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THE VOYAGE OF THE "KARLUK," AND ITS TRAGIC ENDING

Ernest F. Chafe, Corporal, Newfoundland R.

THE *Karluk*, which carried the expedition, sailed from Esquimalt, British Columbia, 17 June 1913, under the command of Captain Robert Bartlett, who was famous the world over since he commanded Peary's ship the *Roosevelt*, and sledged over the ice with Peary until within less than 100 miles of the North Pole. As we steamed out of Esquimalt Harbour we were cheered by hundreds of friends and citizens who gathered along the water-front. The different ships also gave us a good send-off in the usual way, by blowing their whistles and dipping their flags as we passed by. Mr. Stefánsson was aboard when we sailed, but as he had other business to look after in connection with the expedition, he left us a few miles outside of the harbour and returned to Victoria by one of the many launches which accompanied us till after dark.

From Victoria to Wrangell we went through what is known as the "inside passage," and it would not be fair to Vancouver Islanders if I were to go on with my story without a word of praise for this beautiful inside passage. From Wrangell we went outside, going by way of Unimak Pass to Nome, at which place we arrived on July 8, after a passage of twenty-one days. Mr. Stefánsson, who remained behind in Victoria to finish up the business of the expedition, arrived in Nome a few hours later, by way of Seattle, and was surprised to see us lying at anchor, as he had expected to be there before us. We had quite a bit of repairing to do to our engines and steering-gear, and this, with other things (such as taking on coal, water, and provisions), occupied five days. But as soon as we were ready we went to Port Clarence for shelter, for, as Nome has no harbour or shelter of any kind, but lies right open to the sea, it is not a pleasant place to be in when a storm comes on, especially the way we were loaded, with our decks piled up everywhere with sacks of coal, oil, vegetables, dogs, etc. We lay at Port Clarence for nearly two weeks waiting for Mr. Stefánsson, who was in Nome supervising the outfitting of the schooners *Alaska*, *Mary Sachs*, and *North Star*, which constituted the southern part of the expedition, and which were to explore round Coronation Gulf, survey the islands and mainland about the mouth of the Mackenzie, chart channels, study the natives, and prospect for minerals, especially copper. The southern part of the expedition was under command of Dr. Anderson.

We left Port Clarence late in July, and a few days later crossed the Arctic Circle. We stopped by Point Hope a few hours for the purpose of purchasing dogs and other material needed for Arctic work. We also took on board two Eskimos here. They were young men, about twenty and twenty-five, and could speak fairly good English. On August 1 we sighted

the ice, and were soon forcing our way through it. On August 5 we arrived off Point Barrow, the most northerly point of Alaska. Owing to the heavy ice inshore we could not get nearer than 3 miles from the Point. Mr. Stefánsson went ashore with a sledge and a dog-team. He bought some more dogs and skin boats, which were brought on board by the natives. He also hired one Eskimo and one Eskimo family—consisting of a man, woman, and two children. This man was one of the greatest native hunters of Alaska, while his wife was a great worker, and made skin boots and clothes for the crew. We also took on board here a Mr. Hadley, who had lived and traded with the natives at Point Barrow for twenty-five years. He was a man of fifty-four years, but was very active for one of that age. He looked after the dogs and made sledges. His long experience in the Arctic made him a very useful companion, and of great value to us later on in the expedition.

On August 6 we left Point Barrow, and it was here the *Karluk* encountered the first difficulties of her trip. The pack-ice was very heavy, and the leads were few and small, making progress very slow for our ship, which bravely bucked her way through the pack till August 15, when we found ourselves imprisoned and held helplessly in the relentless grip of the vast floe from which she never was liberated. We did not, however, realize the gravity of our situation at the time, still hoping that a lead would open and permit us to pass on our way and escape from our—as we thought—temporary imprisonment.

At this time we were at Camden Bay, about 75 miles west of the international boundary-line between Canada and Alaska, and 20 miles off shore. The weather was clear and cold, and the snow-clad mountains of Alaska were in plain sight. The proximity of the land gave us a sense of security, as the ice had now closed in to shore, and we could have left the ship at any time—had we so desired—and marched to land in safety. We remained stationary in the ice near Camden Bay for a month, and our commander, Mr. Stefánsson, believed that the early northern winter had closed in upon us; as the heavy ice had grounded outside of our ship, he thought we were in what would be our winter's quarters. He therefore organized a hunting-trip to the mountains of Alaska for caribou, in order to secure a supply of fresh meat, taking with him a good supply of provisions, three white men, two natives, dogs, and sleds. He was equipped for two weeks' hunt. On September 20 Mr. Stefánsson bade us good-bye, and started with dog-teams for the land. We watched him over the ice until near the shore, when he was lost to view. He has never been seen since by any of the crew who remained with the *Karluk*.

Two days after Stefánsson left us a heavy fog settled over the entire region. It was so dense that we were able to see only a few rods in any direction. Almost simultaneous with the fog, a blizzard blowing from the south-east sprang up. The heavy ice that was grounded held its moorings for a few hours, but the storm was too much for it, and it was soon on the

move, drifting in a north-westerly direction at a great rate—and we with it. On taking soundings, we found we were drifting over 2 miles an hour, which was very fast, when you consider the thousands of miles of ice that is drifting together.

When the *Karluk* started on her famous drift, there were twenty white men, two Eskimo men, one Eskimo woman, and two children—little girls—aged three and eleven, on board. We drifted past Point Barrow at a very few miles from the land. Our passing was later reported to Mr. Stefánsson by a native who claimed to have seen us—and I believe he did, for he stated that there was no smoke issuing from our funnels. This was true, for we had blown down our boilers some time before. After leaving the coast of Alaska our general drift was to the north-west. Of course we did not travel in a direct line, but zigzagged about until we reached the latitude of 75° N. Then we drifted in a south-westerly course to the point that will now be designated as "Shipwreck Camp" on the maps and charts of Arctic exploration.

We had been drifting so long without any unusual incident that our ship became a veritable home to us. We had comfort and plenty on board, and—in a measure—forgot the helplessness of our situation. Captain Bartlett, perhaps, was the only person who thoroughly realized the dangers ahead of us, but he went about his work calmly, preparing against disaster to the ship. Everything went all right until 10 January 1914, at five o'clock in the morning: then the crisis came. Suddenly—without a moment's warning—there came a crash and roar that awakened every one; it seemed that the ship was being torn to pieces. All hands rushed on deck, some half dressed, to see what was happening. We discovered that leads had opened in several directions, fore and aft the ship, and on both sides of her. The *Karluk* was right in a lead, of which both sides were pressing her very hard. All was quiet till seven in the evening of the same day, when the roar of the grinding ice began again. This time the leads were closing, and the full pressure was brought to bear upon the ship. Then came a crash, and, going into the engine-room, we found that the ice had crushed through the port side of the ship, and she was filling with water. Captain Bartlett saw the impossibility of saving the ship, and gave orders to abandon her. He sent me, with the two Eskimos, to an old floe to build a snow-house, while the others carried the supplies to the same floe. This camp was in lat. 73° N. and long. 178° W.

By next morning the *Karluk* had listed, and her port rail was under water. Captain Bartlett remained on board until shortly before she sank, which she did at four o'clock in the afternoon. We took soundings immediately, and found that she had sunk in 38 fathoms. The next morning the place where she had sunk was completely frozen over, and every trace of the ship obliterated. Taking our bearings, we learned that we were 80 miles to the north of Wrangell Island, and 200 miles from the coast of Siberia.

Shipwreck Camp consisted of three huts built of snow and boxes, with a canvas roof. We had fitted up a stove in each, which was kept going night and day. We were, therefore, fairly comfortable while there, and had lots to eat. Of all the party, the Eskimo hunter, his wife, and two little girls seemed the least concerned.

Captain Bartlett decided to send parties to Herald Island with provisions, and on January 20 a party set out consisting of Anderson, first mate; Barker, second mate; Brady and King, both able seamen; Mamen, and two Eskimos. The first four mentioned were to remain on the island, while Mamen and the Eskimos were to return with the dogs and sleds. The next day Williams and I were sent out to mark their trail with flags, placing one about every 2 or 3 miles. This occupied about five or six days. Then Captain Bartlett sent us with a load of provisions, which we were to cache halfway to Herald Island. The same day we met Mamen and the Eskimos returning. They informed us that they struck open water 3 miles from Herald Island, and could not proceed further. They had left the other four men, with one sledge and all of the provisions, so that they could proceed to the island as soon as the ice conditions permitted.

On February 5 Captain Bartlett gave orders that the next day Mamen and the two Eskimos were to start for Herald Island with two more sled-loads of provisions, and that Williams and I were to take another load and go with them to where we had cached our last load, which was 27 miles from Shipwreck Camp. Everything went straight for the next four days. By this time we were getting close to the island, which was now only 6 miles distant. The next day, after travelling 3 miles, we found that the next and last 3 miles was one solid mass of pressure ridges, ranging from 10 to 30 feet in height, which looked almost impossible to get our heavily laden sleds over. We went on to a high ridge to look for the easiest way through. While there, a breeze of wind sprang up from the east and set the ice moving. A lead was opening between the two sleds, and, rushing back, we found two dogs already in the water. We managed to get both teams together on one side of the lead. Then another opened, and still another, till the whole pack was drifting about in little floes. Herald Island is only a huge rock $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length and less than a mile in width. With the aid of our powerful glasses we were able to see any little object on the land, but could see no moving object or anything to indicate that the mate or any of his party were or had been on the island. I believe the poor fellows met with the same experience as ourselves, and not being as fortunate as we were to escape, they must have perished in the sea.

At noon the same day, we tested the young ice to see if it were strong enough for us to cross over. It was none too strong, but we decided to take our chance. The following day we met Dr. Mackay, Murray, Beauchat, and Morris. They were afraid of Shipwreck Camp drifting further to the north and from the land, so, independent of Captain Bartlett's command,

they started out to try and reach Siberia. Papers were drawn up between them and Captain Bartlett releasing the latter from all responsibility. They had been on the trail for ten days, and looked a most pitiful sight. Their clothes were all frozen and stiff as boards. Morris had driven a hunting-knife through his hand while opening a tin of pemmican, and blood-poisoning had set in, leaving him in a bad way. Beauchat, who was half a mile in the rear, had both feet badly frozen; they had been frozen now for two days, and he refused to let the others help him. He was in such a state that the doctor said he would not live another night. They had given up the idea of going to Siberia, and were now endeavouring to reach Wrangell Island. They had no dogs, and as there were only two of them fit to pull the sled, I advised them to return to Shipwreck. This I pleaded, but all in vain; they said they had made their bed and were going to lie on it. That was the last seen or heard of them, and it is supposed that they all perished.

We arrived at Shipwreck Camp two days later. Captain Bartlett, who had seen us at a distance, came out to meet us, and to learn what news we had for him, which, I am sorry to say, was not at all good. When I told of—what I thought to be—the loss of the mate and his party, and of the condition of the doctor and his party, he was astonished, and did not speak for several minutes. Upon nearing the camp, he told me not to say anything that would discourage the other men. Captain Bartlett was very thoughtful in that respect; he would never say or do anything that would discourage them, although at times he knew we were in great danger. He would try hard to laugh, saying, "Why, there is nothing to it," and that he had met with the same thing dozens of times on his trip with Peary to the Pole.

After having two or three days' rest at Shipwreck, and drying my clothes, I set out again with seven others for Wrangell Island. Chief Engineer Munro was in charge of the party, and I was given charge of the dogs. It was now February 18, and we had about ten hours' daylight for travel. In the latter part of February, after we had been on the trail for ten days, we were confronted by a difficulty we had not yet encountered. Shortly after breaking camp one morning, we came to an ice-ridge or barrier from 50 to 75 feet in height. Here, by the lateral pressure of the great floes, the ice was piled up in a ridge extending eastward and westward as far as the eye could see. We separated into different parties, and set out in different directions to try and find a way through this great barrier. After spending the whole day climbing and scouting, the parties returned, each reporting it impossible to make our way through. We then returned to our snow-house camp of the night before, where we talked things over and decided to travel east until we came to the end of this great ridge, or till we found some way through it. After travelling east for two days, we were still not able to see the end of this ridge, so decided to return to Shipwreck Camp. We were upon the return trail scarcely two hours

when we met Captain Bartlett and the rest of the party that had remained at Shipwreck several days after we left. We acquainted Captain Bartlett with what we had experienced. He said we would have to cut our way through it, and on no account would we return to Shipwreck Camp. Under his guidance and direction we turned about, and were again facing Wrangell Island. Arriving at the great ridge again, Captain Bartlett took up the work of getting us through. It was now his purpose to reach Wrangell Island and leave the survivors of the expedition there, while he and an Eskimo would attempt to reach the mainland of Siberia, and then make their way to some point of civilization whence he could let the Canadian Government know our whereabouts and the danger we were in. He must not be delayed in his efforts to reach the mainland of Siberia. He examined the barrier, and concluded we would have to cut our way through it. With picks, axes, and shovels, we worked like beavers against the huge walls that were holding us prisoners in a world of ice and snow. It was slow work. Day after day we toiled to make a narrow passage across the barrier, a pass 3 or 4 feet wide, and smooth enough to draw our sledges over.

At last the ridge was all finished ; it had taken six days to make just a rough trail over the 3 miles. We now set about to get the provisions over it. This was a slow, strenuous job ; two hundred pounds was all we could take on a sledge at one time, so we had to make a good many trips back and forth before all our stuff was over.

Rightly speaking, it was not one ridge, but a continuation of ridges for 3 miles, or, as we might call it, an ice barrier. It was formed through the ice grounding in shallow water and then by the great weight of thousands of miles of ocean ice forcing in on it and piling it up to a height in places of over 75 feet. The front of it appeared to us like a great prison wall ; it was as smooth and perpendicular as if built by a stonemason. The width of the different ridges varied from 50 feet to 100 yards, and the chasms between them about the same. To build the trail across it, we had first to grade up one side of the ridge, then cut chunks of ice from the top and roll them down the chasm below till it was filled to about half the height of the ridge, then grade a road down to it, across and up the side of the next ridge ; then fill up the next chasm in the same way, and so on till the whole thing was finished. To get the sledges over, we had to fasten a rope to the nose of the sledge, then go on top of the ridge and haul it up ; then untie the rope again, fasten it to the rear of the sledge and lower it down on the other side ; then up the next ridge, and down again, and so on till we were across it.

It was still 30 miles to Wrangell Island, but the trail now presented few difficulties, as the ice we were on was landlocked ice, *i.e.* ice held firmly in position by its proximity to land, or held by sandspits extending far into the sea. It was at the end of these sandspits on the north coast of Wrangell Island that the great ridge or barrier of which

I have told was forming. On the sixth day after crossing the barrier we arrived on the island. There was then no sign of vegetation on it; everything was covered with snow, and, except for the mountains that reared their lofty heads inland and the fact that we were on land, there was little change in the eternal whiteness of the scenery. Of the twenty-five persons aboard the *Karluk* when she was wrecked only seventeen arrived at Wrangell Island on 12 March 1914. The island is 85 miles long, and varies from 28 to 35 miles in width, and is practically all mountainous.

Immediately on our arrival on the island Captain Bartlett began to prepare for his trip to Siberia, and at the same time gave orders to Munro, Williams, and myself to prepare for a trip back to Shipwreck Camp, and if successful in reaching there, we were to bring three more sledge-loads of provisions to the island. By the evening of March 17 Captain Bartlett was ready for his journey, which was one of the most hazardous ever undertaken by an explorer in the Arctic. He left us on the morning of March 18. We bade him good-bye and good luck, and watched him till he was out of sight. He took with him one Eskimo, a sledge and seven dogs, and rations for sixty days.

On April 1 Munro, Williams, and I started for Shipwreck Camp; but gales and snow delayed us, and the ice had drifted so much that the trail was lost. After seven days' struggle we were compelled to turn back, with very small provision left; but the same day leads opened, we all fell through, and eventually I was cut off with the sledge and six dogs. The trail was lost, and I struck the barrier ridges 10 miles from the crossing we had made. After great exertion I got partly over but could do no more, and abandoned the sledge. With one foot and one hand frozen, and nearly snow-blind, I chained one dog to my wrist, and she led me back to camp over a stretch of 30 miles in nineteen hours. Then I found that Munro and Williams had succeeded in getting back, and the former, though frostbitten, had bravely set out again to look for me, but had been obliged to give it up after two days. The little dog Mollie that saved my life was the smallest of the thirty dogs on the expedition, and the best trail hunter. With her wonderful scent she had kept the trail and dragged me along.

Captain Bartlett before leaving advised us to split up into different parties, so as to hunt in different parts of the island. Acting on this advice, Mamen, Mallock, and Templeman went to Rogers Harbour, which is on the south side of the island 60 miles from where we landed, and established a camp there. It was in March that they went there, and in the latter part of May we had not heard from them since they left us, so were beginning to feel uneasy concerning them. McKinley (who was in the best condition of the party) was chosen for this trip. With three days' rations he started out on this long journey to Rogers Harbour. He arrived back at our camp five days later, and reported that Mallock

had died the day before he arrived at their camp ; Mamen was very sick, and Templeman was doing his best to care for him. Mamen was so ill he could not eat the pemmican they had at the camp, so he asked McKinley if he would go back to Skeleton Island and get him another kind of pemmican that they had left there on the way down. Skeleton Island is a small island of a few square yards in size, and lies less than a hundred yards off the east coast of Wrangell Island, and about halfway between our camp and the camp at Rogers Harbour. Chief Engineer Munro, who was in charge on the island, took upon himself the job of going to Skeleton Island for the pemmican to take to Mamen. Taking with him another man called Maurer they set out for Skeleton Island, where they got the pemmican needed and continued to Rogers Harbour, but were too late, as poor Mamen had died some time before.

When they arrived at Rogers Harbour they found Templeman the sole survivor of the party, and almost bewildered. Mallock was a Canadian ; he was born in Hamilton, Ontario. He went with the expedition as geologist. Mamen was Mallock's assistant. He was born in Christiania, Norway. Both were strapping young men, and each measured over 6 feet in height. Mallock died on 17 May and Mamen on 26 May 1914.

Our Eskimo had killed three bears early in April, but they were all eaten. It was now June 5, and we had no more food left. Munro and Maurer on returning from Rogers Harbour reported that birds were plentiful at Waring Point. As there were no more bear or seal in sight around our camp, we decided to move to Waring Point, which was 14 miles to the east of our present camp. The only dogs we had left were the three I had saved from my last trip, and, like ourselves, they were not very strong, so we would have to make two trips to Waring Point.

On the morning of June 25 another sad accident befell us. I had been out shooting as usual and was just coming home. McKinley came out to meet me and told me that Breddy had shot himself. He had got up early, and was in the act of cleaning his revolver, when it accidentally went off and shot him.

Hadley and the Eskimo built a 20-foot ladder, and we took it to the cliffs to try and get some eggs, but we could only reach a few nests, and therefore got a very few eggs, and what we did get were in a well-advanced state of development, and would not have been considered marketable under the Pure Food laws of any country. But there were no Pure Food laws on Wrangell Island, so we ate anything that would sustain life.

July set in with very miserable weather ; it was wet and foggy the whole month. The snow was nearly all gone from the hilltops, and little flowers of many colours began to show their pretty faces above the ground, and were very much welcomed by all of us. Early in July the ice broke and moved off from shore for a distance of 2 or 3 miles, with the result that we could not get any more game without a boat. The

seal and walrus always stay with the ice, so that when the ice goes away you lose your only means of obtaining food. Our Eskimo knew this, and he could see starvation staring us in the face if something were not done to prevent it. So, with the usual native cleverness, he set about to build a kayak from the sealskins we had already secured.

On August 21 our meat supply was nearly all gone; all that we had left was a little meat which we had dried, or "sun-cooked," as the natives call it. For the next ten days we lived on seal blubber again, but this time we had two ounces of dried seal meat per day with it. Winter was setting in, snow had begun to fall on the island, and the weather in general was much colder, and everything presented a wintry look. The idea of spending another winter on Wrangell Island was not a pleasant one. We had been living on pemmican and meat only for the last eight months, and these things alone are not strengthening.

On September 1 we had practically given up all hopes of being rescued, and our Eskimo went off to look for suitable winter quarters. He returned, and said he had found a place about 10 miles from where we were, and that there were lots of driftwood there, and he thought we would be able to build a log hut. This was welcome news, for the thought of having a hut to live in for the winter was a great relief.

It was on the morning of September 7 that relief came to us. I was sitting in the tent bandaging my foot, when suddenly I heard the Eskimo sing out something in his own language; then Hadley and McKinley, who were in the other tent, rushed out, and all three started shouting at the top of their voices. At first it looked as if the ship were going by without stopping for us, so the Eskimo ran off over the ice to head her off. But before he had gone many yards she headed in towards us, and dropped her sails. The first of the rescue party to arrive was a strapping young man of about six feet two or three in height. He introduced himself as Olaf Svensen, manager of the trading schooner *King and Wing*. Our greeting was, "We are mighty glad to see you, Mr. Svensen, and we shall never forget you." Following Mr. Svensen were a half-dozen or more natives, two motion-picture men, and several other members of the crew. They asked us if we would mind staying for a few minutes while they took some "movies." "Oh no," we said; "now that we know we are safe, you can keep us here and take movies of us for a whole week." After the movie-man had finished, we went aboard, where a good dinner awaited us—a dinner that we did justice to. The afternoon was spent in recounting our experiences to our rescuers, and at five o'clock we sat down to tea. We had another meal at nine o'clock, before going to bed, and they told us that they would leave the table set, and if any of us felt like eating during the night, to get up and help ourselves. We turned in and tried to sleep, but no, we were too happy and overjoyed to even shut our eyes; so after lying down for about an hour, we turned out again, and spent the night making tea and coffee and eating.

The next day we sighted smoke, and soon discovered that it was from the U.S. revenue cutter *Bear*, which was making her third attempt to reach Wrangell Island. In her first attempt she did not get past Point Barrow, but in her second attempt she claimed to have been within 20 miles of the island, and that she waited around there for nearly a week for the ice to open up and let her through, but she ran short of coal and had to put back to Nome for more. When we got up to her, Captain Bartlett, who had been on board the *Bear* for more than a month, came aboard the *King and Wing*. When we came alongside we gave him three hearty cheers, for we knew that it was his hazardous trip to Siberia that had saved our lives. He had been faithful to his trust, and for us and our safety he would have braved any danger.

We arrived at Nome, Alaska, on Sunday morning, 12 September 1914. The *Bear* had sent a wireless message the night before, saying she had the survivors of the *Karluk* on board. Among the distinguished visitors was the Mr. Linderberg before mentioned, a pioneer of Nome. Mr. Linderberg, on hearing of the *Bear* failing to reach Wrangell Island in two attempts, was beginning to feel anxious as to our fate, and, knowing that the season was getting late and that there was no time to be wasted if the survivors were to be rescued before winter set in, at his own expense chartered the old U.S. revenue cutter *Corwin*, and, fitting her out with twelve months' supplies, gave the captain orders to proceed to Wrangell Island, or as near as he could get to it, and, if not successful in reaching the island, he was to send a sledge party over the ice to us, and get us on board in that way. I am sorry to say that the *Corwin* was just a day late in arriving at the Island, as the *King and Wing* had rescued us the day before. But, nevertheless, Mr. Linderberg's act of kindness was much appreciated, and will never be forgotten by the survivors of the *Karluk*.

A POLICE PATROL IN THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES OF CANADA

C. D. La Nauze, Inspector R.N.W. Mounted Police

IF a line is drawn across the North-West Territories of Canada from the shores of Hudson Bay to the Alaskan boundary it will pass through a country, probably half a million miles in extent, which is practically unexplored territory. Of late years the members of the Canadian Geological Survey have made great efforts to add to our knowledge of these parts, and their work has been systematic and thorough, but on the whole the word "unexplored" might well be written across the maps; and it will be many years before the North-West Territories are ever properly exploited, not to mention the numerous islands of the Arctic Ocean.