

# SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE ARCTIC

## PART V.—OUR FIRST DISCOVERY OF NEW LAND

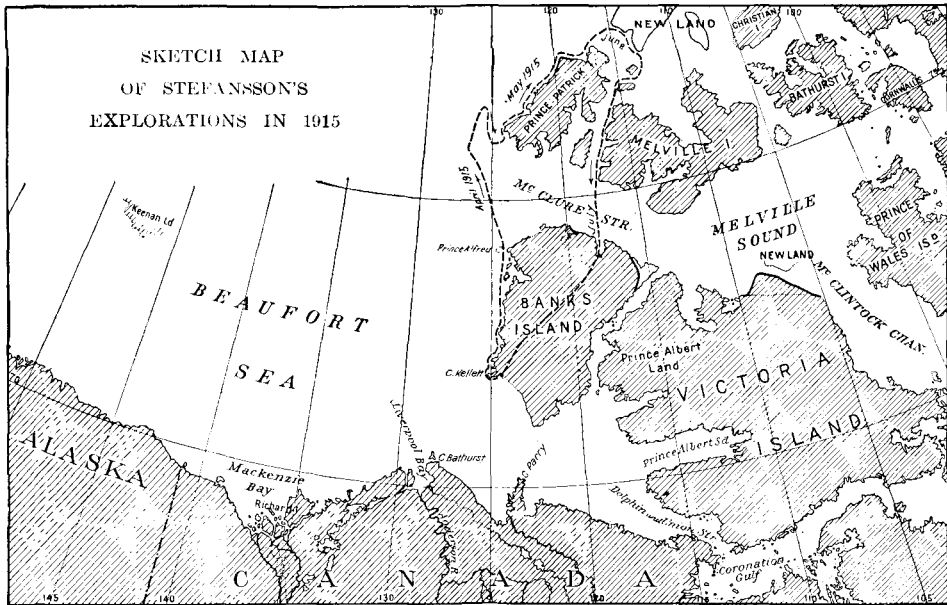
BY VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON

LIKE all of our Arctic winters, the winter of 1914-15 was spent in getting ready for the exploratory work of the coming spring. The previous summer the *Mary Sachs* had brought to Cape Kellett at the northwest corner of Banks Island an outfit of such things as we still had left after the loss of the *Karluk*, but our good sledges were gone, and consequently Captain Bernard of the *Mary Sachs* occupied most of his time making sledges. Much of the material for these was obtained by dismembering the ship to secure the hardwood and iron. Our pemmican had also gone with the *Karluk*, and for that reason our steward, Baur, and others spent many hours slicing up and drying beside the galley stove the meat of polar bears, seals, and caribou, which the rest of us killed either at sea or on shore and brought to the camp. The *Sachs* had not brought us much fuel, so that one or two men had to busy themselves continually in searching up and down the coast, under the snow, for pieces of driftwood and hauling these home, sometimes a distance of fifteen miles.

With this work going on, Natkusiak and I nevertheless found time for an exploratory crossing of the south end of Banks Island. As we made this in the darkness of midwinter, first-class geographic results were not to be expected. Our main purpose was, in fact, to pay a visit to the Eskimos whom we supposed to be wintering on the southeast corner of the island. The supposition that we should find them there was based on the verbal statements of these Eskimos themselves when, in the

spring of 1911, I had met them on their return from Banks Island on the ice of Prince Albert Sound. Eskimos may be as truthful as any people, and are so in fact; nevertheless they frequently give wrong impressions to one another and to those most conversant with them because of their fatal lack of exact words for time and distance. They cannot count above six and have to describe distances by such indefinite terms as "not far" or "very far," and with regard to time their vocabulary is almost equally vague. We now know that the portion of the winter spent by them on the southeast corner of Banks Island is not January, but March and April.

But not knowing it then, we devoted much of December to a hazardous crossing of the mountains back of Nelson Head. The danger is not in the mountains themselves, although precipices are frequent, but in the darkness which makes every precipice treacherous. Because of the elevation of the land to perhaps fifteen hundred or two thousand feet, and because of the open water which prevails most winters around the south end of the island, every breath of wind that blows off the sea is converted into clouds of fog when it strikes the colder hills. The daylight is negligible; and the moonlight, which comes to you commonly enough first through clouds that are high in the sky and later through a mass of fog that immediately envelops your party, is a light which enables you to see your dog-team distinctly enough, or even a black rock that may be one hundred yards away, but is scarcely better than no light at all upon



ROUTE OF STEFANSSON'S SUMMER EXPLORATIONS  
(1915) AND HIS FIRST DISCOVERY OF NEW LAND

the snow at your feet. So far as your eyes tell you, you never know whether you are going to step on a bank of snow or into an abyss. Walking ahead of the team in light of this sort, I used to carry a pair of large, dark-colored deerskin mittens. After throwing one of them about ten yards ahead of me, I would keep my eyes on it till I got within three or four yards and then throw the other mitten, so that most of the time I could see the two black spots on the snow ahead of me separated by five or six yards of whiteness. When falling snow or a blizzard still further complicated the situation we used to remain in camp, sometimes two or three days at a time, unless we happened to be following a valley where there was no special danger of falling, but where we were merely inconvenienced by walking now and then against the face of a cliff.

Although the south end of Banks Island where we crossed it was no more than fifty miles in diameter, we undoubtedly traveled double that distance between December 22d and January 4th, when we reached the sea ice of De Salis

Bay. In another five days we had examined the whole southeast coast of the island and had crossed Prince of Wales Straits to Victoria Island without discovering any signs of human beings. This is the one time of the year, as we well understand, when traveling is dangerous if you rely upon game for your food and fuel. The game is there, of course, no less than at other seasons, but the darkness is a great handicap in securing it. We found the ice in the vicinity of Victoria Island not to be in motion, and as there consequently was no open water, the chance of getting bears was less here than elsewhere. Seals could be secured only through the tedious method of having the dogs discover breathing-holes and then waiting for the seals to come up, a method where the element of chance plays such a part that no one should use it where other methods are available.

Instead, therefore, of stopping to hunt in Victoria Island when our food-supplies began to run low, we turned back to Banks Island toward the open water we had seen as we followed the coast

cast from De Salis Bay. The reason they did begin to run low was that we had had to cross a range of mountains in a condition of light which compelled us to climb steep ridges and make comparatively precipitous descents into valleys, as the daylight was insufficient for the selection of better courses. Hauling a load was impossible, for where a light sled could travel a loaded one could not be moved by the combined strength of men and dogs. I had felt certain also of discovering Eskimos who in all probability would have had stores of food from which to supply us.

When we turned back from Victoria Island I had no immediate intention of giving up the search after Eskimos, but expected merely to replenish our food stores at De Salis Bay. January 12th was our first day of hunting. We had, on a clear day at noon, daylight enough to see the sights of the rifles for about two hours, although not clearly enough for good shooting. It is never really safe to leave a camp unguarded, for the dogs must be tied to protect them against one another, and when they are tied a bear may very well come and kill one or more of them. We took the chance, however, left the camp to itself, and went in different directions to search for game. That day I had no luck, but Natkusiak killed one seal.

For three days after that both of us continued to be unsuccessful in our hunting. Both of us killed seals, but the ice was moving so rapidly that before we could secure them they had been buried under heaps of crushing ice. The tracks of polar bears were numerous, and it was only a question of time when one was certain to be encountered. On the fourth day of the hunt I had just killed a seal and secured it when I looked over my shoulder to see three bears approaching. It was already past noon and their yellowish-white outlines against the pure-white ice were so indistinct that they could not be seen except when they were moving, or at least their bodies could not, although their shiny black noses

were conspicuous. When bears are on the alert and when they either see something indistinctly or are expecting to see something the presence of which they suspect, they move their necks and their whole bodies to peer about in a peculiar snaky way. When the light is such that their bodies cannot be seen, but their black noses are conspicuous, they give, in their efforts to see the more plainly in the rough ice about the effect of railway men's signal lights that are being swung on a dark night. These particular bears made themselves conspicuous now and then by standing on their hind legs, which brought their profiles against the sky. My first two shots brought down a big bear and a small one, but the third inflicted apparently only a flesh wound and the bear that received it disappeared instantly in the rough ice. Natkusiak, who was about half a mile away, soon arrived. We skinned the two bears, and, making a sort of sledge of the skin of the small one, we loaded into it its own meat and dragged it home, allowing, perforce, the meat of the other bear and the seal to take its chances. These bears came just in time, for we had but a single meal left of the seal killed three days before. The following day we found where we had left them the other bear and the seal, although the ice, which was crushing in the neighborhood, might easily have buried the meat during the night.

One of our most serious losses when the *Karluk* sank was that of our kerosene-containers, which had been substantially made of galvanized iron. We were now forced to carry our kerosene in the ordinary five-gallon tins furnished by the oil companies. As kerosene is much more convenient than blubber for cooking in snow houses in winter, we were carrying a supply of it, but now found that our tin had sprung a leak and that nearly all the kerosene was gone. This mischance, together with the too rapid passing of the midwinter period, decided me to give up for that year the search for Eskimos and to return to the winter base at Kellett. We made the return with

such good luck as to weather that we were able to travel in one day as much as forty-five miles, a distance it had taken us seven days to make on the way east.

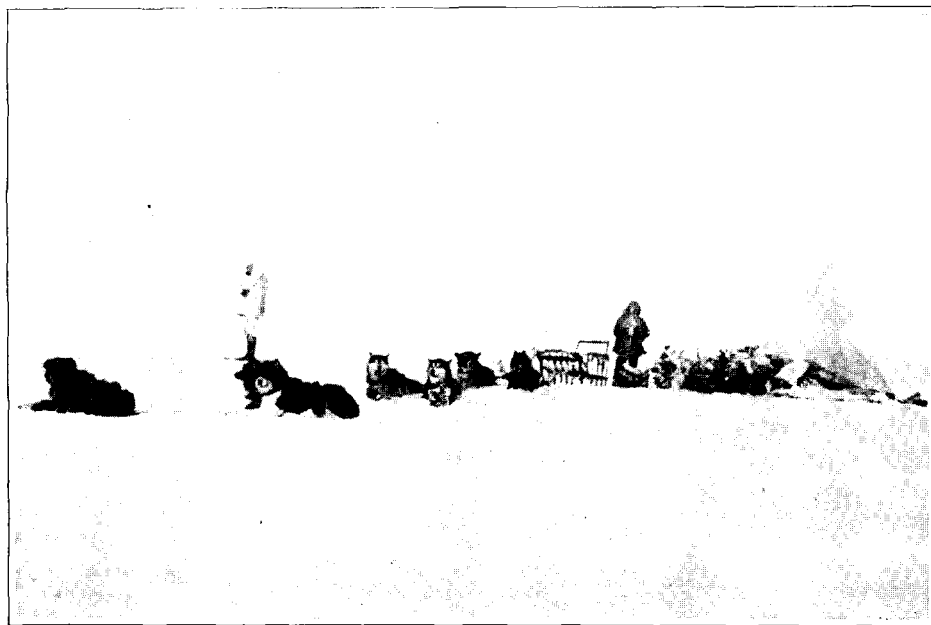
When we got back to Kellett we found that Mr. Wilkins had completed a series of tidal observations, and that Captain Bernard had prepared for us a thousand pounds of dog feed, by drying meat and mixing it with fat as required. He had also made two excellent sledges.

On February 9th the first advance ice party of the year left Cape Kellett under the command of Mr. Wilkins, and the rest of us followed a few days later. Our plan was to follow the west coast of Banks Island north about one hundred and fifty miles and then to cross McClure Strait to Prince Patrick Island and strike out on the ocean northwest from the southwest corner of that island.

Before leaving I had come to realize that we were facing a failure of the plans for that spring because of circumstances unpreventable, no matter how clearly they are foreseen. The various sorts of dog sickness are still as mysterious as were the African fevers in the time of

Livingstone. By Christmas-time our dogs at Kellett had begun to die, one by one. In some cases it was the fattest and the youngest dogs; in other cases the oldest and most decrepit. The only thing we could do was to isolate the affected animals from the healthy ones, and in some cases this may have helped, although one or two of the dogs that died appeared never to have had any contact with the ones that originally showed the disease. There are many theories about these diseases, and there may be some significance in the fact that we have never lost any dogs that have been living on caribou or other land game, but always dogs that have been living on seal meat.

When we finally got away from Kellett we still had two good dog-teams and a third poor one, which was really all we needed, for we had only two first-class sledges. But a day or two after starting we realized that we had a serious difficulty to contend with in addition to the dog sickness. It seems that the preceding autumn a certain amount of snow had first fallen upon the coast ice and



A SPRING CAMP ON THE NEW LAND



THE ARCTIC ISLANDS ARE CROWDED IN SUMMER  
WITH FLOWERS, BUMBLEBEES AND BUTTERFLIES

later a shower of rain had formed a skin of ice over the snow. On top of this soft snow had again fallen, but the thin layer of ice was left as a sort of roof over innumerable cavities and soft places underneath, so that every few steps a dog would break through and get the sharp, angular pieces of thin ice between his toes. Before we realized it nearly all our dogs had bleeding feet and some of them were incapacitated for work. The temperature also at this time was exceedingly low, averaging for a period of weeks forty-two degrees below zero. We did not mind the cold in general, and out at sea such cold is really an advantage, but now it prevented us from doing what we should have done had the weather been warmer—namely, tying boots upon the feet of the dogs to protect their pads from the cutting ice, which at this temperature we did not dare to do for fear the tight lashing around the legs might so interfere with the circulation of the blood as to cause freezing.

When we got to the northwest corner

of Banks Island we discovered that more kerosene-containers were leaking. To have kerosene is an undoubted convenience; and now the only hope of healing the feet of our dogs was to give them a good long rest. So while our sore-footed dogs were being healed by resting I sent Storkersen and Thomsen back to Kellett with a team of those dogs some of which we did not expect to use on the ice and all of which we could now protect with boots against the ice, as the temperature had become less severe. The result of these delays was that it was not until April 5, 1915, that we were finally able to leave Banks Island. It was then too late, in my opinion, for crossing to Prince Patrick Island, so we struck northwest from Cape Alfred.

Our party up to this time had consisted of seven men. But now I sent back Wilkins, Crawford, and Natkusiak, and the ice exploratory party of that year therefore consisted of Storkersen, Thomsen, Andreasen, and myself.

Because the season was already so



late, we took rather more risks on this journey than I consider generally justifiable in polar work. On April 10th, for instance, we camped at the southern edge of a level expanse of ice of unknown width. I examined it in the evening and found it about four inches thick and not strong enough to bear a sled, but that night we had an exceptionally hard freeze and the next morning the ice was between six and seven inches thick. This is quite thick enough for safe travel of loaded sledges if the area to be crossed is a limited one, and, no matter what the area, it is safe so long as the ice remains unbroken.

But ice of this thickness, as indeed of any thickness, may at any time be broken up by increase in the strength of a current or the sudden oncoming of a gale. If the ice is thick no great danger results, for then a cake of almost any size will be a safe refuge for men and dogs, but if six-inch ice commences to break up, then no cake is safe unless it is of great area; and under the strain cakes naturally break into smaller and smaller pieces. If, then, we were to find ourselves with a loaded dog-sled on a piece not much bigger than is necessary for the men and dogs to stand on, the cake would either tip on edge or actually sink under our weight.

It is not often that we have found perfectly level ice to be more than five miles across, and the morning of the 11th when we started out on this six-inch ice we expected to cross it in an hour. But we found it very sticky with the salt crystals on its surface, as indeed it was bound to be, and this interfered with our speed so that we did not travel at much more than three miles per hour.

In some places the ice had telescoped on the previous day and was of double thickness, but wherever it was of single thickness it bent perceptibly under our weight, and we never dared to stop except upon telescoped places.

We traveled hour after hour and the horizon was everywhere a straight line with the sky. It was exceedingly cold, and clouds of "steam" were seen rising here and there. These worried us a bit, for we thought they might be from opening leads and consequently danger signals showing that the break-up of our ice had commenced. Of course we realized that



A TYPICAL ESKIMO DOG

six-inch ice is so warm from the water underneath that it throws off clouds of vapor if the air is at a low temperature, and as we advanced the vapor clouds continually receded before us, showing that they did not come from open water, but were being formed from the ice. After about twenty miles of travel we sighted some heavy old ice upon which we found a safe camping-place for the night. Within an hour after we landed the thinner ice which we had left began breaking up, giving us excellent sealing water right by our camp, but giving us also an uncomfortable feeling that had the thin ice been five miles wider or had we started in the morning an hour or so later, this day might have proved the last day of our travels.

In our ice journeys, besides the astronomical observations which serve to tell us where we are, we take frequent soundings to learn the depth of the waters where we are traveling and the character of the sea bottom. For some two weeks we had a bottom that was clearly

uneven, for the water varied in depth from one hundred to two hundred fathoms. Comparison of our dead reckoning with our astronomical observations also showed that the ice we were traveling on was moving steadily to the southwest—a very inconvenient fact, as our hopes all lay to the northwest. There was a great deal of open water. When we found a belt of a quarter or half a mile of clear water lying across our path it took us only an hour or two to get over, for we were expert by this time in converting our sleds into boats by the use of our tarpaulins. But much more often the leads were filled with moving ice or with stationary ice that was not strong enough to walk on, but so strong that, had we attempted to break a way through it with our sled rafts, we should in half a dozen crossings have chafed holes in the canvas.

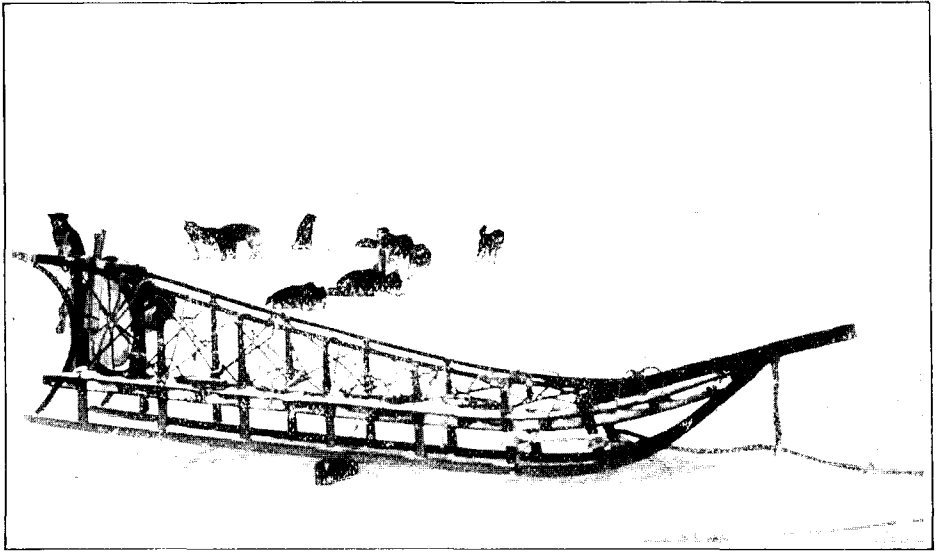
A delay beside a lead when the ice is not moving is one thing, and a delay when you know the ice is drifting in a direction opposite to your course is quite another. We took frequent chances in crossing leads on thin ice, and one of these crossings, on April 25th, came near ending in a serious accident. We realized

the risk and took certain precautions. Our main dependence being always rifles and ammunition, we carried half the ammunition and two rifles on each sled, and for an additional precaution I used to carry my own rifle on my back, and about fifty rounds of ammunition with it. Had we lost one sled we could still have continued with the other; and had we lost both, the fifty cartridges would probably have taken the four of us home, although exploration for the year would have been at an end.

The accident of April 25th resulted when we came to a strip of young ice about ten yards wide. As on all such occasions, I walked out upon it carefully, while the teams and men awaited the verdict. With my hunting-knife I made holes at three different places, and by putting my hand in the water found that the ice was about six inches thick. To those used to fresh water, ice of six inches seems a great thickness, and as a matter of fact a team of dray-horses and a heavy load could be taken across six inches of fresh-water ice. Salt-water ice is a different thing. A piece of it four inches thick, if you allow it to drop on any hard surface from a height of three or four



ICE BREAKING UP IN SPRING ON AN ARCTIC COAST



THIS SLED WAS HAULED BY SIX DOGS OVER LAND AND ROUGH SEA-ICE FOR FOUR YEARS

feet, will splash like a chunk of ice-cream instead of falling like a piece of rock as would glare ice of the same thickness. I knew this crossing was dangerous, but it was so short that I thought the dogs would probably be upon firm footing before the ice broke, if it did break.

The first sled crossed safely. It had been built by Captain Bernard according to a design of my own, with runners that rested on the ice for seven out of their twelve feet of length, so as to distribute the weight over a large area of ice. The other sled was of the typical Alaskan type, where the runners are bent somewhat rocking-chair fashion, to make the sled easier to turn and maneuver, and only two or three feet of the middle portion of the runners rest on level ice.

Andreasen was in charge of the leading sled, and, as it came across without difficulty, Storkersen and Thomsen anticipated no trouble with the second. They were walking along close to the stern end when I noticed the ice under them begin to bend. I shouted to them to get away from the sled, my idea being to remove their weight from the locality and to expose the ice to the weight of the sled only. But when they realized that

the ice was about to break their idea was to push the sled quickly over to the other side. Both of them took hold of the handle-bars and commenced pushing, when the inevitable happened. Their weight added to that of the sled broke the ice, after the dogs had landed on the firm part beyond, but when the front end of the sled itself had barely touched it. Before the ice had fully broken I had hold of the trace of the leading dog and Andreasen was at the bow of the sled. Storkersen and Thomsen escaped falling into the water by letting the sled go as it broke through, and the stern of it was immersed while the bow was held against the ice. It was doubtless not much more than over a second before we all had our hands on the front end of the sled, and not more than two or three till we had it out of the water, but it seemed much longer, and it was certainly long enough for imagining what our situation would be if we lost everything that was on the sled. Not a desperate situation necessarily, although we might have had to give up our work for the year at that point. As it was, we spent two days in getting rid of as much as possible of the ice that had formed on



the various articles that got into the water. After the accident we examined the ice and measured every piece that had broken, and found that at the very thinnest the ice was five and three-quarters inches thick. The temperature at the time of the accident was twenty below zero.

Long before this we had left the area of shallow soundings and were now traveling over an ocean of unknown depth, for our sounding-wire was only about half a mile in length and we never got bottom with it.

The ice behaved in a peculiar way. When the wind blew from the south or southwest, no matter how hard, it would merely stop moving, or, in the case of an extreme gale, would in the course of a day move a few miles to the north. But whenever there was a calm or when the wind was from the north-

this conclusion we tried to travel northeast directly into the teeth of the drift, but we lost as much ground at night as we gained in the daytime, and eventually turned toward shore. The current was so strong, however, that we were unable to reach land on Prince Patrick Island abreast of our turning-point, but were carried south, and were with difficulty able to land on the southwest corner near Land's End, on June 4th.

The west coast of Prince Patrick Island was explored in 1853 by a party under command of Lieutenant Meham, of McClintock's expedition. Meham tells us that no country could possibly be more barren or desolate. They found not a blade of grass nor a living creature, but gravel everywhere, and the land sloped so imperceptibly to the sea that they had to dig through the snow to ascertain whether they were on land or on ice.

In view of this and of the fact that we had several weeks before run out of kerosene for fuel and had finished our dog feed some time before that, it became necessary to talk over with the men the advisability of going on. We all knew that the world would approve if we were to turn home at this point, for it has been the rule in Arctic exploration that the traveling parties face toward home soon after half the provisions have been used with which they started from home, relying on the other half to take them back. It had been so with Meham

and with McClintock on this very coast; a portion of it remained unexplored because Meham's party on the south and McClintock's on the north had been forced by the partial exhaustion of their supplies to turn back toward their base on Melville Island. But I was delighted



ONE OF OUR BEST DOGS

Half mastiff and half Eskimo. Note the mosquitoes, which even the arctic regions are not free from in summer

west, the north, or the east, the ice kept moving steadily southwest. By the middle of May we had lost hope of making any notable journey to the northwest that year, for we were only one hundred miles offshore from the Prince Patrick Island coast. For a time after reaching

to find that all of us were agreed that no risk of life was involved in advancing into any portion of the Arctic without supplies at this time of the year. While we did not expect to find Meham wrong in saying that no living thing could be found on the coast of Prince Patrick Island, we felt that this would only mean that if our experience agreed with his, we should have to turn back to sea again, where, on the sea-ice and in the water, all of us knew that food could be secured. The plan of advancing north, therefore, had the enthusiastic support of all our party.

In following the coast northeastward we soon came to the conclusion that Meham's charting of it was by no means correct, but we also concluded that were we to attempt to revise it our results would not be much better than his, if at all. It was generally a question of light. There is much fog at this season, and Meham had evidently done a good deal of his mapping in fog, with the inevitable results. If we were going to attempt a revision of his work we should have to do part of our work in fog also, with a result that those portions of the coast where he had got sunlight would have been done by him better than we could do the same portion in fog; the only improvement we could hope for would be here and there where our luck in weather was better than his. Furthermore, no one can with reasonable ease make a map of this coast in winter, for the land slopes so imperceptibly into the sea-ice that, so long as snow covers land and ice alike, their limits can be ascertained only by digging. A good map of this coast can be made only when the land is free of snow, in May or early June.

After following the coast north for a few days we had confirmed Meham's opinion of the absence of game. Accordingly, we went offshore about ten or twelve miles to where the land-fast ice meets the moving pack and where in the open lead we were able to secure seals. It is a curious fact, confirmed by the ex-

perience of other years besides this one, that bear tracks are absent in spring north of the south end of Prince Patrick Island. This is doubtless because seals in those latitudes are difficult for bears to secure on account of the peculiar ice conditions, although they are easily secured by the more skilful human hunter.

Because we traveled parallel to the land ten or twelve miles offshore, we found a series of small islands or reefs that had not been noticed by Meham. When finally we came to the portion of the coast which Meham and McClintock had been unable to explore in 1852, we loaded up our sledges with meat and blubber and proceeded toward shore. The coast turned out to be rather complicated and there were several little islands. It took us three days to complete the survey between the most northerly point reached by Meham and the most westerly reached by McClintock, who had been working from the opposite direction.

In a cairn at Cape McClintock, which is the northern extremity of Prince Patrick Island, we found a record left by McClintock sixty-two years before. It ends with the sentence, "I have searched the islands and reefs lying offshore to the northward," which recalls the tragic reason for McClintock's and most of the other expeditions that gave us our knowledge of the islands to the north of Canada. Theirs were not primarily voyages of geographic discovery; they were searching not for islands unknown since the beginning of time, but for men lost in the search for a Northwest Passage, the hundred and twenty men who made up the crews of Sir John Franklin's ships. As we now know, this portion of the search was being conducted and hope was still being maintained five years after the last of the men they were searching for had died.

It is a matter of curious interest that this record is dated P.M., June 15, 1852, and that we found it on June 15th, and in the afternoon, sixty-three years later.

June 17th, after taking the necessary



EXPLORING THE SOUTH-EASTERN COAST OF THE NEW LAND

astronomical observations to check up with those of McClintock, we started north, and after traveling twenty miles discovered new land. In order to keep a more careful account of the various courses by which we traveled, it was my custom at this time to follow several miles behind the sledges and to take frequent compass bearings of them, as well as, in this case, the outlying islands north of Cape McClintock so long as they remained in sight. After making what was considered a reasonable day's travel, the men camped with me about five miles behind them. After camp had been pitched and while the others were cooking supper, Storkersen climbed an ice hummock about forty feet in height just back of the camp, and with his glasses sighted to the northeast a new land which he could see at once was of considerable extent and about fifteen miles away. I was watching him through my glasses, and when I saw him shouting and signaling to the other men I knew that a discovery of some sort had been made. I climbed the highest avail-

able hummock in my vicinity, but it was not high enough, and I did not see the land until some two hours later, when, after taking all the necessary compass observations, I arrived at camp.

My men were all Norwegian, and as any one may see from reading the books of Nansen and Amundsen, Norwegians are prone to the celebration of any sort of event in any way possible. In this case they had cooked some malted milk they had saved for no particular reason, and had discovered some biscuit crumbs in the corner of a box in which we had long been carrying something else, and had made the two into a sort of stew. I don't think any of them considered this any better than seal meat, but, since seal meat was the food of every day, stew was a sort of celebration.

June 19th we landed at what I have called Cape Murray, in honor of James Murray, our oceanographer and the friend and Antarctic traveling companion of Shackleton. Murray lost his life on the ice near Wrangell Island on the *Karluk* branch of our expedition. Dur-

ing the following two years, as we gradually explored this land and located its extreme points, we named cape after cape for the scientists and sailors who lost their lives with Murray or not long after.

When I was exchanging my fur clothes at Nome, Alaska, in 1912, for a suit of the well-advertised American kind, the clerk who sold them to me said that he could not understand how I could waste five years of my life in the Arctic. That is one point of view and a common one. This young man had spent the same five years behind a clothing-store counter. Colonel Roosevelt had spent them in African travel, in the writing of books, and in the making of history. He said to me a month or two later that he envied me my five years in furs and snow houses, in new lands and among new people. That was another point of view. And a third was mine, for I in turn envied him his power and achievements and the character which had made them possible. But while I concede that accident plays so large a part in determining the momentous or trivial nature of geographic discovery that the greatest geographic discoverers must for that reason be ranked lower than the great men in other fields, still there is much to be said for exploration as a career, so long at least as there remains possible discovery of lands previously undreamed of. The tourist who crosses the Atlantic for the first time will spend hours on deck awaiting the predicted rising of Ireland above the rim of the sea, and feels then, unless he is neither young nor imaginative, a thrill which he does not forget the rest of his life. Yet Ireland to the tourist or America to the immigrant can never be what San Salvador was to Columbus, and, though you may not for the thrill of San Salvador be willing to change places with Columbus, you may well envy us who are still alive our first sight of the new land and our first landing upon it. While you may think what you will about the greatness of the achievement, the permanence of it cannot be

denied. The next generation and the next will find that land upon their maps and, if they care to visit, they will find it there bounded by its ice-covered sea. If it is not an important, it is at least a tangible, contribution to the world's knowledge of itself.

Summer was fast approaching when we reached the new land on June 19th. There was snow on most of it, but some of it was bare and there were ponds and puddles here and there, although the rivers had not opened. We found lemmings, which are a sort of bob-tailed mouse, running about; several species of birds had arrived and their nesting was about to commence, and there were tracks of caribou and of wolves and foxes. The caribou had not come from the south, for it is another one of the many pieces of misinformation about the north that the caribou migrate south in the fall and north in the spring. This may be true in some places, but it is not true in others, and in general the same islands that are inhabited by caribou in summer are inhabited by them in winter.

The wisdom of the fox is not so evident as the saying is wide-spread, but the more I see of wolves the more respect I have for their intelligence, which is unique among the non-human inhabitants of the north. The second day on the new land I met a wolf that came running toward me at first, for he could not fail to mistake me at a distance for a caribou, but when he got within two hundred yards and could see me more plainly he realized my strangeness and, what is truly remarkable, inferred that I might be dangerous. This wolf could certainly never have seen a human before, and the only dark thing of size comparable to mine that he had ever seen must have been either a caribou or a musk-ox. The caribou are his prey, and while he seldom kills a musk-ox, he at least has no reason to fear that exceptionally clumsy and slow-moving animal. But at two hundred yards this wolf paused and, after a good look that

satisfied him that I was something new in his experience, commenced to circle me at that distance to get my wind. When he got it it took him but a sniff or two and he was off at top speed. The similarly unsophisticated foxes of this region will commonly run within ten or fifteen yards of you and follow you around for miles, barking like a toy dog following a pedestrian.

The season was so far advanced that, after following the south coast of our island for three days and determining that it was of considerable size, we turned south on June 22d. On our way toward Melville Island we completed the mapping of Fitz William Owen Island, which had been sighted by McClintock, discovered a little island only about five miles in diameter, and followed the west coast of Melville Island south. Here we killed two musk-oxen as well as some caribou, and saw a number of musk-oxen that we did not disturb.

The 4th of July we left Melville Island and in six days crossed McClure Straits to the Bay of Mercy on the north coast of Banks Island. Here we stopped to rate our watches. The place is an exceptionally interesting one. It was here that McClure wintered two years with his ship, the *Investigator*, which he abandoned eventually, retreating with his men to another ship at Melville Island. As I learned from the Eskimos of Victoria Island on my previous expedition, the ship had been broken by the action of wind and ice some years after McClure left her, and all that we found to mark the place were a heap of coal and a great

many barrel-staves and fragments of packing-boxes, with here and there a piece of rusty iron.

We left our sledges at this point, cut up the tarpaulin that had served us so well in crossing many a lead of open water, and made it into pack-saddles for our dogs in which to carry meat and other heavy things, while we ourselves carried the bedding and other bulky articles. The journey south over Banks Island was delightful. The caribou were fat and were seen in large and small bodies here and there on the rolling green prairieland. We usually killed one toward evening and our party was large enough so that we consumed about a whole animal at each camp. There is no wood for fuel, but our knowledge of the botany of the country enabled us to pick grasslike plants that have a resinous substance so that they burn well even when wet from rain or fog. I am unable to see any great hardships in polar travel in winter, whether it be on sea-ice or on an uninhabited land, and am still less capable of seeing anything in the nature of hardship in a summer journey overland.

We arrived at Cape Kellett on August 9th to find everything well at the camp. But two days later Capt. Louis Lane with the *Polar Bear* arrived, bringing us the unbelievable news of the death of eleven members of our expedition at Wrangell Island in the spring of 1914, and the no less unbelievable news of the World War which had been raging more than eleven months when Captain Lane left the last telegraph point at Nome, six weeks before.

(To be concluded.)



## THE BOX-STALL

BY MARY HEATON VORSE

MRS. HUMMER stood in the soft dusk, at the remote doorway of the big room, and looked back at the appalling young scarecrow before her.

She swayed slightly from one foot to another, like an elephant at tether, Richard thought. He could not take his eyes from her. He knew he had no business to stare in this glassy, fixed sort of a way at old Hummer. Why old Hummer was the most familiar thing in the world. He could not remember when she had not been their housekeeper. Her sitting-room had always been his refuge from wrath. Yet this big, kindly woman seemed as improbable and as far removed from usual experience as finding a kindly cow gazing at one from one's bedroom door—cows and women being equally absent from German prison camps. How strange in turn he seemed to her he had measured by the tears that sprang to her eyes at sight of him.

So for a moment they stared at each other, not as though across a room, but as if trying to peer at each other over the intolerable cruelties of the past four years since he had run down the steps waving to them and shouting out a gay, "Well, Good-by, Hummer!"—bound for a trip down the Rhine before he went to Cambridge.

Hummer broke the silence with: "You'll have everything you need now for dressing, Mr. Ricky. You'll find your bath ready for you." She switched on the light from the door and hurried away, leaving him staring after her.

Ricky! He had forgotten all about that name. His mother's letters had always begun "My darling Boy," his father's with "Dear Richard." The last time he had ever seen it written was in a

letter, ever so long ago, from his cousin Dorothy.

"I have been trying for the last hour," she wrote, "to put down 'Dear Ricky'! but Ricky means out of door, and Surrey lanes, and getting into mischief, and all that part of you that can't be shut up in a German prison camp. They can't have shut up Ricky!"

They had not shut him up. Ricky was as dead as Richard's mother. The news of her death had come to him two years before, not with the clean, deep stab of grief, but as something still farther shutting him off from the life's reality, a window gone through which to look on the world, a thickening of the darkness around him. The news had come when he himself was ill, and when the horror of each individual discomfort of life crowded between him and the realization of grief.

Now, slowly, like a black and bitter tide, a numbing sense of loss invaded him. There came to his mind the words of a letter of his mother, written not long before her death. "It's the eternal silence of this house that's killing me, when I think that we used to scold you for the noise you used to make!" This silence that was killing him, too.

A stealthy grief wrapped itself about him. It was not his mother for whom he was grieving—not as one ought to; what he wanted was to be Ricky again. He wanted that, and that was the only thing he did want in life for the moment.

He walked to the glass which was let into the huge wardrobe, a piece of furniture taking up half the wall space, places for hanging on one side, drawers for every conceivable kind of clothes on the other, as solid and resourceful as the