

The "Inviting-In" dances partake somewhat of the nature of the nith contests of Greenland. Each party puts forth its best actors, and strives in every way to outdo the other. During the first day, when the comic dances are on, the tribe succeeding in making the other laugh can demand anything of them they wish. The best dancers receive valuable presents.

The actors themselves go through the same general motions as the ordinary dancers, never losing a step or a gesture, at the same time fitting their movements to the character in hand. As much as possible they strive to make every gesture expressive, and succeed so well that a stranger could tell the part they represent, even if the prompter did not call it out at the beginning of the song. In fact, I have often wondered if they were not possessed by the spirit of the animal they depicted when dancing, as the Eskimo believe.

The actor's outfit consists of a face mask, armlets, finger masks, and fillets. In certain dances the actor also carries a staff. The masks are of two types—those intended to excite merriment and good feeling among the guests, and those worn to honor the *ínua* of the animals in whose honour the dance is given. They are made by some noted shaman employed by the tribe, who also has general direction of the dances. They are very clever representations and will be described as they occur in the dances.

The finger masks are diminutive masks with an animal head in miniature. They are plentifully adorned with feathers; which give the idea of flying as the dancers' arms sweep through the air. The women (supporting dancers) use plain handlets of woven grass and feathers. The armlets and fillets are of fur or feathers corresponding to the animal represented.

COMIC DANCES.

First Day. The dances the first day are of a comic character. If, during the day's dances, the home tribe can succeed in making the visitors laugh, they can ask of them anything they wish.

Entering the *kázgi*, I noticed that the walls and *íplak* had been hung with white drilling (*katúktókūōwítlok*), as a gift to

the visitors; who, in their turn, had covered the floor with *úgruk* (bearded seal) skins. Shortly after the people began to file in.

As each man entered he threw down a small gift before the *nāskut*, as is customary on such occasions. As soon as every one was settled, the dances began. Strange noises were heard in the tunnel, gradually approaching the room. Then a horrible-looking wooden face was thrust up through the entrance hole, worn by the chief comic dancer of the Unalit. The mask was made lop-sided, with one cheek higher than the other, and the mouth and eyebrows twisted to one side. One eyelet was round, the other being in the shape of a half moon. A stubby moustache and beard of mink fur, and labrets of green beads, completed the ludicrous effect. He gazed around the audience in silence for a full minute, throwing the children into fits of mingled terror and delight. Then the leader commenced the dance invitation, and the pantomime began. Sitting in front of the hole, the actor gesticulated with his feather handlets after the usual manner of the Eskimo; occasionally turning his head from side to side with the foolish stare of a crazy person. But the Malemiut visitors, although their eyes twinkled, never cracked a smile.

Then he disappeared through the hole, coming up with a hideous green mask, with a long nose, and a big red streak for a mouth. Surrounding the mask was a bristling bush of reindeer hair. He sat down solemnly, and all his motions were slow and sad. Every gesture, while keeping in perfect time with the music, expressed the profoundest dejection. As a serio-comic, this was even more funny than the other, and the Unalit, who could safely do so, fairly roared. But the cautious visitors sat as solemn as owls.

Then the Unalit trotted out their champion, a lithe old fellow, wonderfully graceful and impressive in his movements. He wore a mask adorned with feathers and an enormous nose, which I was told was a caricature of the Yukon Indian. The Eskimo have lost none of their old hatred for their former foes, and still term them in derision *ipkilik*,¹ "louse-eaters;" from the fact of their long hair being full of these pests. Neither is the Eskimo, with tonsured head, free from the same affliction; as I

¹Literally, "those having lice."

learned more than once, at a crowded dance, to my temporary affliction.

The old man took his place in the centre of the floor amid perfect silence. With head on his breast and hands at rest on his lap he seemed sunk in some deep reverie. Then he raised his hand to his head and cracked a louse audibly. This was too much for the Unalaklit, and they howled with laughter. Then, having won the day by this ruse, the old man began his dance. Two women with feather handlets stepped forth, and accompanied him, imitating his every move. Higher and higher he swung his hands, like the rapid upward wheel of a carrier pigeon. Then the dance stopped as abruptly as the others; the day was won.

Immediately the food for the feast was brought in. It consisted of a strange and bewildering array of native delicacies: ancient duck eggs, strips of walrus blubber, frozen seal-meat, boiled entrails, kantags of blueberries and lichens, and various other dishes which appeal to the stomach of an Eskimo. Not having any particular desire to partake of the same, I took my departure.

GROUP DANCES.

Second Day. Entering the *kázgi* the second day, I noticed that the floor was covered with small heaps of skin and calico. As the Unalaklit came in, each man added to the pile. This, I was informed, was the price of the first day's defeat, and that they were looking for ample revenge the second day.

They began with a "muscle" dance. This consisted mainly in comic posturing and in a droll display of the biceps. Occasionally the dancers would glance down the heaving muscles of the back and shoulders or extend their arms and make the muscles quiver. The Unalit, in their turn, attempted to imitate the same, and outdo the visitors, but although their big clown dancer exhibited his enormous arms and legs to good advantage, they were evidently outdone. Nothing daunted, they began another series, the contest consisting in the ability of the opposite side to guess the meaning of the dances. To this end, ancient dances which have fallen into disuse or been forgotten, except by the old men, are resurrected and practised in secret.