

Procuring Dog-Food in the Eastern Arctic

by INSPECTOR C. E. WILCOX

AN IMPORTANT duty of the members of the Force stationed in the Eastern Arctic, is to procure sufficient dog-food to tide them over during the season of darkness. This entails considerable hardship, but, at the same time, offers a rare diversion from the regular duties.

As a general rule, two dog-teams are maintained at each detachment: a team consisting of from 14 to 16 dogs. In addition, there are the usual pups to be cared for.

The selection of dog-food is of vital importance. It is generally agreed by experienced explorers that walrus meat, in the Eastern Arctic, is, possibly, the best dog-food obtainable, with seal a close second. The meat of the walrus is most nutritious, promoting growth and development of the body.

The dogs are usually fed in the evening, following a hard day's work, as early-morning feeding promotes drowsiness and laziness. About three pounds of meat, daily, is apportioned to each patrol dog and, owing to their penchant for walrus meat, this is gulped down without mastication.

As it is essential that several tons of meat be stored, before the season of darkness, a number of walrus hunts are organized. In addition to providing substantial dog-food, considerable sport is derived by the hunters.

The walrus is a colossal marine animal, weighing from 1200 to 3000 pounds, and is armed with huge ivory tusks from 18 to 24 inches in length, which enable the animal to splinter stout whale-boats with little effort. These giant creatures are most abundant along the shores of Greenland, which are used as breeding grounds, but are also quite numerous in the vicinity of Foxe Basin and Melville Peninsula.

Whale-boats are generally used by white men on these hunts, but the natives prefer the lighter and faster kayaks. While the more modern method of hunting walrus is with the rifle, the use of the harpoon is still much in evidence among the natives.

The harpoon, as a rule, is about 5 or 6 feet in length but varies in weight. The point is usually fashioned from a piece of sharp steel and set into a base of ivory cut from the walrus tusk; it is securely bound to the staff of the harpoon with strong "oogjook" thongs.

Incidentally, the "oogjook" (or bearded seal) is quite rare, and is a prize highly coveted by the natives. The tough hide of the "oogjook" is invaluable for traces, leather thongs, and other necessities, but more especially in the making of boots, because of the protection it affords the feet against the sharp ice.

A 15 to 20 foot thong of "oogjook" is attached to the harpoon, at the end of which is affixed an inflated seal-skin which acts as a float. The natives are particularly adept in the use of the harpoon and may strike with unerring accuracy from a distance of 20 feet or more.

Should the walrus succeed in reaching the water after being harpooned, it will invariably dive, when the float is promptly released, enabling the