Review: Amundsen's 'North-West Passage'

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BIRDS OF TIERRA DEL FUEGO.

'The Birds of Tierra del Fuego.' By Richard Crawshay, Captain, Reserve of Officers, late Inniskilling Dragoons. London: Quaritch. 1907. *Price £4 4s.*

This is essentially a bird book. But it has a geographical flavour, being concerned with a special locality, and we may devote a few remarks to it.

Just as England was peopled with birds from the continent of Europe, so Tierra del Fuego, at the extreme southern end of America, was furnished with feathered inhabitants from the adjoining mainland of Patagonia and Chile. Of the eighty species mentioned in Captain Crawshay's volume, not one is peculiar to Fuegia. All have come from the north, some from the eastern and others from the western side of the Andes; most of them, indeed, are found on both coasts. For Patagonia we have as a guide Sclater and Hudson's 'Argentine Ornithology,' and for Chile the last reliable authority is James's 'New List,' published in 1892. In the former are enumerated 492 species; in the latter, 255, so that we can see at a glance that Fuegia is a poor country for birds, as might have been expected from its terrible climate.

Besides serving his country most effectually both in his military and civil capacities, Captain Crawshay has by no means neglected his scientific opportunities, and has written some useful papers on mammals. But we are not aware that he has previously turned his attention to birds, although it is evident from his field notes that he has an observant eye for this class of animals also.

In a well-written preface, which extends to some thirty pages, Captain Crawshay has given us an instructive sketch of the physical peculiarities of Tierra del Fuego, and has mentioned the principal travellers who have investigated them. Amongst these Darwin, in his 'Naturalist's Voyage,' stands pre-eminent, but King's descriptions of the scenery are "particularly powerful and vivid." Captain Crawshay describes in his preface the leading features of the geology, botany, and zoology of this extreme portion of the Neotropical Region, and then proceeds to the birds, which are the main subject of his work. The most striking forms of the Fuegian avifauna are illustrated by twenty-one excellent coloured plates, prepared by Keulemans, the best ornithological artist of the present time. A series of 'Landscapes,' which shows the scenery amongst which the birds are met with, is also given. We are told that birds are by no means plentiful in Tierra del Fuego, and we can quite understand that the author, who made his specimens with his own hands, had by no means an easy task to get his collection together. But the result of his labours is a handsome volume, which does credit to the author and the publisher, and will be very useful to the naturalist, if not to the geographer.

P. L. S.

POLAR REGIONS.

AMUNDSEN'S 'NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.'

'The North-West Passage.' By Roald Amundsen. 2 vols. London: Constable. 1908. *Price 31s. 6d. net.*

Ronald Amundsen is one of those consummate seamen of a type very frequently found in the Scandinavian countries, who combine audacity with forethought. His experience in the Antarctic ice, and his previous cruises in the northern seas, qualified him for the great task he had undertaken. This was to institute magnetic observations round the position of the pole as indicated by Sir James Ross, and, if possible, to make the North-West Passage. Funds were limited and hard to obtain. Much was due to the active help and sympathy of Dr. Nansen, and there was hearty encouragement from Dr. Neumayer. 'The selection of a Hardanger

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fishing-boat, no longer in her first youth, was fully justified by the event; and the excellent little motor, worked with petroleum, proved a success. Seven gallant fellows formed the crew, including Amundsen himself. The second in command and navigator was Lieut. Godfred Hansen, of the Danish navy, Anton Lund of Tromsø was the chief mate, Peder Ristvedt meteorologist and engineer, Helmer Hansen, with long service in the northern seas, was second mate, Gustav Wicks assistant magnetic observer, and Lundstrom was cook. In June, 1903, these splendid young Norwegians sailed with the resolution to complete the most interesting voyage there remained to be achieved on this Earth.

The interest has been accumulating during three centuries. Our Elizabethan worthies made their great discoveries in the belief that there might be a trade route from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Since their time the objects have been purely scientific. Parry in his three voyages did much, the Rosses in their discovery of Boothia and King William Land, added largely to our geographical knowledge, but it was the vast discoveries of the Franklin search expeditions which threw complete light on the geography and hydrography of the western Arctic Regions. It was ascertained that there could be no navigable North-West Passage west of King William island. Franklin had made a most successful voyage in the right direction. His catastrophe was due to the erroneous chart which made King William island a part of Boothia, thus blocking the only navigable route. It was left to McClintock to discover the only navigable North-West Passage. The ice prevented him from reaching it in the *Fox*, either by Franklin channel or Bellot strait, in spite of long-sustained efforts; but he walked over it, and established the only possible route for a passage. Moreover, he showed, from Franklin's successful voyage, that in some seasons the passage was open and navigable. In 1875 Sir Allen Young made the attempt, but found the ice extending across the channel from shore to shore. In 1903 Amundsen found the channel free of ice, and was able to reach winter quarters at the south-east end of King William island. Four attempts have been made: by Franklin in 1847, which was successful; by McClintock in 1858, when the ice was impenetrable; by Allen Young in 1875, when the ice again barred the way; and by Amundsen in 1903, when the channel was again navigable: 1903 was a Franklin year. On these four occasions the channel was closed twice and open twice. This looks as if it might be expected to be open every second year; but, of course, the data are not sufficiently numerous.

Amundsen gives an interesting account of the visit of the *Gjoa* to Beechey island, where the memorials to the Franklin Expedition, to Lieut. Bellot, and to those who died in the expedition of 1852-54 were in good order. In the voyage down Franklin channel all went well until the little vessel grounded on a bank near the southernmost of the Beaufort islands. She got off by using steam and setting all sail. Off Matty island the *Gjoa* went on shore again; and this was a much more serious disaster, as a gale was blowing. Her extrication was due to the skill and presence of mind of her gallant crew. When they reached "Gjoa haven," near Petersen bay on King William island, the passage was practically achieved and they had secured a well-merited success.

Amundsen gives an interesting account of his magnetic arrangements for the winter, and of his journey, in March, in the direction of Ross's magnetic pole. The journey occupied eighty-seven days, from March 1 to May 27. There is too much in the book about the Eskimos, who appear to have been a great nuisance, though useful as hunters.

Two winters were passed in Gjoa haven, whence an important sledge-journey was undertaken by Lieut. Hansen and Ristvedt. In the previous season of 1907,

Hansen, in a boat voyage, had laid out a depôt at Cape Crozier, being absent forty days in August and September. On April 2, 1905, Hansen and Ristvedt started with two sledges and twelve dogs, provisioned for seventy days. Hansen's journey occupied eighty-five days, the return being on June 25. He crossed from Cape Crozier, the western point of King William island, to Victoria island, discovering some islets in the channel. Thence he advanced north to Collinson's furthest, and for some distance towards Wynniatt's furthest, on the west coast of Victoria island. The account of his journey is not the least interesting part of the book.

The voyage along the coast of North America presented no great difficulties, and, after a third winter, the little *Gjøa* entered the Pacific ocean. It was a memorable expedition. Well thought out and planned, no mistakes were made, and it is wonderful that so much could have been done by such a small handful of men. They were very ably led, and Amundsen was seconded by companions with rare gifts, whose zeal and enthusiasm never flagged. He and his gallant companions have achieved a great geographical feat, the memory of which will endure for all time. The work, in two volumes well illustrated, is worthy of the subject.

C. R. M.

MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL EVOLUTION.

Die Entwicklung der Kontinente und ihrer Lebewelt; ein Beitrag zur vergleichende Erdgeschichte.' By Theodor Arldt. Leipzig: W. Engelmann. 1907. Pp. xix. + 730. *Figs. and Maps.* Price 20m.

This volume is to be regarded in the main as a compilation in which the author has, with great industry and research, brought together the results of the researches conducted during the past quarter of a century by a number of investigators with regard to the former distribution of land and water on the surface of the globe, and the evolution of the form of our present continents. Several of the maps with which the volume is illustrated, so far as they relate to the contour of the continents in geological times, are mainly, if not entirely, based upon those of other writers, the one of the Jurassic epoch being, for instance, a replica from that in Neumayr's 'Erdgeschichte,' with certain emendations in the shading which do not appear to be an improvement. As regards the map of the world in the early Tertiary (Eocene), we notice that this differs from the one in Dr. von Ihering's work reviewed in an earlier page, in that Patagonia is represented as connected with the Marquesas and Samoa by a large extent of land, while "Archinotis" finds no place. In the map depicting the form of the continents in the later Tertiary, a noticeable feature is the presence of a land-bridge connecting Greenland with Iceland, the British Isles, and France, as to the existence of which at such a relatively late epoch we cannot but feel sceptical.

More than half of the work is devoted to the geographical distribution of animals, in which occur long tables of species arranged under such strange headings as "Lemmidenschicht," "Viverridenschicht," etc., the precise signification of which we confess ourselves unable to fully comprehend. This section is illustrated by several maps, which again present certain features (such as the alleged occurrence of *Cryptoproctidae* in the heart of Africa) by no means easy to understand.

While the book undoubtedly contains a vast store of information with regard to the past history of the Earth and its inhabitants, we venture to think that many of the author's conclusions and opinions should be compared with those of other authorities before being definitely accepted. This is notably the case with regard to the aforesaid connection between Greenland and France, such a