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CHUKCHEE PEOPLE

RACE DWELLING IN FAR CORNER OF ASIA.

Sturdy and Independent — Once Taught the Russians a Lesson—Coast and Interior Chukchees Differ Very Materially.

Who are they, where do they live? The name sounds Indian, are they Americans? They are crowded pretty close to America, as close as they can get without falling into Behring straits. They dwell in the uttermost northeastern part of Asia, in far eastern Siberia.

Get out your map and you will notice, unless your map is like three or four provoking ones I came across before lighting on one that allowed Asia her last fraction of territory, that there is a great peninsula stretching out from Asia into Behring straits and almost touching America. This is the land of the Chukchees, a people whose name implies they are rich in reindeer. The Chukchees are a little known people. An occasional whaler comes back with tales of coast Chukchee, an



IN FAR EASTERN SIBERIA.

occasional northern expedition brings to the outside world some scant knowledge of this stalwart people, a people sufficient unto themselves. A writer in the New York Times says: "As their land has apparently neither gold nor coal, it will not be worth the while of Russians or other 'civilized' peoples to invade their land and destroy them."

They are a prolific people, number to-day about 12,000. The Chukchees are strong and courageous, and they have convinced the Great Bear of this fact. The Russians endeavored to test their courage in the years 1730 and 1747, and both times were defeated. At last, in 1764, they abandoned Anadyrsk, the furthest northeast fort. Some time later intercourse was renewed between Russians and Chukchees, and since effort has been made by the czars not to offend the people way up there at the edge of the world.

The Chukchees' language is akin to

a speech of the Mongolians, but they differ from them in form and features. They are tall and well-built, of bronze color; the hair is wavy, sometimes tightly curled, not like that of their Eskimo neighbors. They are inclined to be stocky and have great powers of endurance.

As in Lapland, the people may be classed as coast people and reindeer people. The reindeer people are sturdier, but they often come down to the coast and mingle with their kinsfolk, bringing deer and skins to barter for goods obtainable there—fish, seal, meat, tobacco and tea and whatever else the foreigners have brought in.

The Chukchees are very independent, self-sufficing people, who do not take over words or customs from other races, such as the Eskimo, whom they find here and there along Behring straits, or the Kamchatkans, whom they touch on the south, or even the Russians, who have settled as traders in certain spots, or the Americans whom they meet on the coast. They fabricate their own words for foreigners and foreign things. The Russians they call Mahli-Tannitan, "firetools foreigners," or else Leluremkin, "bearded people." The American whalers they call Lelutvit, "whisker boat men," from Lelutvet, "whisker boat"—as if the long whiskers of our whaling captains had impressed them forcibly. Another term is Pnaukult or "file mongers," from Pnaukum, a whetstone, probably because iron files were traded by the Americans for skins, but their language knew only the stone which the iron article supplanted.

Only a fourth of the Chukchees dwell on the coast, and they have a pretty hard fight for subsistence, suffering from famine, diseases brought by sailors and the dangers attendant on a fisherman's life. The reindeer Chukchees are a healthy race, have been little affected by foreign influence. Within Chukchee territory reside a few Russians, Lamuts and Yakuts; the Lamuts are a people of northern Kamchatka, the Yakuts a picturesque folk inhabiting a wide territory in northeastern Siberia.

The Chukchees have peculiar customs, games and sports, and these are described in a book that is now in the publisher's hands, a work by a Russian, Pan Waldemar Bogorus. For seven years Bogorus dwelt among the Chukchees on the River Kolyma, whose waters empty into the Arctic ocean; and spent two years more in Kamchatka, Anadyr, and the Chukchee peninsula. The record of personal experiences among this little known people will be of greatest interest.

ALFRED WHITEHOUSE.

Thanksgiving Box.

The Daughters of the Confederacy will send a box to the Confederate Home at Pee-wee Valley, which will be packed in the Flack building Monday, Nov. 27th. No canvass will be made for donations, but voluntary contributions will be thankfully received.

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