

papers and discussions is marred by some very poor typography and editing. It is apparent that much more attention was given to rushing to print than to accuracy and correctness of the presentation; there are several embarrassing howlers. (R. K. Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

### STEFANSSON: A BIOGRAPHY

STEF: A BIOGRAPHY OF VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON, CANADIAN ARCTIC EXPLORER. Hunt, W. R. 1986. Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press. 317p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-7748-0247-2.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson (for an obituary see *Polar Record* 11(73): 513-14) was a great explorer and a many-sided personality, to whom others reacted as diversely as they spelled his Icelandic name. With his independent mind he was always individual in purpose and original in performance: too much so for most of his colleagues on his last and best known expedition.

His introduction to the Canadian Arctic came on the Mikkelsen-Leffingwell Expedition in the Beaufort Sea in 1906-07. Crippled by the loss of the ship, divided aims and lack of money, the expedition achieved meagre geographical success. Stefansson joined only in time to meet the two leaders as the expedition was being disbanded. Hard feelings remained at least on one side; as Captain Einar Mikkelsen put it bluntly to me nearly 50 years later, 'Stefansson is no friend of mine'. Yet Stefansson, pursuing anthropological work and living with Eskimo families, found the expedition an immensely useful introduction to the Arctic and set the course of his career. His vision of the North took shape and he resolved to follow the methods of the Eskimos, who '... found the secret of the North alone, And mastered it with weapons of its own.' In other words he went native, shocking his contemporaries. He shocked them further after his second expedition to the Canadian western Arctic in 1908-12, by gaining what some considered vulgar publicity from his report of blond Eskimos in the Prince Albert Sound area of Victoria Island.

So the author of this book has skilfully set the scene for the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-18, again to the western Arctic. The expedition was financed by the Canadian Government with Stefansson in overall command. He led not only men of his own choice, but also a group of Geological Survey of Canada staff under Rudolph Anderson, a zoologist who had accompanied him before. It was an unhappy arrangement, for the latter group possessed only Civil Service loyalties and regarded Stefansson as a quasi-scientist and adventurer. The expedition ship *Karluuk* was beset by ice in the Beaufort Sea from 13 August 1913 and drifted to destruction. Stefansson left on a hunting trip shortly after the drift began and was unable to regain the ship. He subsequently had to defend himself against those who unjustly thought that he had deliberately abandoned *Karluuk* to her fate. For the 25 people in the ship 'the succeeding months brought death to eleven of them and horror to those fortunate enough to survive'. Stefansson found himself unable to cope with the Government scientists, who formed a mainland group under Anderson while he ranged far among the northwestern Arctic islands. The arrangement led to '... a pageant of acrimony, slander, backbiting, and mutiny, a chronicle as amazing in its way as are the glorious accomplishments of the same men'.

Using native methods of travel and living largely off the land, Stefansson discovered islands and improved maps of the whole northwestern region. (The map on p xvi-xvii of the present volume is incorrectly captioned, and half of it is reproduced on p 127, with

minor variation only in naming.) He recorded his experiences in his famous book contentiously called *The friendly Arctic*: the title did not endear him to professional colleagues, who counted the lives lost on the expedition it described. Books and lectures became his living. In 1924 he visited the Australian desert; having portrayed a frozen desert as a productive and comfortable region, and wanted to do the same for a hot desert. There is no mention of this venture in Hunt's book, though it is referenced in the bibliography.

Few matters of Arctic interest escaped Stefansson's pen. He provided, for example, his own plausible explanation of the fate that overtook the Swedish balloonist Andree and his companions, when in 1930, 33 years after their disappearance, their bodies were found on Kvitøya (White Island), Svalbard. (By a regrettable error Professor Hunt confuses this island with Winter Island, Foxe Basin, Arctic Canada.) At the same time Stefansson's philosophy spread to a younger generation of explorers, notably Watkins in Greenland, Manning in Canada, and Gould in Antarctica. In his later years, as the author shows, there was a greatness about Stefansson that enabled him to live down the Wrangel Island fiasco, an abortive reindeer project on Baffin Island, and finally unpleasant innuendoes resulting from his political naïvety in the McCarthy era. Ultimately he became a respected sage of Arctic affairs and saw many of his predictions realized, *Arcticae jacentis vindex impavidus*. This book provides an objective assessment of his career that would have appealed to Stef. It brings out the unity of purpose of his life, and his kindness, open-mindedness and lack of pomposity, in a way that rings true to those of us who knew him. (G. Hattersley-Smith, Polar Regions Section, South America Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.)

### WHALING LOGBOOKS AND JOURNALS

WHALING LOGBOOKS AND JOURNALS 1613–1927. Sherman, S. C. (compiler), Downey, J. M. and Adams, V. M. (editors). 1986. Garland Publishing, New York and London. 469p, hard cover. ISBN 0-8240-9328-3. US\$80.00

This is a concise and practical compilation of data from 5018 logbooks, diaries and similar papers kept by masters, officers, crew and others aboard whalers, sealers, and other vessels, from all the world's oceans. These men were often the discoverers of remote islands and the most frequent visitors to many of them during the old whaling era. The compilation was begun in 1977 as a result of an International Workshop on Historical Whaling Records and had support from many organizations. Although it particularly covers the whaling industry of the New England region of the United States (where the vast majority of such records are preserved) records of many other vessels and countries are included. The records are held in 82 repositories and helpful notes about access is provided. The entries provide all the basic information needed to identify a voyage; vessel, rig, port, dates of voyage (or journal if different), master, record keeper (if different), area of operations, and repository. I am particularly pleased to note the effort that has been made to give full names of masters and other men involved, avoiding the confusion that may arise, especially among members of the large whaling families, when only surnames or initials are used. Another particularly favourable aspect is the indexing; by port, masters and keepers, year, whaling grounds, and repositories. The arrangement of the entries is in alphabetical order of the names of vessels and a short bibliography is appended. Well organized and presented, the work is an essential reference for anyone working on the old whaling and sealing industries, and history of remote places,