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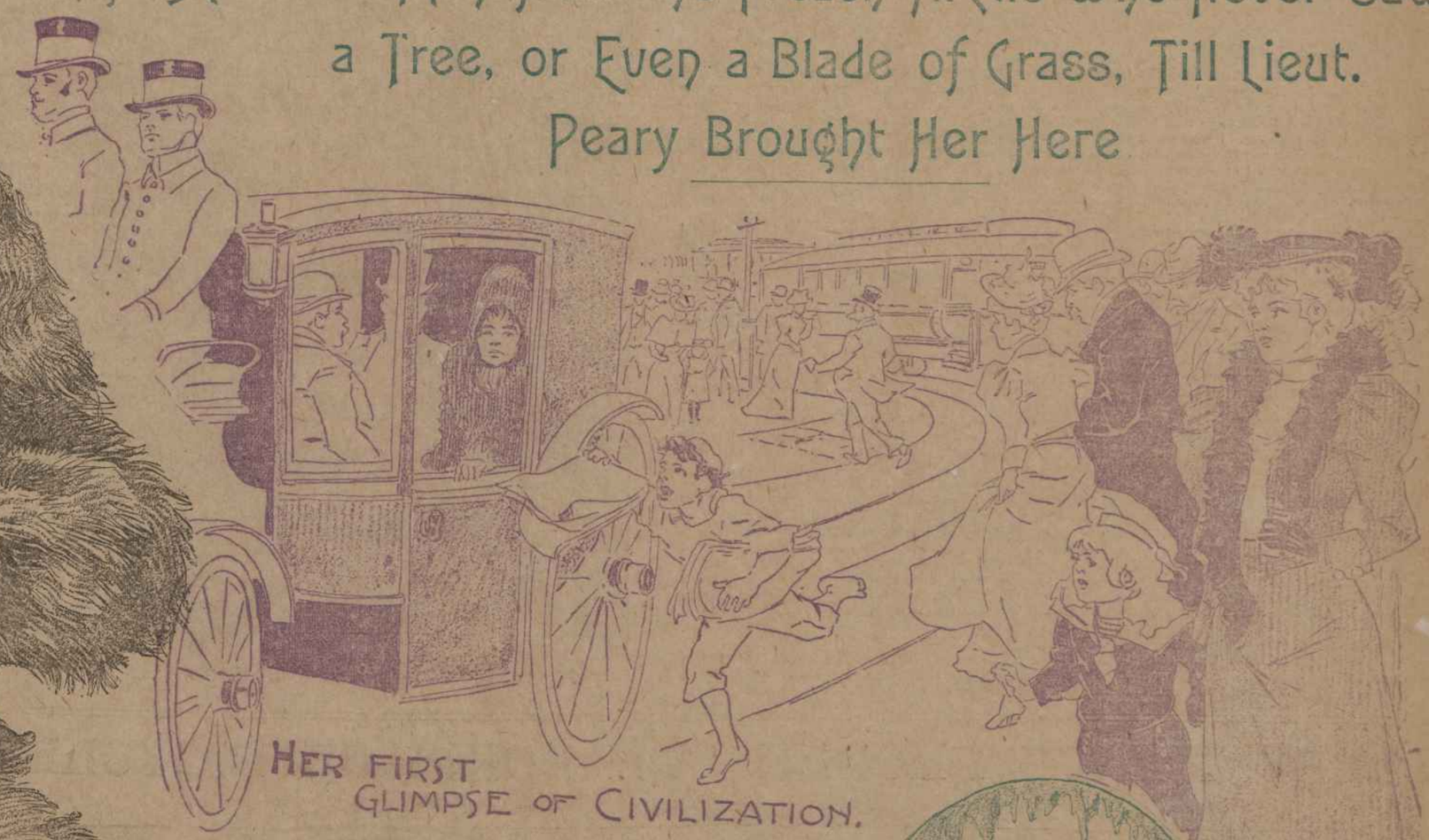
QUEEREST VISITOR WE EVER HAD

A Young Eskimo Woman from the Frozen Arctic Who Never Saw a Tree, or Even a Blade of Grass, Till Lieut. Peary Brought Her Here

From an Oil Painting by Operti, Artist of the Peary Expedition.

Lieut. Peary's Young Eskimo Woman In Her Fur Costume Just as She Dressed on Her Trip Around New York as the Guest of the Journal.



HER FIRST GLIMPSE OF CIVILIZATION.

HER WINTER HOME

HER SUMMER HOME

The Journal Takes Ahtungnah Around Town and Exhibits New York to Her Wondering Eyes.

ONE golden afternoon last week I had a drive with the strangest woman that has ever visited New York. From her strange home in the frozen Arctic the marvels of civilization of New York burst upon her bewildered eyes last week.

This woman had never seen a house fashioned of brick and mortar—in fact, not even a tree nor a blade of grass.

She had never experienced the delights of shopping.

She had never worn that product of a modiste's art we call a dress.

She had never eaten a course dinner, nor, indeed, any dinner.

She had no conception of beauty as we know it. What a Fifth avenue belle pronounces "lovely" she describes as "so funny."

Perfumes are unknown and laces a mystery to this woman.

And, perhaps strangest of all, is the strange fact that she has never known that fell, familiar fiend, jealousy.

She does not know her age—happy woman! At least she cannot count it by the years.

She has never known either anger or happiness, so she says.

This curious woman lives in a house of hides in Summer and hut of Arctic ice in Winter.

She sleeps on the frozen ground, with a bear skin or a seal skin as a wrapping.

Her entrees, relishes and desserts are blubber, or seal or walrus meat.

She dresses in bearskin, and literally wears the breeches.

Night lasts for ten months, and day two months, in the queer land whence she comes.

They have an odd system of rotation of husbands in that land—a system of which my companion on the drive heartily approves.

Hers is a vague religion, and government exists not for her.

Her ideas of proprietary rights are positive, though mixed. She is firmly of the belief that all the world is Lieutenant Peary's; that all the women are his wives and all the men his children.

She is a Princess in her home land, having earned the title by dint of skill with her needle. Hers is a haughty spirit, for she is proud of her wealth, consisting of six dogs, and pities the poor women who have only one weak pug or poodle.

There is nothing in all New York which she would accept, were it offered her as a gift, unless—well, possibly—a bicycle.

Her name is Ahtungnah. Pronounce it slowly and phonetically as it is designed, and you will find it not unmusical. Ahtungnah came from her tupic home in the shadow of Mount York, the snowy wastes and white silences one hundred and fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle and five hundred miles from that elusive, much sought after North Pole. She may be the first woman to see that baffling point, for she came to New York on Lieutenant Peary's ship, Hope, and she will accompany his expedition among the ice floes next Summer. She came to New York because her husband, Nukta, is one of the hardy Lieutenant's friends and followers, and Nukta could not bear to leave her behind, and she is well pleased to see the big "settlement," with its many houses and its funny people. Already she is learning what a subtle, inexplicable thing is fascination, for her contempt for New York is mingled with an interest which she cannot quite understand.

Ahtungnah's home is in a basement room in the west wing of the Museum of Natural History, in Central Park. It is a long, narrow, well lighted room, with a huge, roughly constructed bed of boards, a row of shelves which hold the few extra garments of which she and her companions happen to be possessed. There are two or three box-like seats, which Keshu, the wealthiest and most voluble of the Esquimau colony, complains are not high enough for comfort. Four sharp-eared, sharp-nosed, wolfish looking dogs share the shelter of the room. At one end is a closet, which "Matt" Henson, Lieutenant Peary's man Friday, has converted into a pantry, where he keeps the stock of fresh beef and tea which form Ahtungnah's menu day after day, month after month, and year after year.

Ahtungnah was dressed in state for her drive. She still wore her native foot and leg clothing of sealskin kammaks, or leggings, with the rich, brown fur inside, but instead of the bearskin nanukas, ortrou sers, were an abbreviated pair of cassimere ones, which thoughtful "Matt" had secured from some forgotten wardrobe, and the fur shirt had given way to a blue, crocheted sweater, which, sans the hood, might have pleased the eye of the most fastidious of New York's fair cyclists. Her short, black mane gave evidence of a recent combing, and her face shone from a liberal application of soap. All of the little woman's three feet ten inches of stature and her eighty-five pounds was burnished for the occasion, and yet she had not the cleanly fragrance of the American girl fresh from the bath. "Matt" explained that the odor of the hides she wore on other than gala days was ineradicable, and for that fact he asked pardon. But Ahtungnah looked at me with the complaisance of one in whom the most carping could find no fault.

"Are the dogs ready?" questioned Ahtungnah.

She looked doubtfully at the pair of roans in waiting for us.

Was Ahtungnah afraid? Not at all. Ahtungnah was not afraid of anything in the world but the Kokoia. The Kokoia is the devil as he is known to Ahtungnah. She was not familiar with his sinister accomplishments, but she had heard her mother say he was feared by all wise women.

She sprang up in alarm when she touched the yielding cushions of carriage, but settled down again calmly when assured that the Kokoia had nothing at all to do with the springs. Ahtungnah had helped to draw the flopping, dying walrus's huge body to land. Why should she be afraid of any of the creations of Peary's strange, tall people?

The little woman with the strangely shapen face, like an inverted pear, the small, round, brown eyes, the copper-colored skin, in which was a dash of healthy read, the inconsequent nose and mobile mouth, sat in the carriage with the air of a Duchess. It was she who was conferring an honor. Was she not a Princess because she was the best seamstress in their settlement of eight tupics on Cape York? Did not her husband, Nukta, own more dogs than any man in the settlement except Keshu? What were these strange people of Peary's but big, blundering objects of disdain?

I showed Ahtungnah the objects of interest which I might have pointed out to a friend from the West.

The carriage bowled along the east side of Central Park until it reached the Obelisk.

Continued on Page Thirty.