

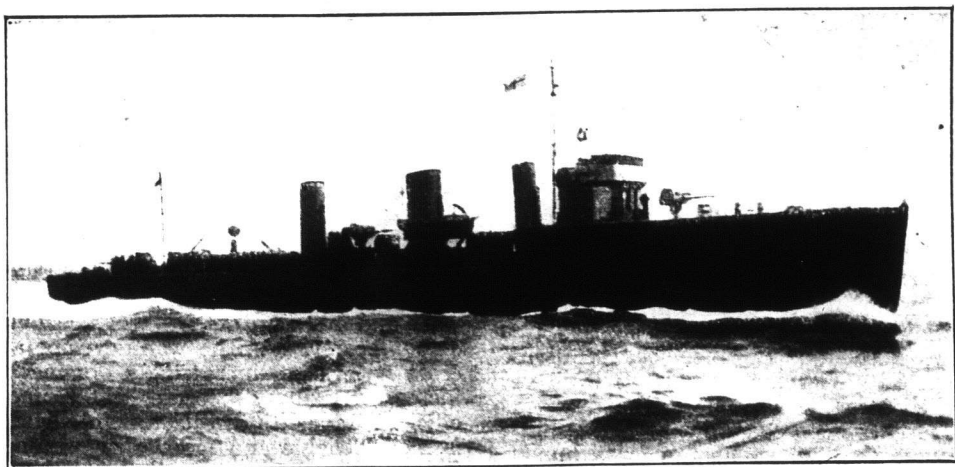
## A War Ship in Action



Robert Williams, A.B.

(R. Williams, A.B., who served five years in the Royal Navy, and spent the last three years in Winnipeg as an employee of the T. Eaton Co., sends the following interesting and thrilling letter to his brother here.)

Three days after the declaration of war, Mr. Williams, who was a native of Belfast, left Winnipeg to rejoin his old ship.)



H.M.S. Meteor

"Dear Brother—I received your welcome letter yesterday and am glad to hear of you all. I suppose you will have seen in the papers before now that the old 'Packet' has been in action. We had a hot time as we were under fire for pretty near five hours without a let up. We sighted the German fleet at seven

last Sunday morning heading for our coast on another little raid, but as soon as they saw us they turned about, and made off at full speed for home. We (four battle cruisers, and some light cruisers and destroyers) made after them, and our boat being the fastest of the bunch was given orders to find out the strength and formation of the enemy. We got to within four miles of them, when they suddenly opened fire on us, and as we had all the information we wanted then we turned tail and reported to our flagship. It was a splendid sight to see our big ships, the 'Lion' and 'Tiger' come into action. After the big ships had been hammering at one another for about three-quarters of an hour our boat was again ordered to steam in between the enemy and our own ships, and raise smoke so that the enemy's range might be spoiled. You know these boats can raise dense clouds of black or white smoke at any time and can cover themselves completely in it. It fairly made some of the boys' hair stand up straight—there we were between both fires. The enemy's ships took no notice of us till we were about half way across and then they opened up. They were using shrapnel and lyddite, and you could see the shells coming closer and closer until at last they got us. It is a miracle that the boat still floats. We were hit about a dozen times, one shell, an 8.2, went in through the ship's side and burst in the foremost stokehold killing four stokers, another burst on the upper deck and part of it took away a chap's lower jaw, another went under my gun but failed to burst—it would have taken six of us if it had. The shell that burst in the stokehold was one of the last broad-

side that the 'Blucher' fired before she turned over. We were about 2,000 yards off then, and were going to torpedo her. It put us out of action, and we had to be towed into Grimsby where we landed our killed and wounded. We are now waiting to go in dock and get dished up a little, and I daresay we will get another few days leave."

### Where the Last Plants Grow

By Aubrey Fullerton

It may not yet be finally known what is the furthest north that wheat will grow and ripen, but we do know where the country begins that will grow nothing at all. The limit of vegetation is surprisingly near the top of the map, in a region that is commonly supposed to be utterly barren and desolate. But even on the islands of the Arctic there are grass-covered prairies and flower-strewn hillsides, and green things grow very close to the borders of the polar world.

The Arctic Islands, just north of the Canadian mainland, are worth knowing better. There are a great many of them, to begin with, and their area, not including Greenland, is at least five times that of the British Isles. Baffin Island, the largest of the group, is itself 211,000 square miles in area. The others, numbering into the hundreds, are of all sizes. Some of them are mere islets, bits of rock lifted above the water, but there are at least twenty that have each an area of more than five hundred square miles. Next to Greenland, Baffin is the

largest island on the continent, and Ellesmere is nearly equal to the combined area of all the West Indies.

This Arctic archipelago, though unfamiliar to most people even by name, has been carefully charted, after many years of polar exploration, and one may find, for the trouble of looking at a map, an almost bewildering array of well-named islands, capes, bays, straits, and mountains. Nearly all these far north places have been named in honor of the explorers who found them. A great many of them bear Scandinavian names, for the daring Danes and Swedes have always taken a foremost part in Arctic exploration.

The islands of the North are unlike any others. They bear witness to a mighty movement of nature's forces away back in creation times, when great upheavals and landslides and volcanic outbursts left them as their monuments. On some of them have been found beds of fossils, in which may be traced the forms of trees and plants now found only far to the south, showing that in the unknown past the top of the world had a much warmer climate than at present.

Only a thin layer of soil covers, in places, the limestone and crystalline rocks of which these islands are formed, and many of them are absolutely barren. Yet where there is even a sprinkling of soil there is usually some vegetation. On Baffin Island, for instance, are goodly sized plains and valleys well covered with moss and other Arctic plant life, on which great herds of caribou and musk-oxen feed luxuriously; and similar areas, on a smaller scale, are found on Ellesmere, King William, and others of the group. The low hillsides on King William Island are spread with what the explorers describe as "a variegated carpet of many-colored flowers." The Canadian Government's expedition of 1903-04 made a list of sixty distinct plants north of Hudson Strait.

The Eskimos of these island regions are, with their kinsmen on Greenland, the northernmost people of the world. Their numbers are uncertain, but are not large, Baffin Island having a population of about one thousand. They live in small camps or settlements along the coasts, and spend their whole time in a fight for existence, hunting the caribou and fishing for seals with a skill born of necessity. Sometimes, too, bands of Eskimo hunters cross over from the mainland to hunt the wild game with which the islands abound.

Very little is known as yet of the interior of the islands, the explorations having been chiefly along their coasts. Some of the islands lie low and flat, but many have coast-lines marked by high cliffs, with elevated tablelands beyond. Baffin Island's coast, for instance, is high and rocky, and its tablelands are from two thousand to three thousand feet above the sea level, reaching at the north end of the island over five thousand feet. The interior of Baffin is, generally speaking, a rough plain, varied with rolling hills and valleys. In the southwestern part of the island are two large lakes, each more than a hundred miles long.

Perhaps the strangest thing about the Arctic Islands is that nature has stored several of them with valuable minerals that the rest of the world would gladly be able to use. There is so much iron in the coast hills on Prescott and Prince Albert Land that compasses refuse to act in their vicinity; mica exists on several islands, and on Baffin a mica mine is profitably worked by a Scotch company that sends over a vessel load of miners every year; there is copper at a number of places; and lignite coal is of such frequent occurrence that it has been used by many exploration parties, while even its shipment for commercial use has been suggested. There are traces of gold, too, and placer mining may some day be worth while.

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