

**THE CRUISE OF THE  
ESQUIMAUX, STEAM WHALER,  
TO DAVIS STRAITS AND BAFFIN  
BAY, APRIL-OCTOBER, 1899**

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The Cruise of the Esquimaux, Steam Whaler, to Davis Straits and Baffin Bay, April-October,  
1899 by A. Barclay Walker

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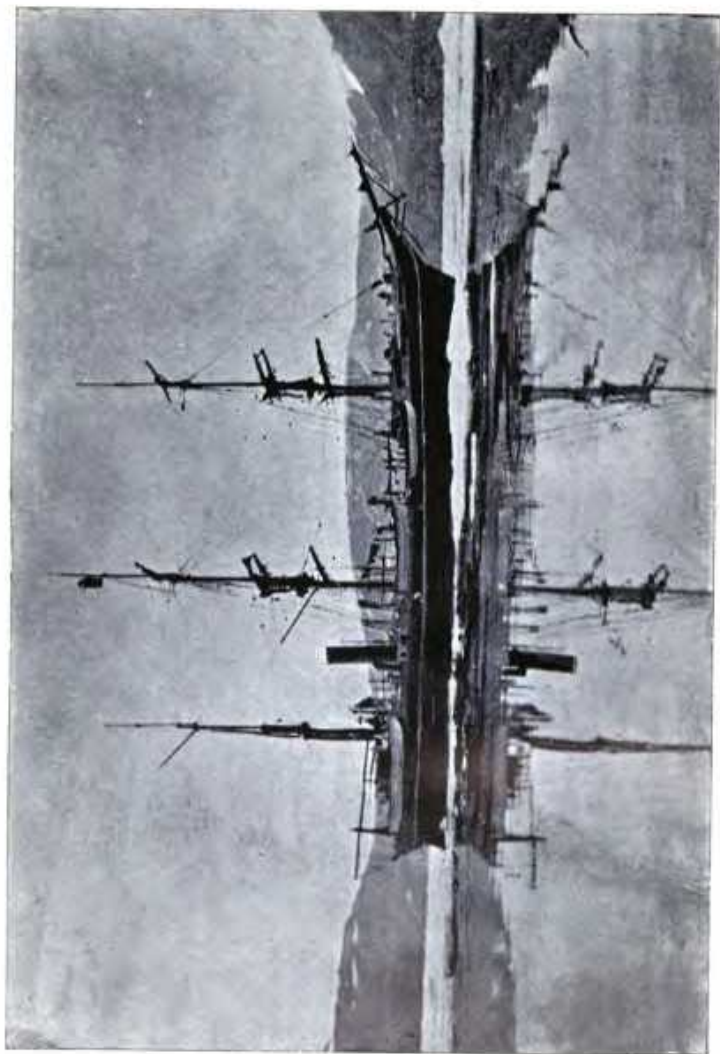
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**A. BARCLAY WALKER**

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THE ESQUIMAUX.

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10. The following table shows the number of people who visited the museum in each month.

Month: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December

Month	Number of visitors
January	120
February	150
March	180
April	200
May	220
June	250
July	280
August	300
September	280
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## INTRODUCTION.

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HE Arctic regions have hitherto been interesting chiefly as a field for Geographical research. The Diary, comprised in the following pages of the six months' Cruise of the "Esquimaux," may serve to show that the Polar Seas and Shores offer opportunities and conditions most attractive to the keen sportsman. Bracing air, grand and diversified scenery, and life under conditions absolutely novel are in these latitudes the accompaniments of varied, and, in most instances, exciting adventure. Besides the pursuit of the whale, narwhal, walrus, seal, bear and deer, there is abundant employment for net and gun in gathering salmon, wild duck and looms. The latter rarely fail to afford excellent shooting when big game does not happen to be at hand.

Although one of the most fascinating forms of sport whaling has up to the present time been considered wholly as a commercial adventure. The value of the Whale Fishery, and the fact that a well grown whale is worth £2,000, go a long way to account for this view.

But the whale is not easy to find, and when found creates an amount of excitement even among the oldest of hands, which culminates only with success, or changes into despair in the event of failure. He may justly be reckoned among the finest of big game.

Built in 1865 the "Esquimaux," in spite of her thirty-four years, proved one of the soundest and most comfortable sea boats afloat. We had every reason to be well satisfied with the old ship, and not less so with our skipper, Captain McKay, whose experience in the



whaling business was invaluable. We left St. Johns, Newfoundland, on April 27th, 1899, carrying a crew of 53 all told, and provisions for two years. The Cruise was completed at Dundee on the 27th October. Dr. R. P. McKenzie and Mr. W. Cecil Hammond accompanied the expedition. In the Journal the former is, for the sake of brevity, referred to as "R," and the latter as "C."

The Diary was written from day to day, and while the impression left by recent events was still fresh. No attempt has been made at elaboration. It is a record of our experiences, brief, but complete, and it is hoped that, having the interest which arises from directness of statement and impressions at first hand, it may reasonably claim a place in the literature of sport.

## I.

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### FROM FLORIDA TO ST. JOHNS.

On April 7th, 1899, I received a cable from Capt. McKay. He informed me that the "Esquimaux" had arrived safely at St. Johns, Newfoundland, after a passage of 17 days.

Dr. McKenzie and self, with my valet, John Collins, accordingly packed our traps. On the 8th we left the yacht "Decoy" at Punta Rosa, Florida, and took train for New York. We arrived on the 10th. Cecil Hammond, who had come over on the "Etruria," joined us that night at the "Waldorf Astoria" Hotel.

We got through our business in New York as quickly as possible, managed to start North at 4 p.m. on April 12th, reached Boston that night, and Truro, Nova Scotia, late on the night of the 13th. There we were delayed a day owing to the indefinite news as to a boat for St. Johns. Things looked unpromising. The "Bruce," on the Sydney route, had broken down, and the railway in Newfoundland was blocked with snow. However, we left Truro on the 15th for Mulgrave, arriving in the afternoon. There again we were delayed owing to the boilers of the "Grand Lake" having to undergo survey; there was nothing for it but to wait, and meanwhile to put up at a small hotel.

On Sunday afternoon we took a walk in the thawing snow. I cannot say I enjoyed this excursion. I got over my knees into some slush.

The "Grand Lake," starting at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 17th, slowly forced her way through the loose ice in the Straits and out to sea, in thick weather.

We were out of the ice, however, after going about 90 miles, and steered for Cape Race. On the 18th it blew a hard N.E. gale with driving snow. The "Grand Lake" being very lively, the majority of the passengers were incapacitated, but at 4 p.m. on the 19th we had the

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satisfaction of entering St. Johns harbour, and found the "Esquimaux" at anchor, looking her best. Capt. McKay and Joe Prince (my steward on the "Ailsa" and "Normannia") met us at the wharf, and we were soon on board the vessel which was to be our home for the next six months.

Steam Whaler "ESQUIMAUX."—Built in 1865; tons 465; horse power 70; engines compound; originally ship rigged but altered to a



ST. JOHNS.

barque in 1883; extreme length, 157 feet; extreme breadth, 30 feet; boats, 8; 1 collapsible dinghy; capacity of bunkers, 110 tons; coal on board on leaving St. Johns, 556 tons; daily consumption of coal on passage,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  tons; tanks for oil, 32; capacity of tanks for oil, 210 tons; speed on trial trip (measured miles),  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots; capacity of fresh water tanks, 40 tons; built of oak; strength in bows,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  feet; ice sheathing, iron, wood; draught forward, 17 feet 3 inches; draught aft, 17 feet 6 inches; depth of hold, 19 feet; provisioned for two years.