

Knud Rasmussen.

His Journeys in East Greenland.

The desire to go to East Greenland lay in Knud Rasmussen's blood for many years.

In 1904, when he had completed his journey to the Cape York Eskimos on the Literary Expedition under Mylius Erichsen, Knud Rasmussen came to Julianehaab on his way back and from there attempted to get to Lindenowfjord by boat. The field ice proved an insuperable obstacle, but from Aluk he was able to see the wild magnificent mountains of the East Coast; then was born a most natural desire to travel to that part of Greenland too some day.

Many years were fated to pass before he did so.

On the first occasion it was not quite in accordance with what he had originally intended; in 1919 Knud Rasmussen went along with a vessel on its normal voyage to Angmagssalik, a journey — known as the Fourth Thule Expedition — which gave birth to the great work of three volumes: *Myter og Sagn fra Grønland*.

He was not content to leave it at that, however; he felt himself drawn irresistably by the enarmous and almost inaccessible wastes drawn irresistably by the enormeous and almost inaccessible wastes to the north and south of Angmagssalik. All the same, his talks with the Cape Farewell Greenlanders, and his studies of the reports of travellers and the ice reports, had made it clear to him that East Greenland was an imprisoned coast, barred by field ice as it was for the greater part of the year, and that a voyage along it meant one long continous struggle, inch by inch, against the elements.

Read what Graah, Garde and Nansen had to go through, and ask Holm, Amstrup and Mikkelsen about their fights with the ice.

Knud Rasmussen knew, and, though occupied with other journeys and plans, constantly watched how the ice behaved, not only by studying the official ice reports, but by means of communications received year after year from friends among the Cape Farewell

Greenlanders; as the years went by, conditions improved considerably, in fact they became so good that in 1931 he made up his mind that the time had come for action. With a few men and a fast motorboat he was carried to Julianehaab, whence the start was made up along the coast to Angmagssalik and back again.

The experiment succeeded.

Where once it had been necessary to worm one's way through the closely packed ice, his motorboat „Dagmar“ ran along smoothly; this was a discovery that revolutionized the whole technique and tempo for future exploration.

This was the Sixth Thule Expedition, the voyage of reconnaissance that opened up Southeast Greenland.

On his return home Knud Rasmussen got busy with the many preparations for the systematic exploration of Southeast Greenland, and this brings us to the two great expeditions: The Seventh Thule Expedition 1932 and 1933.

It has been an unforgettable experience to have taken part in that expedition from the start. With it Knud Rasmussen embarked upon something entirely new. The dog sledge was courageously discarded for modern methods, and it is almost incredible what Knud Rasmussen got through in the way of work to get together all the personnel and material he needed. For weeks on end he was indefatigable, going from conference to conference and gradually conjuring up ship and motorboats, aircraft and wireless, scientists and money, and he allowed himself neither peace nor quiet till everything was ready.

But he did it.

The expedition's sphere of operations extended from Cape Farewell in the south to Scoresby Sound in the north, a wild coast, now ice, now mountain, stretching about 1700 kilometres in length and varying greatly in breadth. In 1932 it was the whole distance from Umivik southwards, and in 1933 a continuation was made northwards from Umivik, a perfect connexion being made to Kangerlugssuaq, mapped by Captain Ejnar Mikkelsen's expedition in 1932; in fact, the aerial photography was carried on a good distance more towards the north.

Only three summer months are available for travelling the coast, July, August and September; for round about October, when the autumnal gales begin, it is prudent to be well away from there with small craft.

In order to cope with the many tasks in that limited period it was of course necessary to force the going and to have a suffi-

ciency of hands; in 1932, for example, there were in all 37 Danes and 28 Greenlanders all helping, and the material included one large vessel (the M.S. „Th. Stauning“), and seven large and small motorcraft as well as an aeroplane, while in 1933 the personnel had been expanded to 45 Danes, one Englishman, four Germans and about fifty natives, distributed over a similar number of vessels.

To give some slight idea of the extent of the work it may be mentioned that in those two summers, 1932 and 1933, the n. c. expedition's vessels in Greenland sailed and flew a distance equal to twice round the world. It was not for nothing that Knud Rasmussen called the Seventh Thule Expedition the "Expedition of many journeys to the coast of a thousand glaciers", and it was a source of profound joy to him know that the tasks imposed had been accomplished without loss of life or material.

Regarding the nature of these tasks, 1) *cartography* by means of aerial photography was the main object of the expedition in both years; in 1932 the others were: geological and archaeological investigations, and in 1933 this programme was extended to: 2) inspection service of the whole southeast coast, 3) special studies of the intellectual culture, religion and folk lore of the East Coast Eskimos, 4) geological research, 5) glaciological research, 6) fishery investigations, 7) zoology, 8) botanical collections, 7) description in line and colour of the nature and people of East Greenland, and 10) East Greenland and the East Greenlanders through motion pictures.

It would be going too far here to mention names and to account for how all these many and varied tasks were accomplished, under a number of our finest investigators who had all joined the expedition readily and without the slightest hesitation.

The Seventh Thule Expedition was destined to be Knud Rasmussen's last.

Towards the end of September he became ill with food poisoning at Angmagssalik. Later pneumonia set in, but he improved so much that the physician gave permission for him to travel home, first from Angmagssalik to Julianehaab, where he arrived on 15th October by the expedition's motor cutter „Kivioq“, and from there on the Government ship „Hans Egede“ to Copenhagen, which he reached on the 4th November.

Then followed his long illness, his hopeless fight against the disease. We all lived in the hope of his recovery, and the real progress he made was a source of great joy to all; so much the more painful

was the news of his death on the morning of the 21st December — a dreary day.

Now he is gone — it is scarcely realizable.

How he brightened things up while he was here. He was an outstanding combination of brain, heart and will; he was moulded in one block, but so richly faceted that we all have difficulty now in singling out the quality that was greatest and best in that superabundance.

As a *traveller* in the Arctic he was far and away superior to all.

He had a marvellous physique, could emulate the Eskimos in living on the country itself, relying upon his own powers of endurance and strength; not for nothing did he bear the proud name of the best dog-driver in the North.

As an *explorer* he was the pioneer.

He threw the door of Greenland wide open to all the world, and name of the best dog-driver in the North.

thereby made Denmark greater. His solitary sledge trail across those remote wastes led from settlement to settlement, brought new peoples into the light of day and carved him a name that is world renowned.

As an *expedition leader* he was incomparable.

The manner in which he laid his plans was exemplary and in the face of new situations he displayed both certainty and calmness of judgment and quickness of brain in coping with them. He had the farsightedness and creative power of the great leader, and was possessed of the uncommon ability to enthuse others; no wonder his expedition comrades looked up to him and would have gone through fire for him. He for his part never forgot what his companions had done and he saw that they received their generous share of the honours.

As an *artist* he was able to carry us all along out on his exciting travels through the snowfields to the world's most northerly race. He has presented to us the fascinating beauty of the Polar regions and enriched our language by means of a long row of books, whose gorgeous descriptions of his journeys are told in his own vivid and clear words.

As the world's *ambassador* for the Greenlanders he is irreplaceable they themselves will tell you that.

He was their chieftain, and now he will live on as the great figure in their legends. Think he was able to do for the Cape York eskimos by starting the Thule Station; and his masterly and heart-

felt appeal for them and Denmark in the Hague case will still be a fresh memory.

As a good *citizen* and son of Denmark he was a shining example to all, for he lived so entirely up to the words: to one's country one owes everything. With a generous hand he presented to the State the priceless treasures he brought home from his travels and as one of the country's five great men he took the lead when the people subscribed towards the new National Museum, where his own collections alone will fill ten large rooms; this merely in order to mention one or two examples.

It would scarcely seem possible that any one individual could possess more great and good qualities — and yet, after all he was perhaps greatest as a *man*.

From him radiated a charm, an enchantment, that gripped all who came in contact with him. In him were concentrated the three virtues: the pure heart, whereby all his doings were so open and above board; staunch faithfulness to his friends; great, true modesty. No one has ever heard him speak disparagingly of others, no one has ever seen him do anything at all that was petty or low; he was simply great in everything, on weekdays as on festal days — a „gift of festivity“ to us all.

Is there any wonder that now we are conscious of an oppressive emptiness?

We will hold on to that treasure-house of memories that we own of rich and happy moments with him, he who became our friend and the hero of a whole nation.

Now that Knud is here no longer, everything is so desolate.

The torch has gone out.

But its reflection will continue to shine through the ages with the splendour of the northern lights.
