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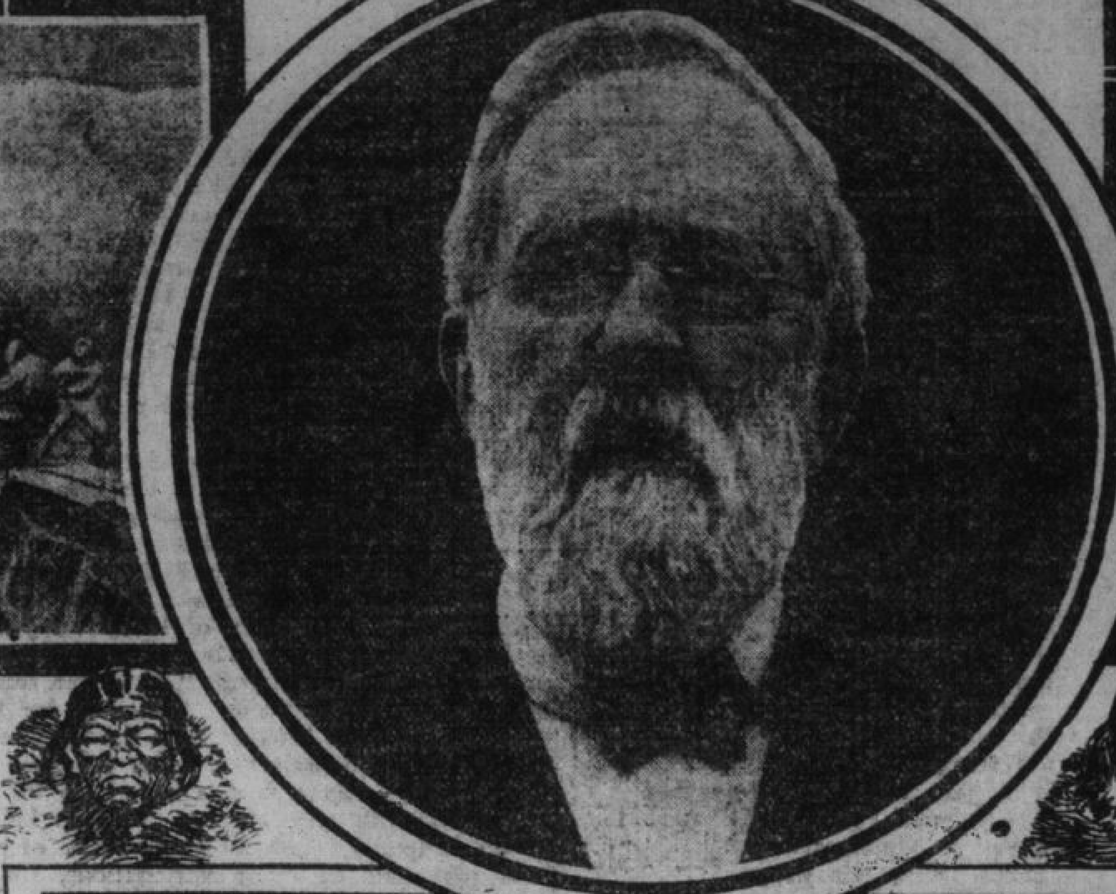
SEEKING the NORTH POLE 56 YEARS AGO



Capt. Amos Bonsall, survivor of the Kane Expedition

A struggle with broken ice

Saving Sled and Provisions

The Graphic Tale of the Only Survivor of the Kane Expedition

A Walrus Hunt

In view of achievements brought to the world's attention of late, it is interesting to learn, from the lips of a survivor, of the experiences of a polar expedition fifty-six years ago.

It was October 4th, 1853. The terrible experiences of the members of the Kane expedition, in the second cruise in Arctic seas of the brigantine Advance, in quest of Sir John Franklin—experiences fated to go on for long months to come—had already begun.

The desperate and subsequently famous "Boat Journey," so thrillingly recounted by Dr. Isaac I. Hayes, was in the midst of its bitter struggles.

On a low, rocky plain between Whale and Wolstenholme sounds, starving on the stone lichen they dug from the rocks for food, amid blinding snow, the party huddled in their improvised tent.

"Petersen had a sly joke for us now and then" wrote Dr. Hayes, in telling of the battle against the lowering despair, "and Bonsall entertained us from time to time with some original drollery."

To-day one of that old, old polar expedition survives—Bonsall, who "entertained with some original drollery;" Capt. Amos Bonsall, of Philadelphia, the man whose opinion has been so often called for on the various aspects of the Cook-Peary controversy as the opinion of one man whose very bones hold the memory of the fearful conflict with the frozen north.

From his lips, still ready with the saving grace of laughter despite his four-score years, has come a group of those impressive memories which tell what Arctic exploration meant when the conquest of the pole was a murderous mirage in the eyes of men, more than half a century ago.

The garb of those early explorers, he said, was planned on the same principle that a fireman applies in fighting flames, for clothing that keeps out the heat works as effectually to keep out the cold.

Thermometers, during the expedition, registered a minimum temperature of seventy-eight degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. Starting from the most useful garment of all, which nature had provided, he wore next to his skin a light woollen shirt. Then came a sweater of the coarsest kind of wool, made in Scotland, with drawers and socks of the same material, the socks reaching to the knees.

The boots were bought of the Eskimos, water-tight, seal hides, tanned, fashioned and sewed with the infinite patience of the Eskimo women, whose most prized possession was a steel sewing needle fit for that all-important labor.

Over the drawers of Shetland wool were drawn sealskin breeches ending at the knee, where they overlapped the boot tops and were drawn tight with a leather thong.

Over the sweater came a body coat, with hood attached, that had no opening except the one at the neck. It was drawn on over the head. It was made of buffalo skins, with the enormously thick, heavy hair inside.

In bleak weather, the hood was drawn up over a skullcap of sealskin, from which the adventurers found it requisite to cut the entire crown. The hair of the head, worn long, gave ample protection except in the lower temperatures. Indeed, Captain Bonsall often found it necessary, when the bodily heat rose in the desperate exercise of travelling, to break off lumps of ice and put them on his bared head to keep off heatstroke, at the very time when he removed his cap rim would have been to invite the loss of an ear from the cold.

The nose, the fore part of the cheeks, the lower portion of the brow all had to be exposed to the air, no matter how fearful the chill. That meant that everybody had frostbitten noses and cheeks, for exposure immediately brought out the red inflammation when they emerged from the shelter of the ship.

Explorers provided themselves, upon their departure from the United States, with hollowed hemispheres of wood that fitted over the eye cavities and were made with a horizontal slit, cut with a saw, through which the wearer was supposed to peer. They were almost exact copies of the eye shields which were hand-carved by the Eskimos and habitually worn on the sledge journeys of the huskies to prevent slow-blindness, the most appalling danger of the desolate white north.

But, by a blessed forethought, glasses of the tinge of "London smoke," fitted in dark, wire-screened frames, had also been included in the Kane outfit. Without these early forerunners of the modern automobile goggles the whole party must have been crippled for they found the slit wooden eye-guards worse than useless in their wanderings.

Even, as it was, some did not avoid the exquisite agony of snow-blindness.

"A man amid the Arctic ice," said Captain Bonsall, "may go for two or three days without his eyeshields, and imagine that he has escaped the dreadful penalty. But when he returns to the ship an anguish of the eyes descends upon him, and he will writhe with the misery of a thousand needles driven into them. And, once snow blind the victim is never entirely cured.

"The London-smoke glasses we used were known then as 'railroad glasses'; they have since proved indispensable in Arctic work. If, by any chance, a man went into the open without his glasses our first question to him on his return was, "How are your eyes?"

"We had a seaman from Nova Scotia, named George Riley, who lost his glasses before starting on a sledge journey which lasted several days. When he reached the ship he looked bright, comfortable and completely at ease.

"'Did your eyes hold out, Riley?' I asked him.

"'Never felt a thing,' he responded, proudly. 'And why not—aren't my eyes perfectly good?'

"He stood there for an instant looking at me in the pride of his strength. Then suddenly—

"'Oh, my God!' he cried in tones of intolerable suffering. He staggered back precisely as though some giant fist had smitten him full in the face.

"In that instant the man had gone blind, and for five days he was an appalling object of pain."

"Did you know," asked Capt. Bonsall, "that Peary has only three out of his ten toes left? All lost in frostbites.

"So long as the frosting affects only the skin and the superficial flesh, the consequences may not be disastrous. But if bones are involved, amputation is the only recourse, and that, too often, fails to save the victim's life.

"In the latter part of February, 1854, Lieut. Brooks took out one of our sledge parties to lay out caches for a long expedition that was to follow. There were half a dozen men in the party, among them my own step-brother, Jefferson Baker, who, when he learned that I was resolved on the voyage, could not be restrained from enlisting too.

"The sun, during the sledge journey of that party, became unusually warm, and their own exertions put all of them in a perspiration that can be compared only with a Turkish bath. Exhausted, they slept as they were, without making change of their socks.

"When we brought them back from that short trip, helpless, Lieut. Brooks lost one of his toes, John Wall Wilson lost three, and my unfortunate brother had his foot frozen as high as the instep. Two days after we got him back to the ship he died of the lock-jaw consequent upon the freezing of his feet.

"Whenever the frost reaches to the bone the injury refuses to heal until bone and all slough away. During the following winter, Dr. Hayes, by accident, immersed both feet in the water. He lost, from one foot, the small toe and its next neighbor, and from the other, the great toe and the two beside it."

Such accidents were not, however, the greatest danger that menaced polar explorers in the old days when Capt. Bonsall met privation and hardship so cheerfully. The two terrible foes were scurvy and despair.

They worked as allies, the human vitality, sapped at its well-springs by the rotting scurvy, sinking to the lowest point, while the very souls of the men died within them and left mere, useless hulks of sturdy, daring, sea-trained athletes.

With the records of all Arctic work filled with such evidence, it is astonishing that the theory of the intimate relation between physical health and morality should have waited nearly half a century to have its promulgation. The conditions during all of those minor expeditions were extreme, but they proved that only a very few choice spirits, endowed with enormous reserves of vitality, can maintain courage and devotion to duty under crushing adversities.

"It was in the latter part of August, 1854," said Capt. Bonsall, "that Dr. Kane called us all together and explained that, as we were practically wrecked in Rensselaer Bay, he could not, in conscience, attempt to maintain naval organization. All who wanted to try to reach Upernavik, 1,200 or 1,300 miles to the south, could go, although he advised against it.

"I was one of those to undertake the adventure. The whole expedition had scurvy, and Dr. Kane, who had it worst, was the most courageous of all. But we who undertook the desperate trip south discovered, in the open entrance to Englefield gulf, a bed of the miraculous scurvy grass, which grows like small celery.

"We flung ourselves upon it as men dying of thirst in the desert rush upon a well of water. Within an hour after eating that marvellous grass we could feel its effects in the easing of our aching, mad, rusty joints, as though we were experiencing a resurrection from a deathbed.

"While we were there, Carl Petersen called from the heights that the ice which had hemmed us in was on the move. We hurried to the boats. Scarcely had we gone a mile from shore than a heavy mist fell, with snow, which came so thickly that the oars, as we worked them, froze up into great clubs of solidified slush. We were utterly helpless, and took refuge on a cake of ice no bigger than a small house.

"Our weight all but turned it over. Setting up our tent on that precarious, toppling refuge, we lay under its scant protection, afraid to take the sleep we so urgently needed lest the moment of the tiny iceberg's overturn catch us unawares. After two hours elapsed, one-fourth of the floor of ice on which our tent stood cracked and broke, floating away.

"An Arctic tent such as we had carries its own flooring—a bottom of tarpaulin, designed to keep out the moisture of the melting ice or snow on which it rests. But for that, William Godfrey, a Whitehall sailor in our party, must have dropped directly into the sea. But the tarpaulin, tent bottom sagged with him like a bag. His weight all but dragged the whole tentful of us over the sharp, new edge of the berg. We just succeeded in hauling him up to the ice on which we lay."

It takes a book for Dr. Hayes to tell of the adventures during the greater boat journey of the Kane expedition's party, bent on escape at any cost, and it takes two books to tell of the famous Kane expedition as a whole.

And through the most appaling of all those adventures Amos Bonsall fared, hale and strong, always cheerful and cheering, fated to live and crack his joke and smile more than half a century afterward during the days when all the world is quarrelling over the discovery of that terrible, man-killing North Pole.

If a Napoleon, in spite of his faith Bonsall live now to prove there is a nothing in destiny, does not an Amos Bonsall live now to prove there is a very real and powerful sort of destiny in an inheritance of exceptional health and strength and cheerful courage?

Caper of Cupid

Madge Carson had been born to heroic proportions. So heroic, in fact, that, to herself she had never seemed young. At just what precise age baby talk and petting ceased she never knew, but if they had, indeed, ever been they had also ended before her memory began.

Usually people spoke of her as a woman self-centered and somewhat dull, but that was because nature or much practice had made her past mistress in the art of concealing her emotion. No one, least of all those in the home, ever guessed that she saw the difference between herself and her sisters—small, dainty girls with pretensions to great beauty. But she did, and if there had been time for repining then Madge Carson would have been an unhappy woman.

Happily, though, for her peace of mind, she was a worker, with boundless ambitions. By the time her responsibilities as eldest daughter had ceased the burdens of a popular physician bore heavily upon even her strong shoulders. But even so, her life was a placid pool, her path the smooth turnpike, the broad highway of successful endeavor. She was admired as a strong woman and as one skilled in her profession, but at thirty-eight, if she had ever had a hope that love might come to her as to other women, it was quite dead.

Cupid, however, had other views. It was at Barton Bay, where she took her annual two weeks' rest, that he made his best bow and solicited audience. And so sly was the old, ever-young god that he had bagged his game and disappeared before the doctor realized his proximity or the tortuous route by which he had approached. In her philosophy of life there were other things worth while besides her beloved theories of healing, and this fact had opened wide the door for Cupid's entrance.

It happened one bright morning that by reason of being an expert oarsman and without any particular inconvenience or danger to herself, she rescued a boat from drifting on the rocks just outside of the definitely flagged channel, and to her surprise found in the bottom, limp and unconscious, a young girl who had fainted from fright. Restored and duly grateful, she had been set down at the boat-house steps, and the doctor promptly forgot the occurrence.

Three days later she was reminded. Her reveries under a favorite tree were disturbed by a shrill scream and the pounding of hoofs. It required but a moment, and no nerve at all, to catch by the bit a big dappled horse cantering smartly in the direction of home, but without the slightest intention of running away, and lift to the ground the girl clinging for life to his mane.

"It's the horse that Bob, the errand boy, drives to market," she explained. "I was learning to ride."

The doctor smiled genially and again proceeded to forget. Fate, however, decreed otherwise. She lay on her couch devouring a book she had promised herself the pleasure of reading, when a series of wild shrieks close at hand, split the air. She sprang to the window, and there, quite within her reach, sprawling along a limb that bent with her weight, was the girl, her face ashen, her fingers clutching convulsively at every twig with which they came in contact.

"I'm falling!" she shrieked. "Save me! Save me!"

The limb responded to a steady pull, coming slowly to the window ledge, when the girl was helped in and placed in a chair to recover.

"The swing was caught," the blue lips shivered. "I climbed up to loosen it."

A few mornings later the sun that should have shone hid itself in a dense, cold fog. A fire was imperative, and the doctor was cosy before glowing fat pine logs in her grate when there came a knock at her door.

"There's a girl sick in 18," the maid said. "I wish you would see her."

With prescient surety, the doctor knew whom she should find. The girl tossed, mumbling among the pillows, her eyes closed, and her head rolling.

The doctor looked long and earnestly, then she raised the slender shoulders and shook them roughly. "Tell me where you were three weeks ago."

The childish blue eyes opened for a second and smiled as the swollen lips pronounced softly the one word, "Papa." Then they closed again and the moaning and mumbling recommenced.

The doctor was a woman of resources. She went at once to the office, where the register disclosed the fact that Leonard Van Ausdal and daughter, Chepulpo, Mexico, had arrived ten days before. The clerk gave the information that the father remained but one night, saying upon leaving that business required his attention for a few days and bespeaking every care and attention for his daughter during his absence. The maid testified in like manner, admitting in addition that she had accepted a generous tip for any services she might render.

A telegram to Chepulpo brought the response that Van Ausdal had recently purchased a large property there, but that his whereabouts was at present unknown. A bulging purse was under the girl's pillow, and pretty dresses hung in the closet, but—

That evening, when the gray day was done, an old sloop inside the bar, but well outside the channel, had been fitted up and placarded, and the moans of an unconscious, blue-eyed girl were drowned by the swash of the sea. But the doctor was there, her strong hands cooling the hot pillows and ministering to every want.

It was another gray day a full week later which the doctor will never forget. Wearied by incessant watching, she slept in her chair, rousing suddenly at the sound of a voice: "Will she live? Tell me the truth."

She had looked up then to see a big man, strong and fine standing by the bed with tight-clinched hands and face working with emotion.

"Yes," she replied, "but I fear—"

She turned away then, for he had dropped on his knees sobbing and calling out: "Pauline, my baby! Papa has come."

After that there were days together disagreeable; days when the fogs hid the hotel and even the land, but to the doctor they were strangely perfect. Those were the days when she forgot her great stature and that she was not like other women. But there were still other days when she would give all her learning and half of her life if she could be young again and small and pretty. For those were the women men fancied, and in Pauline's father she had found the ideal of her womanhood and youth.

But the end came with the release from quarantine. They were bidding the sloop good-bye, when Pauline's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"I'm sorry to go," she cried. "I've never had a mother and I—love the doctor."

"I, too, love the doctor," Pauline's father whispered when Pauline had slipped away. "I'm a fortunate man, Madge, to have at last found the one grand woman. Will you, Madge, could you love me?"

Madge Carson, M.D., bewildered and unbelieving, had but one thought. "I'm so different from other women," she stammered, "so big and so—"

"Different?" he laughed. "Of course. That's why I love you. But not big, Madge, queenly. My queen."

Dr. Carson is still a popular physician, but from the heart of a happy home, she laughs with her husband at Cupid's queer caper and smiles to hear him "wonder at the distorted lenses, through which for so many years she beheld herself."

The American red gum is entering largely into the manufacture of furniture. Early objections to its use have been overcome.

LATCHKEYS USELESS.

Open Door is Rule in Sunny Mexico.

"I'm glad to be back in the land of the latchkey," said a mining engineer who had been in Mexico for the past year. "In France, Spain, Italy, and throughout Latin America there is a servant in every house and hotel, whose business it is to open the door. In Mexico you would think, being so near this country, that the American latchkey would be common. But even in the finest hotels in the capital the big doors are closed at eleven o'clock, and to gain admittance after that hour you have to pound on them with the great knockers that hang outside. After five minutes you hear a sleepy grunt within, then some mutterings and the Spanish word which means, 'I'm coming.' Finally, the small door in the centre of the big will be unbarred and you step inside. Then, if you don't want to sleep in the park, the next night you are kept out late, you give the 'portero,' as the keeper of the gate is called, a piece of silver. Between eleven and midnight the fee is ten cents. From twelve on until morning the gratuity—regulated by custom—steadily increases. Between one and three it is from twenty-five to forty cents, and after three it is half a dollar.

"Many a night I have been awakened by the pounding of the knockers in the neighborhood of my hotel. I timed one man for ten minutes before I fell asleep. Probably he had neglected to fee the 'portero,' or else the keeper of the gate was drunk, as he frequently is. These 'portero' usually sleep curled up in a blanket just inside the door, on the stones with which every interior courtyard and entrance is paved, and all of them have colds. Yet it is a position much sought after, and the gatekeeper ranks highest among the servants."

A Treat For The Doctor.

October Lippincott's.

A Philadelphian, who had since then fortunately regained his health, was last year the subject of an extended examination by specialists.

"The examination seems to have delighted Dr. Blank," said the patient to one of the doctors, when they were alone for a moment, "for I have noticed that his eyes are positively beaming. I assume, then, that my case is not a grave one."

"Well," hesitated the physician addressed. "I hardly feel justified in saying that. But I understand from Dr. Blank that he is going to perform a number of interesting operations on you."

Kidney Losses Stopped.

The escape of albumen from the system is most dangerous. The trouble is you may not know it. Get to the root of the disease—the kidneys—by using Peck's Kidney Pills. In boxes 25c. at J. B. McLeod's, corner King and Brock streets, (Wade's old stand) and corner Princess and Montreal streets. Money back if not satisfactory.

The longest telegraph circuit is between London and Teheran, the capital of Persia. It is 4,050 miles long.

On the farm of England last year there were 1,494,089 horses employed.