

AMERICA TURNS TO THE ANTARCTIC

Byrd's New Expedition Equipped With Every Mod. Con.—Including An Ice-Cream Maker!

THE first United States mariner to see Antarctica was Nathaniel B. Palmer, a sealer out from Stonington, Connecticut, in the year 1820. Later, in 1840, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, of the United States Navy, sent by Congress, sighted its white peaks and declared it to be a continental land mass.

American politicians argue that the million-square-mile sector explored by United States explorers, from Palmer onwards, should be claimed in toto, instead of only in spots.

Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd says: "No foreign expedition has so much as looked upon (it) . . . We have penetrated it . . . lived in it . . . built in it." This rich find is too good to be lost to the U.S., he argues.

It is a far cry now from the days of Antarctic exploration when Scott and his companions pushed forward into the wilderness pulling their own sledges. When Admiral Byrd's latest expedition called at Wellington a few days ago, they came with the latest science-perfected devices to make their work in the Antarctic easier.

M.S. North Star

M.S. North Star is a stout little vessel, built by the Berg Shipbuilding Company in 1932, registered at Seattle, Washington. Aboard her are old and new means of transport in the southern wastes. There are about 70 magnificent dogs; and the "snow cruiser."

The *North Star* is an oil-burning ship. She carries for the trip about 65,000 gallons of oil. Aboard her everything is spotless, from the table-cloths in the mess room to the boiler pipes in the engine room. We were shown around the engine room by "Micky," the engineer. We commented on the cleanness of everything, and one of the men pointed to a few faint finger prints on one of the pipes. "We've not had time to clean up thoroughly yet," he said, "or you wouldn't see that there!"

Nothing could better exemplify the compactness of the ship than the engine-room. Everything, diesel engines, electric plant, refrigerating plant, heating apparatus and air-conditioning plant are packed into a small space—yet nothing is crowded or disordered. In the engine room all spare parts are carried. The ship must be her own repair shop, and should anything be damaged, the job of renewal must be carried out on board.

. . . And Ice-Cream

The men of Admiral Byrd's expedition will have rather better fare than their predeces-



ADMIRAL R. E. BYRD

sors in the Antarctic. There is an up-to-date galley and all modern cooking appliances—even to an ice-cream maker. "Of course, when we get to the base, all we have to do for ice-cream is put an arm out through the door and stir round with a stick," remarked one of the men.

If the *North Star* herself can have any rival for neatness and compactness of design, it must be the snow-cruiser. The giant cruiser with her crew of five can be self-supporting for a year, and she can carry enough fuel to travel across the Antarctic continent and back again. The crew consists of two scientific experts, a wireless operator, an aviator (the cruiser can carry an aeroplane on her broad back) and a diesel engineer.

How It Began

Admiral Richard Byrd, at the head of the expedition, is naturally the outstanding figure in the venture. To organise and prepare the expedition was no easy task. Early last June President Roosevelt asked Congress for 340,000 dollars to send an expedition to Antarctica to lay claim to areas there discovered by U.S. explorers. Later in June the request was rejected. The House called the expedition a "joy ride." But early in July, with pressure from the Senate, the 340,000 dollars became available and the expedition was finally organised and ordered to proceed by early October.

There is more to the venture than the claiming of territory. Admiral Byrd says in his book: "We discovered a seam of coal down there that we think is sufficient to supply the United States for 100 years or more. This seam of coal is . . . exposed along the slope of a high mountain range so that it is not necessary to dig for it . . . I have no doubt that there is oil in Antarctica . . . who knows but that our future reservoirs of oil and coal . . . lie waiting for us at the bottom of the world?"

Portrait of an Explorer

At morning tea in a Wellington hotel with two of his officers and a few friends Admiral Byrd proved himself the antithesis of the martinet. When asked, jokingly, whether they could not take somebody to give the feminine touch, he laughed, "No . . . but I'd like to hide a couple of girls in the snow-cruiser from here to Dunedin . . . just to see Tommy Poulter's face when he discovered them. It would be almost worth while having a movie-camera on the spot to take a record of his reactions. That would be worth a bit!" (Dr. Poulter is the snow-cruiser's chief.)

He paid several compliments to New Zealand (and he meant them). He likes New Zealanders, thinks they have natural courtesy and dignity, and thinks that friendship between this country and the United States, as between all the English-speaking

What They Will Read

Noticed in the "*North Star's*" social room bookshelves:—

"*San Felice*" by Vincent Sheean.

"*Divots*" by P. G. Wodehouse.

"*The Land That Time Forgot*" by Leahy and Crain.

"*So Red the Rose*" by Young.

"*Puzzle Dictionary*" Funk and Wagnall.

And books by Charles Morgan, Denis Wheatley, etc.

countries of the world, cannot be too highly valued. He said he had found only kindness and consideration in his contacts in this country.

Radio Links

Once upon a time, men signalled to each other with fires and smoke-signs. Now radio is the medium. The Byrd expedition keeps in constant touch with America by radio, and this continuous communication will be in operation for the twenty-two months the expedition expects to spend in Antarctica. When the snow cruiser leaves the base for the drive to the South Pole, she will also keep in touch with the base at all times by powerful transmitters, and receiving sets. As yet, it is not known whether special programmes will be broadcast from the base or cruiser, but if they are, they should be of unique interest. Just as Edward Wilson painted the extraordinary beauties of the Antarctic continent on the Scott expedition, and as Herbert Ponting captured some of that strange loveliness of light with his camera, so may the men of this, the 1940 expedition, paint word-pictures of the wonders of the unknown places.