

A young woman appeared in the centre of the floor wearing a white reindeer parka¹ and a girdle of reindeer hair tied around her waist. She began the conventional motions of the woman's dance, glancing nervously round her. Then men dancers, wearing fillets and armlets of wolf-skin, leaped down from the *inlak* and surrounded her, jumping about and howling hideously. As the dance-song quickened, they became more and more excited, until the floor became one confused mass of shaggy heads and wildly tossing arms. The drums redoubled the beat, until the *kázgi* fairly rocked under the volume of sound and the stamping feet. Then, as suddenly as the pandemonium began, it ended.

This was easily guessed as the wolf-pack pulling down a reindeer.

Not to be outdone, the Unalaklit presented a very ancient dance from their old home, Kotzebue sound. This dance, I was told, was two hundred years old, and the old-style dance of the Malemiut. Strangely enough, no drums were used, but the chorus consisted of a double row of men who used ivory clappers to mark the time. Instead of stamping, the dancers bounded up and down on the balls of their feet, holding the legs arched and rigid. No one was able to fathom this dance. It was different from any Eskimo dance I have ever seen. It might be an earlier form, or borrowed from the Déné. So the visitors won the honours of the second day, and left the *kázgi* in high good humour.

TOTEM DANCES.²

Third Day. The third day the contest reached its climax. The best dancers of each party were put forth, and the interest became intense. For months they had been trained in their parts, until every movement had become almost instinctive. Each appeared in full regalia of armlets, fillets, and handlets, adapted to their part. Their appearance was the signal for a demonstration on the part of their friends and every new turn or movement which they introduced into their dance received attention.

¹During the early occupation of Alaska by Russian fur-traders, several words of Kamchatkan origin were introduced, and incorporated in the native languages, among them *parka*. It should be pronounced *párkĭ*, but it being sanctioned by general use, I have retained the usual form.

²Totem marks on personal property and grave posts can still be seen among the Alaskan Eskimo, but the accompanying subdivision of the people into clans has evidently broken down.

The first actors were women, who went through the household occupations of the Eskimo in pantomime, illustrating the curing and dressing of skins, the sewing and making of garments, adapting the movements to the woman's dance.

Then a Unalaklit man took the floor and depicted the life of the walrus.

He wore a very life-like looking walrus mask, and enacted the features of the walrus hunt, modifying the usual gestures. In pantomime he showed the clumsy movements of the great animal moving over the ice, the hunter approaching, and his hasty plunge into the water, then the hunter paddling furiously after him, the harpoon thrust, and the struggles of the dying walrus.

Next two young Unalit gave the Red Fox dance. They wore the usual fur trimmings and masks, and the leader flourished a fox foot with which he kept time to the music. This dance depicted the cunning habits of the little beast, and his finish in the trap of the hunter. The Unalaklit responded with the White Fox dance, which was quite similar, showing a fox stalking a ptarmigan. One actor represented the fox and the other the ptarmigan. The stealthy movements and spring of the fox were cleverly given.

The Unalit, on whom the dance had made a great impression, put forward their best dancer in the celebrated Crow Dance.

The dancer entered from behind the press of the crowd, stooping low and imitating the cawing of the raven. The cries appeared to come from above, below, in fact, everywhere in the room. Then he appeared in all his glory. He wore a raven mask with an immense beak, and bordered with fur and feathers. Labrets and fillets of wood adorned the sides, and a spotted black and white design covered the forehead. He bore a staff in his hand decorated with a single feather. After pirouetting around the room in a ridiculous fashion, he disappeared in the crowd and appeared dragging a bashful woman, who was similarly attired. They danced for a short time together, the raven continuing his amatory capers. Then, evidently tiring of her charms, he disappeared into the crowd on the opposite side of the *kázgi* and reappeared bearing in tow another bride,

evidently younger. After squawking and pirouetting around her for a while, the three danced, the two women supporting him, making a pleasing background of waving arms and feathers. At the conclusion of the dance, he seeks again his first love, and is angrily repulsed while seeking to embrace her. This greatly amuses the audience. Then the three leave the scene, quarrelling and pushing one another.

This concluded the dances proper. Then the shaman donned an *inua mask*¹, and began running around the entrance hole in ever lessening circles. He finally tumbled over and lay in a trance, the while he was communing with the spirit-guests (so the Eskimo told me) in the fire-place below. After a time he came to and informed the hunters that the *inua* had been pleased with the dances and promised their further protection for a successful season.

After appropriate offerings of meat and drink and tobacco had been made to them through the cracks in the floor, the celebration broke up, and the Unalaklit started home.

¹Before commencing his part, the shaman daubed soot from the *kázi wall* on his breast. This was supposed to put him en rapport with the spirit-guests.