

Arctic research has, of course, been going on for a very long time, but until recently its purpose was limited almost wholly to geographical exploration. It has passed through many phases. The original chief impulse, which lasted for well over two centuries, was the famous search for a Northwest Passage from Europe to the Far East. The map of the Canadian Arctic is dotted with the names of the early voyagers - Hudson, Frobisher, Davis and many others - who in their small ships struggled to fulfill the dream of a direct sailing route westward across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The fur trade provided an economic basis for further exploration in the Northland by men of the Hudson's Bay Company around Hudson Bay and later in the interior, and by the discovery of the lake and river routes into the Far North by French and Scottish traders operating out of Montreal.

The first two white men to reach the Arctic coastline overland were Samuel Hearne of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1771 after a winter of wandering with the Indians, and Alexander Mackenzie of the Northwest Company, who descended the river that bears his name in 1789. It is indicative of the incentive behind the early travel that Mackenzie's name for that great river was "River Disappointment", because he found that it emptied into the Arctic and not into the Pacific Ocean.

Hearne and Mackenzie were not scientific explorers in the modern sense. Both, however, had learned one very valuable lesson in what I may call applied science; they used the Indian means of travel by canoe or by snowshoe, and they were able to live off the country. The first substantial land expedition to the Canadian Arctic which could be called scientifically equipped had not been taught this lesson. It nearly ended in disaster and suffered terrible privations. That was the journey by land undertaken in 1821-22 with a considerable company by Lieutenant John Franklin, who some 25 years later was to die with all his large party on his final ship-borne attempt to unravel the secrets of Arctic geography and to discover the Northwest Passage.

Strangely enough it was the disappearance of the Franklin expedition that gave the first real impetus to international scientific cooperation in the Arctic, beginning in 1848, just 100 years ago. In that year there began a search which lasted for ten years before satisfactory evidence was uncovered that every one of his 129 men had lost their lives. During that intensive search, three countries took part in it, Great Britain, the United States and France; 35 or 40 ships were involved; and five overland expeditions were undertaken. One result was that some 6,000 miles of new coastline were discovered in what are now the Canadian Arctic Islands.

Thirty or so years later, in 1882-83, the first Polar Year was instituted. It provided another example of early international scientific cooperation, in the course of which a world-wide chain of twelve northern stations was set up for observation purposes by the ten cooperating countries.

Men of many nations have taken part during three and a half centuries in pushing forward the limits of geographical knowledge in the North American Arctic - British and Americans, Danes, Norwegians and Russians, French and Canadians and others. Most of the modern Arctic expeditions have included men of different nationalities. That eminent veteran, a Governor of the Arctic Institute, Mr. Stefansson, may recall that in his expeditions in the Eastern islands of the Archipelago on behalf of the Canadian Government between 1913 and 1918 there were included citizens of France, Norway, Denmark, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand as well as of Canada. Another well-known contributor to our knowledge, especially of the anthropology of the Arctic, was Dr. Rasmussen, who led a Danish expedition in 1921-24 from Greenland along the shores of the Arctic Ocean to Alaska and Siberia in his studies of the Eskimos. I shall not weary you with reference to the many other expeditions of recent years.