pathetic to an unusual degree. The result is that he gives us a sketch of unusual fidelity. Nansen loves Greenland:

"It is poor, this land of the Eskimo which we have taken from him: it has neither timber nor gold to offer us—it is naked, lonely, like no other land inhabited by man. But in all its naked poverty how beautiful it is! If Norway is glorious, Greenland is in truth no less so. When one has once seen it, how dear to him is the recollection! I do not know if others feel as I do, but for me it is touched with all the dreamlike beauty of my childish imagination. It seems as though I there found our own Norwegian scenery repeated in still nobler, purer forms. It is strong and wild, this Nature, like a sage of antiquity carved in ice and snow, yet with moods of lyric delicacy and refinement. . . . Everything in Greenland is simple and great, — white snow, blue ice, naked black rocks and peaks, and dark stormy sea. When I see the sun sink glowing into the waves, it recalls to me the Greenland sunsets, with the islets and rocks floating as it were on the burnished surface of the smooth softly-heaving sea, while inland the peaks rise row on row, flushing in the evening light. And sometimes when I see the sæter-life at home, and watch the sæter-girls and the grazing cows, I think of the tent-life and the reindeer herds on the Greenland fiords and uplands: I think of the screaming ptarmigans, the moors and willow copses, the lakes and valleys in among the mountains where the Eskimo lives through his brief summer."

Few descriptions of any people, in our English language, are so scientifically good as this of Eskimo life; yet it is also delightful popular reading. There are many reasons why the ethnologist finds the Eskimo interesting. Scarcely elsewhere is there a race-type, pure through so great an area. The Eskimo of Greenland and of Western Alaska are physically the same. So little variation is there in the language that a Greenlander might probably travel from his home to Behring's Strait and make himself everywhere understood. Life is, in general, the same over the whole region. The same traditions and beliefs are found among the tribes. Of course there are varying details. If we compare the Greenlander whom Nansen describes with the Central Eskimo of Boas and the Point Barrow Eskimo of Murdoch, we shall find many interesting little differences; but these disappear before the wonderfully conserved similarity in generalities.

Look the world over, and we shall nowhere find such an example of perfect adaptation to environment. We cannot here discuss how such adaptation comes: it is there. It shows itself in every detail. Notice the skin garments, the kayak, the winter house of stones and earth, the summer tents of skins, the spears and harpoons, the spear throwing-stick,—these are but a few examples of adjustment between

The Greenlander at Home.*

A most interesting sketch of the life of an interesting people is furnished in Nansen's "Eskimo Life." Nansen, well known in connection with the first crossing of Greenland, knows the Greenland Eskimo at near quarters. He writes: "I dwelt in their huts, took part in their hunting, and tried, as well as I could, to live their life and learn their language." The tarrying for one winter among any people cannot give us full knowledge of them, but Nansen was a clear-sighted observer and sym-

*Eskimo Life. By Fridtjof Nansen. Translated by William Archer. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co.

the Greenlander and his surroundings. The food he eats, his smoking lamps, the summer excursions along the coast, all these are exactly proper to his conditions of life. To change these adjustments is a misfortune; to introduce new tastes and needs and life is a crime.

Consider one invention — the kayak. A problem was presented the Eskimo for solution. Wanted—a hunting boat, easy to manage, requiring the least force for its propulsion, light but strong, easily righted if upturned by the billows. The Eskimo struggles with the problem: he produces the kayak — a light framework of wood; a covering of sealskin usually fitted raw and drawing tightly. In the upper side an opening only large enough to allow the man to pass his legs and lower body through. Perhaps six yards in length, its greatest breadth may be but eighteen inches; its depth is little more than six or seven inches. Narrowing fore and aft from the centre, it ends in sharp points. There is no keel. Across the kayak deck, in front of the ring surrounding the central hole, are perhaps six thongs, while behind there may be three to five more. Under these are inserted weapons, each in its proper place most convenient to the hand. To these thongs, too, the game is fastened. The boatman, carefully slipping into the kayak through the hole above, sits on the bottom, with a bit of skin for seat, cross-legged. With his two-bladed paddle held at the middle, and dipping into the water on each side in turn, he shoots the slender craft ahead rapidly. He wears the half-jacket, or the jacket, fastened to himself and to the kayak ring in such a way that dashing waves may sweep the deck without water leaking in. The kayak, with all its appurtenances, is so light that it is easily carried on the head.

But the kayak is no more remarkable than the beautiful series of harpoons and spears that the Eskimo has devised. The throwing-stick, for hurling darts of all kinds, is ingenious. The modes of dressing skins, so simple in themselves but so wonderful in their results, are admirable. Quaint is the method of preparing bird-skins by chewing with the teeth. Only recently we have seen one of those marvellous robes of eider duck breasts, now such favorites in Denmark. It is a work of beauty and of art. No doubt, however, every skin has been chewed in the mouths of Greenland women. Teeth are worn down almost to the gums in such work. We cannot even refer to other ingenious or interesting arts and industries of our Eskimo.

Rink has made a special study of the traditions and superstitions of the Greenland Eskimo. Nansen depends largely upon him for the brief sketch he presents of this subject. He points out that there has been a profound European (Scandinavian) influence upon these stories and ideas. Scientific in this comparison, our author is less so when he traces analogies, often fanciful, between the Greenland tales and those of Africa or Polynesia. Very interesting is the great prevalence of witchcraft among Greenlanders, although Boas finds little of it among the Central Eskimo. Surely here we find some European influence. In witchcraft, human bones, flesh from corpses, skulls, snakes, and spiders, are used. Of wonderful power is a *tupilek*, prepared in profoundest secrecy of various animal bones, skins, bits of the *anorak* (jacket) of the man to be injured — or, if it cannot be secured, bits of seals he has caught — all wrapped together in a piece of skin and tied. It is brought to life by singing charms over it. Then the *ilitsitsok*, or wizard, seats himself on a bank of stones near the mouth of a river. He puts his *anorak* on hind-side foremost, draws his hood over his face, dangles the *tupilek* between his legs. This makes it grow, and when it has gained its size it glides away into the water and disappears. It can transform itself into all kinds of animals and monsters, bringing ruin and death upon the man against whom it is despatched, but reacting upon the sender if it fails.

The character of the Eskimo is singularly happy. With no true chiefs, and no marked classes, all men are truly equal. The brotherhood of man is an axiom practically recognized. Time was, before white man taught avarice and personal advancement, when an *individual* could not starve or seriously want. A tribe might die for want of food; but while *one* had, all could claim a share. Crime was rare. Morality prevailed, although not by our standard. (Much of the moral depravity now existing is due to the demoralizing influence of white visitors.) Even in Greenland we have harmed all that we touch. There are regions remote from the settlements where Eskimo life still goes on in the old and happy way. Nansen's chapter on "The Eskimo at Sea" gives vivid pictures of it. We can give but one quotation:

"It is a gallant business, this kayak-hunting: it is like a sportive dance with the sea and with death. There is no finer sight possible than to see the kayakman breasting the heavy rollers that seem utterly to engulf him. Or when, overtaken by a storm at sea, the kayaks run for the shore, they come like black

storm-birds rushing before the wind and waves, which like rolling mountains sweep on in their wake. The paddles whirl through air and water, the body is bent a little forwards, the head often turned half backward to watch the seas; all is life and spirit — while the sea around reeks like a seething cauldron. And then it may happen that while the game is at its wildest a seal pops its head up before them. Quicker than thought the harpoon is seized and rushes through the foam with deadly aim; the seal dashes away with the bladder behind it, but is presently caught and killed, and then towed away. Everything is done with the same masterly skill and with the same quiet demeanor. The Eskimo never dreams that he is performing feats of heroism."

Our author frequently bemoans the fate of the Greenland Eskimo, and mourns that the settler and the missionary have wrought havoc to his happy life and ancient ways. Truth to tell, we agree with him. Most sympathetic non-philanthropic visitors to any barbarous race which is being made over into civilized white men wonder whether, after all, good is being done. Nansen says many vigorous things in this direction. We quote but one, and that quite mild:

"And lastly comes this question: Can an Eskimo who is nominally a Christian, but who cannot support his family, is in ill health and is sinking into deeper and deeper misery, be held much more enviable than a heathen who lives in 'spiritual darkness,' but can support his family, is robust in body, and thoroughly contented with life? From the Eskimo standpoint, at any rate, the answer cannot be doubtful. If he could see his true interest the Eskimo would assuredly put up this fervent petition: God save me from my friends; my enemies I can deal with myself."

Seldom do we lay down a book so reluctantly —it tells so much so well. No thoughtful person can fail to find it suggestive and helpful. Of course, as a piece of bookwork it is well done. The illustrations are unusually good. The translator, too, deserves no little praise. So well has he done his work that he really disappears from view, and we forget that the author was a Norwegian, and that we are not reading his very words, fresh from his pen.

FREDERICK STARR.