

I will also pass over very briefly the exciting and difficult time we had getting ready for our final take-off for the Pole. The snow was as much as six feet deep in places and we had to learn some things from actual trial and heart-breaking experience, for no one had before flown such a big plane on skis. (Many times it looked as if there were nothing for us but dismal and disgraceful failure.

It was in overcoming the snow and ice that those fellows with me wrote an epic of manhood and spirit that I have never seen equalled. I will let <sup>they are more eloquent than I could</sup> the movies tell their story, ~~they are so it better than I can~~, and I will come immediately to our polar flight.

Finally, at midnight May 9th we were ready for our second attempt to take our plane off the snow with our 10,000 pounds of weight.

For days the midnight sun as it circled in the sky had never failed to shine down on some of our fellows plugging away whether it was at mid-day or at mid-night, or the small hours of the morning.

This time Bennett and I decided that we would give the plane the full power of her three motors and to get off the snow or smash the plane. It is curious that though conservation is necessary in flying in the arctic, there are times when big chances must be taken if there is to be any success. *But we thought we could succeed.*

We had iced the snow immediately in front of the plane, rosin and tarred the skis, and now at 12.30 (greenwich) had the motors running full power and the plane held in leash by

a rope secured to the tail.

Bennett and I ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> in the plane dressed to go and ready to take whatever fate had in store for us - ignominious failure, or a great opportunity for a great adventure over the unknown.

I asked Bennett if he was all set. He nodded his head. I nodded to Noville - the rope was out, and we were moving. Would the ski hold with our heavy load and speed that was increasing rapidly?

Soon we had gained train speed. I glanced at the ski - it was just leaving the snow. We were off. We had the opportunity we had dreamed of.

Curiously my first thought was one of great thankfulness that those wonderful loyal fellows would now be happy that their sacrifices had not been in vain. Their desire to get us into the air, to give us our opportunity while the good weather lasted had been a passion with them.

Then there was a gratitude to Bennett who had done the great feat of getting the plane off the snow. ~~at the same time~~ I thought of Noville and Parker, <sup>two</sup> who felt heart-broken that we could'nt take them along and give them a chance to break their necks.

Though there was small chance of our ever getting back should we come down on the Polar Sea, ~~we~~<sup>we</sup> had given very great attention to having along that equipment that would give us the best chance to get back. *It was the usual thing to do.*  
Our sledge equipment was as follows:

Hand made skill sledge.  
 Gasoline Primus Stove  
 Chocolate.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  months food  
 Pemican.  
 Tea.  
 Sugar.  
 Two Rubber Boats.  
 Two Rifles & Ammunition.  
 One Two-man Tent.  
 Extra Waterproof Seal-skin Boots.  
 Extra Fur Clothing.  
 Snow-shoes.  
 Complete Medical Kit.

Soon we reached Dane's Island where Andree had left with his two companions in his free balloon for the Pole. It was from here too that Wellman started in his dirigible which burst and fell into the sea.

The first three attempts for the Pole by air had ended in tragedy. I could not help wondering if ours, the fourth attempt, would be ~~be~~ more fortunate.

In a few minutes we reached Amsterdiam Island and were delighted to find the weather clear ahead. <sup>a year ago</sup> Amundsen and Ellsworth had met fog at this point which took them off their course and nearly cost them their lives.

To my great surprise I saw the edge of the great polar ice pack only a few miles ahead where I had expected it to begin fifty or a hundred miles further north. Then when we reached the edge of the ice pack I got another surprise. There were very few small broken pieces of ice on the edge of the solid pack. Probably that is because it was early May before the edge of the pack was broken up from the heat. From then on until the end of the flight <sup>we</sup> I spent the busiest hours of my life. ~~I knew that we must navigate with considerable accuracy or we never could get back again.~~

Our sun-compass was on a trap door in the top of the navigator's compartment of the machine and to get at the compass I had to stand on a box and stick my head and shoulders out into the wind stream at the rear edge of the great wing of the Fokker.

~~The sun was towards the north and the wing hid the sun from us so that I would have to use our other compass through one of the cabin windows or the pilot's cockpit. *the first time I tried it* But during the short time that I had my face in the wind stream looking for the sun and checking Bennett on a line from Astorhan Island *the first time I tried it* and a peak, my nose and part of my face froze so that I had no feeling in it whatever.~~

I luckily discovered this in time and rubbed the frozen parts until feeling came back into them.

~~I had noted coming up the coast that we had a wind from the right and rear that was setting us out of course so that I opened the trap door in the bottom of the plane to get the amount of our drift and the speed of our Fokker from our drift-indicator by sighting with it on the snow. I had my gloves off to manipulate this instrument and soon found that my hands froze just as my nose had done, so from that time I had to watch my hands and face carefully while I was taking observations.~~

This brings to my mind the kind of clothes we wore. We had given a great deal of attention to this matter too, for without the proper clothes it is impossible to live and make progress on the polar sea. *in case the plane should come down* The skins of the animals that live in the polar regions are the lightest and the warmest →

*we wore*

Reindeer-skin parka or coat, and reindeer skin boots, lined with sheepskin sheeling. I wore polar bear pants and Bennett wore reindeer skin pants. We ~~had~~ had both seal skin and deer skin gloves. *lined with fur.*

I must admit to a thrill when we got well over the great polar ice pack. I had spent ~~hours~~ <sup>many</sup> hours wondering just what it would look like in early May. We were flying at about 2000 feet and there the white crisscrossed field of white stretched all the way to the horizon.

The sun was bright and we had a wonderful view of the formidable ice-pack. It was covered everywhere with snow and crisscrossed with pressure ridges like a crazy quilt. The constant movement of the polar ice pack causes cracks and ridges and ~~the~~ open leads of water. But we saw very few such leads that ~~were~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~recently~~ <sup>been</sup> frozen over with fresh snowless ice looking greenish against the white snow around. Some of these frozen leads probably older than the others had a layer of snow over them and looked as flat as a table. But I knew them for dangerous sirens. Giving the appearance of excellent landing they were probably too thin to hold the plane which in landing would crash through to destruction.

Our job now was to steer a straight course to the Pole. Should we miss that we would not only fail, but we probably would not get back to Spitzbergen, and we concentrated our every thought to that end.

The magnetic pole towards which the ~~the~~ compass needle points lay 1200 miles south of the north Pole and the unknown error of the magnetic compass caused by that, together with

tendency of the compass to swing, and sluggishness up there from the weak directive force made it impossible to steer straight for the Pole by means of the compass alone. That was why the sun-compass had to be used. There is a 24 hour clock that can be set so that the hand follows the sun around when a shadow is thrown on this hand from a little shadow-pin. This compass is independent of the magnetic errors and there is no tendency towards sluggishness. Even on the Atlantic ocean a steamer could steer a straighter course with a sun compass than with the ordinary compass. We had two of these compasses. One ~~was~~ on a trap door in the top of the plane exposed to the wind and the other <sup>was</sup> kept in the navigator's cabin so that we could get the sun through the windows in the cabin when the great wing threw the trap door in the shadow. Once every three minutes I checked Bennett on his course with the sun compass and when I relieved him at the wheel I took the compass in my left hand and steered with my right.

(show <sup>sun</sup> ~~compass~~) Then once every three minutes <sup>was</sup> checked the drift caused by the wind. An aeroplane is very sensitive to the wind, and unless allowed for, it can take the plane miles of its course.

We had a trap door in the bottom of the plane for the drift indicator. We found that we could get the drift angle to within a degree. So constantly were we at this, weighting down on the snow to instantly detect any change in the wind direction that I got a touch of snow blindness in my right eye.

Both eyes were sore for days after the flight. ~~I also froze the fingers of my right hand trying to work the instrument without gloves~~

The drift-indicator also gave the speed over the ice, by using a stop watch in connection with it at intervals we checked the course and position made with the sun compass and drift indicator with sextant observation of the sun. We were of course delighted when we found that our sights checked with our supposed position. By these methods we were practically certain of our position all the way to the Pole.

After an hour we had passed the place where Andree in his great balloon was last heard from.

At 80 degrees latitude, 7 degrees from the pole he had let out one of his twenty two carrier pigeons and the bird was picked up ~~with the~~ <sup>ing</sup> report of his position and good progress. We had just sent a radio reporting good progress. What a vast difference between the method of travel and communication we had used. <sup>3 understood</sup> Where had poor Andree come down to.

At six o'clock we began looking down into unexplored regions and soon were well into areas never before seen by man so far as we know. <sup>figuratively</sup> I took my hat off to aviation then. Here we were, speeding a mile and a half a minute over unknown regions and with a view from our 2000 feet of fifty miles in every direction.

Anxiously we combed the frozen sea and horizon for land. Under us were the usual evidences that the sea was in constant motion. Newly frozen-over leads of water, pressure

ridges and very occasionally open water that we knew would either soon be frozen over or closed up.

On on we went with no break in the monotonous white desolation spread beneath us, but there was always that bare chance of finding land and it made those moments fascinating.

Everything ran smoothly and our sights continued to check with our supposed position.

Suddenly, when about an hour from the Pole I noticed ~~noticed~~ what I thought was a bad oil leak in the starboard motor.

I took the wheel and asked Bennett to give his opinion of the seriousness of the leak. He jotted down that it was very bad and that he was afraid that the motor would not last long. What should we do? It was one of the big moments.

We decided to keep on for the Pole and decide what to do after reaching it. We would fly the motor as long as it would run. We were about an hour from the coveted goal and every minute of the time were taking unexplored regions off the map. It was tough to have the motor trouble here so <sup>the pole</sup> near and ~~so~~ far from land. But we would go on because 90 miles more or less would make no difference. We then throttled the starboard motor and found that not only could we stay aloft but could make a little over sixty miles an hour with the other two motors. ~~There~~. There would be no trouble about reaching the pole now? ~~Could~~ Could we then get all the way back on two motors. But the pole first and the worry about the return later. As I navigated I cast frequent glances at the oil running from the motor and lodging on one of the wires and tail surfaces. When would it stop?

It fascinated me. It was still turning up full



revolutions and power and we were making fast speed over the ground with our increasingly lighter load as the gasoline was burned up. Towards the end of the hour we began to take our final calculation and soon found that we were at the pole, - my life long ambition had been realized and it was just as Admiral Peary had described it, pressure ridges, dividing ice cakes of varying sizes and shapes, occasional freshly frozen overleads showing green against the white, and ~~the~~ <sup>and snow covering everything except the leads.</sup> hummocks in the cakes of ice. Of course the ice that Peary travelled had year ago melted in warmer seas but we could see, level stretches such as he described <sup>where</sup> ~~where~~ excellent time could be made with dog teams. Time becomes topsy

I thought of Peary's remarkable prediction when he said: "in the near future the biting air above the Pole will be stirred by whirring aeroplane propellers."

Time becomes topsy turvy up there. We circled the globe in a few minutes and in so doing changed out time a whole day. One minute we were going north and the next south though following the same straight course.

The sun at the pole circles in the heavens with only an unappreciable change of its altitude during a day. That is one way of telling when the pole is reached.

I must pass briefly now on our return trip from the pole, for I must let the movies tell the story, ~~they tell it much better than I do.~~ I would like to tell you this however. That soon after leaving the pole when I took the wheel to relieve Bennett for a while I inadvertently left my precious sextant on the chart board and it fell off and broke the horizon glass

so that it could not be used. So we had to get back with the sun compass and drift indicator alone. We were fortunate enough to hit ~~exactly~~ the point of land on Spitzbergen we aimed for.

After reaching the pole we must have felt a reaction for it was difficult to keep awake while steering. Then the regular humming of the motors seemed to have a narcotic effect. I actually dozed off once and was awakened by the increased roar of the motors as the plane headed downward. We of course were behind on sleep before we started, and Bennett got so drowsy I had to relieve him several times. But when navigating I was too occupied to get sleepy.

I ~~will~~ now give way to the movies which I have seen only once myself. They were hurried to the States by fast steamer and put together before our arrival. I must apologize for the number of times they have put me in the pictures