

folk wandering. The one hundred and fifty tales, recorded at a time when folk memory was still dependable, make enthralling reading, and include some literary gems like the little fragment from the stormy coast east of Cape Farewell, entitled "Sunrise". It was later recorded by Knud Rasmussen and published as *The Great Hunter from Aluk*⁵.

McGill-Queen's University Press deserves our thanks for reissuing, after the lapse of a century, these two facsimile volumes, complete with all the illustrations and an 1866 map of Danish Greenland based on an original by Samuel Kleinschmidt.

Trevor Lloyd

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- ⁴Rink, H. J. 1891. *The Eskimo Tribes*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.
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WILLIAM SCORESBY, ARCTIC SCIENTIST. BY TOM AND CORDELIA STAMP. *Whitby, Yorkshire: Caedmon of Whitby Press, 1976. 253 pages, 16 figures. £3.50.*

This is a well-written biography of William Scoresby, a key figure in the history of Arctic science and whaling. Upon his death in 1857, Scoresby's records and correspondence were deposited with the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society, but only now has this "immense pile of paper" been systematically sorted — by Tom and Cordelia Stamp. They have skilfully and unobtrusively merged quotations from Scoresby with their own explanatory text.

Scoresby's life on the sea began with a summer voyage on his father's whaling ship in 1800, when he was only ten years old. Three years later he became an apprentice, and at sixteen, when already a chief mate, he reached with his father a latitude of 81° 30' — at that time the farthest any sailing vessel had ventured north. At twenty-one he was captain of his own ship.

In 1808, Scoresby was elected to membership in the Wernerian Natural History Society, and in 1819, he became a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His reputation

rests solidly upon his two-volume *Account of the Arctic Regions*, first published in 1820, after he had spent sixteen summers with whaling ships in Arctic waters. This book has been described as "the foundation stone of Arctic science" and "one of the most remarkable books in the English language". Eighty years later General A. W. Greely said: "Geographically, Scoresby's discoveries were greater in importance and number than those of any other single navigator in Greenland waters". Scoresby in his book reviewed thoroughly the Arctic and whaling literature of many languages, and made original observations of snowflakes, polar ice, ocean currents, meteorology, and the natural history of whales, recognizing for the first time the concentration of whales in the more opaque green waters that contained plankton.

As early as 1815, Robert Jameson, Scoresby's teacher at Edinburgh University, suggested to him that he volunteer to lead an Arctic discovery expedition. In 1817, when he found the east coast of Greenland free of ice, Scoresby wrote to Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, to suggest that the British government finance an expedition led by a whaling captain such as himself. It is, however, overly speculative for the Stamps to claim so assuredly: "Thus began the long and largely ill-organised search for the north-west passage by British naval commanders of little or no Arctic experience, which could have been completely avoided by the appointment and adequate support of Scoresby". The partisanship of the authors is again evident when they call John Barrow, the Secretary of the Navy Board who blocked Scoresby's aspirations to command a major polar expedition, a "mean-spirited sycophant".

The advice given by Scoresby (in his 1820 book) on methods for exploring the northern coast of North America was indeed better than the plans issued by Barrow. Scoresby made the recommendation that small parties should travel on foot with sledges, with or without dog teams, and felt that by a similar method it might even be possible to reach the North Pole over the ice. Scoresby pointed out why the ocean must be frozen at both poles, while Barrow died believing in the existence of open water at the North Pole.

Based as it is on his papers, this book tells us much of the personality of Scoresby and of his life and times. Yet we are told little about the deaths of his parents, and nothing about his brother's successful medical practice in the State of New York. Scoresby seems not to have made contact with his brother on either of his trips to the United States.

Scoresby's deep religious faith led him to abandon whaling after the voyage of 1823, just three years before the loss of two ships signalled the death knell for whaling out of his home port of Whitby. He studied for the ministry and eventually achieved the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The last half of the book deals with Scoresby's life as an Anglican minister, including the trials of his last seven years as vicar of Bradford, which led to his retiring when only fifty-six years of age. During his ministry, Scoresby continued his work on magnetism and compasses, participated in annual meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and corresponded with a young physicist, James Prescott Joule, but contributed nothing further to Arctic science.

Although the definitive assessment of Scoresby's scientific achievements has not yet been written, this book will serve to empha-

size the importance of a man who is now largely forgotten. Many readers will be stimulated to purchase the 1969 reprint of Scoresby's major work (of 1820)¹. As the Stamps convincingly tell us, "He had qualities and gifts 'seldom united in one man'. A courageous whaling captain; a skilled navigator; an able surveyor and draughtsman; a naturalist and an acute observer; a forceful and graphic writer".

This creditable, moderately-priced work is virtually free from typographical errors. The major disappointment is the bibliography, which is sketchy and incomplete; a number of Scoresby's scientific papers and eight of his books and pamphlets are not listed in it.

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