

POLE-HUNTING AS A SPORT

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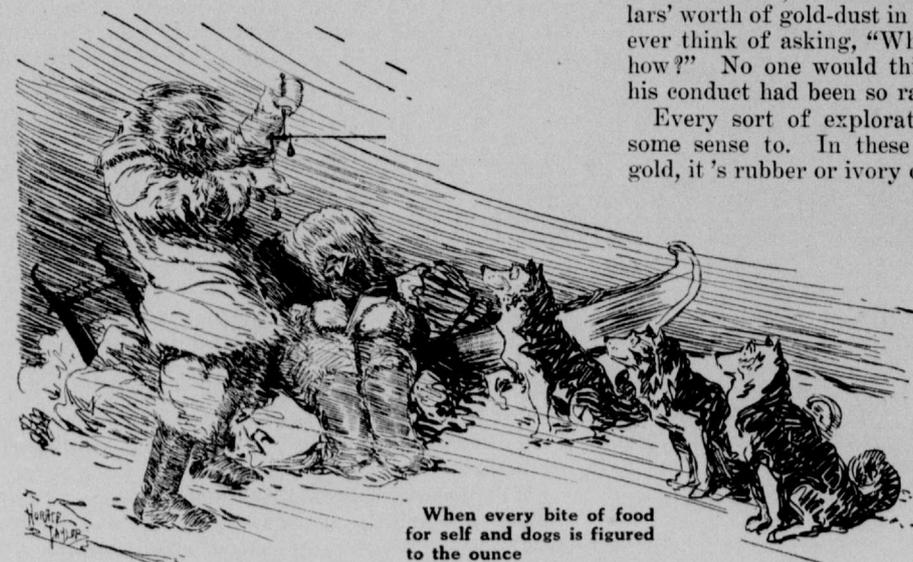
THE SPORT OF going Pole-hunting is ended. The original and only two Poles have finally been captured and their hides tacked up to dry. This practically finishes the age of exploration too.

But, just as when the Wild and Woolly West blew up and killing Indians ceased to be the cynosure of youth, the brave boy detective began to tear off the disguising whiskers from his face and foil the villain thereby, so the Old Sleuth of intensive exploration will likely take the place of the Buffalo Bill of extensive exploration and be every bit as interesting and exciting. Maybe more so.

Whatever expeditions of discovery there may be, from now on they will be directed to odd corners of the earth and not toward the top and bottom ends of it. That incident is closed. It's a funny situation when you come to think of it. Usually an achievement so noteworthy is only the beginning of even more noteworthy ones along the same line. America was n't discovered once for all. It's being re-discovered every day by Englishmen pained to learn they can not run out to Chicago and get back in time to dress for dinner, by New Yorkers shocked by evidence that the continent extends much farther West than Hackensack, and by others of us really surprised to find that Denver is about half-way across and not within an hour's ride of the Pacific as we fondly fancied.

And the thing's so dog-gone definite! Never was anything like it in the world before. Who invented the automobile? or the telephone? or the sewing-machine? or — or anything? Who discovered America? Tut-tut, Columbus never saw America — not the mainland any how. If you want to start an argument on that I'll argue you to a fare-you-well. There's Leif Eriesson, you know, and the settlement at Vinland. And there are the Irish Christians that fled before the fury of the Norsemen. Oh, if you get me going on that subject, I'll have you gasping for breath!

BUT, North Pole Peary; South Pole Amundsen. And that ends it. I beg your pardon . . . Repeat the question, please . . . Gentleman in the gallery inquires: "How about Doctor Cook?" Well, sir, I feel a glow of personal pride whenever that illustrious name is spoken. All the resounding fakirs that have come down the big road in my time I've fallen for, excepting him. Why, right after the war with Spain I even voted once for — No matter about that, though. I don't begrudge that once. I learned my little book by it, and that is more than some can say. Others may grit their teeth to think of Dr. Cook, but I shall always regard him as the one green and succulent oasis in a dusty desert of disillusionments. Thank you for reminding me of him. I am glad of the opportunity to . . . er . . . to . . . er . . .



When every bite of food for self and dogs is figured to the ounce



"One, Two, Three for Robert Peary!"

And since the young man gnawed by ambition to write his name high on Fame's eternal blackboard may no longer, in expectation of going Poling, harden himself to Arctic cold by sitting up till after eleven in a steam-heated flat, the time has come to ask: What was the tarnation sense of it any how? What was there to gain? What difference is it whether anybody ever traveled so far North that one step farther would be South?

I suppose every one has asked that. Along toward morning in the Klondike, I am told, it gets real chilly. Maybe in the dead of Winter it is n't quite



Warming your feet under your companion's shirt

so cold as right plumb at the Pole; but when the mercury freezes solid and even whiskey is kind of mushy-like, ten or a dozen degrees one way or another do not matter much. Hardship for hardship, I suppose it is an even thing with Poling; but if a fellow came back from the Klondike with what he started out for, that is to say, two or three million dollars' worth of gold-dust in his grip-sack, no one would ever think of asking, "What was the sense of it any how?" No one would think of calling him a hero, his conduct had been so rational.

Every sort of exploration except Poling there's some sense to. In these far-off places, if it isn't gold, it's rubber or ivory or furs or coal or copper or white pine or something valuable. Always in these far-off places there are "natives," lazy doleful things, in whom it is our Duty and our Destiny to inculcate the needed lesson of unremitting industry, they to get out raw material for us, two dollars' worth every day, let's say, and board themselves, we to pay them one good licking every day.

But at either Pole there's none to chop a hand off of as warning to the idle, none to give steady employment to. There is none to skin out of what he's got and we want, not even an Arctic hare. Every living thing, excepting the explorer, has the gump-tion to stay away from there. If there is gold or coal or mineral deposits at the North Pole they are under 1,500 feet of water.

What is the use of going Poling then?

"Scientific research," some one answers.

WELL, to be sure, these scientists do crazy things, or what look like crazy things. They are n't as interested in making piles of money as a normal person should be. But though, seemingly, they throw their lives away, they do it always in the reasonable hope of very practical results, not to themselves, perhaps, but for the race's benefit. Even this thing of finding out what's burning in the sun — why, we all know that it is only a question of time when the spectroscope will give us the recipe for making gold out of Babbitt metal.

The pursuit of knowledge may often take a man to where the table-board is very poor, but never to where nobody has ever been before and never will want to go again. There are several things we're not right sure we thoroughly understand, things we might know more about if all that money blown in on perfectly useless Polar expeditions had been laid out on their investigation. Infantile paralysis, for an example; or how a shop-girl can live decently on four-fifty per. Fascinating mysteries, well worth while, and yet within walking distance of the street-car lines.

Scientific research comes right down to making a large number of meticulously careful observations with extremely delicate instruments of great precision, accurately recording them, and calmly and dispassionately reasoning out what they add up to.

How can that be done, I want to know, when it's a case of dashing to the Pole, tapping the bye with, "One, Two, Three for Robert Peary!" or "One, Two, Three for Roald Amundsen!" and then beating it? You might as well expect accurate work from a census tabulator pursued by Indians eager to demonstrate their notion of a hair-cut. Worse, because even Indians on the war-path do stop at times for food and sleep; the Arctic cold never lets up. Even in midsummer the low-lying sun has about as much warmth in it as a lighted match across the street. Who can make meticulously careful observations with instruments of precision when he's shivering like a lost puppy on a wet doorstep?

And on that impetuous dash, when every bite of food for self and dogs is figured to the ounce, when all the fuel that you carry is alcohol to make your tea with, who's going to tote instruments of precision for any other purpose than to prove he's been there?

Here's the way of it: You hike along, day after day, day after day, driving a team of Arctic dogs (the meanest critters on God's earth to manage) over piled-up chunks of ice that rack the stoutest sledges all apart. Sometimes you have to go three miles around a crack that isn't more than ten feet wide. Sometimes it's narrow enough to jump; but look out you don't fall in; you have no fire to dry your clothes by. Look out the crack does not close suddenly and nip a toe off; this is no time or place for hospital cases. And all the time the wind at sixty miles an hour and sixty degrees below is pelting your face with needles of sharp ice. (Continued on Page 12)