

Shungnak

COPY

The review of the work done in the Shungnak School for the year of 1910-1911 is as follows.

Attendance.

I arrived at Shungnak the 1st of September, and immediately endeavored to have school opened, but without success. The natives, being accustomed for the school to open a couple of months later, had removed to fishing and hunting grounds that were distant. A number of families, dissatisfied with the suppression of innocent, native pastimes, and with the unfair division of Government reindeer and mission goods, by the school teacher and missionary, had permanently removed to the Kayuku and Squirrel Rivers. A considerable number of the children had died during the three years that the school had been established. For these reasons the first months average was low, and the yearly average obtained by dividing the sum of the monthly averages by the number of months taught, smaller than that of

COPY

any previous year. It is to be noticed that the yearly average has steadily declined each of the succeeding years of the school for the reasons already stated. If, however, the average daily attendance and the number of days taught, were taken as a basis of computation, the average for the school year of 1910-1911 would compare favorably with that of the previous year.

I also wish to state that attendance to Sunday School and diversions were not included in my statistics, as they were in those of my predecessor.

I insisted on regular attendance, and lowered the enrollment age from seven years to four years, in spite of the efforts of the local missionary to keep the children out of school. She told the parents that the school work would give a child of less than seven, brain fever. The older children were allowed to frequent the mission during school hours, and were entertained by singing of songs, and the giving of candies, etc. The system I employed was to make out a list of those not present, and enquire as

to their whereabouts. I then dispatched a pupi or two, to bring in the delinquents. If their efforts were not successful, I brought in the truants. On one occasion, for truancy, I punished Jacob Johnson, Harry John, Joe Frost, Herman Ticket and Frankie Snell by administering six strokes each, on the palm of the hand with a small willow. This was done with the approval of the parents, and was witnessed by one of them.

The month of September, as I have stated, did not have a large attendance, but in October the men began to arrive from their hunting trips, and I began to have more of a school; but the attendance was not good as the children were employed in picking berries and gathering moss for the cabins. The adults were engaged in repairing cabins, and putting in fish traps to catch the fish that migrate down the river at the approach of winter.

In November the attendance was better. December was the month of greatest attendance as usual in Alaska. It is to be noted that the fluctuation

in the monthly attendance in the school year of 1910-11 was not as great as in previous years. This fact is a measure that the methods, which I employ resulted in a steady interest in school work. The months of January and February is the season of the martin trapping, and took a number of families several hundred miles from the village. There were some natives visiting in March, but most of these returned in April, so in that month I had a good attendance. This is due to the fact that some families in the Royukuk and Squirrel River, learned that the conditions existing at Shungnak were better than before, and returned.

May was an exceptional good month as regards attendance. The long days make it quite inconvenient to have hours that would accommodate all the families, their children, their industries and pastimes. This is a month of scarcity of food. The outside supplies are usually exhausted, the dry and frozen fish become putrid, while the rabbits and ptarmigan are at a distance. It becomes necessary for the natives to **COPY** to a better base of supplies. Black River is an

ideal place for wild fowl and fish in the month of June, and many families moved there. The natives are so scattered that it is useless to follow them. We had an average of nearly fourteen pupils for June, which is not a bad showing. This is the first year that the school was conducted for the entire month of June. From a point of attendance, I think the past year is satisfactory. However, I was often at a loss, to know whether it was of more advantage for the family to go away and trap or work, and thus live in comfort, or to remain in the village in absence of this in order that their children should attend school.

#### Department.

During the preceding years of the school, no regular attempt to enforce discipline appears to have been made. The pupils were allowed to do as they pleased at times, and when conditions became too bad a campaign of reform was instituted. The children knowing that this quality of behavior was not to be insisted upon long, merely awaited **COPY** relaxation, and commenced anew.

The presence of a white child in the school had been the cause of education of the children in the vices of an outside country school. Among these might be mentioned the writing of names on the school-building, chewing gum in school, throwing notes, shooting spit-balls, whispering, and girls and boys winking at each other. I detected the white pupil in all of these except gum-chewing and spit-balls. I found the pupils engaged in eating chalk while at the blackboard. I inquired as to the reason, and they said it was the common practice of the former teacher, who recommended it as beneficial. Besides the acquired bad habits, the children had a few natural ones, such as dog-eating books, romping in the school room and wasting pencils. The white man in the neighborhood had so advertized the inability of the preceding teacher to correctly spell simple words, that his ignorance was perceived by the pupils, while his old-fashioned methods caused them to lose interest in their studies. NB!

As a result of this irregular discipline, the natural and acquired school vices, the

dissentions between the school teacher and his neighbors, and the consequent agitation of the natives, the apparent ignorance of the instructor combined with uninteresting exercises and methods the lack of attention to school affairs, due to the time being spent in mission work and trading, the idea of the office of school teacher had degenerated in the minds of the pupils, so that meant only that he was to see that they did not play in school. In short they believed that they came to school to be watched rather than to learn, and if they could take advantage of the teacher, it was expected of them to do so. I do not wish it understood that the pupils were vicious and hateful, for they were not. If punished they would not hold it against the teacher, but the sense of shame was not awakened by any reproof. To be corrected was only to be "put out of the game" and served only to make them more cautious, rather than to resolve to reform.

It was apparent to me that nothing short of drastic measures could prevent these **COPY** and as the local missionary was only awaiting

an opportunity to involve me in difficulty with the natives, I refrained from the use of the same. I therefore began to talk with the children, with a view of awakening the moral sense, and gradually and systematically insisted upon better behavior. At the end of the school year it was apparent that with the departure of the local missionary, and the awakened feelings of the children that the school was to advance from being disorderly to as well behaved as any.

### School Work.

#### Chart Class.

Owing to the fact that the pupils of less than seven years of age had not been encouraged to come to school, we were enabled to enroll a large number of little folks. These were taught numbers, stick laying counting objects, the letters of the alphabet, spelling and reading simple words, the simpler parts of Book No. One for Non English speaking People. The older and brighter ones learned in addition the ~~multipli-~~ **COPY** cation tables as far as the fives. Also the Lords

Prayer, the Apostles Creed, and all of this class were ~~tan~~ many simple, children's songs. Mrs. Sickler had charge of these classes:

#### First and Second Readers.

The children made great progress in these books. Some were able to finish both of these books in a year. They pronounced their words quite well, <sup>but</sup> the elocution admitted of improvement while their understanding of what they read was far from that which I desired. In these particulars they are no worse, however than other schools I have visited. I have experimented to gain better results, and believe I have a system that is especially adapted to the conditions. This will be described later. It is, however, simply an application of the "Core Theory" of Giller and De Garmo.

#### Third and Fourth Readers.

~~I had a number of pupils in these classes,~~ but while their enunciation was quite correct, the understanding of the subject matter was ~~faulty~~ **COPY**. The subject matter was not adapted to Eskimos.

### Writing

I took considerable pains to teach penmanship, and while I do not claim any ability as a penman, I understand the principles of lettering so I can draw correct letters on the black-board and point out errors to the pupils. I did not use copy books, but placed the copy on the board in order that the various processes could be observed by the pupils. I required each pupil to rule his own papers in order to develop judgement, neatness and accuracy. I succeeded in obtaining some very nice copies and some improvement in the daily writing but I noticed that pupils who went away on hunting trips with their parents, usually went back to the scrawls of former years. This indicates the value of placing of correct ideals before the mind of children when they first enter school.

### Spelling.

Eskimo children learn to spell very easily, but seem to have a difficulty in associating certain letters with the sounds which belong to them. **COPY**  
 B and P are and often 'd' and 't' are often used.

interchangably. I early discarded the spelling book as it is a waste of time to have them spell dis-associated words by rote. It was my practice to assign the words in the reading lesson as a spelling lesson. I also from time to time had a spelling "bee".

### Drawing.

I introduced the use of the ruler and scale with a desire of teaching the children to make measurements, and to become familiar with fractional parts. A short course in making calendars and clock dials combined the measurement of time, with drawing. Some conventional design work was taught in order to develop the idea of ornamentation. These natives are the best decorative that I have observed in Alaska. Mrs. Sickler gave some exercises in colored crayon work.

### English Language.

The study of English Language was conducted by using the ~~Book for Non-English Speaking People, and~~ letter writing. I encouraged the children to write to write to friends and relatives at Squirrel River and elsewhere. I furnished the postage. Eskimo letters

are usually faulty in the use of Capital and small letters, the tense of verbs, the pronoun, and the singular and plural forms. This may be largely corrected by placing a list of the principal parts of the verbs that occur in the daily reading lesson on the board, a list of the nouns and their plurals, and a list of the pronouns and their antecedents. I find that pupils respond readily to this kind of work, and soon assist in the work. I do not think it profitable to go into detail with the other parts of speech until the nouns, pronouns and verbs are mastered. It is under the greatest difficulty that the natives learn to use correct English. The miners and traders use pigeon English exclusively, in addressing natives. My predecessor used expressions such as "I haint seen it", "Jesus done it", "Peter and Andrew was brothers," etc., commonly in his ordinary speech.

### Grammar

During the first months of the year I gave one white pupil instruction in Grammar **COPY** afterwards gave some instructions to the native

Children that was more in the nature of English lessons.

### Numbers and Arithmetic

I experienced no difficulty in teaching Eskimo children to count. I devoted considerable time to teaching the children how to make correct numbers, but experienced considerable difficulty in having them apply the correct principles to their daily work. Having fallen into lax habits, they were productive of "sloppy" work. I succeeded in teaching the "multiplication table" to most of the older pupils.

I then showed the relationship of these tables to the "division tables." As soon as these were learned I showed the children that by simple methods of transformation that these tables would serve as tables of fractional parts. i.e. that  $4 \div 2 = 2$  could be written  $\frac{1}{2}$  of  $4 = 2$  or one half of  $4 = 2$ . In the mean-while, examples showing how the same results could be obtained by using either multiplication or addition were given. The proving of subtraction was given as a means of **COPY** the relationship of subtraction to addition. This

Course in the four fundamental operations in arithmetic was supplemented by practical examples. In the case of a few older pupils, simple fractions, the multiplication of numbers as high as nine digits, the making of business bills and accounts, and decimals relating to U. S. money received attention, and some fair results were obtained. It was my desire to make the next years work more practical, and to this end I sent for a number of catalogues of Montgomery Ward and Company, so that the children could have practice in selecting articles, and estimating the cost of freight, postage, etc. I also intended to have the parents give a small sum of money to each child each year, so as to teach the children how to send out for things which they obtain from missionaries and traders at exorbitant prices. I devoted a half of each school day to Arithmetic, and believe that it was time well spent.

### Geography.

I Geography I gave some instructions **COPY** the first two months to a white pupil, and a

native young man. It was my desire to teach this subject quite thoroughly, as natives are used as pilots from time to time. The inability to secure proper material resulted in abandoning these intentions. However I gave instructions from time to time on the location of compass points and local geography.

### History.

I gave some instructions in history during the first two months, but abandoned it as a regular study. The time can be put in to a better advantage otherwise. The only advantage history is to an Eskimo is to teach him patriotism. This quality is foreign to him, as the Eskimos have never had a native government, nor a flag. As long as government favors are dispensed by missionaries, the advantage of the U. S. Government, and the conception of the same will never be appreciated by an Eskimo. I have examined natives from other schools where history has been taught, and am satisfied they know nothing about it.

COPY

Temperance, Physiology and Hygiene.

## Temperance, Physiology and Hygiene.

These subjects were taught in a general way throughout the year. I think the way to teach Temperance is through example, and personal admonition to those who need the help. To advertize and continually keep evils before the minds of the people is to invite them to sin. There has been very little liquor in this community, and if any has used by the natives, I have not heard of the same. Physiology and Hygiene were taught with Sanitation and personal cleanliness.

## Manual Training.

I did no work in this line beyond that concerned in having the reindeer boys build sleds, make harness, snow-shoes and the like. The natives are industrious, and the white miners, who are skilled mechanics, are always showing the natives new methods of work. I believed I could put in the time more profitably in other kinds of instruction during the school hours.

## Sewing.

The boys, as well as girls, were taught to darn and mend. Mrs. Sickler furnished the yarn for the lessons in darning, and the <sup>needle</sup> also. Each girl in the sewing class cut and made a sunbonnet for herself; and some of the older ones made them for the younger girls. Each girl furnished her own material. Some time was also given to the cutting and fitting of patterns. Our sewing machine was at the disposal of the natives, and Mrs. Sickler assisted all those who applied. We bought a large number of paper patterns of various garments in Seattle, and these were in demand.

## Cooking.

Mrs. Sickler taught all the girls and boys how to make bread. We also organized an adults class in cooking, but the local missionary interfered with our work so we thought it best to abandon the work until we could get instructions from the District Superintendent. However, the school girls baked ninety six

loaves of bread before the close of school. The missionary, who had been also the U.S. Teacher had taught but one woman in the village to bake, and had conducted a lucrative bakery business in the Government building. This tardy interest in the native affairs only occurred after we had organized our classes.

### Agriculture.

This is a subject I write concerning with much pleasure and satisfaction. I brought in a supply of seeds with me from the outside, and as soon as I arrived I sent for additional seed to the Sitka Experiment Station and to the Bureau of Agriculture, Washington D.C. As soon as the weather would permit of agricultural work being performed, I turned over the entire school work to Mrs. Sickler, and instructed the natives in gardening. During the month of June, it was seldom that I worked less than six hours a day. The gardening that had been done before my arrival may be described as follows. A piece of ground measuring about 1500 sq. ft. had been fenced and

planted by the school teacher who spent his summers at Kotzebue and returned in the fall. A native girl looked after the garden, and received half the yield. Seven natives had, at different times planted a small plot of ground, but in almost every instance the crop had resulted in failure, owing to too late planting, the soil not being cultivated, the plants not being thinned and like reasons. I succeed in increasing the number of gardens from seven to seventeen, doubled the area of all the old gardens, and had many new ones made.

The school children and adults were given instruction in soaking seeds, in planting the various kinds of seeds, in cutting potato eyes, in spading, hoeing and raking, in thinning and in weeding, in transplanting, in watering, and in fact, all the operations needed for successful garden culture. I put in about a third of an acre in order to obtain a supply of vegetables to use in cooking classes the succeeding year. I also **COPY**ed to demonstrate to the natives how a model garden

should be conducted and how much food could be obtained by a slight amount of labor.

I had seven varieties of radishes, four varieties of turnips, two varieties of peas, four varieties of ruta bage, three varieties of carrots, two varieties of beets, four varieties of cabbage, two varieties of lettuce, one variety of Kohl Rabi, one of parsnips, one of Kale, one of Brussells Sprouts, and one of parsley that did fine. Onions, beans and cucumbers were a failure.

Cabbages weighed three pounds, turnips four pounds. Carrots grew an inch and a half in diameter and could not be excelled in flavor. A quarter of a crate of potatoes yielded five large potatoes. I obtained a full crate from a fraction of the ground. The balance of the potatoes were given to the natives and whites for seed. Other varieties had been tried in this section without success.

I told the natives that a hundred dollars of turnip and potatoes could be obtained easier than a hundred dollars of skins in the bitter cold of winter. I told them of the great value of vegetables in preserving the **COPY** heat and they agreed with me. The interest that was

taken in the work was great. There was always some one leaning over the fence while I was at work, and when a native had been away for a couple of weeks he always made the round of all the gardens in the village on his return. Several natives from Squirrel River asked me to come down and show them how to make gardens, also. I found some land that I think would produce grain, and it was my intention to try the experiment. Grains of barley that were accidentally dropped in the fall, grew up and produced fine heads.

### Music.

On our arrival the children knew but a few old church hymns. Mrs. Sickler taught the children several dozen songs, especially adapted to children. She also instructed the children in singing by note. A most interesting and successful song entertainment was part of the Christmas program. Mrs. Sickler's playing on the violin was greatly enjoyed by the natives, who used to come in almost daily and ask her to play. **COPY**

Native Pursuits.

## Native Pursuits

About eighteen boats were completed in the past year. A number of the boats were sold for prices ranging from ten dollars to sixty dollars. Nearly every family made snow shoes and a sale was found for some at prices ranging from five to seven dollars.

A number of natives obtained employment at the placer mines in the summer time at wages which averaged four dollars a day, and board. T

The trapping consists of red, white, blue, and cross foxes, mink, marten, ermine and muskrat. It is seldom that a native makes a hundred dollars trapping in a year. The average is far less.

There was an abundance of fish in the past year, but there was <sup>but</sup> little demand for same. Salmon sold at about five cents apiece for dog feed. Fresh fish sold for ten cents a pound at the mining camps.

The hunting season was a successful one. Over a hundred caribou and mountain sheep were killed as well as over a dozen black and brown bears. Bear skins

were valued at from four to six dollars, sheep skins at four dollars, and caribou skins at six dollars.

These hunting expeditions are encouraged by the "missionaries" and traders, who buy the skins, but I am of the opinion that if the natives would remain and work for wages at the mines, their families would be materially better off and the morals would improve as certain young men (natives) make a practice of seducing the wives of those who are away hunting. The hunting grounds are so far distant that the flesh is nearly all wasted, or used for dog feed, so very little comes back to the family except the skins and sinew.

### Personal Cleanliness.

We discovered that a great number of the children had lice, so we had them report on Saturdays on several occasions. Their heads were washed, hair combed and blue ointment was applied. After this the children took great pride in keeping free from lice. The parents also took more interest in the matter.

We had the children report from time to time as to whether they had bathed themselves or

had washed their clothes the preceding week.

We made a tour of every house in the village, weekly, and usually found that the house had been scrubbed and put in order for our expected visit. We made it a point to scrub our own floors weekly, and to wash our linen weekly, and often took occasion to remind the natives of the same.

In the springtime the various cess-pools, fish-caches, seal-oil caches and other receptacles of filth thawed out. The snow-banks formed great pools of filthy water. I cut drains to free the school-house, and called a meeting of the natives to devise ways and means of rendering the village more sanitary. Before anything was done, we were flooded by the river, and all the garbage was well disposed of. We very narrowly escaped, as a few more inches rise in the river would have carried the ice over the bank, and would have ground the houses to pieces. The location of the school house is not a safe one.

COPY

Regarding morals, the conditions have imp-

proved greatly. I reported one case of adultery and bigamy to the District Superintendent and Judge Moran. I was pleased that steps were taken in the affair, as the example had a bad effect on the natives. I successfully used my good offices to effect reconciliations between married couples who had been estranged. (I performed one marriage ceremony.)

After the departure of the missionary I conducted religious services for the natives, at least twice a week. The white men, who had been driven away from the church by the persecution of the missionary, attended my services, the natives made up their internal feuds, and remained in the vicinity of the school, instead of scattering as they were accustomed when the missionary went on his five month vacation to Kotzebue. Thus the year ended with the best feeling existing between all parties, since the first trouble the school was involved in.

### Wood.

Prior to my term, wood had been obtained for the school by using dead timber, or

pulling down old, miners cabins. The supply was, in this way, exhausted for a radius of four miles. When I arrived I found about twelve cords of rotten wood for the winters supply. I had considerable work in securing some more, but through the kindness of one of the leading natives, I secured the services of four men who cut me the amount I needed. After this, in the spring when food became scarce, I had no difficulty in having a large quantity of green wood cut and piled up to season for the next year. I was able to use some of this wood in the Spring and found it far superior to the punk I was forced to burn in the winter. A years supply should be kept on hand to prevent the government from being held up for exorbitant prices.

### Reindeer.

I have taken great interest and the reindeer and spent considerable in the fall, when there were but few pupile, in examining the various pastures that were recommended to me by the best informed natives. It was evident to me that through selective breeding, as much could be done for the improvement

of the reindeer, as has been possible to improve other lines of live stock. White and mottled reindeer skins command twice the price of dirty brown ones. Now, unless brown reindeer have some special quality, such as superior size, or hardness, it is clearly a loss to breed such animals. However this type of animal forms a large part of this herd, and many others. The reindeer number at present only a small fraction of what they will be in the course of years, so if steps are taken now to improve the type of deer, we can accomplish our task easier and better than after the deer multiply. Again the caribou is said to excel the reindeer in many points. If this is so, it shows that the reindeer has degenerated on account of in-breeding, and needs new blood to be introduced into the herds. As we have types of beef and of milk cattle, I think that strains of reindeer could be created which would excel in the quality for which they were intended. We might have milk deer, venison deer, and sled deer types. The horns on the deer are a superfluity and the cause of ~~some~~ **COPY** and broken bones. I think they should be removed,

although I have been warned to be careful in experimenting on this line, because it was dangerous, and not believed to be successful. I think selective breeding would produce a hornless variety of reindeer that would correspond with the Galloway and Polled Angus breeds of cattle. I believe that castration by means of the knife should replace the method now in vogue. I have made some experiments along this line, and was so successful that the apprentices have, without any instruction from myself, adopted this method when operating on any of their own deer.

The deer are infested in the springtime with grubs in their flesh which renders the skin and meat alike worthless. This affliction is similar to that termed "warbles" in cattle. I think this disease could be treated successfully, if experiments were conducted for that purpose.

I am satisfied that the methods of breaking sled deer by the apprentices is inferior to the methods of the white men who have trained and worked sled deer.

To accomplish the work as above outlined, **COPY** a station should be established in which one person

Could give the subject his entire time for a period of years. For the present I think that much good could be accomplished by castrating all the male fawns during two successive years. During the third year all the males except of a desirable type should be castrated. At regular intervals interchanges of males should take place between herds.

The deer have done well the past year, and I have inspected the herd each month when it was possible. The loss of fawns was less than usual. The apprentices have improved wonderfully in the manufacture of sleds, harness and in general efficiency.

### Medicine

It is with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction that I can report that I have successfully treated every case that I have had charge of.

Three persons died in this neighborhood, one of old age, one of consumption and one of heart failure. I had none of these under my treatment.

A large number of children were born, and all lived. During the preceding three years, **COPY** mortality averaged eleven a year. I attribute my

success to a good understanding of the elements of biology and chemistry, instruction under a skilled surgeon and a long experience in treating natives in many countries. Natives who have been under treatment of other teachers and missionaries in this region have come to me and I have afforded them relief in a very short time. In spite of my success I had my work greatly interfered with by the person whom I superseded.

respectfully your humble servant  
Fred M. Siskler