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ESKIMO OF HOOPER BAY

NORTHEAST of Nelson island and south of Cape Romanzof lies the village at Hooper bay, situated a few miles inland on a tidewater river. The houses, occupied in winter, are built on a mound which rises slightly above the surrounding flats. The dwellings are dug and built into the hill with such little regard for order that the entrance to one may open on the roof of a house below.

On a spur of the hill, a short distance from the village, is an extensive graveyard containing many grave-boxes with accompanying pots, pans, paddles, and weapons. Here many poles stand erect as grave-markers, each with a small platform on top, to which is fastened a carved figure, one such being the image of a man, arms outstretched, sitting in his kaiak.

The sources of food are seemingly few. Berries in profusion grow on the flats, while beluga, flounder, sole, tomcod, and many varieties of ducks supply the remainder. Fox, mink, muskrat, and weasel are trapped for their furs. It has occasionally happened, as in the year 1927, that the fish-run yielded a poor catch, birds were scarce, and there were but few berries. The people were faced with starvation in the coming year; indeed only the aid of the Government teacher, who took out parties of hunters in his small power boat to run aground and shoot beluga, or white whales, saved them. Some sixty-seven beluga were thus caught, sun-dried, and kippered.

In the summer the Eskimo of Hooper bay live in tents and brush shelters along the banks of the stream. The surrounding country is flat; barely a foot of it is above sea-level at high tide, hence it is always marshy. The tide-flats breed swarms of mosquitoes; the blue clay of the relatively more solid ground is soggy and sticky to a depth of six inches or more, making walking difficult except on beaten trails, and travel is treacherous even there. Slimy clay prevails everywhere. In summer shelters and winter houses alike, it oozes through the sleeping matting, and clothing, kaiaks, and everything in use become coated with it. Living conditions are therefore extremely filthy. Uncleanliness of person and possessions is the rule; the floors of dwellings are deep in filth and refuse of every description; fish and game are cleaned in the rooms, and the entrails and heads are carelessly flung on the floor to rot and to produce a pestilential stench. By reason of the continual

dampness, it is estimated that nearly three-quarters of the inhabitants of the village are tubercular; yet few seem to be bedridden, but are able to pursue their daily duties. School and religious workers have endeavored many times to persuade them to move to a more healthful locality, always to meet with stubborn refusal. Say they: "How can we move? We have barely enough timber for our houses here; there is not enough for building a new village. Our fathers rest here in their graves; we can not leave them."

The dugout houses are built in a manner somewhat similar to those of Nunivak island, differing chiefly in the shorter entranceway and having the outer opening at the end, rather than on top, of the entranceway. The kaiaks are built along the same lines as those of Nunivak, but the weapons used are much cruder. What the inhabitants lack in wood and ivory carving is made up in skilful joinery. The language is spoken more slowly and is less guttural than that of Nunivak.

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