God was so terribly angry with those who sinned that he could never forgive them, as even wicked men sometimes do." (20: 221.)

An angakok came to Paul Egede and said, "I have heard tell of a virgin in your land who had a son, who was a great angakok and could do wonderful things, cure all kinds of diseases, and even make the dead alive again, and that your forefathers have slain this great angakok, and that he later became living, and went to heaven. Had he come here to us, we should have loved him and been obedient to him. So crazy

people we haven't among us. What madmen to kill one who could bring the dead to life! Why did he not kill these bad people, and come over to us, we should have better appreciated him." (20: 20.)

An experience of some Eskimo in Copenhagen also shows their view of the justice of human affairs:

Nearly the whole city came to look at these strange people. When they saw the porter taking money to let people in, they thought it was they who should have the money who were being looked at. They ought also, they said, to have something for so often hearing that they were not handsome. In Denmark there must be a different custom than in their country. There the small girls call through the windows to the others, "You are pretty," and the answer from within is, "Come in." Then the girls outside give a present. "But here it is always, 'You are ugly,' and to get in to see us, they give the porter money, which we ought to have for our ugliness, since it is so strange among you to see ugly people." (20: 39.)

The following incident shows their fine sense of sympathy:

Several of the Eskimo Cartwright brought to England died on the voyage, much to his sorrow as well as that of their relatives and friends in Labrador. But the latter, so he tells us, "no sooner observed my emotion, than, mistaking it for the apprehension which I was under for fear of their resentment, they instantly seemed to forget their own feelings, to relieve those of mine. They pressed round me, clasped my hands, and said and did all in their power to convince me that they did not entertain any suspicion of my conduct toward their departed friends." (12: 139.)

Their fellow-feeling even with the brute creation is shown in their words at seeing a man on horseback. They expressed "great compassion for the poor beast, whose unfortunate lot it was to carry so great a weight at such a rate." (12: 128.)

## 11. HOMICIDE AND WAR

From the peaceable nature of the Eskimo, we would expect to find homicide of infrequent occurrence, and the evidence bears out this supposition. Nansen says, "Murder is very rare. They hold it atrocious to kill a fellow-creature." (43: 162.) Important is the testimony of Hans Hendrik, the Christian Eskimo from the Moravian mission, who found to his surprise and relief, when among non-Christian tribes, that "notwithstanding their being unbaptized, they abhor manslaughter." (27: 42.)

A dissenting opinion is expressed by Holm; of the East Greenlanders he says that "murder is frequent when one takes into

account the sparseness of the population." (30:87.) It does not appear that he is here speaking as an eye-witness. And, in another place, in relating several accounts of murders, given him by the natives, he says that the stories are possibly only legends, embodying the accumulated and exaggerated events of hundreds of years. He also states that frequently they accuse each other in their nith-songs of attempts at murder, with no basis in fact. These considerations tend to throw doubt upon the accuracy of his first statement.

But, of course, it would be running in the teeth of facts to assert that murders never take place. As Rink says, "the passions of the people tending to ambition, domineering, or the mere fancy for making themselves feared, sometimes gave rise to violence and murder." (53:34.) In another connection we discuss the punishments for murder. The place it occupies in their criminal law is shown from the fact that it is practically the only offense punishable by death. Nelson tells us that "a man who has killed another can be recognized by the restless expression of his eye." (45:293.)

Folk-lore abounds in stories of homicide and its revenge. But this is no index to a corresponding frequency in real life. As Matthews well says,

"It is nothing to us that a horrid crime (as we regard it) is described in a tale, for the story-tellers of all ages and of all races have delighted to thrill their hearers with such tales, and, as civilization advances, this delight seems to increase rather than to diminish." (41:2.)

We may here say a few words about war and the Eskimo. There is scanty support among this people for the thesis, "War is the normal condition of savagery." (Mooney, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, 751.) Paul Egede, long ago, wrote that "the Greenlanders do not know of war, and therefore have no word for it." (20:138.) According to Nansen,

"War is in their eyes incomprehensible and repulsive; . . . soldiers and officers, brought up in the trade of killing, they regard as mere butchers." (43:162.)

An instructive incident is told by Amundsen:

An Eskimo, who had agreed to go with the expedition, suddenly became melancholy, and sobbing bitterly said he did not want to go to the land of the white men, as they might kill him. Assurances were of no avail, "he would not be convinced, and pointed to some pictures of the Boer War." (1.2:92.)

We find in this respect, as in so many others, the western Eskimo an exception. They have engaged in wars between the tribes as well as with the Indians. (45:327; 32:130; 34:150; 21:388.) Sometimes a certain number of men were chosen on either side to fight it out as representatives of the tribe, the rest of the tribe remaining at peace. (34:227.)

As Rink points out, among the western Eskimo, "in connection with warfare among the tribes it has even led to the keeping of slaves, of all habits the one apparently most at variance with Eskimo social life." (52:28; cf. 32:78.) The evidence from the Eskimo supports Westermarck's position that "the earliest source of slavery was war or conquest." (71. 1:674.)

It might be supposed that the Eskimo's aversion to strife would be coupled with a lack of courage. But facts show that such is not the case. In the western tribes, who engage in war with each other and the Indians, martial courage is not wanting. But even to that great majority who live in peace with all men, no one would deny the possession of courage, who knows the bravery of the undaunted hunters of land and sea. (See 42:42; 5:574.) As Crantz says of the kayaker, "He dreads no storm; as long as a ship can carry its topsails, he braves the mountainous billows." (16. 1:139.) The Eskimo in his kayak is not only "an object of wonder and delight," as Crantz calls him, for his marvellous skill, but also one of the sublimest examples of human daring and self-reliance, of personal courage vastly greater than that required to keep step with an army to the field of battle. Alone he courts the dangers of the icy deep and challenges and conquers, single-handed, the dread powers of nature.

## 12. TRUTHFULNESS AND GOOD FAITH

Says Nansen:

"One of the most prominent and attractive traits in the Eskimo is certainly his integrity. If some Europeans have denied him this virtue, it can only be I am sure, because these gentlemen have not taken the trouble to place themselves in sympathy with his modes of thought, and to realize what he regards as dishonorable. It is of special importance for the Eskimo that he should be able to rely with confidence upon his neighbors and his fellow-men; it is the first condition of this mutual confidence, on which depends all united action in the battle of life, that every man shall be upright in his dealings with his neighbors." (43:157 sq.)



He quotes Dalager to the effect that they "shrink from relating anything which they are unable to substantiate." (43:126.) The last-named authority gives the women a less clean record in this regard than the men, a view which is also held by Crantz. (16. 1:175.)

Murdoch found the Eskimo "generally truthful, though a detected lie is hardly considered more than a good joke." (42:41.) The context seems to indicate this last clause refers particularly to their relation with foreigners. It may be noted that Amundsen and Stefánsson, who both had opportunity to observe many different tribes, agree that natives who have not been in contact with white men are more truthful and honorable in every respect. (58:200.)

It is undeniably true that some Eskimo resort to deception in their relations with foreigners, particularly in trading-transactions. Holm found it one of their practices to offer the poorest things first. (30:168.) Some natives tried to sell Beechey's party fish skins "ingeniously put together, so as to represent a whole fish, although totally deprived of their interior substance." (4:391.) Similar tricks were tried on the Point Barrow expedition. "They brought over the carcass of a dog, with the skin, head, feet, and tail removed, and tried to sell it for a young reindeer," and again when the party were buying seal oil from the Eskimo, "one woman brought over a tin can nearly filled with ice, with merely a layer of oil on top." Also clothing and other articles made for sale to the visitors were carelessly made, compared with the care they put on their own things. (42:41.) It is only fair and perhaps significant to compare with these reports the experience of Dalager, one of the first Danish merchants in Greenland:

"In describing a thing to another person, they are very careful not to paint it in brighter colors than it deserves; especially in the sale of an object which the buyer has not seen, even though the seller may be anxious to get rid of it, he will depreciate it rather than overpraise it." (Quoted 43: 158.)

Turner testifies to their respect for probity in others:

"They form a permanent attachment for the white man who deals honestly and truthfully with them, but if he attempts any deception or trickery, they are certain to be ever suspicious of him, and it is difficult to regain their favor." (66: 180.)

How untruthfulness is regarded as a disgrace is strikingly shown in an incident related by Cartwright. After the Eskimo he brought to London had seen St. Paul's, he asked them how they would describe the cathedral to their countrymen in Labrador; to which they replied that they would mention neither it, nor many other things that they had seen, lest they be called liars, from the seeming impossibility of such facts. (12:124; cf. 26:348.) There is truth as well as poetry in an Eskimo song, whose burden is, "We are accustomed to have trustworthiness." (63:309.) Tales like "The woman who told a lie," show the Eskimo attitude reflected in folk-lore. (50:60.)

Especially do the Eskimo appear in a favorable light in their faithfulness to a promise or contract. Peary asserts, "An Eskimo never forgets a broken promise—nor a fulfilled one." I have not discovered a single charge against an Eskimo of breach of good faith, using this last term in the sense of "fidelity to promises, which should make facts correspond with our emphatic assertions as to our conduct in the future." (71:2:72.)

Rink's statement that "nothing was sold on credit, at least not without being paid for very soon" (53:29) is uncorroborated by other authorities. According to Crantz, "the purchaser can take a thing on credit if he has not the means of payment." And that considerable time is allowed for payment may be inferred from the fact that if the debtor dies before the debt is discharged,

"The creditor must not afflict the disconsolate mourners by remembrance of the deceased, but after some interval he may reclaim the article bartered, provided it is not lost in the scramble which usually succeeds the funeral. This lenient system goes so far that, if a person loses or breaks an article taken upon credit, he is not held to his agreement." (16:1:167; cf. Dalager, quoted 43:111.)

The Eskimo of Bering Strait commonly demanded their pay in advance when asked to do anything for white men, and hesitated or even refused to give white men any article of value without being paid at the time. Nelson attributes this to a distrust of strangers; is this another instance of unpleasant memories? Amundsen tells us his credit among the Nechilli was "really flattering." "In the beginning the Eskimo were rather astonished at receiving a piece of paper instead of a knife or fifty cartridges, but when they understood the meaning of it my paper was always accepted as good as payment." Some were

presented a whole year later, when they were honored "to their great delight." (1. 2: 64; cf. 3: 299.) Among the very same Eskimo spoken of above as so distrustful of the whites, Nelson states that it was

"A constant practice to obtain credit at the trading stations to be paid for when they should have procured the necessary skins." And he adds that they were "very honest, paying all debts contracted in this way," in many cases when the trader would have had no means of obtaining his pay. He remarks that "a curious part of this custom was that very often the same Eskimo who would be perfectly honest and go to great trouble and exertion to settle a debt, would not hesitate to steal from the same trader." (45: 294.)

I find in this fact an illustration of their strict fidelity to a promise, as compared with a rather disrespectful attitude toward uncovenanted property. Cartwright relates a striking and significant incident; an Eskimo "absolutely refused to part with a bundle of whalebone, which he brought to pay a debt with; notwithstanding I assured him that the person to whom he owed it was not in this country, nor would ever return to it." (12: 296.) Amundsen tells of a native mail-carrier, who although urged by his family to remain at home to take care of an injury,

"withstood all temptations, and continued on his route. . . . He was stimulated by a desire to prove that he was a man of his word. He was especially delighted at the praise I gave him for his integrity and sense of honor." (1. 2: 76; cf. 1.1: 196.)

Westermarck says that "the regard in which truth is held by the Eskimo seems to vary among different tribes." (71. 2: 75.) There is no reason why such a statement may not be made of different individuals of the same tribe. Because a traveler happens to encounter an honest man in New York and a dishonest one in Chicago, it would hardly do to say that American *cities* differ in honesty. Indeed, we have evidence that quite opposite types of character may be found in one and the same Eskimo community. Even allowing full face value to all damaging evidence, after a careful consideration of all available data I think there is no reason why we may not say of the Eskimo what Matthews does of the Indians, that they are "not less truthful than the average of our race." Also it is well to bear in mind, what this same writer reminds us of, that "all people, in all times, have found it convenient to condone a certain

amount of falsehood. *The ethical boundaries of veracity have never been exactly defined.*" (41:5; italics mine.)

We may consider here briefly a phase which is of special importance in connection with their religious and social life, namely the honesty of the magicians or angakoks in their relations with the people and with the spirit-world. Some, like Crantz, believe that "the coarse imposture of the whole process is palpably manifest;" "the great majority of the angakoks are doubtless mere jugglers;" although he admits that

"the class includes a few persons of real talent and penetration and perhaps a greater number of genuine phantasts, whose understanding has been subverted by some impression strongly working on their fervid imagination." (16. 1: 196.)

He tells us that "with regard to their own practices, they readily admit that their intercourse is merely pretense to deceive the simple." (16. 1:197.) Now this is a grave charge to bring against a class and a system, as central in Eskimo life as that of the angakoks. The affinity of this view with the priestcraft-theory of the origin of religions might suffice to show its untenability. But there is direct evidence from Eskimo life itself. Holm tells us of angakoks' freely expressing unbelief in their powers. (30:127.) But, he says in another place (30:135):

"It is not impossible that their confession of their own impotence as angakoks is only an expression of the extraordinary modesty, with which the Eskimo speak of themselves. . . . It is very possible that the angakoks in reality believe in their own relations with the spirit-world."

He notes the significant fact that while denying his own powers, an angakok always expresses faith in his fellow-magicians. (30:127, sqq.) Even more positive testimony of the same effect is given by Rasmussen. After relating his encounter with an angakok who was exclaiming, "all foolery, silly humbug! Nothing but lies!" he states:

"A magician always precedes his conjurations with a few depreciating words about himself and his powers, and the more highly esteemed he is, the more anxious he is to pretend that his words are lies." (50: 17 sq.)

Our conclusion, I think, must be that expressed by Rasmussen when he declares:

"The magicians themselves are undoubtedly self-deceived in the conduct of their incantations; I do not believe that they consciously lie. Otherwise, why should they, when they themselves fall ill, seek the help of the spirits?" (50: 156.)

## 13. GRATITUDE

After stating that, according to travelers' accounts, the feeling of gratitude is "lacking in many uncivilized races," Westermarck quotes the following from Lyon, concerning the Eskimo:

"Gratitude is not only rare, but absolutely unknown amongst them, either by action, word, or look, beyond the first outcry of satisfaction." (71. 2: 155; cf. 16. 1: 174.)

A quite different, and I am sure more just, view is presented by Murdoch (this, it should be said, is also quoted by Westermarck, 71. 2: 162):

"Some seemed to feel truly grateful for the benefits and gifts received, and endeavored by their general behavior as well as in more substantial ways to make some adequate return. Others appeared to think only of what they might receive." (42: 42.)

This would do very well as a description of a high-class civilized community.

A favorite point for moralists with linguistic proclivities is to deny the existence of a word for this or that virtue, in the language of a primitive people. Among these "gratitude" is one often found missing. Now we hold, to use the language of Wundt:

"The phenomena of language do not admit of direct translation back again into ethical processes; the ideas themselves are different from their vehicles of expression, and here as everywhere the external mark is later than the internal act for which it stands." (72: 44.)

But it may be of interest to note that a word, given by Amundsen as "koyenna," meaning "thanks," which a missionary in Alaska claimed was of Christian origin was found in Greenland (spelled by Crantz "kujonak"), when the first modern missionaries arrived there.

Peary writes of his Eskimo acquaintance that "their feeling for me is a blending of gratitude and confidence" (48: 48) and "they are keenly appreciative of kindness." (48: 51.) Holm says that the sick, when helped by the Danish expedition, were very grateful and the patient's housemates "showered us with thanks and gifts." He adds that this may not have been so much from gratitude, as from the feeling the angokoks had instilled in them, that all aid must be paid for. The explanation is dubious. He himself gives other instances of thankfulness where no such interpretation is admissible. (30: 173.)

Amundsen expresses "great pleasure to see how happy they were with their gifts" (1. 2: 78), and that they thought of other than what they could get is shown by their actions when the Norwegian expedition was ready to sail. Their Eskimo friends presented them with "no less than seventy fine salmon, weighing from six to eleven pounds each, one in fact weighed over seventeen pounds." (1. 2: 94.) This represented toil and self-sacrifice, and was certainly not for the sake of future reward. (See also 1. 2: 107; cf. 4: 402.)

The importance attached to gratitude, as well as benevolence, by folk-lore is well illustrated in the tale of Kumagdlat. (53: 115.) A story from real life which shows how deep-seated in human nature is the response of gratitude, is that of the orphan boy, narrated by Rasmussen. (50: 51.) "A gift always opens the door of an Eskimo heart," remarks this author, "Thou gavest; see, I give too," is the key thought.

#### 14. PARENT AND CHILD

The desire for offspring is one of the most dominant traits of the Eskimo and one having far-reaching consequence. As is noted in another section, it is a potent cause of divorce, polygamy, and wife-exchanging. "The chief end of marriage," says Nansen, "is undoubtedly the procreation of children." (43: 150; cf. 56: 176.) Childlessness exposes the husband to the derision of his fellows. "Having no children, he has no sense," says a nith-song. (63: 295.) But even more unfortunate is the barren wife. Rasmussen declares, "There is only one woman whom I pity among the Polar Eskimo—the woman who has no children." (50: 65.) He relates a pathetic story, which is only one of many of like nature from life and folk-lore (53: 181, 441), describing the shame and suffering of the childless woman. The following by Nansen is worth noting in this connection:

"If a Greenlander's wife does not bear children, his marriage fails of its chief purpose. Their treatment of barren women seems to us wanton and immoral; but when we remember that the production of offspring is the great end and aim of their conduct, and reflect what an all-important matter it is to them, we may perhaps pass a somewhat milder judgment." (43: 171-172; cf. 30: 96.)

In this connection it might be noted that the Eskimo do not appear to be a fertile race. The number of children born to

one woman is, as a rule, small, and complete barrenness is not uncommon. (43:150; 30:96; 42:414; 66:189; 16. 1:149; 45: 29.)

The chief practical consideration is to have children for support in old age. Therefore married couples who remain childless frequently adopt children. Sometimes there is an exchange of children; "somebody wanting a boy hands over a superfluous girl in exchange." (33:80.) The adopted children receive the same treatment and have the same rights as children born of the marriage. (42:419; 5:580; 53:221; see also 1. 1:311; 2:205; 16. 1:155; 30:88; 6:115.)

This intense desire for offspring is coupled with a strong affection for children. On this point all authorities are in complete agreement:

"The affection of parents for their children is extreme," (42: 417); "Love of offspring is of the deepest and purest character," (55: 191); "Parents have an indescribable love for their children," (30: 92); are representative statements from different parts of the Eskimo area. Boas says, "The parents are very fond of their children and treat them kindly. They are never beaten and rarely scolded." (5: 566.) Holm tells of a man of whom the only good thing that could be said was that he had a notable love for his children. (30: 96; see also 19: 81; 16. 1: 149, 174; 43: 153; 13: 127, 179.)

In the desire for, and, though to a lesser degree, in the care of, children preference is shown for boys. Nansen's statement, "When a man-child is born, the father is jubilant, and the mother beams with pride, while if it be a girl, they both weep, or are, at any rate, very ill content" (43:135), is undoubtedly often applicable, though it must admit of many exceptions. The preference for boys is shown by a belief that a boy may be changed to a girl after birth, as punishment for not observing the birth-taboos. (20:130.) According to Holm, the pregnant wife uses amulets to assure the child's being a boy. (30:90. For illustrations in folk-lore see 53:390, 456, 458.)

The reason for this attitude is not far to seek. The solution is suggested in Holm's statement, "As soon as the wife becomes pregnant, her husband regards her as the mother of *the future hunter.*" (30:90; italics mine.) As Nansen puts it:

"The boy is regarded as the kayak-man and hunter of the future, the support of the family in the old age of the parents, in short as a direct addition to the working capital." (43: 135; cf. 1. 2: 205; 16. 1: 155.)

Yet there is undoubtedly much truth in these words of Murdoch:

"While a boy is desired, since he will be the support of his father when the latter grows too old to hunt, a girl is almost as highly prized, for not only will she help her mother with the cares of housekeeping when she grows up, but she is likely to obtain a good husband who may be induced to become a member of his father-in-law's family." (42: 419.)

The difference in the valuation put upon boys and girls is shown in the case of orphaned children. Of these Nansen says:

"If a boy's parents die, his position is never a whit the worse, for all the neighbors are quite willing to receive him into their houses, and do all they can to make a man of him. With the girls it is different; if they lose their parents and have no relations, they can always, indeed, have plenty of food, but they have often to put up with the most miserable clothing." (43: 135.)

Such neglect of orphan girls must, however, be far from universal, as shown in numerous stories in folk-lore. This same authority also adds:

"When they come to marriageable age, they stand on pretty much the same level as girls who have been more fortunately situated; for no such thing as a dowry is known, and their chances simply depend upon beauty and solidity, which shall secure them favor in the eyes of men."

The position of the orphan boy in Eskimo folk-lore is an exceedingly interesting theme.

He is the hero par excellence; his struggles against difficulties and final triumphs form a favorite subject. In the tale, "The Little Angakoks from the North Land" (63: 281 sqq.) two orphans secured seals for the people, after all the old angakoks had failed. A frequent theme is that of an orphan boy, who has been neglected or tormented, becoming a strong man and taking fatal revenge, often by the aid of supernatural powers. In one story, the hero killed all his persecutors, "only the poor people who had been kind to him he spared." (53: 98.) In another he "slaughtered all but the little girl who had befriended him. She became his wife." (66: 265.) The words of one orphan-hero is the keynote in most of these stories, "They had no mercy on me when I was weak, now that I am strong, I will have my revenge."

Rink points out that this class of tales has "a moral tendency, bringing before us the idea of a superior power protecting the helpless, and avenging mercilessness and cruelty." (53: 92; cf. 3: 272.) They are closely akin to the belief that



"There is a spirit who comes and frightens people to death when orphan babies scream. There is also a risk of the dead mother herself coming back. Once upon a time an orphan baby was allowed to scream, and no one tried to quiet it; then suddenly the dead mother appeared in the doorway and frightened all to death." (50: 137.)

The kindness which is undoubtedly often shown orphans is strikingly illustrated in several folk-tales.

One tells how the hunters, on their return from the chase, "always used to give to the orphans a plentiful repast, and had special stores of provisions set apart for orphan children against hard times." (53: 334.)

In another, an orphan boy offered some brothers to barter his little dog for a pair of boots. One of the brothers said, "Well, thou art a hearty little fellow for thy age," and gave him two pairs of boots without taking his dog. All the other brothers likewise loaded him with presents of various kinds. (53: 408 sqq.)

Notwithstanding "the most unbounded freedom," to use Holm's expression (30: 92), in which Eskimo children grow up, our evidence is, without exception, in favor of their excellent behavior. "The children were what we would call in Europe well brought up, though they got no bringing up at all," is Nordenskiöld's way of putting it. (47. 2: 236.) "One must admire how well-bred the little ones are," says Holm. (Cf. 19: 82; 42: 417.) After speaking of the absence of restraint and punishment, Nansen says:

"With such an upbringing, one might expect that the Greenland children would be naughty and intractable. This is not at all the case. When they are old enough to understand, a gentle hint from father or mother is enough to make them desist from anything forbidden. I have never seen Eskimo children quarreling, either indoors or in the open air; not even talking angrily to each other, much less fighting." (43: 154; cf. 45: 191.)

Children early begin to learn the activities which are to be their life-work, the boys as hunters, the girls as housekeepers. But "they still have plenty of leisure to play with other children until they are old enough to marry." (42: 417.) Indeed, they get their training largely through play. Among the boys' favorite playthings are toy harpoons and bird-darts. (43: 156.) Then one day "it dawns upon him that his childish play can be taken in earnest." (50: 117.) That day marks an epoch in the

Eskimo's life, and is a great event for all his family. Hall relates that the mother of a boy came to him, "her whole frame shaking with joy, while she told the news she had just heard, that her son had harpooned and killed a seal." (26:171.) This is the Eskimo mode of "initiation into manhood" (they have no so-called "puberty rites," at least not for boys.) Crantz thus describes the scene:

"Of the first seal which he catches, an entertainment is given to the neighbors and inmates of the family, during which the young adventurer relates how he accomplished his exploit. The guests express their surprise at his dexterity, and praise the flesh as peculiarly excellent. And the females afterwards begin to choose a wife for him." (1: 150.)

The dutiful attitude toward parents does not cease with childhood. Valuable on this point is the testimony of Crantz, as he will not be accused of exaggerating "heathen" virtues. "Ingratitude in grown-up children toward their old deceitful parents is scarcely ever exemplified among them." (1:150.) Similarly Holm writes, "Grown-up children have great affection for their parents, and show them care and devotion" (cf. 48:46; 30:93), even in the case of an unworthy parent.

I am not sure but what Nansen's statement, "reverence for the aged is not a prominent feature of the Eskimo character" does some injustice to the people of whom this writer is such a staunch friend. We have already pointed out the place of the elders in the social order. The aged are the objects of marks of special honor. (See e.g., 42:359; 4:389.) Turner speaks of men who attain eighty years of age and have great-grandchildren, and "these never fail to show respect for their ancestor." (66:190.) The old people of the community are in a way the link which connects the present generation with the revered ancestors, and with the latter they share in supreme degree the attributes of wisdom and trustworthiness. "Old women do not fling their words about without meaning, and we believe them. There are no lies with age." (50; cf. 5:605.) In a folk-tale a grandfather, "a wise man," admonishes his grandson "never to be uncivil towards old people, not even on being reproved by them." (53:414.)

That there are those who do not live up to this high standard in their behavior toward the aged, even their own parents, is very probable. It very likely happens that people too old

to take care of themselves are neglected or treated with slight consideration. (See 43:177; 20:101; 66:178; 30:181.)

A practice found among the Eskimo which at first sight outrages our moral sensibility is the *abandoning and killing of aged parents*. They are sometimes put to death by their own children; how can that be harmonized with that affection for parents which we have described? The same treatment may be dealt out to the sick and insane. As all these cases have the same causes, we will treat of them together.

The fundamental explanation for these acts must be sought, not in any "corruption of the heart" of the Eskimo nor their heathenism, but in the grim necessities of the struggle for existence. It is the demand for the sacrifice of the individual life that the group may survive. The scarcity of the food supply or the hardship of the march may require that those who only consume or who retard the progress be abandoned or dispatched. This is well illustrated in an account by Boas:

"When a traveling party runs short of provisions, they sometimes leave a woman or an old person, who may hinder their progress in a small snow hut, in which such a person is walled up. In case the party succeed in reaching their destination and replenishing their stock of provisions, they return for the deserted one." (6: 117.)

Sometimes the aged and sick themselves ask to be killed. A young man told Hall, "with tears in his eyes" that "it had been his duty" to put his parents to death "as it was at their request." (26:277.) An incident, which Nansen uses as an illustration of the fact that "the conceptions of good and evil in this world are exceedingly divergent" (43:170) is as follows: A missionary spoke to a girl of the love of God and neighbor, when she said to him:

"I have given proof of love for my neighbor. Once an old woman, who was ill, but could not die, offered to pay me if I would lead her to the top of the steep cliff from which our people have always thrown themselves when they are tired of living; but I, having always loved my neighbors, led her thither without payment, and cast her over the cliff." (See also 43: 163; 42: 331; 17: 385; 6: 499.)

*Infanticide* is practised under similar conditions from like motives. They often kill children who are deformed or those so feeble that they are not likely to live, and those whose mothers die in childbirth and who have no one to nurse them. (43:151;

20:107; 30:91.) A motherless infant, says Crantz, is "buried alive by the desperate father, when he can no longer endure the sight of its misery," And he adds, "The heartrending anguish of this task must be left to the imagination to conceive." (1. 61:218.) Paul Egede tells of a deeply grieved widower who had thrown his new-born child from a high cliff, with closed eyes, so as not to see its end. He explained that its mother was dead, there was no one to nurse it. It had to die slowly, but now it died quickly, he sighed. (20:107. See also 6:117; 5:580; 48:66; 45:289; 53:35.)

But fortunately extremities which necessitate such actions are comparatively rare. Murdoch writes, "We never heard of a single case of infanticide." (42:416.) According to Waldmann, not even feeble or premature children were exposed, by the Labrador natives among whom he lived. (69:431.) Patient efforts are used to preserve the life of the child when possible. Folk-lore tells of a woman who miscarried and the child "was swaddled in the skin of the eider-duck, and had to be fostered with the utmost care to keep it alive." It became "one of the most powerful of men." (53:453.) Amundsen relates a case, where parents had drawn their son, lame from childhood, along on a seal-skin, for many years. The explorer's gift of a sledge was a welcome aid. (1. 2:79.)

Examples could be multiplied showing the devotion of parents to their children in the face of death. Dalager says, "What chiefly cuts their hearts is to see their children starving. They give food to their children even if they themselves are ready to die of hunger." (Quoted 43:103.) Parental love and grief of an Eskimo affected Paul Egede more perhaps than the strict logic of his theology would permit, when a man came to him and asked if his dead son was in heaven. Egede notes in his journal (remember father and son were both heathen): "I could not but answer him that the good God, who is the Father of all, prepares a fitting place for His children." This comforted the stricken man, but he remarked, "Still it is hard to lose mine, and not see them again in this world." (20:96.) The value attached to the preservation of a child is illustrated by two folk-tales.

In one, a man having slain a murderer, was asked by the latter's wife, "Are you going to kill me too?" To which the avenger replied, "No! Pualuna [the youngest son] is not big enough to do without you." (50:

132.) In another a second wife killed the first, of whom the husband had not informed her. She took the slain woman's child. The man "was not angry with her on account of the murder because she had let the boy live." (53: 276.)

Finally we may refer to an account by Klutshak.

The expedition of which he was a member (Schwatka's) had secured an Eskimo and his wife to accompany them. The couple had a girl five or six years' old, who, according to common usage, was "betrothed" to an adult. The latter demanded the child as a hostage, lest they would not return. "It was a painful situation for Nalijau and his wife. On the one hand was a better, care-free, easier life without their beloved child—on the other, the most wretched conditions with their child." But after a long struggle, the father came and announced that they had decided to remain. "The love of the parents for their child had won in the struggle with the prospect of a better life." And the author adds that this decision met with the general approval of the other Eskimo. (34: 169.)

I think facts like these throw more light, than would a long discussion, on the psychology and ethics of infanticide among the Eskimo. (See also 9: 192; 66: 192; 42: 415.)

*Feticide* would be very difficult for an observer to discover. From the desire of the Eskimo for children we would suppose it to be very rare. Of a case described by Holm, that author says that it was "a great offense" to the other Eskimo.

## 15. CANNIBALISM

Deniker enumerates as causes of anthropophagy, or cannibalism, necessity, gluttony, and superstition. (17a: 147.) Of the second of these, no instance has been found among the Eskimo. The third is given as a reason in only two reported cases. In Greenland, according to Rink, "a slain man is said to have the power to avenge himself by 'rushing into him,' which can only be prevented by eating a piece of his liver." (53: 45.) At Bering Strait, Nelson informs us,

"when young men fought in their first battle each was given to drink some of the blood, and made to eat a small piece of the first enemy killed by them, in order to render them brave." (45: 328.)

But there are many cases recorded of the eating of human flesh under the pressure of imminent starvation—*necessity*—that force which we saw to be cause of the killing of children, sick and aged. (6: 144, 258, 278, 489, 494; 1. 1: 278, 281; 30: 162.) Generally it is only bodies already dead from disease

or famine which are thus appropriated. Sometimes, however, people are killed, to preserve the existence of the group, by replenishing the food supply. (6:574; 50:33.) Such actions, even the consuming of the dead, are resorted to only after every other means has proved futile; Turner says "after eating their dogs and the clothing and other articles made of skins." (55:187.)

Boas says "all these occurrences are spoken of with the utmost horror." (5:574.) The effect upon the mind of such an experience is well illustrated in an incident given by Amundsen (1. 1:278; 281):

A man had died while on a fishing expedition. His wife and sons, who were with him, being unable to procure any other food, were forced, in order to save their lives, to partake of the dead man's body. "This dreadful tragedy seemed to cast a cloak of melancholy over old Navija. She was naturally very bright and gay, but at times had fits of the deepest melancholy, during which she tenaciously clung to her boy."

In East Greenland, those who have been forced to eat human flesh refrain from ever speaking of it. (30:165.) On the west coast of Hudson Bay, cannibalism should not be mentioned in the hearing of women. (6:503.) The Eskimo attitude is well manifested in the custom that

"a person who during a famine has eaten human flesh, should never afterwards eat bear meat, because it is believed that bear meat resembles that of man, and that to eat it will keep alive the desire for human flesh." (6:149, 489.)

This acquisition of a "taste" is referred to in an East Greenland tale. (31:323.)

Cannibalism is frequently dealt with in folk-lore, but always to emphasize the abhorrence of the narrators for the act. Any interpretation of these tales as traditions of an earlier general cannibalism is out of the question.

## 16. PROPERTY AND TRADE

Nansen says that the Eskimo,

"like all nations of hunters, have a very restricted sense of property; but it is mistake to suppose it entirely non-existing. As regards the great majority of things, a certain communism prevails; but this is always limited to wider or narrower circles according to the nature of the thing in question."

In these words he well sums up the main features of the economic system of the Eskimo. (43:108; cf. 53:9; 52:23.) We have already discussed the various subdivisions of Eskimo society. These are well worth bearing in mind in considering the matter of property, as we find a perfect correlation between the ownership of property and the individuals or groups who make use of the things in question. Among the Eskimo there is a complete application of the principle, which is the central idea of modern socialism, what is individually used should be individually owned, what is collectively used should be collectively owned.

Strictly personal property is practically limited to the things which the individual, man or woman, employs in his or her particular work. According to Nansen, it is

“most fully recognized in the kayak, the kayak-dress, and the hunting weapons, which belong to the hunter alone, and which no one must touch. With them he supports himself and his family, and he must therefore always be sure of finding them where he last laid them; it is seldom that they are even lent to others.”

The woman likewise owns the necessary household articles, besides her clothing and ornaments. (43:108; cf. 42:328.)

The possession by an individual of more than a certain amount of this kind of property is jealously restricted by public opinion. These specifically personal articles were, to quote Rink, “even regarded as having a kind of supernatural relation to the owner, reminding us of that between the body and the soul,” But if a man owned more suits than usual, “public opinion would compel him to allow others to make use of them.” (53:30.) A few hunters have two kayaks; but if one happens to have three, “he would be obliged to lend one of them to some relative or housemate, and sooner or later he would lose it.” The Eskimo attitude is strikingly shown in the rule that a borrowed article, if lost or damaged, need not be compensated to the owner, since the very fact that he could afford to lend it, proved he did not need; hence it is “not held with the same right of possession as his more necessary belongings, but ranked among those goods which were possessed in common with others.” (53:29, 30; cf. 45:294.) Another interesting view is given us by Boas;

“A person who has unwittingly damaged the property of another regrets that he has been the cause of loss, particularly if the owner

should comfort him by minimizing the importance of the accident. If, on the other hand, if the owner should express his annoyance, the offender will take comfort, because it is sufficient for one person to feel annoyed." (6: 116.)

Among the Alaskan Eskimo, the idea of individual ownership appears to be more strongly developed than elsewhere. Murdoch believes that

"there is no limit to the amount of property which an individual, at least the head of a family, may accumulate. This has given rise to a regular wealthy or aristocratic class, who, however, are not yet sufficiently differentiated from the poorer people, to refuse to associate with them on any terms but those of social equality."

Leadership in trading with whites is one cause of the rise of this class. (42: 429.) But even in this region the ancient order cannot be abrogated with facility or impunity. Nelson writes of this as follows:

"The Eskimo are very jealous of anyone who accumulates much property and in order to retain the public good will, are forced to be open-handed with the community. . . . Whenever a successful trader accumulates property and food, and is known to work solely for his own welfare, and is careless of his fellow villagers, he becomes the object of envy and hatred which ends in one of two ways. The villagers may compel him to make a feast and distribute his goods, or they may kill him and divide his property among themselves." (45: 305.)

The next class of property is that which belongs to the whole family. Rink enumerates under this head the family-boat and tent, provisions collected during the summer, and stores of skin and other articles for family use or for barter.

The third class is the property belonging to the house-mates, including the large house and the supply of meat for certain common meals. A fourth class comprises the things shared by all the place-fellows, such as the flesh and blubber derived from the seals caught during the stay in winter-quarters. And a fifth and last class, consisting of the food-supplies which, either on account of the size of the animal, or owing to scarcity and famine, were shared by the inhabitants of neighboring settlements. (53: 30.)

The Eskimo do not, as a rule have any definite idea of property in land, yet priority of occupation carries with it certain privileges. Thus it is a recognized rule that "no one shall pitch a tent or build a house where people are already settled



without obtaining their consent." (43:109; cf. 16. 1:166; 30.)  
But,

"beyond the confines of such places as are already inhabited, every one was at liberty to put up his house and go hunting and fishing whenever he chose." (53: 27.)

Nansen says that perhaps the rudiments of the idea of private property in land is found in what he believes to be a fact, that "where dams have been built in a salmon river to gather the fish together, it is not regarded as the right thing if strangers come and interfere with the dams or fish with nets in the dammed-up waters." (43: 110.)

He says that this is also mentioned by Dalager. The contrary is given by Rink,

"not even where others had first established a fishing place, by making weirs across a river, would any objections be made to other parties using these or even injuring them." (53: 27; for a similar rule about fox-traps see 16. 1: 167; 53: 29.)

This is in substantial agreement with Crantz, who concludes;

"Should a stranger disturb the prior occupant, he [the latter] will rather go away and starve than engage in a quarrel." (16. 1: 167.)

Nelson's observations indicate that in Alaska the idea of private property in natural resources is pretty well developed, one of the many respects in which the culture of that region differs from that of the other parts of the Eskimo area. The right to use certain places for setting seal and salmon nets

"is regarded as personal property, and it is handed down from father to son. If anyone else puts a net in one of these places the original owner is permitted to take it out and put down his own. These nets are sometimes rented or given out on shares, when the man who allows another to use his place is entitled to half the catch." (45: 307.)

There do not seem to be any definite boundaries between the hunting grounds of various tribes. According to Amundsen, it very frequently happens that two tribes meet while out hunting. "Such an encounter far from leading to strife and bloodshed, is the signal for a round of festivities." (1. 2: 45.)

The Eskimo have a great many rules governing the disposition of the booty of the chase. (6:116, 210; 5:582; 42:275, 427; 16. 1:167; 53:27, 29, 136; 30:76; 69:433; 33:223; 43:113.) Among these are the following, the particular one applying in a given case depending upon particular circumstances, including the kind of animal involved; they also differ in detail in various

localities. The right to the animal belongs either to the one who first sees it, or the one who first wounds it (no matter who fires the fatal shot), or, if several shoot at once, the one who comes nearest a vital spot. Referring to this last rule, Crantz remarks that since the introduction of muskets, many disputes arise which are not easily settled since no one knows his own bullet. (16. 1:67.) A case of what a jurist would call "conflict of laws" is given in a Cumberland Sound tale.

All the people shot arrows at a caribou and killed it. One shouted, "I hit it first;" another, "It was my arrow that killed it." Finally one of the party grew so angry that he took the caribou by the hind legs and dashed it to pieces on the rocks. "Then nobody dared to claim it." (6: 284.)

How detailed the principles of division sometimes are is shown by a rule from the west coast of Hudson Bay:

"The hunter who first strikes a walrus receives the tusks and one of the forequarters. The person who comes to his assistance receives the other forequarter; the next man, the neck and head; the following the belly, and each of the next two, one of the hindquarters." (6: 116.)

Also, in some cases, all who participate in the expedition share in the booty; again all who see the capture of the animal have this right. Under certain conditions, all rights of acquisition are suspended and the captured animal regarded as the common property of the whole community. This is true of all booty in time of scarcity. And at all times, according to Rink, "animals rare on account of their size or other unusual circumstances, were, more than ordinary species, considered common property." (53:28.) This holds universally of the whale. (For the description of a "whale-party," see 16. 1:167.)

If an animal gets away with the harpoon sticking in it, the finder is entitled to the animal, but the harpoon is returned to the proper owner, if he announces himself. (53:28; 16. 1:167.) On Hudson Bay the finder is allowed to keep the harpoon also. (5:582.)

Boas has discussed the property marks of the Alaskan Eskimo. These are found

"almost exclusively on weapons used in hunting, which after being dispatched, remain in the bodies of large game. Their purpose is to secure property-right in the animal in which the weapon is found." (10: 601.)

Such marks are not found among any other branch of the Eskimo. He concludes that

"this fact, taken in connection with the form and occurrence of such marks among the northeastern tribes of Asia, suggests that this custom like so many peculiarities of Alaskan Eskimo life, may be due to contact with Asiatic tribes." (10: 613.)

Anyone picking up driftwood is entitled to its possession. To make sure his right, all he has to do is to carry it above the high water line, and mark it in some way, such as putting a stone on it or cutting a notch in it. (53: 28; 42: 428; 16. 1: 167; 43: 110.)

"For this form of property the Eskimo has the greatest respect," says Nansen, "and one who has left a piece of driftwood on the shore may be sure of finding it again even several years after, unless Europeans have come along in the meantime. Anyone taking it would be regarded as a scoundrel." Nansen emphasizes this custom "as a proof of the Eskimo's scrupulous respect for the moral law which he recognizes." (43: 162.)

Somló has shown that among peoples of the most primitive types of culture (e.g., Tasmanians, Botocudos, Negritos, Seri Indians, etc.), trade ("Güterverkehr") is carried on both intra- and inter-tribally. (57: 155.) So, too, "notwithstanding their very limited feeling as to the accumulation of property, the Eskimo have carried on a kind of trade among themselves." (53: 11.) It has been discovered that articles have travelled all the way from Asia to Davis Strait or Hudson Bay. But as a practical necessity, each community has to depend upon itself for the staples of life. The articles of commerce are comparatively few. They are especially desirous of procuring things made of metal, for use in their weapons and tools. Well might the Greenlanders laugh when they were offered gold and silver coins, but they were eager for objects of steel. (40a: 192.) The Eskimo were the first American aborigines to become acquainted with smelted iron, from the Norse discoverers and settlers. (40a: 201.)

"Their trading negotiations," says Crantz, "are simply and concisely conducted. They make mutual exchanges with each other for what they need." (16. 1: 160.) Amundsen credits them with "sharp business instinct." From his liberal presents to them in return for their gifts, they "soon discovered that it was more remunerative to bring their goods as gifts." He was

therefore "obliged to decline all gifts, and introduce regular trading instead." (1. 1:179.) One Eskimo, who would get rich quick in more southerly parts of the continent, "noticed that I liked to have neatly sewn clothes; so he bought garments from some of his friends and sold them to me at a large profit." (1. 2:55.)

If an Eskimo repents of a bargain, he has a right to return the purchased article and take back his equivalent, even after considerable time. (53:29; 16. 1:167; 43:111.) Another interesting trait is brought out by Holm's experience. He says, "When we had traded with one, the others regarded it as their right, that we trade with them and give them the same as the first." For instance, a man asked and received a piece of arrow-iron for a piece of driftwood. Then another came with an old board and asked for a like piece of iron. "He explained that they always gave people what they asked for." (30:168.) A curious trading custom is reported from Alaska. It is called "patukhtuk," and is described as follows:

"When a person wants to start one of these he takes some article into the kashim [men's house] and gives it to the man with whom he wishes to trade, saying at the same time, 'It is a patukhtuk.' The other is bound to receive it, and give in return some article of about equal value; the first man then brings in something else, and so they alternate until, sometimes, two men will exchange nearly everything they originally possessed; the man who received the first present being bound to continue until the originator wishes to stop." (45: 309.)

## PART II

### SOME ETHICAL PHASES OF ESKIMO CULTURE

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#### 17. INHERITANCE

When we consider the small amount of property which an individual among the Eskimo can acquire, we realize that the question of *inheritance* is not a very important one in their economy. Another circumstance, which decreases the amount of transmissible property, is the custom of destroying or placing by the grave of a large part of the property of the deceased. Boas enumerates as objects which may be acquired by inheritance, the gun, harpoon, sledge, dogs, kayak, boat, and tent-poles of the man, and the lamps and pots of the woman. (5:580.)

The immediate heir is the oldest son living with the parents. Nothing falls directly to the widow, except the articles she brought in marriage. Adopted children are on the same footing as blood-descendants. Thus an elder foster-son has prior right over a younger son born of the marriage. If there are no children in the family, a relative, such as a brother, becomes the heir. (53:25; 16,1:176.)

It should be borne in mind that, with the right of inheritance, goes the obligation of providing for the dependent survivors. So that, as Rink says, it "represents a question of obligations and burdens rather than of personal gain." (53:25.)

For rules of inheritance apparently peculiar to Alaska, see Nelson's monograph. (45.)

#### 18. THEFT

From the nature of the case, private property being so limited, crimes "in violation of the rights of property can only have been trifling," as Rink points out. (53:34.) Conflicting reports are given as to Eskimo tendency to theft, especially in dealing with strangers.

It is the almost unanimous testimony that stealing is very

rare among members of the same community, and when it does occur, is condemned. Nansen says:

"The Eskimo regards it as in the highest degree dishonorable to steal from his housemates or from his fellow-villagers, and it is seldom that anything of the sort occurs." (43: 158.)

Hans Egede testifies that "they rarely steal from one another. Wherefore they let their goods lie exposed to everyone, without fear of anyone stealing or taking away the least bit of them. Indeed, this vice is so repulsive to them that if a girl steals, she thereby loses the chance of a good marriage." (19:69.) So too Crantz states, "They have no disposition to overreach each other, still less to steal, which is considered excessively disgraceful." (16.1:160.) Holm says that among the East Greenlanders, "theft is not uncommon," but adds that the causes are principally revenge or necessity. (30:87.) The report, given by other Eskimo to Hall, that the Nechilli "will steal whenever they can get a chance, even one Innuít from another" (26:421) was a rumor of the same status as that told Stefánsson of a distant tribe's eating all strangers. (59.) Exceptional, indeed, if correctly reported, is the situation at Point Barrow, where "men, who were said to be thieves, did not appear to lose any social consideration." (42:41.) Among the nearby tribes studied by Nelson,

"stealing from people of the same village is regarded as wrong. The thief is shamed by being talked of in the kashim. An incorrigible thief is held and beaten on the back."

An effective insurance method is reported by Murdoch:

"Before starting for the deer the hunters generally take the movable property which they do not mean to carry with them out of the house and bury it in the snow for safe keeping, apparently thinking that while a dishonest person might help himself to small articles left around the house, he could hardly go to work and dig up a cache without attracting the attention of the neighbors." (42: 261.)

There appears to be truth in Nansen's statement that "the Eskimo's conception of his duties towards strangers, especially toward white people, is not quite so strict." (43:159.) "To steal from a stranger or from people of another tribe is not considered wrong so long as it does not bring trouble to the community," according to Nelson. (45:293; cf. 16.1:160; 19:69.) Cases of thieving are frequently reported in the literature.

(30:171, 176; 56:187; 4:389, 398; 1.1:174, 181; 2:60; 42:41; 19:136.)

The actions of the thieves when detected throw light on their feelings about the matter. Murdoch says "the thieves when detected seemed to have no feeling of shame." (42:41.) Still a certain shame, even if not sense of guilt, is not wanting. According to Holm, "their blushes always betrayed them," when interrogated about thefts. (30:177.) Amundsen says of some detected thieves that they "slunk away sheepishly." (1.1:282.) Others appear to regard the matter as a good joke. Beechey relates that when thefts were detected, the goods were immediately returned, "with a hearty laugh in addition." (4:395.) Similar behavior is common in natives who indulge in fraud in trading. Amundsen speaks of a man who "grinned all over his face with glee, at having, as he thought, so successfully tricked me." And when discovered, he "could not help laughing at his failure." (1.2:56.) A woman, "when she saw she was found out, burst out laughing heartily, all the rest joining in." (1.1:173.)

Again they try to throw off suspicion by friendly actions, or if convicted, to offer excuses. Some Eskimo were suspected of stealing flour from the Beechey expedition, and the suspicion was strengthened by their unusual and conciliatory conduct. Also they

"protested that they were innocent of the theft, and as proof that they could not possibly have committed it, they spat into the sea with disgust, in order to show how much they disliked the taste of the material, little considering that the fact of their knowing it to be nauseous was a proof of their having tasted it." (4: 389.)

An East Greenlander, who, in buying knives, took two, one on top of the other, assured Holm that it had happened by mistake "as the knives were so thin." Later he confessed that a neighbor had whispered to him to act thus, "for it would not be discovered." (30:177.) A woman told Paul Egede that she had stolen a knife from a ship; but she became dizzy, as a result of her act she thought, and went back and put the knife where she had taken it. Another Eskimo interjected that he had stolen many times from the Dutch and had always felt well afterwards. But then he did not think God cared for the Dutch, nor they for him; they did not say grace at

meals as the Danish missionaries did, nor had they morning and evening prayer. (19:98.)

We are told by Murdoch that

“there was seldom any difficulty in obtaining restitution of stolen articles, as the thief’s comrades would not attempt to shield him, but often voluntarily betrayed him.” (42: 41.)

According to Holm, they informed about each other for fear of themselves being apprehended. Some sought reward for acting as informers. “When a man was accused of stealing, the first question was always who had reported him.” (30: 177.) This is significant as indicating that, while stealing from foreigners may not be condemned among them, on the other hand the thief acts only in his individual capacity at his own risk, not being able to claim the support or protection of his fellows.

There is evidence to show that this thieving habit is far from universal. Murdoch says there were many who resisted the temptation to steal. Other writers too speak very highly of some natives, even whole tribes. Amundsen found the Nechilli very trustworthy in this respect. He placed his depôt under their care. (1.1:281.) Beechey speaks of one group as “exceedingly honest.” (4:378; cf. 391.) Cartwright, after sixteen years among the Eskimo of Labrador, goes on record that “there is not a nation under the sun, with which I would sooner trust my person and property.” (12.)

Still, it is doubtless true that a certain double standard with respect to the appropriation of other men’s goods is found among the Eskimo. One cause is probably to be found in one phase of their “ethnocentrism.” Says Nansen:

“We must remember that a foreigner is to him an indifferent object; it matters little to him whether he can rely on the foreigner or not, since he has not got to live with him. Thus he does not always find it inconsistent with his interests to appropriate a little of the foreigner’s property, if he thinks it can be of use to him.” (43: 159.)

Another consideration which enters in to determine their actions is the treatment the Eskimo, like other primitive peoples have been subjected to by representatives of “civilization.” A rehearsal of the records of injustice, robbery and fraud perpetrated on the Eskimo alone would stretch this discussion to unwarranted length; besides it would not be a discussion of



ESKIMO morality. For a few cases, see 43:159-161. To quote just one sentence from this authority:

“Let us suppose that it had been the Eskimo who came and planted themselves upon our shores, and behaved as we did in Greenland—would it then have been altogether inconsistent with our moral code to rob and filch from them whatever we could?” (43: 160.)

One suspects that past experience has something to do with such behavior as that described by Beechey. Notwithstanding good treatment by his expedition, the Eskimo required

“much persuasion to induce them to come upon the deck, and even when some of them were prevailed upon to do so, they took the precaution of leaving with their comrades in the boat every valuable article which they had about their persons.” (4: 402.)

Then, a third, and it may well be the most important reason, may be found in the state of the property-sense and property-order among the Eskimo, a subject we have just discussed. With our insanely overwrought sense of the “sanctity” and “rights” of property, it is difficult to realize the Eskimo point of view. Their economic system is based on a practical application of the idea of the absolute subordination of material means to human and social ends. We have noted the principle on which they place restrictions on possession of unnecessary wealth. Now, as Nansen points out,

“it must be taken into account that in comparison with the Eskimo the Europeans possess property in superabundance. According to Eskimo morality, therefore, it appears that we ought to be able to dispense with some of our superfluity, and if we decline to do so, we are miserly and selfish.” (43: 160.)

## 19. BEGGING

We will mention briefly another practice, namely begging. Explorers frequently complain of this among the Eskimo. It is practically certain, however, that this is due to contact with the whites. According to Nelson, “begging is common only among Eskimo who have had considerable intercourse with white men.” People not accustomed to meeting white men he found little addicted to it, and “their manner usually more frank and attractive.” (45:295.) He believes that this habit has come about through indiscriminate giving of presents. This view agrees exactly with the experience and opinion of Stefánsson. He found no begging among the Eskimo he discov-

ered. He relates that, at one place, he made a present of one needle to each of over two score married women.

"Of course I kept no books, but I feel certain that every one of these women brought me something with which to pay for the needle, most of them saying that they did not want me to think that they were people who accepted gifts." (58:200.)

In Alaska he found just the opposite condition.

## 20. GAMBLING

According to Boas, "In winter gambling is one of the favorite amusements of the Eskimo." (5:567.) He describes a game of chance which looks innocent enough. (5:569.) Murdoch reports "only one game which appears to be of the nature of gambling"; it is "a very popular amusement." (42:364.) Certain Alaskan natives are described by Holmberg as "passionate gamblers." It is "not rare for them to lose all their belongings in this way." (32:123.) In the Ungava district, it is said that

"gambling is carried on to such a degree among both sexes that even their own lives are staked upon the issue of a game. The winner often obtains the wife of his opponent, and holds her until some tempting offer is made for her return. The only article they possess is frequently wagered, and when they lose they are greeted with derision. The women especially, stake their only garments rather than be without an opportunity to play." (66:178.)

The methods, and probably the extent, of gambling have been influenced by the white men. (See 66:178; 42:364.) Peary found no gambling among the Eskimo with whom he came in contact. (48:47.)

## 21. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

As we have already noted, the Eskimo have no clan organization. The selection of conjugal partners is restricted only by certain degree of kinship. First cousins are prohibited from intermarrying. (19:79; 16:147; 43:175; 5:579; 6:158.) The same prohibition seems to apply to a boy and girl who have been reared in the same family, they being regarded practically as brother and sister. An exception to the latter rule is noted from East Greenland. (30:94.) Waldmann says that in Labrador marriage was often contracted between first cousins. (69:435.) There are also traces of prohibition of marriage

between legal relatives. Thus, Crantz says that rarely did a man marry two sisters or a mother and her daughter; "such a contract draws down general odium upon the parties concerned." (16.1:147; 30:95.) On the other hand, Boas found no rule against a man's marrying two sisters among the Central Eskimo. (5:579.) Folk-lore tells of troubles resulting from efforts to marry sister-in-law and daughter-in-law, but it is doubtful whether the relationship of the parties plays any part in the narrator's mind. (53:397; 6:286.)

Nansen says that, in Greenland, "a man should, if possible, seek his wife in another village." (43:175.) Neither descriptions nor folk-lore give the impression that this is any widespread rule. The close kinship of fellow-villagers may lead to such conditions. Turner speaks of a group in which, although the females outnumber the males, the relationship is so close that many seek their wives from other localities. (66:189.)

There are frequent references in folk-lore to marriages within the prohibited degrees. This does not imply a similar frequency in real life. The contrary seems to be true. The most prominent incest-motive in Eskimo mythology is the story of the origin of the sun and moon. A man had sexual relations with his sister, who blackened his face with soot. He pursued her into the sky, where she became the sun, and he, with the sooty face, the moon. (20:54; 63:275; 6:173; 37:179; 30:99; 31:268.) A Cumberland Sound tale relates how a man was hated because he cohabited with his mother; he was killed by his brother (6:283); similar, with foster-mother (6:297). In a Greenland tale, a couple thought that the cause of their children's dying was "perhaps we are too near kin." (53:391.) Turner reports a case where a son took his mother for wife, apparently at her wish, but "the sentiment of the community compelled him to discard her." (66:180.)

Necessity appears to be an extenuating circumstance. The natives of Southampton Island ascribe their ancestry to a man, who was driven to the island, where he married his daughter; "the people are the descendants of this couple." (6:478.) According to a Greenland tradition, a man married his adopted sister; for they lived alone. (53:170.) A somewhat different situation was that of the giant who married his sister, "because she was the only woman tall enough for him." (6:292.) No

credence can be given Langsdorff's statement that certain Alaskan Eskimo "cohabit promiscuously, brothers and sisters, parents and children" (quoted 2.1:81), except that he may have heard of some cases.

A practice which seems to have been prevalent among the Eskimo is *child-betrothal*, decided by agreement of the parents. (53:23; 16.1:146; 42:410; 47:26; 25:567.) This may even go so far that "two friends, desirous of cementing their tie of fellowship, engage that their children yet unborn shall be mated." (66:188.) However, "these engagements not being strictly binding, may be broken off at any time." (5:578; cf. 48:60.) In some cases one of the parties may be an adult, the other a mere child, the arrangements being made by the latter's parents. (42:410; 1.1:307.)

*Early marriages* are the rule. (30:94; 69:434; 43:139; 42:411; 66:188.) Marriage may take place even before puberty. Holm says that in East Greenland it is not rare that young people marry three or four times before that age. Crantz' statement that "a man seldom thinks of marriage till he is twenty years of age" (16.1:145) does not seem to hold. The requisite qualification for the male is that he is a sufficiently able hunter to provide for the female, and "has the requisite strength to force her to become his wife," as Turner adds. She must be proficient in the arts which pertain to woman. (66:188; 43:138; 30:94; 42:410.)

As to the motives for marriage, Murdoch writes, "As far as we could learn, marriage was entered upon generally from reasons of interest or convenience, with very little regard for affection, as we understand it." He acknowledges, however, that "there were some indications that real love matches sometimes took place." (42:410; see also 16.1:145; 30:94.) The denial of the possession by primitive peoples of what is called "romantic love" is a favorite proposition with some writers, as for instance, Finck. But folk-lore and real life furnish evidence of its presence among the Eskimo. (5:615; 31:320.) Nansen's words are well chosen:

"Love is by no means unknown in Greenland; but the Greenland variety of it is a simple impulse of nature. It does not make the lover sick of soul, but drives him to the sea, to the chase; it strengthens his arm and sharpens his sight; for his one desire is to become an expert hunter, so that he can lead his Naia home as his bride, and support a family." (43:138.)

Worthy of being noted here is a romance revealed by Peary's words (48:52):

"Hot-hearted young Ooqueah of my North Pole party fought his way with me to the goal for the possession of the daughter of old Ikway. This young knight of the northland is an illustration of the fact that sometimes an Eskimo man or woman may be as intense in his or her affairs of the heart as we are."

The usual principals in the preliminaries of marriage are the prospective bridegroom and the young woman's parents, or, if they are dead, her brothers. The advice of the man's parents is also given consideration. (19:79; 69:434; 53:397; 30:94; 16.1:145.) The services of mediators are sometimes enlisted in winning the desired maiden. (53:23; 69:434; 16.1:145.) Probably the employment of these third parties is not at all common. The dashing young Eskimo hunter ordinarily prefers to do his own wooing. In a folk tale we are told that the reason a youth sent a mediator was that he was "bashful and afraid to speak for himself." (5:615.)

There does not appear to be any regular system of purchase-money or of dowry, though traces of both are found. Holm says that "the young man must sometimes pay the father to get his daughter in marriage," but also, "good hunters are paid by fathers to marry their daughters." (30:96; cf. 55:188; 43:135.) A young man, who did not possess the necessary wherewithal to indemnify the parents secured the girl on credit, and "he owes them still," remarks Waldmann, who relates the case. (69:434.) It is customary for the woman to bring with her certain household utensils, besides her clothing. These things remain her own property. (16.1:145; 53:24; 42:414.)

Rink's view that marriage was rarely consummated "without some degree of force having been practiced upon the bride" (53:23; cf. 43:139) seems to be well substantiated, though there are undoubtedly not a few exceptions. Wife-capture is a favorite theme in folk-lore. (52:323, 450, 453.) The abduction may be without the knowledge and consent of the girl's parents. (1.146.) But ordinarily the marriage has been duly arranged, and the only resistant is the bride-elect. (16.2:105; 20:28; 42:412.) While to all appearances, the abduction is much against the girl's will, it seems that appearances are in this case often deceptive. Crantz says that, on hearing the proposal,

"the damsel directly falls into the greatest apparent consternation, for single women always affect the utmost bashfulness and aversion to any proposal of marriage, lest they should lose their reputation for modesty, though their destined husbands be previously well assured of their acquiescence." (16, 1: 146; cf. 19: 79.)

Paul Egede tells of a bride who ran away from the man's house several times, always, however, "where she expected to be found." (20:28.) Nansen's comment on this custom is interesting:

"In Greenland, as in other parts of the world, good taste demanded that the lady in question should on no account let it appear that she was a consenting party, however favorably disposed towards her wooer she might be in her heart. The Eskimo bride was bound to struggle against her captor, and to wail and bemoan herself as much as ever she could. When they first saw marriages conducted after the European fashion, they thought it very shocking that the bride, when asked if she would have the bridegroom for her husband, should answer Yes. According to their ideas, it would be much more becoming for her to answer No. When assured that this was the custom among us, they were of the opinion that our women must be devoid of modesty." (43: 140.)

However, "it sometimes happens that the young woman really objects to her wooer." (43:141.) In such cases, she either has her way (16.1:146) or she is taken against her will, when she may give the man visible remembrances of a strenuous fight. (66:181.)

More informal ways (for forcible abduction is "good form") obtain, however, in which the young people decide the matter between themselves. (53:263, 406.) Crantz' assertion that a woman "can never make choice of a husband" (16.1:159) must admit of exceptions. There are several instances on record where the girl has a definite choice in the matter (66: 188; 50:55; 53:208.) One of Cartwright's experiences shows that independence of spirit and action is not entirely wanting among Eskimo women. A man arranged with this English gentleman to give the latter one of his wives, a young woman of sixteen. All her relatives "expressed great pleasure at the honor of the alliance." But the woman thought otherwise. "You are an old fellow and I will have nothing to say to you," was her verdict. "So there ended my courtship," remarks the author. Like independence was shown by a widow who, according to a tale, "greatly harassed by the persecutions of a man who wanted to marry her, fled to the inland with

her little son, whom she educated with the view of making him a hater of the male sex." (53:462.)

It happens that a suitor encounters not only the objections of the girl or her parents or both, but also those of rivals. Peary reports that

"if two men want to marry the same woman, they settle the question by a trial of strength, and the better man has his way. These struggles are not fights, as the disputants are amiable."

Another method is reported by Boas (6:466); the woman is made to stand in the center of a hut, where the older people assemble, and the several suitors try to get possession of her, the strongest being allowed to marry her. "In one of these cases, two men struggled for a woman, and when they were tired out, a third man rushed in and carried her off." This custom is known also among the neighboring Athapascan Indians. A gentler method was that adopted by two Greenlanders who agreed to make the test a kayak race. (53:170.)

Marriage ceremonies seem to be almost unknown among the Eskimo. Rink's statement that "the wedding was performed without any special ceremony" appears to indicate the general rule. Hans Egede states that "well-to-do parents have a feast for their son's wedding." (19:80.) Murdoch reports a celebration in the home of the bride's parents. (42:411.) Bancroft does not give the authority for a description of an Alaskan marriage ceremonial. (2:1:83.) Hans Egede states that there was also a feast "the day after the bridegroom slept with the bride." (19:80.) This suggests a postponement of the consummation of the marriage. Light may perhaps be cast on this obscure passage by a remark by Paul Egede that a day or two should, according to custom, elapse after the bride had been brought to the man's house. (20:28.) These are the only references I have found to any such custom among the Eskimo. This people are singularly free from sexual rites and taboos, of the sort which fill Crawley's volume, *The Mystic Rose*. Evidence from Eskimo society tends to support Westermarck's very moderately expressed opinion that Crawley has "somewhat exaggerated" the danger attributed to sexual intercourse. (71.2:415.) Murdoch well states the Eskimo conception of marriage as far as its social relations are concerned: "The marriage bond was regarded simply as a contract entered into

by agreement of the contracting parties." (42:411.) The absence of ceremonial reflects this attitude of non-interference by the group.

The prevailing form of marriage is *monogamy*, but *polygamy* and even *polyandry* are allowed and practiced. (6:115, 466; 5:579; 50:65; 33:41; 16.1:147; 45:292; 19:77; 66:188; 63:276; 53:23; 43:145; 30:95; 42:411.) Polygamy is conditioned on a man's possession of sufficient wealth to support more than one wife; hence it is possible only for the ablest hunters. Thus it may be regarded as a mark of honor. Another condition influencing the form of marriage is the numerical ratio between the sexes in any given group. Thus, among the Polar Eskimo, polygamy is very rare, as there are more men than women. (50:65; cf. 30:96.) Another factor to be taken into account is the custom of the man's becoming a member of his wife's family. As Boas points out, this would serve as a check to polygamy. "It is only when the new family settles on its own account that a man is at full liberty to take additional wives." (5:579; cf. 42:410.) This custom is not universal, nor even usual, as far as our evidence tends to show. It appears to be more common for the young couple to live with the husband's parents. (See *e. g.*, 6:115.) When free from obligations to support relatives, the couple ordinarily maintain separate households.

Among the motives for polygamy, the desire for offspring plays the most important rôle, although Rink's statement that polygamy was "only approved by public opinion in so far as it aimed at the propagation of male descendants" is to be regarded as too sweeping. He makes the same assertion in regard to divorce and wife-exchanging, in which cases the exceptions to the rule he lays down are even more numerous. (53:23.) But we can accept Crantz' statement that

"since it is esteemed a disgrace to have no children, and especially no son to support their declining age, such childless Greenlanders as are competent to maintain several wives, will seldom restrict themselves to one." (16. 1: 147; cf. 30: 97.)

Relief from further child-bearing on the part of the first wife may also be a desideratum. A woman, on being asked why her husband had taken another wife, replied, "I asked him to myself, for I'm tired of bearing children." (43:144; cf. 16.1:147.)



Another motive is desire for additional help in the female branch of the domestic economy. Thus we are told of a man who "married a young wife, so as to have somebody at home to do the work," his first wife being old and feeble. (33:41.) The wife herself sometimes suggests the second marriage, in order that she may have help in her household work. (43:144; cf. 55:189; 30:95.)

Hans Egede found, what he considered remarkable, that, before the preaching of the missionaries, there was no jealousy connected with the plural marriages. (19:78.) There are cases, however, where the women regard each other as rivals. (30:103; 63:276.) But as a rule they get along well together.

The first wife retains a primacy in the direction of the household. (19:78; 69:435; 53:25; 16.1:148.) This is true even if the husband shows a preference for the second. (43:145.)

*Divorce* is unrestricted, and as unceremonious as is the contracting of marriage. The causes of separation are legion, in fact, anything which either party may regard as sufficient. In this respect, wives are as free to suit themselves as are husbands. According to Peary, what he calls "trial marriage," is

"an ineradicable custom among the Eskimo. If a young man and woman are not suited with each other they try again, and sometimes several times, but when they find mates to whom they are adapted, the arrangement is generally permanent. . . . If a man grows tired of his wife, he simply tells her there is not room for her in the igloo. She may return to her parents, if they are living; she may go to a brother or a sister; or she may send word to some man in the tribe that she is now at liberty and willing to start life again." (48:59.)

Murdoch says that marriage is easily dissolved, "on account of incompatibility of temper, or even on account of temporary disagreement." One wife was discarded because of "a disagreeable and querulous temper." The husband married another woman, but "his second matrimonial venture was no more successful than his first, for his young wife proved to be a great talker." He said "she talked all the time, so that he could not eat and could not sleep." So he sent her away, and tried his luck a third time. Another man, who had two wives, divorced the younger one. "The reason he assigned was that she was lazy, would not make her own clothes, and was disobedient to the older wife to whom he was much attached."

(42:411; cf. 45:392; 5:579.) Crantz writes that the husband only gives an undesirable wife a sour look, and then absents himself for a few days.

"She immediately takes the hint, packs up her effects, and withdraws to her relatives, demeaning herself in the future, as discreetly as possible, in order to chagrin him, and bring scandal upon his conduct." (16, 1: 147; cf. 43: 143.)

Desire for children, which we have seen to be perhaps the chief reason for polygamy, is also a potent cause of divorce. Crantz says that a childless wife lives "in continual dread of divorce" (16.1:151), while

"it rarely happens that a separation takes place when they have children, and especially sons, who are their greatest treasure, and best security against future want." (16, 1: 148.)

Holm says that in East Greenland, disagreements between married people are usually settled without rupture of the marriage relation,

"especially if the woman has children. If she has no children it is not infrequent that the woman or the man, when opportunity offers, leaves without saying anything." (30: 97.)

The author just quoted enumerates an interesting and representative list of grounds for divorce, including the following: They had tired of each other, the wife was a poor seamstress, the wife wanted to live where her family lived, her husband's family neglected her. One man gave as his reason that "she ate so much that he didn't get enough to eat." (30:100.) As illustrating the frequency of divorce in some cases, he mentions one woman, twenty years old, who had had six husbands, and had just married the seventh. (30:101.) Another, after having tried eight husbands, remarried No. 6, whom she pronounced "the best of her husbands"; although he had struck and whipped her, "she longed so for him that she couldn't sleep at night." (30:103.)

Folk-lore, in this feature as in all others, truthfully reflects Eskimo life. Characteristic is the tale of a man who separated from three wives, with each of whom he lived only a month or two. Two of these he had divorced "because they didn't keep his boots in order." (31:329; see also 53:255, 303.) Boas records a tale, indicating that ideas of "emancipated women" are not unknown among the Eskimo. (5:628.)

Two women deserted their husbands, with whom they quarreled, and went to live by themselves. The husbands, wishing their wives back again, sent the women's fathers after them. But these found the women unwilling to return. The men "told the strange story that two women without the company of any men lived all by themselves, and were never in want."

It appears that primitive Enoch Ardens are to be found among the Eskimo. This theme is also dealt with in folk-lore.

In one tale, the first husbands return to find their wives married to other men. The women are given back to the former, who say to the second husbands, "Many thanks to you that ye have provided so well for our relatives." Certainly a philosophic attitude. (53:196; see also 31:298.)

Similar tactics to those pursued when two men wanted the same girl, seem to be resorted to if a man wants another's wife. Peary tells us that the former simply says to the husband, "I am the better man," and the husband has then either to prove his superiority in strength or surrender the woman. (48:59.) So also Nansen says, "If a man takes a fancy to another man's wife, he takes her without ceremony, if he happens to be the stronger." (43:143; cf. 30:96; 31:330; 20:65:) Sometimes a wife is carried away by another man, at the request of her family, that she may get better support. (30:100.) Cartwright gives an account, perhaps somewhat overdrawn, of a bloody struggle resulting from an affair of this kind. (12:328.) Nelson states that formerly, at Bering Strait, the husband and his rival were "disarmed by the neighbors and then settled the trouble with their fists or by wrestling, the victor taking the woman." (49:292.) More subtle methods may be pursued. According to Turner, a man may bribe an angakok to get a woman from her husband "under threats of supernatural evil." (66:189.) Designing women are not above pursuing similar tactics to get husbands away from their wives. (66:189.)

## 22. EXTRA-NUPTIAL RELATIONS

Many writers speak of the freedom enjoyed by the unmarried of both sexes among the Eskimo. For instance, Murdoch writes as follows:

"As to the relations between the sexes there seems to be the most complete absence of what we consider moral feelings. Promiscuous sexual intercourse between married and unmarried people, or even among children, appears to be looked upon simply as a matter for amusement. As

far as we could learn, unchastity in a girl was considered nothing against her." (42: 419.)

Turner says:

"Many of the girls bear children before they are taken for wives, but as such incidents do not destroy the respectability of the mother, the girl does not experience any difficulty in procuring a husband. (66: 189; see also 30: 96; 45: 292.)

On the other hand, Hans Egede, who was certainly not wanting in strictness as to the seventh commandment, says of the Greenlanders of his day (he was the first white man to live among them in modern times):

"Young women and girls are modest enough, as we have never seen them have any wanton relations with young men, or give the least indication of such conduct, either in word or deed. During the fifteen years I was in Greenland I knew of only two or three girls who became pregnant outside of marriage; for this is held to be a great disgrace." (19: 78.)

Dalager, an early authority, says of Eskimo girls that "in their first years of maturity they bear themselves very chastely, for otherwise they are certain to spoil their chances of marriage." (Quoted 43:167.) Of the Greenlanders in general he says that they are not so much given to incontinence as are other nations. It may be noted that Nansen accepts the above testimony of these two authorities, as substantially accurate. Crantz says, in one place, that

"however careful their young and single people may be to avoid all open irregularity in their deportment, they are in secret quite as licentious as those of other nations" (16. 1: 175),

but in another place he writes that

"the women are seldom guilty of incontinence, with the exception of young widows and those divorced from their husbands. Single persons of both sexes have rarely any connections." (16. 1: 145.)

*connected by what?*

The authority last quoted states that "there are among them harlots by profession, though a single woman will seldom follow this infamous trade." (16.1:176.) No matter what may be the exact condition of sexual morality in general, it is fairly certain that prostitution, when found among the Eskimo, is attributable to foreign influence. If Crantz' observation is correct, the cases he refers to may well have been due to contact with traders. Murdoch states that prostitution "is carried to

a most shameless extent with the sailors of the whaling fleet by many of the women" (46:420, cf. 54; also 1.1:202, 310), but among the natives themselves, "prostitution for gain is unknown." (*Ibid.*) Of the natives of Labrador we are told by Waldmann that "since they have been in contact with the fisherman, there has been a relaxation of their morals." (69:435.) Nansen discusses at length the effect in this regard of European occupation of West Greenland, which he regards as decidedly detrimental, in spite of the efforts of the missionaries. (43:163.) He says a young native woman "positively glories" in illicit relations with a European, and "seems to procure additional consideration among her female friends." Trebitsch received just the opposite impression, namely, that "girls who cohabit with Europeans are derided by the natives." (65:50.) He gives samples of satirical songs about such girls. He also believes that "prostitution is unknown in all Greenland." (65:16.)

Without attempting to resolve the contradictions in the evidence, I think we can conclude as true of the Eskimo in general, what Murdoch declares concerning the natives of Point Barrow, that while their sexual laxity "seems too purely animal and natural to be of recent growth," and hence can hardly be said to have been *introduced* by the whites (Holm's statement about the East Greenlanders is of special importance on this point, 30:96), yet this laxity has undoubtedly been encouraged by the whites, and, finally, these "taught them prostitution for gain." (42:420.)

There is more agreement of observers as to the extra-nuptial intercourse of married people than as to the sexual relations of the unmarried. To quote Nansen:

"The strict morality which obtained among the unmarried youths and maidens on the west coast in the heathen days [he follows Hans Egede, quoted above], seems to have been considerably relaxed when once they were married. The men, at any rate, had then the most unrestricted freedom." (43:167.)

According to Crantz, "the married will break their vows on both sides with the utmost shamelessness." (16.1:176.) One restriction to unlimited license is found in the objections of the husband of the woman in the case, when his consent has not been given. Nansen is of the opinion that if a heathen—and in many cases, even a Christian—Greenlander

"refrains from having to do with another man's wife, whom he has looked upon with favor, it is generally more because he shrinks from quarreling with the husband than because he regards adultery as morally wrong." (43:172; to the same effect, 69:436.)

Jealousy, in the male, at least, is not unknown. (66:178, 188; 30:97; 5:579.) Holm gives as an illustration of this a man who became jealous because his young wife smiled at a member of the expedition. Sometimes "the injured husband does not seek immediate punishment, but smothers his resentment, till he has an opportunity of revenging himself in a similar manner." Nelson says that the husband "rarely avenges himself on the man concerned," although the affair may form the excuse for an affray where there has been previous enmity. He may beat the unfaithful wife. (45:292, cf. 16.1:147.) The extreme penalty is given in a tale entitled "The Faithless Wife," in which the woman, who by stealth has had illicit relations, is killed. (53:143; cf. 6:224.) According to Turner, "the male offender if notoriously persistent in his efforts to obtain forbidden favors, is usually slain." (66:178.) The wives are allowed greater liberty "when they have no children by their husbands," says Paul Egede. (20:135.)

It must not be understood that this sexual license is universally indulged in. Nansen, after picturing the present-day laxity which he finds, says of the married Greenlanders that "their every-day behavior is, as a rule, quite reputable and void of offence; on that point all travellers must agree." (43:172.) Even Crantz admits that, after all, "their connubial intercourse is conducted with tolerable decorum." (16.1:147; see also 42:420.) A saying current in East Greenland, that "the whale, the musk-ox, and the reindeer left the country because the men had too much to do with other men's wives," suggests a belief that indulgence in that way is not quite right. Some of the men, however, declared it was "because the women were jealous of their husbands." (30:100.)

A custom found among the Eskimo everywhere is the exchanging and lending of wives. (5:579; 6:225; 66:189; 48:60; 42:413; 43:148, 169; 69:435; 26:424.)

The exchange is often a sign of friendship. Thus, at Bering Strait, where it is common for two men in different villages to become bond-fellows or brothers by adoption, one of them,

when received as guest by the other, is given the use of his host's bed with the wife during his stay. When the visit is returned, the same favor is extended; as a consequence "neither family knows who is the father of the children." (45:292; see also 5:579; 42:413.)

Sometimes this expression of good-will is connected with decided practical advantage. Thus, to quote Rasmussen,

"if a man has to go away on a long hunting expedition, and he wants a woman with him, he can, if his own wife, for instance on account of pregnancy, is unfitted to endure the hardships of an expedition by sledge, lend her to a man who is remaining, and in return receives his."

Also

"if a young wife is homesick for friends and family who live a long way off, if her husband is willing to humor her, but does not himself wish to undertake the journey, a man fond of travelling will often announce himself as agreeable to take the other on her visit, leaving his own wife as hostage." (50:64.)

Murdoch reports a similar case where a man, on going on a hunting expedition, borrowed his cousin's wife, "as she was a good shot, and a good hand at deer hunting," while his own wife went with the other man on a trading expedition. (42:413.)

A temporary exchange is sometimes made permanent. (43:148.) Murdoch gives as the reason that "the couples find themselves better pleased with their new mates than with the former association." Another reason, given by Holm, is that, since the men at the same time exchange various things besides wives, they "do not wish to part with the things they have come into possession of." (30:98.) But there may be also a quite different effect. "When marriage is disturbed, the man often exchanges his wife for an indefinite period," says Rasmussen, "It is asserted that the two are soon anxious to be together again, for a man generally discovers that his own wife is in spite of all the best." (50:64.)

Hans Egede describes a remarkable "game" found among the Eskimo of West Greenland, for which "married men and women come together, as to an assembly." After feasting, singing, and dancing, every man retired with some other man's wife. "They are held as examples of the best and noblest disposition who without chagrin, lend their wives to others."

While "married people see in it nothing to be ashamed of, the young and unmarried are forbidden by modesty to take part." (19:78.) Dalager states that this performance is of very rare occurrence and adds that "a married woman who has duly become a mother of a family never takes part in it." (Quoted 43:168.) A similar "lamp-extinguishing game" is found in East Greenland; it is played in the winter when the people live in the large communal houses." A good host always has the lamps put out at night when there are guests in the house." In this game, unlike the one described by Egede, unmarried people also take part. But, according to Holm, the same limitations as to kinship are in force as with regard to contracting marriage. (30:98.) One man claimed he did not participate in this game, for if he did, he would have to reciprocate when he had guests, and he did not like to have other men have intercourse with his wife. The neighbors denied this story. It may have been a fabrication with the purpose of appearing righteous in the eyes of the Europeans according to their standards. (30:99.)

Murdoch reports that, among some Eskimo on Repulse Bay, there is said to be, at certain times, "a general exchange of wives throughout the village, each woman passing from man to man till she has been through the hands of all, and finally returns to her husband." He gives as his informants "some of the whalemens who winter in the neighborhood." The character both of the story and the tellers make us look with suspicion, or at least caution, on such a statement.

In passing, we may refer to Murdoch's opinion that these wife-exchanging customs "seem to indicate that the Eskimo have not wholly emerged from the state called communal marriage, in which each woman is considered as the wife of every man in the community." Since Westermarck published his epoch-making argument against the theory of primitive promiscuity, we are not so inclined to this interpretation, which, it should be said, was a prevailing doctrine when Murdoch wrote the above.

We have noted that one of the principal causes of polygamy and divorce is desire for offspring. This appears to be a prominent motive in exchanging and lending of wives also. True to life is a tale in which the wives of two housemates could not get children. Therefore, they exchanged wives for



a time; whereupon both wives became pregnant and bore sons. (30:263.) Supernatural agencies may be employed in this connection. Thus in case of barrenness an angakok may take a trip to the moon, whence a child is thrown down to the woman, who thereupon becomes pregnant. "After this difficult journey, the angakok has the right to sleep with the woman"—a curious transposition of time-relations. (30:131.) The angakoks can bring about pregnancy, however, without such magical flights. (53:148.) According to Hans Egede, women regard it as an honor to cohabit with an angakok. Also

"Many husbands even regard this with favor, and will even pay the angakoks to lie with their wives, particularly if they themselves cannot get children by them; for they believe that a child begotten of an angakok will be more capable and fortunate above others." (19:78.)

Paul Egede, however, found that some Eskimo regarded this procedure as indecent (20:135), Klutschak alone refers to the angakoks' having "*jus primae noctis*." This lone instance may be due to misinformation, or misinterpretation of some other event.

The angakoks sometimes, by order of their tornaks, command other men to exchange wives with each other. (5:579; 6:158; 26:101; 66:179.) "The women must spend the night in the huts of the men to whom they are assigned. If any woman refuses to go, she would be sure to be taken sick." (6:158; from Hudson Bay; at Smith Sound it is the men who exchange sleeping-places, 50:64).

Rasmussen writes, "It sometimes happens that a woman will refuse with tears to be exchanged, but this is rare. Then the husband beats her as a punishment." (Other women may take the leading part in forcing a reluctant wife to yield. See 26:102.) "These conditions," he continues, "give rise to curious ethical ideas among the Eskimo. A man once told me that he only beat his wife when she would not receive other men. She would have nothing to do with anyone but him—and that was her only failing." (50:65.)

After these considerations, we will probably regard Amundsen as unnecessarily hard on his own race when he finds in a host's offer of the loan of his wife "another striking proof of the fact that this tribe had been in contact with 'civilized' men." (1.1:293.)

In considering the phases of Eskimo morality brought out in the foregoing, the following comment by Nansen is worth noting:

"We should beware how we fix ourselves at one point of view, and unsparingly condemn ideas and practices which the experience of many generations has developed among another people, however much they may conflict with our own. There may be underlying reasons which do not at once meet the eye, and which place the whole matter in a different light. . . . Their way of thinking in these matters is less ideal and more practical than ours, and their point of view entirely different. Their habit of exchanging wives, for example, and their treatment of barren women, seems to us wanton and immoral; but when we remember that the production of offspring is the great end and aim of their conduct, and reflect what an all-important matter this is for them, we may perhaps pass a somewhat milder judgment."

He remarks that to the Eskimo the exhortation to increase and multiply seems to be of greater weight than the prohibition of the seventh commandment. And he adds a very important suggestion, "The reason may partly be that his race is by nature unprolific." (43:169 sq.)

*Homosexual practices* have been reported by several writers on the Eskimo. It has been rather prominently noted among the extreme western tribes. (For details see 32:120; 56:173, 176; 2:1:82.) It is almost entirely confined to males who play the rôle of the opposite sex. No cases have been reported from other sections. Some references in folk-lore may, however, be of significance. A tale from Cumberland Sound tells of a woman who transformed herself into a man and married her adopted daughter. (6:248.) In another from the same region, one man took another for wife. (6:325.) Still a third, from Greenland, deals with a woman who disguised herself as a man, and took her daughter-in-law for wife. Her son killed his "despicable mother." (53.)

### 23. POSITION AND TREATMENT OF WOMEN

Several writers speak of the Eskimo women as the "property" of their husbands (48:60; 43:121, 147; 50:62); others of their life as one of "slavery." (2:1:65; 16:1:151.) But such expressions cannot be taken in a literal or legalistic sense. Indeed, some of the authors referred to above would be among the first to deny implications which such statements might convey.

We have already shown that in the matter of contracting marriage, the choice or consent of the female is not an altogether unknown factor. As to divorce, her rights are the same as those of the man. The personal property she brings with her at marriage remains hers inviolate during and after the union.

As to the husband's power over her person, Rink says "the husband had the right of punishing his wife by striking her in the face with just sufficient force to leave visible traces." (53:25.) Boas, to the contrary, speaking of the Central Eskimo, holds that "the husband is not allowed to maltreat or punish his wife." (5:579.) The real state of affairs is probably that there are no "rights" one way or the other. Wife-beating is often indulged in (6:298, 538; 42:414; 20:123, 195; 30:102; 1.1:307; 50:55) and as we shall see presently, she reciprocates if she can. If either party doesn't like the treatment he or she is free to leave. There certainly is no legal machinery by which either sex can enforce its "rights." It is a principle among the Eskimo not to interfere in domestic broils (50:56; 30:102), except in cases where relatives may side with the wife. (50:61.) But they too may stand idly by, like the man, who, when Rasmussen appealed to him to help his own sister, replied that "women must be punished occasionally to make them obedient." (50:56.)

But, as has been already hinted, the story is not all on one side. A case reported by Murdoch is not unique: "a stalwart wife turned the tables on her husband who attempted to abuse her, giving him a thorough beating and then leaving his house." (42:414.) Peary speaks of a woman who "proved her right to independence by blackening the old man's eye." (48:60.) Amundsen tells of a couple, the female partner of which was "the biggest and strongest lady of the tribe." "This was a typical 'happy marriage,' she reigned absolute and he obeyed blindly." (1.1:307-8.) Rasmussen witnessed a battle between a man and his wife. "Women's whims! It is quite amusing to cure them of them!" shouted the man. "Like a flash of lightning she sprang at him and struck him such a violent blow, that he fell down with a howl." This caused exceeding merriment all through the village. "The strong man has been knocked down by a woman. Fancy! Eré was thrown by his wife—pfui, by a woman!" (50:58; cf. 30:97.)

Such incidents as these seem to make unnecessary Petitot's theory that the one line of the Eskimo's ancestry came of a conquered race, which the victors assimilated by marrying and subjecting their women. "I can explain in no other way the complete servility of the fair sex." (49:104.)

But such domestic unpleasantnesses need not be supposed to be common occurrences among the Eskimo. Like similar happenings among ourselves, they are of course more likely to get "in print" than the even tenor of the average home life. Nearly all who are familiar with the Eskimo would agree with Holm when he says that "the men as a rule treat their wives well." (30:96.) Petitot, in the passage referred to above, compares the general treatment of women by the Eskimo and by the Indians among whom he worked much to the credit of the former. Nansen, after describing some turbulent episodes, adds, "Scenes of this sort, however, are rare among this peaceable people." (43:121, 148.) Murdoch declares "there often appeared to be a warm attachment between married people." (42:410; cf. 1.1:308.) Several writers describe scenes of demonstrative affection. According to Holm, "it is a usual thing to see married people caressing each other with extraordinary intimacy." (30:96; cf. 110; also 50:59.) Rasmussen writes: "On the whole I have retained the pleasantest impression of the mutual relations between man and woman. . . . We are quick to judge the men, because they strike; and we are sorry for the women, who get a black eye now and again as the result of a little temper. But we forget that we civilized men, by a poisoned word, can often strike harder and more brutally than the Eskimo with his fist." (50: 63 sqq.)

The mutual affection of married people grows with age. To quote Dalager, "the longer a married couple live together, the more closely are they united in affection, until at last they pass their old age together like innocent children." (43:148; cf. 30:97.) Murdoch points out that marital troubles are chiefly among young couples. (42:414.)

As to the position of woman in the community, we have very divergent testimony. Holm, for instance, remarks that "the women have social importance only in as far as they give occasion for disagreement among men. Their position can nearest be regarded as that of servants." (30:87.) But there are many more witnesses which take a quite different view of "woman's sphere." Thus Murdoch says:

"The women appear to stand on a footing of perfect equality with the men both in the family and in the community. The wife is the constant and trusted companion of the man in everything except the hunt, and her opinion is sought in every bargain or other important undertaking." (See also 46, 1: 449; 4: 387, 391; 32: 119; 50: 64.)

Nansen affirms that, if

"the social position occupied by its women affords the best criterion of a people's place in the scale of civilization [a view which he does not accept; cf. 71, 1: 646] the Eskimo must be allowed to have reached a pretty high level of development. For the Eskimo woman plays no insignificant part in the life of the community." (43: 121; see also 133.)

The facts of the division of labor between the sexes shed light on this problem, and merit some consideration. Writers to speak of women's life as "slavery" use that term primarily, I think, as synonymous with *drudgery*, although inferiority and subjection may also be implied. Now no one denies that the Eskimo woman has a hard task to perform. But are the men idlers? The principle of division of labor is fundamental to an understanding of Eskimo social and economic life. As Nansen puts it, "The employments of the sexes are entirely distinct," and he goes on to say:

"The Eskimo have not yet attained to the conception that there is little or no difference between the men and women. They hold that there are, among other things, certain essential physical differences." (43: 122.)

For an excellent detailed treatment of this subject we refer to this author's chapter on "The Position and Work of Women." Without going into detail here, we quote the following from Nansen, which is typical of the Eskimo everywhere:

"To the man's share falls the laborious life at sea, as hunter and food-provider; but when he reaches the shore with his booty, he has fulfilled the most important part of his social function. He is received by his womenfolk, who help him ashore; and while he has nothing to do but to look after his kayak and his weapons, it is the part of the women to drag the booty up to the house. The women flay the seal and cut it up according to fixed rules, and the mother of the house presides at the division of it. Further, it is the women's duty to cook the food, to prepare the skins, to cover the kayaks and woman-boats, to make clothes, and to attend to all other domestic tasks. In addition to this they build the houses, pitch the tents, and row the woman-boats." (43: 123; cf. 26: 178; 30: 88; 19: 62; 16. 1: 154.)

It is also common, on overland journeys, for a woman to act as leader and guide of the dog-team. (42:274, 359; 26:138, 215, 1.1:175.) In East Greenland the men share in work otherwise performed only by women, such as flensing the seal, putting up the tent, and dragging the game to the house. (30:97.)

The following words of Westermarck are perfectly applicable to the Eskimo:

"It is obvious that this strict division of labor is apt to mislead the travelling stranger. He sees the women hard at work, and the men looking idly on; and it escapes him that the latter will have to be busy in their turn, within their own sphere of action. . . . The wife is pronounced to be an abject slave of her husband, destitute of all right. And yet the strong differentiation of work, however burdensome it may be to the wife, is itself a source of rights, giving her authority within a circle which is exclusively her own." (71, 1: 637.)

This division of labor, based on physical and social conditions, has become fixed by custom, so that departure from it is regarded as a disgrace. As Nansen says, "it was beneath the dignity of the hunter to lend a hand" in any work peculiar to women. (43:123; cf. 69:434.) But it should be added, for this is liable to be overlooked, that even more disgraceful than for a man to do a woman's, is it for a man *not* to do a *man's* work. To the point is Crantz' statement that "those unable to catch seals are held in the greatest contempt." (16.1:151.) Recall the importance of ability as a hunter as a qualification for marriage.

A certain distinction between the sexes is seen on some social occasions. For instance, at meals and banquets, the women do not eat with the men. They eat either afterwards, or at the same time by themselves. (19:76; 5:563; 1.1:122; 43:134.) We must be careful not to read too much significance into such a custom. Certainly, there is no evidence that the Eskimo women regard this as a sign of social inferiority, as some of the authorities do. Indeed they may prefer this arrangement. Dalager relates that the men sit in their place and discuss their hunting adventures, past and future (a subject more interesting to them than to the women), while "the women too have in the meantime formed a little party by themselves in another corner." (Quoted 43:134.) We know that women take part, equally with the men, in important events, like the

singing contests and the festivals for the dead. Also women, even little girls, may be angakoks. (43:29; 63:281, 299.)

In concluding this survey of the life of the Eskimo woman it is well to consider thoughts like these by Rasmussen:

“A superficial consideration of the position of women in Eskimo society might induce one mistakenly to believe that she leads exclusively a cowed and unhappy existence. But certainly no one would be more astonished than herself if any one came to the Eskimo woman and pitied her. . . . She herself has no consciousness whatever of being man’s drudge. . . . That they are indispensable to the maintenance of the social fabric they know quite well and are proud of it.” (50: 62 sqq.)

#### 24. CONCLUSION

In closing this study, the writer is keenly aware of its incompleteness and inadequacy. Doubtless, errors of interpretation are not wanting. No one could more eagerly welcome criticism and correction of any such. He realizes also how doubtful, in the present state of our knowledge, are many points of fact. Numerous inconsistencies and contradictions in the available evidence remain unresolved. To accomplish this, as well as arrive at a safe interpretation of the older observed data, recourse must be had to further “careful field work,” as Boas has emphasized. (8:805.) I think a study of this kind impresses one with the uncertain and fragmentary nature of our information even about a people of whom so much has been written; and the caution necessary in weighing conclusions based on “comparative” studies of great numbers of peoples, about most of whom our accurate knowledge is painfully meager. Further, this humble effort, I believe, brings out the importance of studying ethnological phenomena in the proper relations to the total cultural complex of which they are a part. Without a knowledge of such relations, many features of Eskimo morality would be even less comprehensible than they now are.

Finally, I may say, that one must be impressed with the intense humanness of this people—that “a man’s a man for a’ that”—even an Eskimo. And, while it is the business of the ethnologist to describe and explain, not to praise or censure, I cannot but express a profound admiration for these “neighbors of the north pole.” To study their life and character has been a genuine pleasure. Of those things in their morality

which may jar our civilized sensibilities, I can but say with Osaquaq, the Smith Sound Eskimo,

"Our tales are of men's experiences, and the things one hears of are not always lovely things. But one cannot deck a tale to make it pleasant, if at the same time it shall be true. The tongue must echo the event and cannot adapt itself to taste or caprice."

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