



My Life with the Eskimo (1913)

Vilhjálmur Stefánsson

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Vilhjálmur Stefánsson (1879 – 1962) was a Canadian Arctic explorer and ethnologist. "My Life with the Eskimo" is the enthralling story of Stefánsson's Arctic journey over one thousand miles of ice, and his discovery of the new race, the blonde Eskimo. Stefánsson's splendid volume is a mine of interesting observation for different branches of science. It is a fascinating book of description and adventure that has been written by the famous traveler and explorer, who has passed years of his life within the Arctic Circle. Mr. Stefánsson has had a vast amount of material from which to draw and he has made his selection wisely. He has lived with the Eskimo for long periods; he knows their language; he has subsisted on their food; he has heard their legends; he has seen them in their daily lives as have few explorers. Consequently his remarks about this primitive and matter-of-fact people are shrewd, true, and frequently amusing. The experiences and tales which he recounts, mirroring the hardships and the inspirations of life in a fearful but wonderful country, compose a work quite the most absorbing on it that has ever been published.

In 1908 the American Museum of Natural History organized an expedition to the Arctic under the leadership of Vilhjálmur Stefánsson and Rudolph M. Anderson. The object of this enterprise was to make anthropological and zoological studies on the coast between the Mackenzie River and Hudson Bay and on the adjacent islands. The expedition was to be known as the Stefánsson-Anderson Arctic Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History. The plan of the leaders was to travel by land and water with a party of Eskimo and to depend entirely upon their own resources as to food and clothing. The Canadian Government also aided the expedition with funds and equipment for geographical and geological observations.

Messrs. Stefánsson and Anderson returned to the Museum in September, 1912, after four years of continuous exploration. A full statement of the itinerary is given in Stefánsson's My Life with the Eskimo.

Mr. Stefánsson succeeded in visiting thirteen groups in that territory and determining approximately their respective habitats. He noted the peculiar suggestions of European blood among these Eskimo.

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