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Peary Arctic Club Expedition to the North Pole, 1908-9: Discussion

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The observations were taken day and night, and besides the regular hourly readings, numerous additional readings were generally taken near the times of the high and the low waters.

From the records themselves, and from plottings constructed from them, it appears that the observations were taken with great care and thoroughness.

The principal results from these records have been already obtained, and are on file in this office.

In order to show the full geographical value of the results, it will be necessary to consider them in connection with all other tidal results relating to the Arctic ocean. This work is now under way.

Commander Peary's observations leave little to be desired in regard to tidal observations between Cape Morris Jesup and Cape Columbia; but there are long stretches of the Arctic coast where nothing is available. This is especially true of the Russian coast and the western and northern portions of the Arctic archipelago. However, we have recently received some tidal information from the Russian hydrographic office, with the promise of more, which will pertain to regions where no knowledge of the tides has heretofore been available.

The results obtained from Commander Peary's records show that the tides along the northern coasts of Grant Land and Greenland are quite different in many respects from what had been heretofore supposed. For example, his records prove that the tide occurs three hours earlier at Cape Columbia than at Cape Sheridan, and not later, as had been generally assumed.

As already intimated, the full significance of these observations in respect to Arctic geography cannot be seen at this time.

The meteorological records submitted to this office consist of thermograms covering about 180 days, and barograms covering about 260 days.

Respectfully yours,

R. A. HARRIS.

NOTE.—Mr. Harris, whose report is above presented, is the tidal expert of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, to whom the records of Commander Peary had been referred for scrutiny and examination.

The PRESIDENT (before the lecture): It has for long been the dream of Arctic explorers to reach the North Pole. At last that prize has been won by the United States, and we have assembled here to-night to welcome the winners.

The methods by which a traveller can ascertain that he has actually reached this goal are well known, and although this is a technical subject more suitable for discussion in our *Journal*, where it has already been dealt with, than for consideration here, yet one or two observations on this head may perhaps not be out of place. In the first place, as regards astronomical observations at the poles of the Earth, the observer has only to deal with the determination of latitude, which is a simple operation. On the other hand, the weary Arctic traveller in those icy wind-swept regions has peculiar difficulties to contend with in his geographical determinations, especially at a time of year when the sun is always near the horizon, below which it never sinks. In fact in all such work there must always be a certain margin of reasonable and probable error, appropriate to all the circumstances of the case. Indeed, when a traveller asserts that a certain spot is in a certain latitude, what he means is that the true position does not differ from the assigned position by more than this margin of error. Turning now to the hero of the evening, Commander Peary was awarded our Gold Medal twelve years ago, which is a sufficient proof that he is an Arctic traveller of the highest reputation. Then

again, his efforts have been marked by such splendid persistency as to make success appear to be the inevitable result. And, finally, an exceptionally capable committee of his fellow-countrymen, appointed by the National Geographic Society of Washington, have examined his original records, and have emphatically endorsed his claim. This judicial task could not have been more appropriately placed. It is on these grounds that I stand here to-night as the representative of the Royal Geographical Society, and, armed with the full authority of its Council, to welcome you, Commander Peary, as the first and only human being who has ever led a party of his fellow-creatures to a pole of the Earth.

We are, however, to-night not alone concerned with this aspect of Arctic exploration; for in the course of the many arduous journeys, full of dangers and difficulties, which explorers have made when dragged northwards by the loadstone of the pole, a large amount of scientific work has been done, and our geographical knowledge has been greatly increased. Commander Peary's expeditions form no exception to this honourable record. And this should not be forgotten, because, as I said when I addressed you here in June last, it has been the policy of our Society not to honour any mere race to the Pole. Nevertheless, on that occasion we were here all openly rejoicing at the fact that it was one of our own countrymen who had then made the nearest approach to a pole of the Earth. To-night we have assembled to do honour in the same spirit, and quite as enthusiastically, to an American citizen, who has at last actually accomplished this feat, the dream of all previous Arctic and Antarctic explorers. I will now ask Commander Peary to describe the journey in which he obtained, after more than twenty years' striving, his final victory over the forces of nature.

Admiral Sir GEORGE NARES in proposing a vote of thanks, said: As one who has conducted his ship, the *Alert*, through the ice of Robeson channel, to the north end of which Commander Peary and his able second in command, Captain Robert Bartlett, have on *two* occasions conveyed the American ship *Roosevelt*, I have been asked to say a few words of thanks and congratulation to Commander Peary at having at last completed his life's task of reaching the North Pole.

As one who knows the courageous resources necessary in those who navigate Robeson channel, owing to the raging tides and winds that guide the ice-floes there, which never give them an opportunity of resting, the skilful seamanship that is necessary to push a ship through that ice-encumbered channel, I am glad to congratulate Commander Peary and Captain Bartlett at their having, with the *Roosevelt*, reached so high a latitude. On Commander Peary the responsibility of his many journeys was dependent, and with the assistance of his followers most admirably did he carry them out. On his last expedition to the Pole he started from Cape Columbia—the most northern point of the American archipelago.

He and his Eskimo hunters have successfully demonstrated that the Arctic natural life of the country, musk-oxen and reindeer, as found by the Norwegian Captain Sverdrup, have superseded, or at least must be added to, the former Arctic ration of pemmican and preserved meat.

In our former days, in 1852, when looking for Sir John Franklin, I well remember, when crossing Melville island, under Lieut. Meecham, we sighted a large herd of reindeer, that had been herded together by a pack of wolves, but, owing to our confidence in our well-packed Arctic rations of pemmican and preserved meats, we left the deer alone. Had such a case occurred to Peary he would certainly have based his provisions on the deer, as he did in later days when his hunters shot so many near the United States range of mountains in Grant Land.

In criticism of Commander Peary's character as displayed as a traveller in his numerous journeys northward, I would draw attention to the good points—inbred in

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his life—which must have reproduced itself largely amongst the Eskimo, the trusting confidence displayed by his followers, as exemplified by Captain Bartlett and his Eskimo, and his dogs; his good choice of the best road to follow and persistently following it; his disregard of his own health and spirits—as shown by the lost limbs he has left behind him in his Polar travels, when he never gave up, whatever happened to himself.

I need scarcely dwell on his natural feelings of exultation at attaining the Pole, the journey to which he had consecrated his life, and his great luck then in having fine weather and good ice after his many troubles on former occasions; the extreme distances he than travelled were measured by long hours and short rests. The painful snow-blindness he must have undergone; the troublesome water-cracks he necessarily encountered; and his misfortune with his deep sounding, can only be dwelt on as bad luck. In fact, whoever wants to read an exciting traveller's story, where life is ever being risked, let him read the story of Commander Peary's attempts to reach the Pole.

In seconding the vote of thanks, Admiral Sir LEWIS BEAUMONT said: I owe the privilege of seconding the vote of thanks to Commander Peary to the position I have the honour to hold in the Geographical Society, but, personally, I feel that I have a second title in the fact that Commander Peary's first great journey of Arctic discovery commenced at the farthest point which I had seen in one of the deep fiords of North Greenland. His going over the ground which I had been the first to see and map enlisted my interest and sympathy in his work, and to this interest and sympathy years have gradually added wonder and admiration at the extraordinary courage, patience, and perseverance with which he has continued to fight single-handed against the immense difficulties of the task which he had set for himself.

You have heard from him how the splendid success which has at last crowned his efforts was only won by a combination of twenty years' experience, and the long and patient training of the Eskimo to do his will; but I would like to remind you that in the first great journey to which I have just alluded he had with him only one European and no Eskimo, and that the fame of this his apprenticeship in Arctic sledging has only receded from view because of his more brilliant later achievements.

Commander Peary began by showing that he had in him all the personal qualities which enable a man to make great sledge journeys in the Polar regions—in his fifteen years' work since he has shown that he also possesses the much higher qualities of rapid organization and good generalship.

Under his leadership the zeal and enthusiasm of beginners have been made to accomplish the work of veterans—all the energy that has come within the sphere of his influence has been made to converge upon one object; and while he has remained the brain, guide, and commander, the work done by his assistants has been full of independent initiative and intelligence.

There are some thoughtful people who doubt the value of reaching the Pole, and say, what is the good of it? That question is not for our discussion to-night, for what we have before us is a fact; but in any case what I am certain of, and in a long career always have maintained, is that no genuine honest work, which calls for courage, endurance, and self-sacrifice, such as he has shown, is ever lost. The good of it may not appear at the time or during the man's life, or even in his generation, but it is bound in the end to bear fruit, and to find its use in the world to the benefit of those who come after him. I beg to second the vote of thanks.

Captain R. F. SCOTT: I esteem it a great privilege to have been asked to support this motion. It has been most fittingly proposed and seconded by those British

explorers who have gained their laurels in the regions in which Commander Peary has achieved his great triumph. It is well that those who are most competent to judge should record their enthusiastic admiration of the unconquerable spirit with which Commander Peary has pursued his object, and their appreciation of the justice of the reward which has at length crowned his efforts.

Commander Peary has most generously acknowledged the debt which he owes to the splendid efforts of our British pioneers, and rather than to praise his exploits, it is for me to acknowledge the debt which explorers of the future will owe to him.

The history of the conquest of the North Polar regions extends over many centuries, whilst the history of the South Polar continent has occupied little more than a decade. That the secrets of the South should have been revealed with such comparative rapidity is due solely to the fact that the Southern traveller has benefited by the hard-gained experience of his Northern *confrère*.

Speaking as a Southern traveller, and one who hopes to extend his experience of Antarctic conditions, I have to thank Commander Peary for the great lessons which he has taught us, and for that brilliant example of courage and perseverance which he has set, and which it must ever be the desire of future explorers to emulate.

After the vote of thanks, the PRESIDENT, presenting the medals, said: On the very day on which we heard of Commander Peary's safe return, I sent to him a telegram of warmest congratulation in the name of this Society. To-night I should like to send in your name, and through the channel of the Press, a message to the people of the United States, to tell them that we hold that they may well be proud to claim Commander Peary as a fellow-citizen; for he has taught the world a great lesson. What he has done must encourage every young man to feel that, however difficult the task he has set himself to do, he may hope to win in the end, provided—it is a big proviso—that he is determined to consecrate to it the undivided energy of body and mind, and never to swerve from the narrow path till nature forbids further efforts. This example of success, crowning such a long-continued struggle, will endure as a beneficial influence for years to come, and in other fields besides that of Arctic discovery.

It must be known to you all that our Society has awarded Commander Peary a special Gold Medal, not solely for this last journey of his in which he reached the Pole, but also for all the long years of toil and trouble which he has devoted to Polar exploration. I wish myself to say no more to-night. But I ask you all, when I hand this medal to its owner, to show that you fully endorse its award, that you carry by acclamation the vote of thanks which has been proposed, and that you join in the message of congratulation which we hope may be transmitted to his fellow-countrymen in America.

When presenting the medal to Captain Bartlett, the PRESIDENT said: I am glad that this message of congratulation to the United States has been so cordially endorsed, because it enables me to add, without any fear of misunderstanding, that we in this country may also take a certain national pride in this expedition. In Arctic exploration a system of supporting parties is generally essential; and in Captain Bartlett, the leader of the last supporting party, the leader whose assistance has been so generously acknowledged by his chief, we have one whom we are all proud to claim as a citizen of the British Empire. It is pleasant thus to couple the names of Commander Peary and Captain Bartlett; for, as to Commander Peary, no one is more pleased than he is by any recognition of the merits of those who served under him. And as to Captain Bartlett, I know that he both respects and esteems the leader he has so well served. I hold in my hand a silver replica of the medal awarded to your leader, Captain Bartlett, and this I am glad to present to you in

the name of the Society, and with the warmest congratulations of all present for your fine achievement.

Commander R. E. PEARY: From the bottom of my heart I thank your veteran Arctic explorers for their friendly words. I thank you, Mr. President, for your explicit and unequivocal remarks. Through you I wish to thank the Council and the members of the Royal Geographical Society of London for this magnificent trophy, which I and mine will always prize. The accomplishment of this work which I have tried to tell you of to-night, was done because it had to be done, but this helps to make up for those days in the North—the bluest days of all,—when we had to turn back on previous expeditions, unsuccessful; it helps to make up for those years of exile from home and all that goes to make life agreeable. In this magnificent trophy is the cap, the climax, the finish of four hundred years of history, of which Great Britain has written three-quarters or more. In the person of Bartlett, your flag stands next to the North Pole. In the person of Scott, God willing, it shall stand at the South Pole. Honours are equal—we are of one blood. I thank you.

Captain R. A. BARTLETT: I sincerely and honestly, on behalf of my country, the oldest British colony, Terra Nova, thank you for presenting me with this Silver Medal. America has given us Newfoundlanders a chance to do some work in the Arctic; beginning in '69 with Hayes, and then '72 with the rescue of the *Polaris*, then Greely, and then Commander Peary has given us further chances. I am no orator; I wish I were. You will understand I appreciate it, and words at this moment refuse to frame themselves adequately enough for me to express my deepest and sincerest thanks. Fellow-Britons! why did your men do so much in Africa, in India, and in other places on the globe? Because they had men like Kitchener, Roberts, and Wolseley, and others to lead them. We had a man who could lead us, and our task was the North Pole, which must be attained; Stars and Stripes must be planted there. "Now, boys, do it!" That was our tocsin.

FROM HAUSALAND TO EGYPT, THROUGH THE SUDAN.*

By Dr. KARL KUMM.

WITHOUT going into details, I beg to be permitted to state that my journey from Hausaland to Egypt could not have met with the success it obtained, without the support and assistance of the Governments of Great Britain, Germany, and France. Obstacles one had anticipated were removed as one approached them, and difficulties disappeared. The first half of my journey led through comparatively well-known country, the Niger Territories, and the Middle Shari region. When I left Liverpool on October 10, 1908, on the Elder Dempster boat *Falaba*, my main object was to visit the Mission Stations of the Sudan United Mission, and to establish the Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves' Home at Rumasha, in Northern Nigeria. This led me first to the Government centre in Zungeru, and afterwards by way of Lokoja to the various Mission Stations. During this journey of inspection when travelling through the Murchison range from Bukuru

* Royal Geographical Society, April 11, 1910. Map, p. 248.