

The Last Years of Arctic Work

By ROBERT E. PEARY, U.S.N.

THE kernel of an Arctic expedition of the present day is the sledge journey, whether the object of that expedition be the Pole, or the highest north, or the exploration of unknown Arctic lands. Such Arctic lands as are accessible to a ship have been charted long ago, and neither the Pole nor the highest north is likely to be reached directly by a ship. I recognize, of course, the possibilities of the drift method, as originated by Nansen, and fully appreciate the wonderful success of the "Fram's" voyage. On the other hand, however, contrast the dreary, helpless time that must be given to this method (time so wearing that even Nansen's enthusiasm succumbed to it, and drove him out prematurely to his work), and the probability that even the "Fram" would

Conger, and with others proceed north from there, either via Cape Hecla, or the north point of Greenland, as circumstances might determine.

I wanted to start the first division on the 15th February, the second a week later, and leave with the third March 1st; but a severe storm, breaking up the ice between Etah and Littleton Island, delayed the departure of the first division of seven sledges until the 19th.

Along the Northern Edge of the North Water.

The second division of six sledges followed on the 26th, and on March 4th I left with the rear division of nine sledges. Three marches carried us to Cape Sabine, along the curving northern edge of the "north water." Here a northerly gale with heavy drift de-

question of food for my dogs gave me no choice but to attempt an advance. At the end of four hours we were forced to burrow into a snow bank for shelter, where we remained till the next morning.

In three more marches we reached Cape von Buch. Two more days of good weather brought us to a point a few miles north of Cape Defosse. Here we were stopped by another furious gale, with drifting snow, which imprisoned us for two nights and a day. The wind was still bitter in our faces when we again got under way, the morning of the 27th, and the ice-foot became worse and worse, finally forcing us out on the broken pack. Cape Lieber was reached on this march. At this camp the wind blew savagely all night, and in the morning I waited for it to moderate before attempting to cross Lady Franklin Bay.

A Kill of Musk Oxen.

While we were waiting, the returning Eskimos of the first and second divisions came in. They brought the very welcome news of the killing of twenty-one musk oxen close to Conger. They also reported the wind out in the bay as less severe than at the Cape.

I immediately got under way, and reached Conger just before midnight of the 28th, twenty-four days from Etah, during six of which I was held up by storms.

The first division had arrived four days, the second two days earlier. During this journey there had been the usual annoying delays of broken sledges, and I had lost numbers of dogs.

The process of breaking in the tendons and muscles of my feet to their new relations, and the callousing of the amputation scars, in this, the first serious demand upon them, had been disagreeable, but was, I believed, final and complete. I felt that I had no reason to complain.

The herd of musk oxen so opportunely secured near the station, with the meat cached here the previous spring, furnished the means to rest and feed up my dogs. A period of thick weather followed my arrival at Conger, and not until April 2nd could I send back the Eskimos of my division.

The Choice of a Way.

On leaving Etah I had not decided whether I should go north from Conger via Cape Hecla, or take the route along the north-west coast of Greenland. Now I decided upon the latter. The lateness of the season and the condition of my dogs might militate against a very long journey; and if I chose the Hecla route, and failed of my utmost aims, the result would be complete failure. If, on the other hand, I chose the Greenland route and found it impossible to proceed northward over the pack, I still had an unknown coast to explore, and the opportunity of doing valuable work.

Later developments show my decision to be a fortunate one.

I planned to start from Conger the 9th of April, but stormy weather delayed my departure until the 11th, when I got away with seven sledges.

At the first camp beyond Conger my best Eskimo was taken sick, and the

following day I brought him back to Conger, leaving the rest of the party to cross the channel to the Greenland side, where I would overtake them. This I did two or three days later, and we began our journey up the north-west Greenland coast. As far as Cape Sumner we had almost continuous road-making through very rough ice. Before reaching Cape Sumner we could see a dark water sky lying beyond Cape Brewort, and knew that we should find open water there.

From Cape Sumner to the Polaris Boat Camp in Newman Bay we cut a continuous road. Here we were stalled until the 21st by continued and severe winds. Getting started again in the tail end of the storm, we advanced as far as the open water, a few miles east of Cape Brewort, and camped. This open water, about three miles wide at our end, extended clear across the mouth of Roberson Channel to the Grinnell Land coast, where it reached from Lincoln Bay to Cape Rawson. Beyond it, to the north and north-west, as far as could be seen, were numerous lanes and pools.

The next day was devoted to hewing a trail along the ice-foot to Repulse Harbour, and on the 23rd, in a violent gale, accompanied by drift, I pushed on to the Drift Point of Beaumont (and later Lockwood), a short distance west of the Black Horn cliffs.

The ice-foot as far as Repulse Harbour, in spite of the road-making of the previous day, was very trying to sledges, dogs, and men. The slippery side slopes, steep ascents, and precipitous descents, wrenched and strained the men and animals, and capsized, broke, and ripped shoes from the sledges.

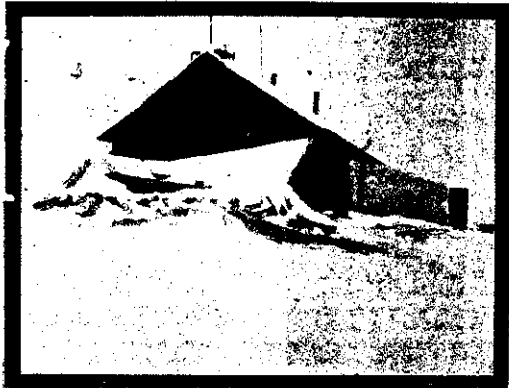
Open Water and a Moving Pack.

I was not surprised to see from the Drift Point igloos that the Black Horn Cliffs were fronted by open water. The pack was in motion here, and had only recently been crushed against the ice-foot, where we built our igloo.

I thought I had broken my feet in pretty thoroughly on my journey from Etah to Conger, but this day's work of handling a sledge along the ice-foot made me think they had never encountered any serious work before. A blinding snow-storm on the 24th kept us inactive in a camp which could well be called "Camp Woeful." When we awoke in the morning it was snowing heavily, and some three inches had already fallen. We could scarcely see across the ice-foot.

Eskimos Became Hysterical.

While we were drinking our tea one of the younger Eskimos fell in a fit, and the others became hysterical. I felt a peculiar dizzy sensation myself. Recognising the effect of our alcohol cooker in the close atmosphere of the igloo, with every aperture sealed by the newly-fallen snow, I hurriedly kicked out the door and a portion of the front wall. This relieved matters, and I sent three of the Eskimo outside to get the benefit of the fresh air, while I took the two worst ones in hand personally, and finally succeeded in quieting them down. After this they were "ankooting" all day. The open water ahead of us, the grinding pack close beside us, the bad weather, and the, to them, mysterious attack of the man



FORT CONGER, WHENCE TWO MAIN ROUTES LEAD NORTH.

not survive a second attempt—contrast this with the quick, effective spurt of the Duke of Abruzzi, which, in a single year, placed him ahead of Nansen. The man who can so utilise his personnel and material as to accomplish a march of 500 miles each way over the polar sea will win the Pole, for we know now that the attainment of a base within that distance of the Pole is a matter only of time, patience, and money.

The Longest Sledge Journey in the Arctic Circle.

It was in the spring of 1900, in pursuance of a definite and coherent plan of Arctic exploration, under the auspices of the Peary Arctic Club of New York that the sledge journey, which is the subject of the following pages, was made. Though the start was made some 350 miles south of the starting points of previous expeditions in this region, a point 150 miles beyond their farthest was attained, the northern extremity of the Greenland Archipelago; the last of the remaining Arctic land groups reached and rounded, and the most northerly known land in the world (probably the most northerly land) achieved.

This journey, in respect to latitude covered and distance in a direct line from start to finish, is the longest of all sledge journeys within the Arctic Circle. The air-line distance from start to finish was such that, had my starting point been in the same latitude as that of Abruzzi, it would have taken me to the Pole; or had my starting point been in the same latitude as Nansen's, or on the northern shore of Grinnell Land, it would have carried me beyond the Pole.

Northward in Three Divisions.

My general programme for the spring work of 1900 was to send three divisions of sledges north as far as Conger. From Conger I would send back a number of the Eskimos, retain some at

tained me for two days. Three more marches in a temperature of 40deg. F. brought me to the box house at Cape D'Urville. Records here informed me that the first division had been detained here a week by stormy weather, getting away only on the 4th, the day I left Etah; while the second division had left but two days before my arrival. I had scarcely arrived, when two of the first division Eskimos came in from Richardson Bay, where one of them had severely injured his leg by falling under a sledge. One day was spent at the D'Urville house drying our clothing, and on the 13th I got away with seven sledges on the trail of the other divisions, the injured man returning to Sabine with the supporting party.

I hoped to reach Cape Louis Napoleon on this march, but the going was too heavy, and I was obliged to camp in Dobbin Bay, about five miles short of the Cape.

The next day I hoped, on starting, to reach Cape Fraser, but was again disappointed, a severe wind storm compelling me to halt a little south of Hayce Point, and hurriedly build snow igloos in the midst of a blinding drift.

All that night and the next day and the next night the storm continued. An early start was made on the 16th, and in calm but very thick weather we pushed on to Cape Fraser. Here we encountered the wind and drift full in our faces, and violent, making our progress, from here to Cape Norton Shaw, along the ragged ice-foot, very trying.

The going across Scoresby and Richardson Bays was not worse than the year before; and from Cape Wilkes to Capt Lawrence the same as we had always found it. These two marches were made in clear but bitterly windy weather.

Imprisoned by Storms.

Another severe northerly gale held us prisoners at Cape Lawrence for a day. The 20th was an equally cruel day, with wind still savage in its strength, but the



CAPE LAWRENCE IN MAY, LOOKING NORTH, BY THE LIGHT OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN.