

CHAPTER XXX.

RECENT ATTEMPTS TO REACH THE POLE.

To the Pole by Airship—Andree and Wellman Make Dramatic Attempts—Former Never Again Heard From—Nansen Battles with Icy Seas—Future Explorations—Abruzzi also Fails—Amundsen's Exploit—Record of Polar Voyages—Andree's Expedition—Martyr's Last Words to Civilization.

DURING recent years there have been numerous efforts to solve the riddle of the north. Andree attempted it in a balloon, and added another riddle—the riddle of what became of him. Then the Duke of the Abruzzi, Nansen and Fiala.

Walter Wellman, of Chicago, has been for years preparing a balloon trip to the Arctic in search of the Pole. He has made two starts, both of which were failures.

The most successful of Arctic voyages in recent years is that of Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian, who successfully navigated the Northwest Passage in the sloop *Gjoa*.

There have been 578 expeditions directed against the North Pole and 61 against the South Pole since 1800. Great Britain leads with 107 northward and 25 southward. Russia is second, with 105 north and 1 south. The United States is third, with 84 north and 12 south.

Out of the silence and the mystery of three long years—out of that great unknown area which lies frozen around the Pole—Frithiof Nansen, the gallant Norwegian, suddenly and unexpectedly, in a most surprising manner, emerged. He himself told us that we were not to be anxious even if it were five years before we heard from him, seeing that his project was to drift with the Polar current which he believed existed across the North Polar regions, then south along the east coast of Greenland. Anxiety and doubt, however, were not to be allayed, particularly in the hearts of his more immediate relative and friends.

Still, back he came in all his old familiar vigor of frame and ardor of spirit, restored to the world of science, which looks for records unique and valuable from his experiences, and to the greater world of all those who can admire endurance and sacrifice for an ideal.

It has been frequently stated that Nansen failed, in that he had not reached the North Pole. Others have pointed out that he has not failed, in that his object was not to reach the North Pole (that mathematical point in which the axis of our globe has its northern termination), but to explore the unknown Polar area. It is worth stating, however, that though Nansen came short of his own object his expedition nevertheless was a great geographical success.

In his lucid address before the Royal Geographical Society, in which he laid down his alluring programme, Nansen



NANSEN AND PARTY HAULING SUPPLIES FROM THE SHIP.

made it abundantly clear to all who followed him closely that although he did not consider the actual reaching of the Pole to be essential to the success of his expedition, yet the great object of his voyage was to compass the crossing of the North Polar region; to enter it from off the coast of Siberia, and to go out of it on the American side.

In that he did not do this—in that he reached his highest point while on this side of the North Pole, he, in a measure, came short of the object he placed before himself; but in having navigated a ship farther north than any ship has ever yet been impelled by man (for Sir George Nares, who previously held the record, reached 82 deg. 24 min. in the "Alert"), and in that he himself, by sledging across the

Polar pack, traveled a distance of 170 geographical miles farther north than has ever been previously attained, Nansen may properly be considered to have achieved a great Arctic success, and brought the record to a point which it will require the highest pluck, the greatest labor, or the happiest fortune to surpass.

Moreover, since he drifted in his ship or marched on the ice from 133 deg. 37 min. E. long. to 55 deg. E. long., he passed over a great part of the Eastern Sea, and is able to tell us of the distribution of land and water, climatic conditions, the ice movements and currents, and the general geographical character of that large area.

EXPEDITION A GREAT GEOGRAPHICAL TRIUMPH.

This point has not been generally noted, but it is worthy of attention, that he might have gone north to his present limit and almost due south again without being able to tell us much of the unknown Polar region; but seeing that he drifted in his vessel, the "Fram," in a northwesterly direction—a direction he followed to his highest point (86 deg. 14 min. N. lat.)—and then came south in a southeasterly direction, he covered almost the widest area of the earth's surface that he possibly could. Thus his expedition was a great geographical triumph.

Its story reads as one full of adventure and peril, and of the swift changes in fortune which are so familiar to us in the records of former expeditions. But few experiences of Arctic exploration have surpassed in thrilling interest the adventures of Dr. Nansen and his single comrade.

One of the first points of interest in this wonderful story is the fact that the "Fram" fully justified Nansen's sagacity in having her built on so rounded a model that she should afford the least possible resistance to the oncoming ice, for when the overwhelming ice-floes closed about her, as though to crush her down, the vessel slowly broke away from the pack at the water-line, and, the ice passing underneath her, quietly rose out of the great crystal cradle in which she had been so firmly frozen.

Another instance of the explorer's foresight is furnished in his idea of generating electric light during the long Polar night. Many people thought that this was a mere theoretical

whim, likely enough to commend itself to the pure man of science, but unlikely to be put into action when the strenuous toil of actual exploration had begun. Yet this was not the case; the electric light generated by his windmill fulfilled his expectations, and it is easy to conjure up a vision of the gallant Norwegians, when the wind failed and the sails of the windmill flapped uselessly, going forward to the capstan on the deck, and beginning to tramp round and take that regular



DR. NANSEN AND LIEUTENANT JOHANSEN LEAVING THE "FRAM."
"GOOD-BYE ONCE MORE."

exercise to which Nansen looked as a means for the preservation of their health.

Another picture. It is March 14th. The "Fram" has slowly drifted until she has reached a point farther north than any ship has previously reached, but the direction of her drift is westerly, always westerly, and there is little or no prospect of her coming near the North Pole.

Nansen steps over the side of the "Fram" with his com-

panion Johansen, each with his little skin canoe for use in open water, and accompanied by twenty-eight dogs to pull their three sledges. The dogs had food for thirty days, the men for one hundred. When the dogs' food failed a dog was to be killed to satisfy his fellows; when the men's food came to an end some Arctic gulls or a bear or a walrus or a seal, if they were fortunately at hand, were to be the sole source of supply. The hardships of the explorers and their safe escape are matters of history.

From a published account of the expedition that rescued Dr. Nansen, we take the following details:

THE RESCUE OF DR. NANSEN.

"The return of the 'Windward' steam yacht, which arrived in the Thames from Tromso, in Norway, bringing home several members of the party led by Mr. F. C. Jackson in the Arctic exploring expedition designated by his name jointly with that of Mr. Harmsworth, its munificent patron, is a gratifying event which is in time to lay before the British Association of Science, at Liverpool, the results of Mr. Jackson's observations, with those of other members of the staff, concerning the geography, the botany and zoology, and all the natural features of that remote land, so long unknown and hitherto so difficult of access, where they have spent many months, summer and winter, since their vessel left.

"The 'Windward' returned to Vardo and sailed again for Franz Josef Land, where Mr. Jackson had established on Cape Flora a little hamlet of log huts called Elmwood. But, in addition to the direct object of this mission, which had been so largely realized, the 'Windward' has also had the good fortune to meet on the desolate shore of Franz Josef Land and to convey home to his own country the eminent Norwegian explorer, Dr. Nansen, whose heroic efforts during the absence of three whole years from the civilized world at a brave sacrifice of ease and comfort have obtained for us some knowledge of the actual condition of the Polar region to within 226 miles of its center north of the Asiatic continent, while he has shown the way to reach the Pole itself by traveling so far northward over the ice.

"We obtain, indeed, a considerable amount of information

concerning Franz Josef Land, which was discovered many years ago by the Austrian, Julius Payer; the proof of its insular position, the channel leading from it into 'Queen Victoria Sea,' with the bays, inlets, capes, and promontories which Mr. Jackson has first seen and named; the plant and animal life of that country, and other knowledge gathered during his sojourn at 'Elmwood, Cape Flora'—or in his boat excursions to the neighboring waters.

THE POLAR OCEAN.

"Speaking generally of these recent achievements of Arctic exploration, they may be said to have ascertained the fact of the existence of the Polar Ocean which, in all probability, entirely surrounds the most northerly extremity of the globe. The phantom of an indefinite extension of land beyond the shores of Franz Josef Land, which had already been visited, and which are now, by Mr. Jackson's persevering labors, proved to be those merely of an island, with a distinct geographical outline, has been cleared away; and a long line to be drawn from those shores in a northeasterly direction over a frozen or rather ice-covered space of sea, traversed by Nansen with his sledges, will appear extending to the point where he was compelled to desist from his direct march toward the Pole.

"We feel cordially satisfied, as a matter of national ambition in such deeds of grand and gallant enterprise, with the share which has fallen to the lot of our own countrymen in this undesigned combination of the most recent geographical discoveries.

"Mr. Jackson had explored the coasts of the most northerly land yet known to exist nearly four months before Dr. Nansen came down from the higher latitude which he had attained by marching over the ice some hundred miles away to the east. He had given, as he had a good right to do, the names of the 'British Channel,' and the 'Queen Victoria Sea,' to the waters he found opening northward, beyond the 'Austria Sound' of Payer, adding to these designations, at successively observed recesses or interruptions of the water-space, in what is likely to be an archipelago with many smaller islands, the English honored and home-remembering names of 'Clements Markham Bay,' 'Allen

Young Sound,' 'Robert Peel Sound,' and of 'Cape Albert Markam,' 'McClintock,' 'Sybil Montefiore,' and those of islands 'Mary Elizabeth,' after his own mother; 'Scott Keltie,' but lastly, that of 'Frithiof Nansen,' happily associated with this nomenclature of the Franz Josef Land archipelago by the Norwegian explorer's descent upon its shores.

"Henceforth, being so far made acquainted with what is undeniably proved to be 'the most important body of water in this part of the Arctic regions,' to the north of the Old Continent, we may anticipate a corresponding extension of the general scope of Arctic exploring work on the other sides, or from other points of the circumference of the Polar Circle."

A very remarkable thing about Polar exploration is the enthusiasm with which it is taken up and the willingness to undergo all sorts of hardships in the effort to find that elusive North Pole.

THE ANDREE BALLOON EXPEDITION.

A widely different, and apparently a far more perilous method than any which had previously been devised for reaching the North Pole, was adopted by Professor Andree, of Sweden. This was an attempt to make the journey by means of a balloon. It not only awakened the curiosity of the public in general, but also aroused the deepest interest in scientific circles. That Andree met death is certain, but nothing else is sure of his expedition.

Solomon August Andree, the son of an apothecary in Grenna, Sweden, was born in that town in 1854 and there his father died in 1871.

In 1881-82 Andree was a member of Dr. Ekholm's expedition to Spitzbergen. On his return he was appointed chief engineer at the Patent Office at Stockholm. Later, as a private undertaking, he crossed the ocean to Philadelphia in order to make a careful study of atmospheric conditions. He was struck with the continued regularity of aerial currents near the surface of the water and formed the opinion that the higher currents would be even more uniform and continuous. This led to a belief that it would be possible to cross from America to Europe in a balloon. For some time

he was not able to experiment extensively in aerial navigation, but the results of several ascensions with the celebrated Norwegian aeronaut, Cetti, seemed to establish the truth of some of the theories which he had formed.

Andree spent the summer of 1893 at Goteberg, on a visit to his brother who had become the manager of a sailor's home at that place. Andree had already conceived the singularly daring plan of crossing the ocean in a balloon from the Cape Verde Islands, near the northwestern coast of Africa, to Venezuela. By making this trip he wanted to prove the possibility of traveling long distances in a balloon. By careful calculation the two brothers concluded that the distance between the points named could be traversed in ninety-seven hours. After a great deal of study an elaborate plan was completed. But when this plan was submitted to the great explorer Nordenskold, and other scientists at Stockholm, they said to Andree, "If you have faith in such an undertaking why not rather try to go from Spitzbergen to the North Pole?" This led Andree to consider the feasibility of such a project and eventually to engage in the great work which during the past few years has kept his name prominently before the public.

BALLOON THEORY WON RECOGNITION.

Andree was a delegate to the Geographical Congress which was held in London in July, 1895. There his plans for crossing the North Pole in a balloon obtained the greatest degree of publicity and were the subject of long and earnest discussion. The battle for the recognition and acceptance of the balloon theory was won.

Baron Nordenskjold, whose great success in the work of Arctic exploration made him an invaluable ally, fully endorsed the arguments of Andree. On Andree's return to Sweden a subscription to defray the expenses of the projected expedition was started. In a short time the required sum (\$36,000) was pledged by prominent Swedes.

About the time of the departure of the expedition the opinion of Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, as to a successful ending, was sought by a prominent Swedish paper. The following rather non-committal reply was telegraphed from Lysaker on July 21, 1897:

"On my return here I received your telegram. I am not an aeronaut and therefore have no claim to be an authority. To me, having no scientific knowledge of ballooning, the expedition seems an undertaking that is possible to accomplish."

The balloon was made by M. Lachambre, of Paris, and cost \$10,000. It is about seventy-five feet in height from the opening of the balloon proper to the top, and not far from one hundred feet high from the top to the bottom of the basket.

The provisions, sledges, and a collapsible boat, were stored in the netting above the ring. In order to promote convenience in handling, as well as to insure better preservation, the food supplies were placed in canvas bags.

BALLOON ALMOST A NOVELTY.

While this balloon may be regarded as being in almost every respect a novelty, its most striking characteristic was the guiding and steering apparatus. This may be briefly described as consisting principally of guiding ropes. These are of different lengths, the shortest measuring about one thousand feet and the longest some twelve hundred feet. They are of different lengths in order that if one of them gets entangled with any object the others may run free.

It was Andree's intention to keep only about five hundred feet above the surface of the earth and let the guide ropes trail behind the car. Sails were rigged from a bamboo yard-arm extending horizontally across a second ring. By the obstruction of the guide ropes and by changing the sails to the right or the left, or by taking in a sail on either side, it was thought that a tack of thirty degrees could be made.

A large number of carrier pigeons were taken along to be released when anything of importance occurred. There was also a supply of cork buoys which were strong enough to endure a fall upon the ice from the altitude of the balloon and light enough to float in open water. Each buoy had a small vertical staff with a Swedish flag large enough to be visible at quite a distance. In the centre of the buoy was a place for a water-tight metal box. In this box a letter was to be placed before the buoy was thrown overboard. One

found some years later was the only word ever received from Andree after the start.

Andree's first expedition started on the steamer *Virgo*, from Goteborg, on June 8, 1896, and arrived at Spitzbergen on the 19th of the same month. For his companions Andree had chosen Dr. Nils Ekholm and Nils Strindberg. Dr. Ekholm is four years older than Andree and has won considerable fame as a meteorologist. Nils Strindberg was born in Stockholm in 1872. He graduated from the University of Lund, where he made a special study of natural philosophy, and he has won an excellent reputation as an amateur photographer. From the first day on which he heard of the proposed balloon expedition he had been eager to accompany Andree on the trip. He is a nephew of the Strindberg who is prominent as an author.

BALLOON LOSES CONSIDERABLE GAS.

During the autumn it was intimated that Andree would not make another attempt to carry out the plan which had so signally failed. The fact that Dr. Ekholm had resigned as a member of the expedition was quoted as proof that the rumor was correct. It was said that from the time of its inflation the balloon lost a considerable volume of gas each day. This leakage, the Doctor believed, would make it impossible to keep the balloon afloat long enough to make the voyage to the Pole. Another version, which is probably the correct one, was to the effect that Dr. Ekholm had been married shortly before starting on the expedition, and that on his return his wife exacted from him a promise never to attempt another experiment of this kind.

The necessary funds for a new expedition were quickly and easily obtained.

Early in June, 1897, the expedition started for Danes Island and on the 14th of that month the case which contained the balloon was landed.

On June 19 the work of inflation was commenced. At midnight of June 22 it was completed. The balloon then contained about one hundred and seventy thousand cubic feet of hydrogen gas.

Then a few days were spent in testing the air-tight qualities of the balloon. In the performance of this work an

entirely new process was adopted. All the seams of the balloon were covered with strips of white material which had been impregnated with a certain chemical mixture. Wherever gas escaped these strips were blackened. Eight or ten men, holding on to the meshes of the netting, climbed simultaneously to the dome of the balloon to place the prepared strips in position.

During the morning of July 11 Andree was unusually silent and appeared to be in very earnest thought. At about ten o'clock he went to note the indications of the various meteorological instruments—anemometer, thermometer, barometer, etc.—which he had brought with him. The wind was then south-southwest. About half an hour afterwards he suddenly announced that he was ready for an immediate departure.

GETTING READY TO START.

All the work was carried on with the greatest rapidity. Each member of the expedition assisted, and the herculean strength of Frankel was shown by his easy handling of enormous beams and weights which an ordinary man could hardly move. The last thing to be done to get the balloon in readiness was to attach the car. This was accomplished at about two o'clock. The attachment was made to the ring, which itself was held by three strong ropes which were fastened to large stakes firmly driven into the ground.

Everything had been made ready, and the long-desired moment for departure had now arrived. Andree mounted the car, made a careful examination to see that everything was in order, and then in a tone of command called out, "Strindberg!" Strindberg mounted. "Frankel!" Frankel mounted. "Come!" said Andree cheerfully. Not another word was spoken. Suddenly Andree cried out "Cut!" The sailors vigorously plied their knives, and in a moment the released balloon bounded to the height of three hundred feet in the air.

Such, in brief, is the history of this remarkable expedition. Omnipotence only knows how it ended.

Wellman's latest failure was especially dramatic. On June 25, 1909, the world heard that the steamer Arctic, of Walter Wellman's North Pole expedition, had returned to

Tromsø, Norway, from Spitzbergen with her flags at half-mast, bringing news that Knud Johnson, one of the two men who remained at Wellman Camp all winter had perished in the pack ice and that the airship shed had been destroyed by a heavy storm.

On May 19 Johnson went with his fellow-watchman, Paul Bjoervig, on a hunting expedition over the pack ice. The ice was moving and Johnson fell through a crevasse into the sea. Bjoervig held out a long stick for Johnson to grasp, but he was unconscious. Bjoervig then ran back to the camp and secured a rope, but when he returned to the crevasse Johnson's body had disappeared.

A strong gale from the southwest sprang up Christmas Day and lasted for eight days. Bjoervig, who has spent many winters in Spitzbergen and has been with Wellman on every Arctic expedition since 1894, says he had never seen such a fierce storm as this one. It reached its climax on the night of December 26, when it entirely destroyed the airship shed. The whole roof, which was 70 feet wide and 215 feet long, was carried one hundred metres away and broken to pieces and then the remaining portions of the building collapsed.

Anticipating the possibility that the airship house might be destroyed, Walter Wellman had sent by the Arctic timber and other repairing materials.

His later attempt, however, again met with failure, after going about thirty-five miles.