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TIERRA DEL FUEGO IN 1898.

What do you do to keep out the Indians? I asked a man who has charge of 80,000 sheep in Tierra del Fuego the other night. "Do?" was the reply "Why we shoot them." "Sometimes we catch them and send them to the Catholic mission station on Dawson Island, but it is cheaper to kill them on sight." I have heard other men make similar statements. The Ona Indians of northern Tierra del Fuego are hunted like wild beasts. They are shot down without question when they are seen near the white establishments, and every big sheep station has its men who keeps a lookout for them. No account is made of such as are killed. There is practically no law in Tierra del Fuego, and, although both Argentina and Chile own portions of it, the greater part of it is as wild as was the United States at the time of Columbus.

The Indians feel much the same as the whites, they scruple not to send their arrows into them, and when they have the greater force they are not afraid to attack. Only a few months since two Chilean naval officers were surveying one of the smaller islands near here. They were killed by the Indians. The men, when found, were stripped and in one of them there were twenty-five arrows with glass heads. As a result of this warfare, it is difficult to see Onas outside the mission station on Dawson Island. I have met with almost none in my travels through the Strait of Magellan and along the northern coast of Tierra del Fuego. I passed one or two boat loads near the Isle of Clarence on the south of the strait and have seen some of the half civilized ones of the Catholic mission. I have, however, talked with the priests who are working among them and from them and other parties have gathered some news information about these little-known people. One of the Catholic fathers has very kindly given me some of his photographs, but these represent them in better clad than the average people of their kind.

The most of his pictures are of the Ona Indians, who are found in central and northern Tierra del Fuego. They are the most numerous of the three tribes about Cape Horn, according to the Chilean estimates numbering from 2,000 to 4,000, the other two being the Yaghans, of whom there are only 500, and who live almost entirely on muscles and shell fish.

Nearly all of these Indians go naked. Where they have been captured by the missionaries you find them wearing stray garments, but there is seldom a semi-civilized man among them who will not sell his whole suit for a plug of tobacco, nor a woman who would not in a driving snow storm take off all she has on and give it for a piece of red cloth or a string of bright beads. The Onas of the wilds wear a strip of guanaco skin over the shoulders tied on by

things bound over the chest. The men and women among them have breech cloths, but the children go naked, barring the coat of whale or fish oil with which they are liberally smeared. This oil serves to keep out the cold. Such as I have seen have shown no sign of shivering, although they live in the latitude of Labrador, and I, with my winter flannels and overcoat, am none too warm.

These Indians have been painted by travelers as wretched and miserable in the extreme. I do not find them so. They are sleek, fat and apparently well fed. Those I saw farther up in the Magellans had a perpetual grin on their faces, and both the Onas and the Yaghans, are, I am told, good natured. In traveling along the shores of Tierra del Fuego you come every now and then to an Onas house. It is merely a hole in the ground with a wind break of branches or trees bent down and tied together over it. This hole is about three feet deep and is just big enough to contain the Indian and his family. They use it chiefly at night crawling in and cuddling up together with their dogs lying about and over them for warmth. Such fires as they make are for cooking and are in front of, and outside, the sleeping hole. They do not like to stay more than a night or so in the same place, as they have an idea that the devil, or evil spirit, is after them, and they must move on or he will catch them.

The Onas are of a good size, though not the giants that some travelers have painted them. The men are, as a rule, about six feet tall and the women about five feet five. The Yaghans are much smaller and the Alacalufes are between the two. Were it not for their stomachs the Onas might be said to be well formed. They are straight, deep-chested and muscular. The women when young are plump and well-rounded, with fine necks and breasts. They are all, however, great gluttons, and they sometimes gorge themselves so that their stomachs are stretched like a drum head and extend out into pot-belliedness. Their skins are lighter than those of most of our Indians. They have high cheek bones, flat noses and straight, dark eyes, with rather full, sensual lips. Their hair is straight; it is black, and with the men is singed close at the crown, forming a sort of tonsure. The women let their hair grow and it hangs down over their shoulders. The men do not begin to have beards until late in life, and as they do not like to appear old they usually pull out the stray hairs on their faces. An Onas seldom has a beard before he is thirty-five or forty.

The Onas do not apparently care whether their food is fresh or not. Before the advent of sheep farming in Tierra del Fuego they lived on fish, fungi and guanacos. Guanacos are wild animals which look like a cross between the deer and the camel, and are of the size of a very large sheep. The Onas run them down with their dogs and follow them also on foot. They are very fast runners, and take

steps, so an Argentine man who lived on the islands says, six feet apart. When they kill more game than they can eat they bury the left-overs in the bed of a stream and come back a week or so later and eat them. This is especially so of the sheep they steal of the whites. They drive them off in flocks of five hundred and more, get them away into the forest and have a big feast. They then break the legs of the sheep remaining and drown them in some deep stream, leaving them there until the chase of the farmers is over, when they go back for another fat but now well-rotted feed. They eat the decayed flesh of stranded whales and fish which they find upon the shore, but, as a rule, do not go out in canoes to fish, as do the Yaghans and the Alacalufes. They also make traps to catch game. They use only bows and arrows in war and for hunting. The arrows were originally tipped with flint, but now they are pointed with pieces of glass made out of the broken whisky and wine bottles thrown out by the steamers passing through the Strait of Magellan. The Ona women weave very pretty rush baskets of a bowl shape. They cure the skins which their husbands bring in from the hunt and sew them together with sinews into robes or rugs. These Onas, I am told, have no Great Spirit or God, like our Indians. Just what their religion is I am unable to learn. They believe in polygamy, one man having several wives, which he buys of their fathers at as low a price as he can.

Before the whites came here there were something like three thousand of the Yaghan Indians. They were described by sea captains as a healthy, hearty, naked, savage race. The English established a mission in south Tierra del Fuego and persuaded them to put on clothes. It is claimed that with the wearing of clothes came consumption and pneumonia, and that this has reduced their number to less than 500. The head of the mission among these Indians is the Rev. Thomas Bridges, who has a big sheep farm in the south. He has an Indian settlement where the people live in houses and where they farm on a small scale. The information I have about these Yaghans comes almost entirely from Mr. Bridges. He says they live in groups of about thirty families. They are not cannibals, as has been charged, and they do not eat raw meat. Their principal food consists of mollusks, fish, sea calves, birds, strawberries and fungi. Their women cook these things in different ways. They cook birds by placing them on the coals and putting red-hot stones inside of them. They bake eggs by breaking a small hole in one end and then standing them upright in the embers before the fire, turning them round and round to make them cook evenly. They cook and eat the blood of animals, but, as a rule, eat their vegetables raw. The women are the fishers and the men do the hunting. The men make canoes, but the women paddle them. They are good boatmen.