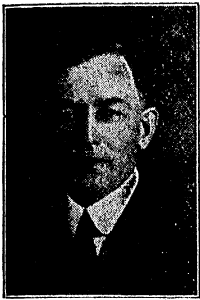


## Winter Travels in Northern Alaska

By E. B. LARSSON.

Most every winter, ever since I came to Unalakleet, I have made one or more trips to villages north of Unalakleet. The



question whether it would be more to my liking to go north or to go south must not be taken into consideration. The most comfortable thing here in winter time would be to stay right at home.

Traveling by aeroplane has long been stylish with the white people in Alaska. Until very recently, however, the rates were so exorbitant that ordinary people could not, except in emergency cases, afford to travel with aeroplanes. Now the rates have come down so much that in long distance travels it comes less expensive to go by plane than by dog team. But with a number of places to be visited it is still the more practical thing to go by dog team. So, having decided that I would make a trip north also this winter, I asked the president of our Young People's Society Clarence Isaiah to go with me. On the morning of February 21 he came with his team of Huskies, and we began to load the sled. There were sleeping bags of reindeer skin and traveling bags filled with socks, mittens, parkees, and mukluks, and various other warm articles. There were also some of the Christmas presents that had arrived late. These were now to be distributed to the children in the different villages. There were bundles of Sunday school papers and of the Covenant Weekly, and also some songbooks and New Testaments. Moreover, there was the communion set and some vegetables, potatoes and garden seeds for friends along the way. It got to be a big load, but we had a good team, fine trail, and a clear, cold day.

The first day we got to Egawik, a small village about fifteen miles north of Unalakleet. Shortly after our arrival there we went to see our old friend Ackan, who was now far gone in consumption. We read from the Bible, sang and prayed. Our sick friend and his wife also wanted to have the communion. They were anxious to have us come in and see them on our way home also, and I promised that we would try to stop and come over to see them. In the evening we had service in one of the larger homes of the natives. Here I again read from the Bible, and Clarence, my driver, interpreted. We spoke, sang

and prayed for quite a while and afterwards we had baptism of children and communion service. At Egawik I was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. George Lomen, who are in charge of the Lomen Reindeer Co. Store at that place.

Early next morning we were up and started on our way towards Shaktoolik, a village about forty miles north of Unalakleet. In order to avoid going over some very steep hills we "took the ice." When we have cold and calm weather long enough during the winters thick ice forms on the sea. But the east wind and high tides will often take the ice out from the shore. Some time before we went this way one of the mail carriers had been taken out from the shore. He got back to the shore ice by swimming quite a distance, holding on to a small chunk of ice. My driver was careful. When we came to new, smooth ice he stopped the team and went to test the ice, cutting into it with his hunting knife. If it appeared to be rather thin, he chose the safe trail over the rough, but thick old ice.

Riding as a passenger after a dog team, a person has plenty time to enjoy himself, the beautiful scenery of the country, and also the sunshine, if the sun happens to show itself. Moreover, he may get much enjoyment from watching the behavior of the dogs and especially of the leaders. Usually, the dogs are hooked up in pairs with one leader up in front. There are some very good, and some rather worthless leaders. I well remember one vain fellow, the leader of a fairly good team. Instead of going ahead in a businesslike manner he trotted along sideways, carrying his tail high and looking back ever so often, as if to make sure that they all would see what great honor had been conferred on him. Some dogs get afraid and do not dare to go ahead if they are put in the lead. Others are bent on getting into a fight with other teams that pass or meet them on the trail. But good leaders are of great value. They watch intelligently for the word from their master, attend to their business, and do their utmost to keep their team from getting into useless and harmful fights. When the blizzards come and cause the driver to lose the trail, he often gives the faithful leader liberty to choose his own way and bring them all to safety. We got in to Shaktoolik early in the afternoon and stopped at Stephan Ivanoff's home. For many years there were several leaders in the Christian work at Shaktoolik, but Misha Ivanoff with family went to our new district

to teach school, first at Hooper Bay and now on Nunivak Island. Also, Jacob Kenick left Shaktoolik to become native missionary at Hooper Bay. For the last few years Stephan Ivanoff and his wife have been almost alone as leaders among the Christians at Shaktoolik. In this village, as well as at Koyuk, I gave out many fine little Christmas presents to the children. I also gave out many Sunday school papers and some songbooks and New Testaments. At 7:00 o'clock in the evening we had service in the school house.

The following day we were going to Koyuk, which is about forty-five miles north of Shaktoolik. This turned out to be our hardest day during the whole trip. The trail is staked on the ice of Norton Bay for a distance of about twenty-five miles. This time there was glare ice for many miles and the wind was contrary. For a long time it looked like we either would have to go back or try to get to the beach and follow it to Koyuk. Bravely did Clarence try to walk ahead of the team. He wound some of the dog chains around his boots in order to get some foothold on the ice. But he slipped and fell once in a while, and so did the dogs, as they tried to follow, and so did I, as I was staying behind and tried to help to push the load against that terrible north wind.



*Both were raised in Alaska.*

Finally, we reached some ice that was rough and the dogs were able again to pull and to go at good speed even against the wind. This was not the first time I was in trouble on the ice of Norton Bay. On Thanksgiving Day, 1928, Harry Soxie and I were out on that same bay. That time it was the south wind that caused us trouble. It brought in such a high tide that the

water rose to a couple of feet or more on the ice, especially along the shore line. That time we did have to go back a long way. For a while it seemed like we should have had to stay out on that ice over night, but Harry made a desperate effort to get ashore and succeeded. At a place that he considered fairly safe he waded ahead through the water, calling to the dogs to follow. For long stretches the dogs had to swim. I myself stood rather comfortable in the sled, though the water rose high enough to soak through my reindeer boots and partly fill them with water. But we did get ashore, and oh, how good it felt to be on land again! Late in the evening we also reached a native village, though it was not the one that we had set out for in the morning. We surely were happy and thankful in the evening of that Thanksgiving Day. This time we also got in late but managed to get something warm to eat and drink before we went to the evening service. The news of our arrival spread quickly and it did not take long to get the little church warmed up. At Koyuk the church members have managed to get a place for worship, all of their own. It is a small "church," but even so, it is better than to have to depend on the good will of the government school teachers for the use of the school house for services.

One more day's journey took us to Dime Creek. That is a village where there are mostly white people. They have no missionary of their own or any pastor, and so I have gone up there once during the winter now for several years. It appears that they are glad to have services and quite a crowd of people gather in their school house. They usually arrange with beautiful singing by some of the village people. This time many stayed after the regular service was over and kept on singing from the Covenant Hymnals which I had brought along. Several Swedes are living at Dime Creek. I stay in the roadhouse with Fred Swanson and go out to visit the Johnson and the Hagberg families, and others, when I come there.

The thermometer showed 38° below as we were ready to start homeward the following morning, and the wind was cold on the high hills, but we were well dressed. I had two parkees on top of all the other clothing, and Clarence had three. As we returned to Koyuk that Saturday we had another service in the evening. The next day, being Sunday, we did not travel but stayed and had services wellnigh the whole day. In the morning we had baptismal service and communion service. In the afternoon we had a special meeting with the older people, and regular service in the evening. At the close of the evening service several young people stated their desire to turn

## Why?

### *A Question of Today; and a Hint of the Answer*

As she wearily climbed the sagging steps of their once attractive home Helen saw her frail father at the window and tried to smile back. How cheerful he always was! It was now over seven years since his heart had forced him to give up his regular carpenter work. For a time he had kept the house and yard in splendid condition but for the past two years he had been able to do only a little about the house. Helen had neither money nor skill to alter the outside appearance and their landlord refused to spend a penny on the old house. As she opened the creaking door she wondered what her father would say tonight—if he knew.

She recalled his joy at the word she had brought home the evening before when he had asked, as was his custom, "Well, daughter, what kind of a day has it been?" How glad she had been to say, "Pretty good, Daddy, collections are not so bad. I deposited four hundred for each today." But tonight—

For several years Helen had been general office girl for two prosperous dentists, the Jenks Brothers, locally known as Nat and Bud, but as office after office had been doing away with such positions she felt increasing concern for hers. Nor could she keep her father ignorant of the situation.

As she kissed him she forced a smile and asked, "How have you been today, Daddy?"

"Only soso, Daughter," he replied slowly.

"Why, Daddy, what do you mean?" and her face blanched. Had he already heard about—

"Just a bit more uncomfortable than

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to the Lord for salvation and that we should pray for them. May the Lord finish the good work which he has begun within their hearts. At Koyuk Mr. Ralph Pearson from White Mountain joined us. He was now on his way to Unalakleet for the yearly conference and also came to teach some of the subjects in our Bible School at Unalakleet.

At Shaktoolik we also had baptism of children and communion service. Returning to Egawik on the 28th we heard that Ackan har just passed away in the morning. As he had felt that the end was coming near he had admonished the members of his family to live for the Lord, so that some day they all would meet in heaven.

In the afternoon of the 28th of February we were back home in Unalakleet, and happy and thankful we were to the Lord for his protection and help on the way.

usual, that's all, Daughter." Then he added, cheerily, "But we can't complain while you have your job. What was that deposit yesterday?"

"Four hundred apiece."

"Hmm, that is pretty good for one week these days."

"Yes, Daddy," Helen breathed weakly.

The next day was Sunday and she was up early answering advertisements. If she could only get a job without letting her father know what had happened!

Monday morning she went out as usual and began her search. Returning in the evening she found her father in better spirits.

"Daughter, what do you think the paper says? Nat and Bud Jenks have each bought a new car, a Packard. That surely means business must be picking up. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why, Daddy, I—I didn't know it!" replied Helen trying desperately to keep her composure, but suddenly seething inside. So that was the reason she had been laid off, so that they—and their pleasure-seeking wives—might have new cars. Packards! Their old cars, one two years old and the other three, had not been good enough! Hadn't she and her aged, infirm father a right to a living? Her father was speaking:

"You didn't know, Daughter? I guess they wanted to surprise you, too."

"I guess they did," she replied aloud, but to herself she said, "Thank Heaven he does not guess."

At the end of the fourth day Helen had exhausted all local possibilities. It was late when she reached home and her father was sitting at the window looking worried.

"What detained you, Daughter?"

"I'm sorry to be so late, Daddy. You are hungry. I'll hurry and get supper ready, then we can talk."

She was thankful she had planned a meal that her father would particularly relish for she must break the news as gently as possible or he might have one of his serious heart attacks. Her indignation rose whenever she thought of the new Packards. It was not as if there were no work for her in the office—that she knew, well. How should she tell him?

After he had said grace he looked across the table and scanned her face keenly. "Daughter, you look tired. You are more than weary. You look troubled." "Do I?" she answered with a splendid effort at cheerfulness. "Well, I'm hungry and probably that is the reason."

"This is a good supper. This meat is as delicate and tender as your mother's