

# MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE NORTH POLE



Dr. Frederick Cook in clothing he wore to the North Pole.

**D**R. FREDERICK COOK, who realized the dream of the explorers of the world when on April 21, 1908, he planted the American flag at the spot where all points of the compass were south, is back in civilization telling his story. No more dramatic tale has been related than the one procured through the enterprise of the New York Herald the day Dr. Cook reached Lerwick in the Shetland islands. "Land has been discovered on which rests the earth's northernmost rocks," says Dr. Cook. "A triangle of 30,000 square miles has been cut out of the terrestrial unknown."

"The expedition was the outcome of a summer cruise in the Arctic seas on the schooner Bradley, which arrived at the limits of navigation in Smith sound late in August, 1907. Here conditions were found favorable for launching a venture to the pole. J. R. Bradley liberally supplied from his vessel suitable provisions for local use. My own equipment for emergency use served well for every purpose of Arctic travel. Many Esquimaux had been gathered on the Greenland shores at Annatok for the winter bear hunt. Immense quantities of meat had been collected and in camp were plenty of strong dogs. The combination was lucky, for there was good material for equipment.

"All that was required was conveniently arranged for at a point only 700 miles from the boreal center. A house and workshop were built of packing boxes by willing hands and this northernmost tribe of 250 persons set themselves to the problem of devising a suitable outfit.

"Before the end of the long winter night we were ready for the enterprise and plans had matured to force a new route over Grinnell land northward along its west coast out on to the Polar sea.

"The campaign opened with a few scouting parties being sent over the American shores to explore the way and seek the game haunts. Their mission was only partly successful because of the storms.

"At sunrise of 1908 (February 19), the main expedition embarked on its voyage to the pole. It consisted of eleven men and 103 dogs, drawing eleven heavily laden sledges. The expedition left the Greenland shore and pushed westward over the troubled ice of Smith sound.

"The gloom of the long night was relieved only by a few hours of daylight. The chill of the winter was felt at its worst. As we crossed the heights of Ellesmere sound to the Pacific slope the temperature sank to

minus 83 centigrade. Several dogs were frozen and the men suffered severely, but we soon found the game trails along which the way was easy.

"We forced through Nansan Sound to land's end. In this march we secured 101 musk oxen, seven bears and 335 hares. We pushed out into the polar sea from the southern point of Herbert island on March 18. Six Esquimaux returned from here.

"With four men and forty-six dogs moving supplies for eighty days, the crossing of the Circumpolar pack was begun. Three days later two other Esquimaux, forming the last supporting party, returned and the trials had now been reduced by the survival of the fittest. The two best men and twenty-six dogs were picked for final effort.

"There before us in an unknown line of 460 miles lay our goal. The first day's journey provided long marches and we made encouraging progress. A big lead which separated the land from the ice of the central pack was crossed with little delay.

"Low temperature was persistent and winds made life a torture. But cooped up in our snow houses eating dried beef tallow and drinking hot tea there were some animal comforts occasionally to be gained.

"For several days after sight of known land was lost the overcast sky prevented an accurate determination of our positions. On March 30 the horizon was partly cleared and new land was discovered. Our observation gave our position as latitude 84.47, longitude 86.36.

"There was urgent need of rapid advance. Our main mission did not permit a detour for the purpose of exploring the coast. Here we saw the last signs of solid earth; beyond, there was nothing stable to be seen.

"We advanced steadily over the monotony of moving sea ice and now found ourselves beyond the range of all life—neither foot prints of bears nor the blow hole of seals were detected. Even the microscopic creatures of the deep were no longer under us. The maddening influence of the shifting desert of frost became almost unendurable in the daily routine.

"The surf of the pack offered less and less trouble and the weather improved, but there still remained the life sapping wind which drove despair to its lowest recess. Extreme cold compelled physical action.

"Thus day after day our weary legs spread over big distances. Incidents



Eskimo girl who was a member of Dr. Cook's former expedition.

and positions were recorded, but adventure was promptly forgotten in the next day's efforts. The night of April 1 was made notable by the swinging of the sun at midnight over the northern ice. Sunburns and frost bites now were recorded on the same day, but the double day's glitter infused quite an incentive into one's life of shivers.

"Our observation April 6 placed the camp in latitude 86.36, longitude, 94.2.

"In spite of what seemed long marches we advanced but little over a hundred miles. Much of our work was lost in circuitous twists around troublesome ice pressure lines and high irregular fields. A very old ice drift, too, was driving eastward with sufficient force to give some anxiety.

"Although still equal to about fifteen miles daily, the extended marches and the long hours for traveling with which fortune favored us earlier, were no longer possible. We were now about 200 miles from the pole and sledge loads were reduced.

"One dog after another went into stomachs of the hungry survivors until the teams were considerably diminished in number, but there seemed to remain a sufficient balance for man and brute to push along into the heart of the mystery to which we had set ourselves.

"On April 21 we had reached 89 degrees 39 minutes 46 seconds. The pole was in sight. We cleared the remaining 14 seconds and made a few final observations. I told Etukishook and Ahwesh (the accompanying Eskimos) that we had reached the 'great nail.'

"Everywhere we turned was south. "With a single step we could pass from one side of the earth to the other, from midday to midnight.

"At last the flag floated to the breeze at the pole. It was April 21, 1908. The temperature was minus 38 centigrade, barometer 29.83; latitude 90; as for longitude, it was nothing, as it was but a word.

"Although crazy with joy, our spirits began to undergo a feeling of weariness. Next day, after taking all our observations, a sentiment of intense solitude penetrated us while we looked at the horizon. Was it possible that this desolate region, without a path of earth, had aroused the ambition of so many men for so many centuries; there was no ground, only an immensity of dazzling white snow, no living being, no point to break the frightful monotony. On April 23 we started on our return."



Eskimo man and Dogs. It was big, husky men of this type that helped the intrepid explorer on his successful quest of the pole.