



LONE MONARCH OF A LONE LAND.

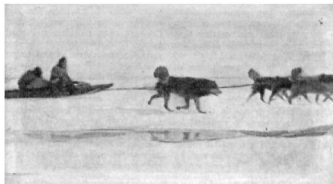
["Musk-Ox Hunting Among the Twilics," p. 158.]

MUSK-OX HUNTING AMONG THE IWILICS

By A. Hyatt Verrill

SIX long and dreary months our little whaling schooner had been locked fast in the ice of northern Hudson's Bay with naught to break the monotony of our existence save the impromptu dances in the deck-house and the modest festivities called forth by Thanksgiving and Christmas. Although to a stranger the land appeared still in the grip of midwinter, yet to the natives and whalers many signs gave warning of the approach of Arctic spring. Daily the black edge of water beyond the floe grew nearer and the flocks of cider and "old squaws" grew more restless; daily, too, the ptarmigan, increased in numbers and added brown feathers to their spotless winter costume. Then one dull and gloomy day a flock of snowbirds, chattering gaily, overran the vessel and all hands knew and rejoiced that winter had flown and spring had come. A day or two later the Iwilics, whose low, domed houses of frozen snow had nestled in the lee of the schooner all winter, began to move ashore and build new igloos on a firm foundation. Interesting, indeed, was it to watch these Arctic nomads construct their queer homes. By the aid of long, curved, snow-knives, made from the tusks of the walrus, the sturdy fellows cut squarish blocks of snow of just the right dimensions, while

others piled them up in an ever-narrowing circle, until at last the home was complete. Their moving, once the igloo was finished, took but a short time, for their furnishings are of the simplest. A soapstone lamp, an old tin or iron pot or two, quantities of skins and furs all chewed soft (and also evil smelling), extra clothes, guns, horn dippers, seal spears, bunches of sinew, bone needles and sewing gear, and numerous odds and ends of bright calico, flannel, beads, etc., completes the inventory of the average hut. To a white the chief drawback to one of these interiors is the smell, which at first seems overpowering. One becomes accustomed to it after a time, however, and really gets to like the simple folk. They are ever moving from place to place, for it seems easier to build a new house than to clean an old one. Then again, they are very superstitious and among other beliefs is that of the two twin-sister goddesses, one of whom has charge of all the land animals, while her sister looks after those of the sea. According to the Iwilics it would offend the land goddess to work on skins or clothes made of skins of land animals while living on the ice, or vice versa. As a result, whenever a garment made of deerskin needs repairing during the winter, the seamstress is obliged to move to a tem-



GOING OUT TO THE HUNT.

porary house on shore. As a consequence of all these peregrinations the ice and shore, at the beginning of spring, looked as if a small army of Iwilics had lived there, so numerous were the abandoned igloos, whereas, in reality, the families did not exceed a dozen at any time.

A few days after moving into their new quarters, Harry, our head Eskimo, came aboard and invited me to accompany him

ptarmigan filled our tiny dwelling. As we sat about in our heavy deerskin garments and picked the bones, the boy called his father's attention to the stiff leg tendons and asked him how they came there. Now the Iwilics have a fable or fairy tale to account for everything, and are never tired of relating them, so, although I have no doubt that the little fellow had heard the tale hundreds of times, his father smiled and nar-



DEERSKIN (SUMMER) HOUSE.

on a sled journey to Yellow Bluff, where he had cached some whales' bones which he wished to use for sled runners. Early the following day we started off with Harry's little boy riding on the sled, while his father and I ran alongside to keep warm; for although balmy spring had arrived, the mercury stood twenty-eight below zero. On the way our dogs chased and brought to bay a large bear, which we secured. We arrived at Yellow Bluff in due time, but although thoroughly tired out and half famished, before we could eat, drink or sleep, it was necessary to build a small igloo, light a stone lamp and melt ice for water. By the time this was accomplished I was glad to munch some frozen meat and crawl into a sleeping bag, I awoke hungry and refreshed and found Harry and his son already up, while the savory odor of stewing,

rated it again. "Many years ago," said Harry, "there was an old woman who lived in a small igloo with her granddaughter. The little girl was very fond of stories and teased the old woman to tell them to her. One night the grandmother was cross and when the child asked for a story she said, 'Don't want to tell story, little girl go to sleep.' But the little girl said, 'please tell me a story, Annanating (grandmother).' Then the grandmother grew angry and said very quick, 'Huh, I see mouse!' Now the little girl, like all Eskimos, was very much afraid of mice and hid her face and cried and cried, until her eyes were red and Nud-liauk took pity on her and changed her to a bird, and she flew away from the cruel old woman, and ever since the ptarmigans have had red eyes and stiff tendons in their legs, where the child carried her needles in

her boots." At the conclusion of the story we packed up our goods and started on our return. We reached the schooner about 10 p. m., and I was very glad to doff fur underclothing and turn into a decently warm bunk. A few days later the Iwiliics reported a wolf about, but although we set numerous traps, we failed to secure him that night. The next day when I returned from a short tramp on the floe, I found the wolf had come skulking about the vessel during my absence and had been shot from the deck by our first mate. The poor creature was almost starved to death, but was exceedingly large and almost pure white.

To the sportsman hardy enough to spend a winter in this desolate land, it would prove a rich hunting ground, for game is plenty and generally fairly tame. Throughout the whole region polar bears and caribou are numerous, although the former are not seen during midwinter and the latter are more abundant in spring and autumn, when they travel across country in immense herds. Wolves are not common, but the Eskimos manage to get them regularly, as well as wolverines. White foxes are very abundant and readily secured, as are also ptarmigan, eider and other ducks. On the wide, rocky plains further inland, musk oxen roam, and, if you are guided by experienced Iwiliic hunters, are fairly easy to obtain. The bay itself furnishes four species of seal, as well as the walrus. The largest of these seals, known as the "oogjug," is used mainly for boat bottoms and is so highly prized that the Eskimos celebrate the capture of one by a three days' round of gayeties, during which time the men can do no work and the women are not allowed to comb their hair, a custom which none of the natives seem able to explain, although doubtless it originally had some mystic significance. During these celebrations the "anticoots," or magicians, take a prominent part, as in fact they do at all times. These fellows are clever, intelligent chaps, who claim to be able to visit the spirit land at will, as well as to drive off evil spirits and cure disease. They certainly do have more or less hypnotic power and are really capable of throwing themselves into a trance. At these times, also, games of strength take place, and some of these are very odd and original. In one two lusty young Eskimos tie their heads together by means of stout

sinews around the neck and then try to see who can pull the other along—a sort of tug-of-war. Then there are wrestling matches, races, etc., and last, but by no means least, in the estimation of the Iwiliics, the gambling. All the tribe, women as well as men, are inveterate gamblers and never miss a chance to risk their property in gaming. One of the favorite gambling devices is to try and jab a spear through a perforated piece of ivory hung immovably in the center of an igloo. This seems quite a simple thing to do, but when a dozen or more excited natives are all jumping about and jabbing away at the same time, it is literally a game of chance, and the fortunate winner takes the pot. Another game, particularly among the women, is played by means of a dipper made from the base of a musk-ox horn and fitted with a short brass or wooden handle. The women sit in a circle and each stakes something, then one of them spins the dipper rapidly around and when the revolutions finally cease the one towards whom the handle points is declared the winner and must start the betting for the next round and also spin the dipper.

Often during the festivities occasioned by the capture, of one "oogjug," the men kill another (for they do not consider hunting in the light of work), and thus one fiesta crowds on the tail of another. The men are born hunters and spend most of their time hunting, in fact, their lives depend upon it. The mainstay of their existence is the Barren Ground caribou. After the caribou in importance, come the seals, while musk oxen are used for comparatively few purposes. Of course the whales and salmon furnish them with a great deal of food and other materials, but since they have come in contact with the whites they save the bone and oil for the whalers, having discovered that it furnishes more comforts in trade than they could secure from it direct. Above everything else they prize matches, and so precious are these to them that when wishing to light a fire the Iwiliics, instead of striking a match, carefully split one into small pieces, keeping this up until one is accidentally ignited. As they are quite skilful at this, it is frequently some time before the fire is started and the Eskimo has by that time trebled his supply of matches. This same careful economy of civilized articles is observed in other

ways. The stems of their pipes, after being smoked for some time, are whittled up and smoked over with a very little fresh tobacco added. Cartridge shells are saved carefully and after being cut up with files, are hammered out and used in a number of ways. In hunting, economy of ammunition is their main effort and they seldom take chances on a long shot. In hunting caribou they usually go in companies of four or five, and when the game is sighted, two or three of the party lie hidden to leeward, while the others, making a detour, approach down the wind. As soon as the

sledges, about thirty dogs, six squaws and three men, Billy, Stonewall Jackson, and John L., besides Harry and myself. It was quite warm, five above, when we started, and the exercise making our heavy fur garments uncomfortable, they were removed and piled on the sleds. A few hours later, however, it clouded over, the wind increased and we were glad to don the seal-skin clothing. That night we camped in a little hollow, while a blizzard raged outside. We minded it little, however, for the Iwilies are a jovial people and always make the best of things and thoroughly believe in

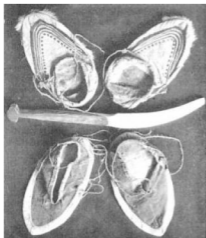


IWILIC SQUAWS.

deer scent these they of course travel in the opposite direction and fall easy prey to the hidden hunters. After being shot at they turn about and dash off, forgetting all caution, and still more are brought down by the other party. In this way it not infrequently happens that an entire herd is killed off in a few minutes.

All during the winter we had hunters in the musk-ox country, and although I greatly desired to kill one of the creatures, no opportunity presented itself for me to go until well along in the spring. At last the promised clay arrived and we started off. Our party consisted of three large

having a good time wherever they may be. We spent the evening sitting about the stone lamp, smoking and telling stories, and when we awoke the following morning found the weather clear and cold, with the new-fallen snow just right for tracking. Late in the afternoon we ran across our first game, a herd of eight caribou, from which, after a little stalking and maneuvering, we secured four. For the two following days we met with little game, two wolves and three or four foxes comprising our bag. On the third day we entered an entirely different sort of country, rough and rocky, with numerous hills, and small ledges jut-



MOCCASINS AND SNOW-KNIFE.

ting out from the surface. This was the musk-ox country, and although we saw no signs of game during the first day, all proceeded with caution, stopping and peering ahead as each rise was ascended. About noon of the second day we struck a trail and after following it a short distance unleashed the dogs, who at once started off on the fresh scent. Very soon their yelping and howling told us the game was in sight and as we reached the crest of the next ridge we caught sight of them, four dark-brown, shapeless bodies, galloping over the snow, a half mile away, with the dogs in hot pursuit. Over a ridge they dashed and over the ridges we followed, across a flat and rocky plain and over another ridge, until it seemed as if we would drop from sheer exhaustion but the sturdy Iwilics never slowed up, trotting rapidly along on their short legs; knowing full well that ere long the oxen would be brought to bay. At last the shaggy, wild-eyed creatures turned and faced the yelping curs; and truly a fine picture of defiance they presented, as with lowered heads, steaming nostrils and foaming mouths they stood shoulder to shoulder, im-

patiently pawing the ground and awaiting the onslaught of their savage enemies. For a moment the dogs hesitated, and then the leader, a big, tawny brute, sprang forward with a snarl. There was a sickening thud as the massive horns caught him squarely in the breast and flung him backward for a dozen yards, crippled and bleeding. Profiting by the fate of their leader, the other curs held off, now and again dashing in to snap at the oxen's heels, but keeping well out of reach of the long, wicked horns. So intent were the musk oxen watching their four-footed foes, that they failed to note our approach until we were within fifty yards, when suddenly they caught sight of the new enemy and, whirling about, dashed out of sight over the lodge before we could raise rifle to shoulder. The oxen were now thoroughly frightened and although we followed them for several miles they refused to come to bay and we abandoned the chase, returning tired and disgusted to camp.

The following morning, after several hours of hard tramping and patient trailing, we again sighted the herd. They had evidently recovered from their fright of the day preceding, for they ran barely half a mile before making a stand. Taught by our former experience, we approached cautiously with rifles ready for instant service. When



IWILIC PIPE, COMBS, DIPPERS, NEEDLE CASES, PIN AND NEEDLE.

seventy-five yards distant they caught our wind and started to run, but this time we were prepared, and dropping on one knee, I took a quick shot at the leading bull just as he reached the top of a ridge. The big fellow leaped from the ground and disappeared on the farther side. At the same instant the Iwlics let drive, but

the rest of us busied ourselves skinning the ox; and a truly noble fellow he was, his great horns curving in a grand sweep downward and outward with massive shield over his shaggy forehead. We spent a fortnight in the musk-ox country and secured in all seven of the wild Arctic cattle, returning to the schooner with fully laden



"RETURNING TO THE SCHOONER WITH FULLY LADEN SLEDGES."

aside from little spurts of frozen snow, I could see no results from their shots. We rushed forward, thinking to get another shot at the retreating creatures, and as we reached the top of the little hill almost stumbled over the body of the bull. One of the men started at once for camp, while

sledges. Upon reaching the Bay we found the vessel had come up from the ice and all hands were making ready for whaling. A few days later the spring thaws were on in earnest, with squalls and rain, which rapidly broke up the ice and permitted us to once more spread our well-patched sails.

A FOREST LITANY

By Amelia K. Wing

The solemn ritual of the leafy-wood,
 The swaying branches moaning high in air,
 The murmur of the brook in playful mood,
 Are but the soul's deep litany of prayer.