WILEY

Review

Author(s): J. M. W.

Review by: J. M. W.

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 6 (Jun., 1922), pp. 469-471

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1780649>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 04:05 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Geographical Journal

call it, the Assiwaban River. This route Mr. Cabot eventually traversed in its entirety, reaching Indian House Lake at practically the same time as Mr. Hesketh Prichard, who arrived on its shores, some miles to the northward, by an independent line of his own choosing. The "thousands of miles" referred to apply therefore, for the most part, to a number of journeys in one comparatively restricted area. Mr. Cabot gives, in addition, some account of visits paid to the extreme south of the peninsula in 1913 and 1916.

These remarks involve no depreciation whatever of Mr. Cabot's performances, or of the valuable and instructive work in which he has described them. Even on the coast his exploits were sufficiently remarkable to give rise to exaggerated stories, which he is at pains modestly to correct; his experience of the country few could claim to rival, and his principal object was not so much exploration as the study of the Naskapi Indians, in which field, as all who are interested in Labrador know, he speaks with supreme authority. Mr. Cabot is evidently a bold and seasoned traveller, who has not infrequently run considerable risks, and has been dependent to a large extent upon his own resource and enterprise. For expeditions into the interior, as Mr. Cabot found, it is practically impossible to rely upon local assistance. The coast people's ignorance of the hinterland is only equalled by their dislike of it, and, as the summer cod-fishing provides an alternative source of income, the desertion of a confiding traveller entailed little or no financial loss to a cowardly or recalcitrant guide, while, since guides as a class are non-existent, there is no appreciable force of public opinion to condemn such conduct. Suspicion of a possible rival on the part of those who trade with the Indians also plays its part, and though Mr. Cabot managed, in face of considerable difficulty, to establish friendly relations with the Naskapi, there is evidence that the welcome which this people extended to him was exceptional, and that unaccredited strangers in the interior would not, as a rule, be allowed by them to pursue their way unmolested. In 1915, as we are informed in this volume, a party was actually ejected by the Indians.

Though study of the Naskapi was the author's main interest, his observations on the fauna, flora, and geology of the region traversed are shrewd and accurate; he has provided a sketch-map adding materially to the sum of geographical knowledge; and the numerous excellent photographs with which the book is illustrated, including pictures of living caribou and ptarmigan, help to make up a volume which is a most welcome addition to the literature dealing with the subject.

G. M. G.-H.

POLAR REGIONS

The Friendly Arctic.— Vilhjalmur Stefansson. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1921. 30s. net.

Mr. Stefansson has already published a summary of the main work of the Canadian Arctic Expedition in the *Geographical Journal* for 1921, and it is therefore unnecessary here to do more than say in few words that it consisted of five seasons' exploratory work by the leader himself and of three seasons of topographical and other surveys by Dr. Anderson's Southern Unit. The story of the almost bewildering sequence of events is now set out in full, together with the author's beliefs and suggestions on how Arctic travel should be carried out in modern times. On the latter subject he is particularly well qualified to speak, for like Sir James Clark Ross and Sir Leopold McClintock he holds an unusually long record of polar travel—almost ten years. At the present day he may well be regarded as the man best qualified to speak on sledging in the

Canadian Arctic, just as Mr. Rasmussen may claim to speak on travel in Greenland.

The book itself consists of 700 pages, printed in somewhat smaller type than usual, and on that account may deter some possible readers. It would be a pity if this were so, for Mr. Stefansson's narrative is one of the most interesting that has been written on the Arctic, and is published in days when the output of English Arctic literature is far surpassed in volume by that dealing with the Antarctic. It is original in treatment, and it is quite frankly heterodox. The author throughout, as the title might indicate, is out to fight and if possible demolish the idea that the Arctic has either its discomforts or its dangers beyond the ordinary.

Mr. Stefansson has long held the view that one should be able to live in the Arctic almost entirely on the proceeds of hunting, on sea-ice as well as on land. In 1914 he put his convictions to the test, and with a few weeks' provisions made a three months' sledge journey at considerable risk across the moving pack of the Beaufort Sea from Martin Point in Alaska to Banks Island. The result was not only a triumph for originality, but it was also an effective silencer to Mr. Stefansson's numerous critics. Unfortunately some of the latter were to be numbered amongst members of the expedition itself, and the narrative tells how they not only criticized but in some cases actually opposed the wishes of their commander. In three cases orders were definitely disobeyed: whatever the motives may have been, the result in each case was to nullify much that the leader had intended, and seriously to cripple his well-laid plans. A man of less resource might have been completely baulked. The Canadian Government, however, are to be congratulated on having appointed a leader whose character was such that he resolutely proceeded with his programme after his main ship the *Karluk* was lost; and later, despite opposition and deficient outfit, actually succeeded in carrying out almost all that he had wished to do. How much more Mr. Stefansson would have accomplished had the *Karluk* and its valuable equipment not been lost can easily be imagined. That with improvised appliances and untrustworthy support he could accomplish as much as he did marks him out as a worthy successor to these other Canadian Arctic explorers, Rae and Simpson.

To those who know the Scott and Shackleton pictures the book would appear to be inadequately illustrated, but this was evidently the direct result of the loss of the *Karluk*. On the other hand, there is an excellent series of maps, on which can be traced the progress of the expedition from year to year, as the base was pushed northwards, new coastlines discovered, and old ones resurveyed. On this, as on most recent polar expeditions, there was no mid-winter monotony. During the winter sledging went on almost as usual, hunting was a necessity, and skins had to be prepared for clothing. No effort, however, is made to describe at length either the events of the winters or the incidents of sledging. Dates and distances, even, are very seldom mentioned. Instead of the mass of similar details which has made Antarctic travel books in many cases repetitions one of the other, here is a book where the writer continually digresses to describe Eskimo superstitions on one page, or perhaps to ruminate on another on the equally superstitious attitude of white men to unusual food. The comparison is all in favour of Mr. Stefansson's original methods; he has not only "spun a good yarn," but also provided a mine of Arctic lore. The book deserves to be very widely read.

The author is himself so frank in his criticisms of previous explorers that he will no doubt allow us to make two criticisms in our turn. Is his method

of "living on the land" really a paying one? A great deal of time has to be spent in hunting, and the traveller, moreover, has to be a first-class hunter. This involves two distinct disadvantages: on the one hand, a comparatively small proportion of the time is available for geographical exploration; on the other, the number of men suited for Arctic exploration on the Stefansson method would be extremely small, and would not include many explorers who have proved themselves in the first flight. The frequent references to Admiral Peary rather than to Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton show that the author is not familiar with the greatly superior equipment and rations which have been evolved in the Antarctic. Would not their employment in the Arctic, considering the shortness of the exploring as distinct from the travelling season, be an improvement? "Living on the land" has still to justify itself as more economical in time or richer in results than the methods employed by McClintock on his great sledge journeys.

The second specific criticism is on the advisability of calling the Arctic "friendly." Friendly it may be in the height of summer, in a well-found ship or to an expert hunter armed with European weapons. The Eskimo themselves, however, are known to suffer frequent hardships, and the starvation of whole families is not uncommon. On this very expedition, moreover, whose record is now set forth under the title of 'The Friendly Arctic,' no less than sixteen men lost their lives in tragic circumstances, attributable in most cases to the rigours of Arctic exploration.

J. M. W.

THE MONTHLY RECORD

EUROPE

The Tirso Reservoir Dam, Sardinia.

SARDINIA has felt to the full the serious consequences due to the irregular régime of the rivers in a land where the rainfall is concentrated into one season of the year, so that disastrous floods alternate with periods of drought which are fatal to agriculture, and also encourage malaria by the stagnation of surface waters which ensues. The only remedy, here as elsewhere, is the regulation of the water-supply by the formation of reservoirs to impound the ample supply of one season for use in the other. Tentative schemes have been on foot for a number of years, but have only lately borne fruit in a grandiose project for the creation of a lake 20 kilometres long on the middle course of the Tirso, the longest and most copious river of the island. This undertaking, now well advanced towards completion, is described and illustrated by photographs in the issue of *Le Vie d'Italia* for March 1922. To form the lake a gigantic dam 70 metres high is being constructed across the valley of the Tirso near Santa Chiara di Ula, mainly according to the plans of Signor Omodeo, but on the system of multiple arches suggested by Signor Luigi Kambo. This permits the installation within the dam itself of the powerful electric generators which will be capable of supplying power to the extent of 50 million kilowatts per annum. The lake reservoir, fed from a catchment area of 2100 square kilometres, will have a capacity of 416,000,000 cubic metres, and will supply water for irrigation to 30,000 hectares of land in the plain of Oristano, with a constant flow of 20,000 litres per second. At the same time disastrous floods will henceforth be impossible in the lower basin of the river. The power generated will first of all be distributed south-