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Will the ZR-1 Discover a Polar Paradise?

Here is one of the most outstanding stories of scientific possibility ever published. Commander Green's exclusive article has all the pungency of romantic fiction; at the same time it is founded on scientific observations of a veteran arctic explorer, and corroborated by fascinating legends of the Eskimos. Not since the days of Columbus has any venture held such power of gripping the world's imagination as the proposed voyage of the ZR-1.

In the issue of **POPULAR SCIENCE MONTHLY** for November, 1920, the prophesy was made that a "huge dirigible of the Zeppelin type will enable the explorer of the future to study the geography of the poles in a really scientific way." Now this promise is to be fulfilled in the projected transpolar flight of the new navy dirigible next summer. What will be the outcome?

Commander Green's entrancing picture of a balmy polar paradise represents, he says, simply a tremendous possibility of arctic aeronautic exploration. In this article he sets forth the facts as he has gathered them. Whether you agree with this theory or not, you will find it absorbingly fascinating.

By Lieutenant-Commander Fitzhugh Green U.S.N.

In the proposed transpolar flight of the huge new navy dirigible, the ZR-1 (the Shenandoah), next summer, lies the most thrilling possibility that ever faced a single body of explorers:

In the center of the unknown area of the Polar Sea may be discovered a vast continent heated by subterranean fires, and inhabited by the descendants of the last Norwegian colony of Greenland!

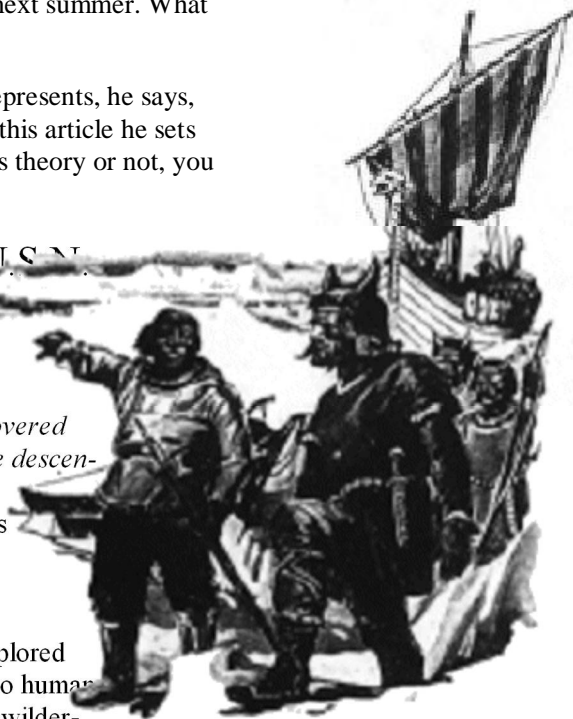
So wild is the idea as to tax the most gullible imagination. Yet it is vividly encouraged and supported not only by history and tradition, but by the searching test of scientific analysis.

Witness the astounding facts:

Within the boundaries of the Polar Sea spreads the greatest unexplored area on the surface of the globe: 1,000,000 square miles on which no human eye has gazed! Look at the map on page 31. Most of this enormous wilderness lies on the Alaskan side of the Pole. On the European side lies Iceland, at a point corresponding roughly to the center of the unknown area opposite it across the top of the world. This fact is significant. Experts are in nearly unanimous agreement that a new arctic land will be found by the ZR-1. Doctor Harris, the tidal expert in Washington, D. C., long ago declared that the data he had worked out from polar ocean currents all convinced him that the existence of a large land-mass near the North Pole is indisputable.



The giant new navy dirigible ZR-1 in test flight. If she makes the voyage across the North Pole next summer, it will prove according to Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Famous arctic explorer, "one of the turning points in history".



All the ancestors of the Lost Colony of Vikings who mysteriously vanished from Greenland centuries ago be found inhabiting a steam heated polar continent? Eskimo tradition paints in vivid terms the White Men swarming suddenly northwards to a wonderland the natives long had known - a land of endless summer, rich in vegetation and game.

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Add to this the array of evidence geologists adduce on the basis of terrific volcanic activity along a well-defined line leading up the North Pacific, through the Japanese archipelago, and the fiery Aleutians, and onward toward the Pole. This seismic axis plotted on the globe nearly bisects the unknown area of the Polar Ocean. Further, were this line swung through 180 degrees, it would touch Iceland, one of the most fiercely volcanic spots on earth. Another significant fact.

Still more: Not many years ago, in a particularly open season, the American whaler, Captain Keenan, reported that he saw a land northeast of Point Barrow. Peary, from Cape Thomas Hubbard, sighted distant peaks northwest. Such evidence is incontrovertible. The new continent seems already within our grasp!

So much for the land-mass.

Now for its probable inhabitants.

Eric the Red discovered Greenland in 985 A.D. He brought back glowing tales of grassy fiords, long sunlit days, game-infested hills, ice-pans groaning under their burden of fat seals, bays teeming with fish.

Vikings Prosper

Colonization began at once. And so true did Eric's bright tale prove that the Vikings greatly prospered. In the archives at Bergen may be seen today the receipts for their princely contributions in ivory and oil to the ill-fated Crusades.

The last ship known to have returned to Norway from her arctic colonies arrived in the year 1410. We read that it brought a rich cargo; that its report was of happy, thriving Norsemen back north; of health and growing independence despite their rigorous environment.

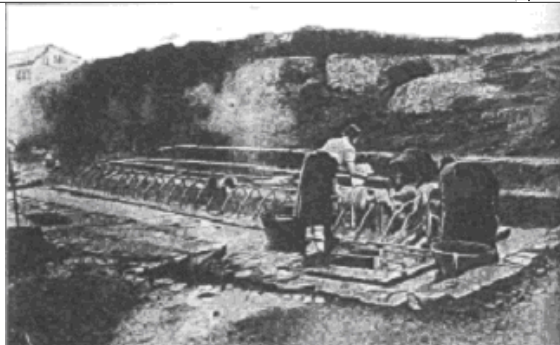
An Adventure in the Icy Desert

"With my own eyes I have seen in Greenland the ruined stone houses of the lost Norwegian colony", writes Commander Green. "With Donald B. MacMillan I have tried to reach the polar continent, believed to lie in the Polar Sea North of Canada."

As an arctic explorer of wide experience, Commander Green - now aid to Admiral Williams, President of the Naval War College at Newport, R.I. - has made an exhaustive study of the fascinating possibilities of discovery of which he writes. Following his graduation from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, he joined the Crocker Land Arctic Expedition as engineer and physicist in 1913. He spent 3 ½ years in the polar regions.

In the spring of 1914, with MacMillan and two Eskimos, he sledged more than 1,000 miles up across Ellesmere Land and out into the Polar Sea in search of land that tidal experts insist must lie in this million square miles of unexplored area. They also explored an unknown portion of Axel Heiberg's Land.

The next year, after their relief ship had become imprisoned in the ice of Smith Sound, Commander Green, with two other members of the expedition, sledged south, passing down the uninhabited portion of the Greenland coast and reaching the Danish colonies five months later, in the spring of 1916. Reaching New York by way of Copenhagen in the autumn, he joined the Atlantic Fleet on regular duty. The following spring he became flag Lieutenant to Admiral Rogers in command of the division of United States battleships attached to the British Grand Fleet in European waters.



Then, as in 1914, Europe became a shambles. Plague and war swept civilization. Pestilential disease ran a ghastly race with a horde of human murderers. Even the sea route north was forgotten...

Lost Colony a World Riddle

Dark ages passed, Nature bred again in men the will to search her world for knowledge and for wealth. Greenland was rediscovered. Hans Egede established the first modern settlement there in 1721. But the grim report he made was tragic beyond belief:

The Norwegian colony, 10,000 people - perhaps 100,000 - had, to a man, mysteriously disappeared!

"The greatest riddle in the history of the world," it has been called - the baffling mystery of the lost Norse colony.

Where did they go?

Where didn't they go is a question more easily answered. Not to sea in ships, for they had but one or two; and Greenland, lying above the tree-line, gave them no timber for building more. Not slain by Eskimos, for Eskimos are the most peace-loving people in the world, knowing nothing of the art of war. Not, like Europe, swept by some dread germ of awful virulence, for germs don't thrive in polar regions.

What then?

Examine the Eskimo tradition: It paints in vivid terms the White Men swarming suddenly north to a wonderland the natives long had known. Because of evil spirits, no Eskimo had ever dared this trail.

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Washing in Iceland, where hot springs and boiling mud abound. An engineering scheme for steam heating the whole island by harnessing its steaming geysers has been projected recently. It is no idle dream, says Commander Green, to believe that Iceland has a geographic mate on the opposite side of the Pole - a polar continent of mild climate and luxuriant vegetation warmed the year round by hot springs and geysers.

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Our artist's conception of the discovery of a possible "polar paradise" by the ZR-1, based on Commander Green's imaginative article. This land, the explorer believes, may be about the size of Pennsylvania, and may be encircled by a lofty volcanic range of mountains buried in eternal ice and snow. Behind a veil of fog may lie a fertile plateau where heat, from hot springs, geysers and boiling pools defies the cold. The illustration shows the possible habitations of the modern descendants of a vanished race of Norsemen.

"The land is warm; is clothed in summer verdure the year around; is populated by fat caribou and musk-ox. It lies", they say, even to this day, "in the direction of the coastal trail-route north."

This route is that taken by our American expeditions. Peary, Kane, and Hayes all used it. It always has been the easiest route as well as the most productive of natural food in seal and walrus. For our explorers it has been a hard trail. But for the Norwegian colonists whose forebears had spent 10 generations north of the arctic circle it must have been less difficult to travel than were the western plains for our American pioneers.

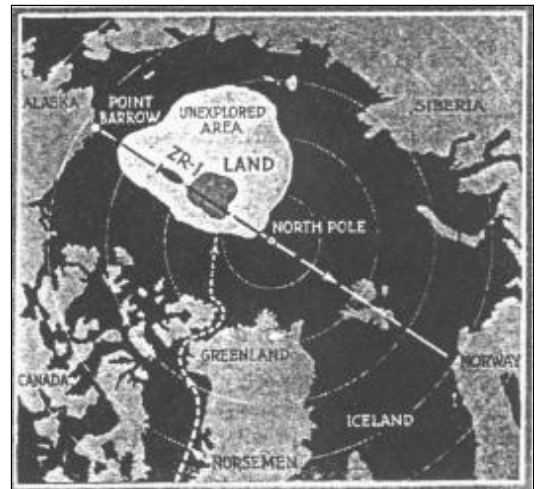
Lured Northward

Picture the terrible situation in which the deserted Norsemen in Greenland found themselves: No outlet for their trade. No source of supply for the little but indispensable luxuries of life. No access to

A generation - two, perhaps - of heartbreak and of longing; unhappiness goading the younger men to travel northward. Perhaps a route to southern lands lay that way. Suddenly like a bombshell breaks upon the weary colony the wonderful news: "We've found a polar paradise! Sunshine! Game! Grass! One moon's easy journey north! A short lap on the sea ice! Come!"

What had they to wait for? A Century had passed since the last ship sailed. The last man who had seen a real Norwegian had died. The homeland was but a myth. So they "packed and, singing songs, departed," the native legend puts it, "suddenly to the northward." They never returned. The fact is not at all surprising if what we think is true - that they found a land of milk and honey in the very center of the polar pack. And it is perfectly logical to suppose that their descendants will be found up there next summer by the dirigible ZR-1, in dramatic isolation.

Go back to the scientific data on which we base this amazing assumption. Iceland's collection of volcanoes is unsurpassed. She has 107 major craters within her tiny limits, and thousands of minor ones. Iceland's climate is temperate despite its arctic situation. The peace, and health, and the prosperity of Iceland's inhabitants were sustained by its natural warmth during the 200 years of isolation from Europe that it suffered at the same time and for the same reasons that the Greenlandic Norsemen were deserted.



This map shows the proposed transpolar air route of the ZR-1 from Alaska to Norway. Cutting the distance to European and Asiatic capitals from 11,000 to 5000 miles, this route would pass across what may geologists believe to be an unexplored polar land on the opposite side of the Pole from Iceland. The curving dotted line indicates the possible route which the "lost Norsemen" may have followed to this imagined arctic wonderland.

Moreover, Iceland's lava flows are by no means always from conventional craters. The greatest of them have come quietly from fissures in the level land. We may deduce that subterranean fires smolder near the surface. It is not uncommon for the inhabitants to be forewarned of eruption by sudden melting of the snow and ice.

Hot springs and boiling mud are found in every part of Iceland. There has been projected an engineering scheme for heating the whole island by harnessing its steaming geysers.

In this connection it is interesting to compare the mean annual temperature of

friends and families back home.

Iceland 34°F - with that of Greenland at the same latitude - minus 15° F. During the summer Icelanders enjoy a period quite comparable to that of our own New England states. Averages run up to 60° F.

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How the barrier mountain range of the new land may appear from a distance.

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It is no idle dream to claim that Iceland has a mate across the way. Geographical twins are common on our globe; Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope; the Mediterranean and the Caribbean; islands off Alaska and Japan; and so on.

Is There a Polar Paradise?

It is no speculation of wild improbability to picture a polar paradise, like some titan emerald in its alabaster setting. At Disco, Greenland, orchids warmed by natural hot springs blossom out of doors through the bitter sunless winter months!

Weighing carefully all the facts available, we may set the area of the new land at about 50,000 square miles, or roughly the size of the state of Pennsylvania. Its perimeter is bulwarked by a quake-distorted range of mountains buried in eternal ice and snow, and rearing 10,000 feet into the sky. Twisting fiords penetrate the ragged ice-gnarled coast.

Just inside the mountains hangs a veil of fog, the vapor of contrasting temperatures. For here we may imagine the aspect changes sharply. Heat from a nether world defines the cold. White of snow and ice shades swiftly to the green of verdant pastures, and gold of wooded uplands.

We come upon a level clearing on which are spread symmetrically half a hundred human habitations. Tall men magnificently built and clad in short and bright hued loosely fitting blouses are moving leisurely about. Mingling with them are comely, fair-haired women in dainty smock. Laughing children dash here and there among the shrubbery.

No savages are these descendants of the vanished colony. Indeed, we shall be mistaken if they are not far in advance of our own smug selves in culture, learning, deportment, and social refinement. They have harnessed natural energy to an amazing degree. They know the truths of other worlds. They have mastered the secrets of health.

May Revolutionize Commerce

Yet we need not be swept away by too sanguine a view of what the ZR-1 may find. There are others features savoring more of cold, hard facts than of romance.

For instance, a polar air route cuts the distance to European and Asiatic capitals from 11,000 to 5,000 miles. A vast volume of commerce and traffic will be deflected from America toward the Pole.

No matter what the land may be which lies close to the Pole, it will control the Polar Ocean strategically. Appreciation of this fact is evidenced by Amundsen's announcement that his next great effort to be first across will include three planes. And there are whispers that two other powers are grooming entries for the race.

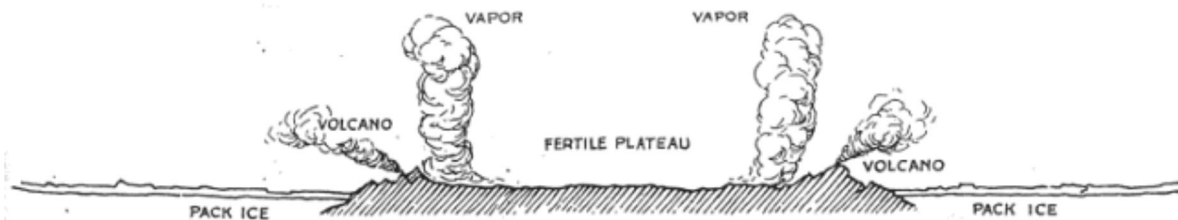
Alaska then must come into her own. She will gather population and stand as an arctic service station to passing planes.

The ZR-1 may get away by early June. The weather then is calm; the daily temperature just above the freezing point. After her 6,000-mile flight from Lakehurst to Point Barrow, from which she will eventually take off, there must be a period of final grooming; possibly a trial or two out over the icefields. And by the Fourth of July, 1924, we should know the answer to this most thrilling of all man's geographical conundrums.

Does a polar paradise exist? And, if so, are the vanished Norsemen there?



Lieut.-Cmdr. Fitzhugh Green, U.S.N., from a photograph taken in the Arctic.



Commander Green's own idealist drawing, showing a cross section of the imagined arctic continent - an undulating, fertile plateau, steam heated by hot springs, geysers and boiling pools and rimmed by a volcanic range of mountains. Behind this barrier rises a veil of vapor.