



—Phillips

"North Stars" unloading at Resolute. A snowmobile is speeding across the airfield.

for its ingenuity. On the floor are even some species of arctic flora for the beating of perspiring customers. All that is lacking is the attendants. To this odd device the reckless scientists repair from time to time (even though they have a perfectly good bath indoors) and sit solemnly in a tropical temperature. Then they go and roll in snowdrifts at 40 degrees below zero. At least, so it is claimed. So far there has not been a single case of pneumonia; in fact the health record throughout the Arctic stations has been remarkably good. The main scourge is the common cold, and it occurs only after an airlift has brought in the germs of civilization. If there is a medical emergency the patient is speedily "airlifted" out to the nearest well-equipped hospital.

It is a curious way to spend an evening, but at about six p.m. on the day of our arrival, after five hours flying from Churchill, we went on to Mould Bay (at 79 degrees north) and back, a round trip of nearly 1,000 miles. To the newcomer, the flight was more than routine. The aircraft had developed two or three defects which, at a fully-equipped base, would probably have grounded it until the crew of mechanics with endless equipment had been able to set it right. Up here there were mechanics; there was some equipment, but there was not a limitless supply of replacement parts; and above all there was not time. We flew on successfully, thanks to the skill of the crew. Apart from the mechanical faults which seemed so much more serious in these remote places, one of the most trying aspects of Arctic flying is the long period of inaction while the aircraft warms up. We had stood on the agonizingly cold air strip for about 20 minutes. Then we sat strapped in the plane which was about 20 degrees below zero for 35 minutes before the wheels lifted from the ground. There was no possibility the passengers lumbered up from their seats and ploddingly exercised freezing feet growing numb on the cold metal floor while we watched the white clouds of breath float towards the roof. Through the aircraft windows flecked with crystals of frost, the Arctic in twilight looked more frigid than ever. In all that lifeless white expanse, the only source of warmth were the pulsating blue and red flames from the exhaust of the aircraft engines. The passengers watched them intermittently and strained to sense some change in the pitch of the roar which would indicate that the long period of warm-up was nearing an end. When finally the safety-belt signal was extinguished, the passengers lumbered up from their seats and ploddingly exercised freezing feet like hibernating animals emerging from deep sleep. Many lay on the packing cases in the center of the floor, their feet against the ceiling nearer the heating vents. The