

Durch
Grönlands Eiswüste



VON A. DE QUERVAIN UND A. STOLBERG

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On the Ice Cap

We had never seen a more fantastic spectacle of nature than the scenery that unfolded itself on 29 June – a day which had begun in dense fog. Our small steamer, Godthaab, slowly made its way around the non-visible northern tip of the peninsula Nugsuak (ed. Nuussuaq). At midnight we had left the notoriously icy and stormy waters called Vaigat and sailed carefully across the north-eastern bay's glassy waters towards Umanak (Uummanaq), our northern most destination, which was hidden ahead somewhere in the grey towards the east. North Greenland was supposedly very beautiful. Until now we saw nothing but a pale glow in the direction where the sun should be standing, and in this ghostly light, we now and again saw the outline of nearby icebergs, whose green white walls were lost in the twilight-like fog. It was not only secretive; it was the secret itself! And what happened next, I tried already then to describe with words. *The grandeur's victory over the surprising; can best be described as a "theatre cup" – a grand theatrical change of scenery*: Faster than can be described, the fog veil was torn in one go and a bright scenery of fantastic shapes was built up before our eyes. Umanak's inaccessible double-peaked gneissic rock rose before us, further to the east, Salliaruseq's (ed. Grand Island) thousand metres high heavy walls and behind us the mainland's vast plateau covered by glaciers. We took this revelation of Nordic natural splendour to be a good harbinger for the last part of our work – the expedition on the ice cap.

The ice cap! The idea that we were soon to unveil one of the largest Arctic secrets seemed magically appealing and enticing to us. You have not been to Greenland without being on the ice cap! It may seem strange: many, indeed the vast majority, who have lived for years in Greenland, have never walked on the ice cap. Although nearly all of Greenland is "flooded by an ice river", human settlements are separated from the ice cap by a mountain zone of up to 150 km in width, which is intersected by fjords. And only a few make it to where the coast for the second time is limited by an ocean, namely the ice cap's ocean of ice. It is like stepping into eternity; such is the feeling that comes to mind at the sight of this sea ice.

In Umanak we made the final preparations. Our actual camp life began there too, as we hitherto had lived either on the ship or in Danish colonial houses and had only used tents for field trips. Umanak is by Greenland's standards a somewhat small town. There are only 4 Danish houses, namely those of the colony manager (also called the "factor"), his assistant, the priest and the doctor. These are sited with a little church and two major transit warehouses. The Greenlanders' houses could be called primitive, but are still statelier than we have seen elsewhere, and built as two-family houses. Between the Greenlanders' houses, you would find the dogs, and kayaks in high places, as far as possible out of their reach; even higher, the lard hides from sharks and seals hung to dry, cut into long strips.

Alas, these dogs! None of us can think back on Umanak without remembering these beasts' long list of sins. Beautiful strong animals and all the respect for the work they do in the winter. However, in the summer when "the sledge track" is missing, they become a predatory gang – somewhat reluctantly you could understand them as their owners feed them with kicks, and they have to see to their own sustenance. Either their hunger is very large or their tastes very poor, for they will eat everything with the exception of stone and iron. They have a special fondness for European items. We were not sufficiently aware of this from the beginning, and we had to pay for our ignorance with three and a half pairs of shoes – this within half an hour caused by a little dog who had managed to climb over the high fencing of the factor's dwelling. *Labor omnia vincit improbus!* All my European shoes! This prevented me from travelling home.

I soon found comfort in being a spectator to Baebler's persecution of the dogs, since a similar fate had surpassed him. His favourite dog had, in faithful devotion, stolen his Greenlandic Sunday sealskin boots from the provision tent. The dog appeared just around the corner of the tent with the stolen goods as we arrived. One glance was enough to grasp the situation. So quickly love can turn to hate! But the subsequent shower of stones and a passionate pursuit did not fix the sad remnants. This was how we learned to be cautious, and to be armed with stones as weapons at all time against nosy dogs.

There were other more welcome curious eyes to our doings. These were the Greenlanders themselves. When we prepared the evening meal in front of the tent, a large audience of children and adults had gathered showing unflinching interest in our household secrets. We had sympathy for each other even without words. We made ourselves even more popular when I distributed a box of cough drops, which, as a precaution, had been donated to our trip, but we did not need it. To the amusement of the congregation, I also used the opportunity to learn scraps of Greenlandic, which were later very useful to us: Tuperk – tent, Imerk – water, Sermerk – glacier gave fundamental knowledge and life conditions for a traveller in Greenland, and you learn these words with a somewhat different interest than formerly *la pipe*, pipe and *le canif*, pocket knife or *mensa*, table. Of practical importance are also the expressions for the possible and the impossible, which we were inaugurated in during our visit to the hospitable pastor Jespersen and his niece Miss Gudrun Larsen. "Ajorpok", things are going badly – "Ajungilak", things are going well - "Ajornakrak", things are not going well at all. This is what all the conversations are about while travelling. This young lady was also kind enough to offer to inspect our barograph during our expedition on the ice cap. We needed this continuous recording of air pressure for accurate reduction of our height measurements at all time.



Alfred de Quervain



Emil Baebler



August Stolberg

The official plan was to climb the ice cap from the bottom of the bay northeast of Nugsuak and spend approx. 4 weeks advancing eastward. The time leftover – we were hoping for 2 weeks – could then be used for measurements of the large Karajak glacier as a continuation of the German polar researcher E. v. Drygalski's work.

Behind all our preparations, one thought kept returning: Would it be possible to cross the ice cap all the way to the east coast? We knew that such an undertaking would only be successful in exceptionally favourable conditions, but these conditions might occur, and we would be equipped for this goal. Nansen's daring crossing to the south of 65° latitude had left more to be explored of the ice cap, and his original intention had been to cross the ice cap to the west coast at Qaassianguit and not south of Nuuk. A crossing from west to east, which was our plan, presupposed that somewhere on the east coast would be a base and a ship. These have in fact been present since 1895 as the Danes have founded a small colony in Angmagsalik (Tasilaq), which is visited by a ship every year in August if the ice cover on the east coast allows. It has undeniably occurred twice that the inhabitants of Angmagsalik from the mountains had to watch the small steamer's week-long battle with the ice to finally, in disappointment, see it disappear again without any contact established with the colony. The distance from our starting point at the west coast to Angmagsalik is 750 km. The quantity of provisions that we can bring along will only suffice if we have very favourable conditions right from the beginning. If you take into account the recent experiences of three Danish researchers during their trip on the ice cap in southern Greenland where they advanced 20 km per day on average, and Nansen, who travelled during a later and more unfavourable season, on average advanced 16 km a day, it cannot be excluded that it can be done. However, a significant difficulty awaits us on the east coast before we can reach our destination. Angmagsalik is located on an island separated from the ice cap by the 10 km wide Sermilik fjord. We had already in Godhavn (Qeqertarsuaq) remembered to decorate one of our sledges in such a way that it could be used as a sledge boat. The leader of the Arctic station in Godhavn Mr Nygaard had even sacrificed 3 waterproof sleeping bag covers and many hours of help until we had brought a vessel to a position that was indeed fragile, but in an emergency could carry three men. Furthermore, we had another sledge which we had built with a sailing device in order to take advantage of a favourable wind on the ice cap.

We figured from the start that we would not be able to use sledge dogs on the ice cap, because the peripheral regions were too rough and rugged, so instead we even had to carry out the dogs' work. Subsequent experience showed that we were right in our first assumption. In a different season and with the new gained experience, the issue should be reconsidered.

We waited patiently for an opportunity to come from Umanak to Ikerasak that would be our actual starting point for the trip up the ice. Traffic and goods between the larger colonies were handled by larger two-masted sailboats, called long boats, and on such a boat we began our journey to the east on 2 July amidst the icebergs that filled the inner part of the north-eastern bay (ed. the Uummannaq fjord). We sailed at noon. The loading and stowage had finally been carried out with great haste, because a favourable wind had risen, and Captain Jesaias naturally preferred to use the sail as lead. We had been travelling for an hour when Stoltenberg discovered that he had forgotten his binoculars. What to do? But then the unique Eskimo culture celebrated a small triumph. A kayak man was sent back with a note, and an hour later, the forgotten object was in our hands again.

Life onboard the long boat's deck was the most beautiful imaginable Nordic idyll. Our crew stood, sat and lay around on the deck in the most convenient way and enjoyed with relaxed pleasure the warm sunshine and their wishes went no further than to the content of the coffee grinder which the beautiful Eskimo girl Anna with tantalising laughter turned on. She had arranged a real miniature kitchen and watched, while

preparing the favourite drink in Greenland, the progress of the sizzling fish on the frying pan for supper. Jesaias, the captain, sent from time to time a man up in the small mast to look out for ice.

This carried on for hours. The sun had moved far north and only cast a dim light over the fjord. Salliaruseq's (ed. Grand Island) cliffs were dressed in warm red, and the bright white icebergs had a reddish tinge in harmony with both their own blue-green shade, the water in the fjord and the distant hills' deep blue colour. My companions slept on the deck in their sleeping bags. They did not let themselves be disturbed, not even when the great silence was disturbed by the rolling thunder of the icebergs that broke down. The only one groaning in the small cabin was Mr R, a music theorist from Norway who was to accompany the Cape York expedition to collect the pagan Greenlandic songs. He sailed with us to Ikerasak and was now plagued a bit by the fever, as he a few days before had taken a far too cold sea bath. It was also a kind of fever that kept me from sleeping; the beauty of the sailing trip, the gentleness and greatness of the atmosphere were overwhelming. "Throughout your life you will not get to experience a similar harmony and atmosphere again," I said a few days earlier to Baebler. And the eye could not get enough.

After midnight, the softly curved horizontal line came up between the mountains in the distant horizon to the east: the ice cap! "Sermerk?", I asked an Eskimo who was awake. "Ap, sermerk", he said with a respectful voice. So was our opponent for the first time in view! What would we be able to obtain from him?

Toward morning, I had been overpowered by sleep after all. I was awakened by a growing discomfort. Drowsy, I felt on my face and my hands, mosquito bites! This meant that the mosquito-infested Ikerasak could not be far away. Correct, our boat was already in the small bay, and on the coast Dannebrog (ed. Name of the Danish flag) waved on top of the small trading post surrounded by Eskimo houses. The settlement's landmark rose in the background – the Umanetsiak cliff.

I did not wait for a boat to get ready, but slipped into my kayak and was fast ashore first and foremost to find the Danish official who, as the only European, lived a life here secluded from the world.

In the door to a larger Greenlandic house stood an elderly man, half dressed in Greenlandic outfit with a peculiar combination of a cap and pixie hat on his head and with a refined and yet furrowed face. It had to be Jens Fleischer. I informed him of the arrival of our little expedition, and answered his questions that I was the leader. "Yes", he said, "One must make the decisions" and continued:

Ου πολυαρχία, έις έις βασιλιάς

"A multitude of rulers is not a good thing. Let there be one ruler, one King"

I could not believe my own ears: A quotation from Homer in Ikerasak! Jens Fleischer, of whom Fama had told so much, seemed now unusual to me too. Next to him stood a boy of an unmistakable Greenlandic appearance. "My son," Jens presented. "Do you speak Danish?" I asked him. "Namik" (no), he answered in Greenlandic.

What a contrast! The father responded with a Greek quotation; the son did not speak his father's language anymore. Rather tragic than comic, at least there was something sad about this little intermezzo which told more than many words of the consequences of the close contact between such different cultures. For this man who was once the factor in a larger settlement (colony) and through his talent and his thorough

knowledge of the facts was known to play a key role in the Greenlandic colony management, this close contact had caused serious consequences. He had married a Greenlander and had therefore, after the then existing rules, abandoned his position as factor and had himself transferred to the settlement Ikerasak. Loneliness in the exclusively Greenlandic surroundings may have facilitated a propensity for alcoholic drinks, of which enjoyment may lead the otherwise noble and kind-hearted Jens astray when spirits on rare occasions came to the place.



Stolber, Baebler, Quervain, Jens Fleischer
(Photo: Arnold Heim, ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Image Archive)

My companions had meanwhile come ashore, and Jens invited us to his house. It was a genuine Greenlandic house like all the rest, i.e. seen from the outside not much different than a nice accumulated heap of stones, overgrown grass and small window openings. However, inside it looked rather cosy, yes, even lavishly cultured; a variety of rooms – his house was 40 steps long – a nice work room with a desk of mahogany, in the “salon” there was even a real piano. When Baebler started playing, Jens brightened up, because he could only play with one finger. He sat quite moved, supporting his head with both hands, and we sensed what could move the old man. But the mood did not last long. He offered us food and regaled and entertained us in the best humour with dignified politeness and with the knowledge of a French aristocrat. His wife showed up (this was his second wife), an Eskimo naturally dressed in Greenlandic clothes, i.e. with anorak, leather pants and high boots. She was pale and delicate in appearance, with upright posture. It was unthinkable not to bow the same way as we would have for a lady in a salon. Jens showed me a picture of her as young, perhaps because he felt the need to justify the present situation (in those days there was also something appealing about her) and said, half apologetically: I’ve always had a weakness for immediate, responsive girls. A little too much might be the right expression. It is understandable. Anyone who appreciates the immediate responsiveness will always retain a slight yearning for Greenland.

We had informed Jens Fleischer about our plan to attempt to reach the ice cap at first along the southern shorter route across the narrow Karajak Fjord (Qarassap Immaa) and reach Karajak Nunatakken via that route. In case the fjord was filled with icebergs, we would turn around and try the longer route across the more northerly located ice-free Sermidlet Fjord (Sermillip Kangerlua).

First, we had to get rid of all the items that we were not going to take with us on our journey to the ice cap. We had to reckon with the possibility that we did not return along the same route, and this should be taken into account according to many people's advice and guidance.

In the evening, our equipment was divided into two smaller whaling boats, and off we went again. The Greenlandic paddlers, men and women, tried with merry shouts and sarcastic remarks to outdo each other. But the mood was less optimistic as the ice was gathering around us. From Ikerasak we had embarked on the southern shorter route to the ice cap of the two options. For both routes, it was out of the question to get directly on to the ice cap, where the ice reaches the water in the bottom of the fjord; such direct access is only possible where the ice cap borders the extensive, ice-free rocky surfaces.

Any concerns proved justified; the ice masses from the large Karajak glacier stood like a wall in front of the rocky coast, which was our goal. The great purge of the floating icebergs, which is caused by storms and ice, had not advanced enough this summer.

"Ajorpok", said the Greenlanders, "it is bad." a few times I answered them with "Ajungilak" (ajungilaq – it is OK). I did it gradually more of principle than by conviction, because it is true to say that it became worse and worse. Eventually I sat in a kayak and sailed on reconnaissance with another of the accompanying kayak men.

On this as on other similar kayak sailings, I have gained a personal fondness for the floating ice world. The ice colossi, which apparently lay motionless, might at any moment break into pieces. Almost continuously, the thunder was rolling from such collapsing icebergs across the fjord. The foam spray from the tsunami rose sky-high. Soon its power would be broken by the encounter with the many other pieces of ice, but even from afar it would raise and lower our kayak, and with bated breath we would look at the tower of ice which we now had to paddle past. One had to recall the words of Schiller:

"And if you do not wish to awaken the sleeping lioness, walk silently through the streets of horror!"

But it is not horror that fills the lonely traveller, but rather a solemn and simultaneously happy affection.

Our reconnaissance in our kayaks unfortunately confirmed, like the view from the mountain side which we with difficulty ascended, the Greenlanders' recent diagnosis: "Ajornakrak." If an Eskimo so says, then it cannot be contradicted. However, we tried a last means to reach the goal we had in mind.



"Ajornakrak" – We are forced to turn back in Karajak Fjord.
(Photo: "Durch Grönlands Eiswüste", Strassburg, 1911)

When the kayak men have done a great work, you are, as visitor, entitled to give them a little bit of caraway-flavoured schnapps, which the colonial administration has delivered. Normally, all alcoholic beverages are kept away from the Greenlanders. The Greenlanders call this extra treat for “Snapsemik”, which we in special cases, in spite of anti-alcoholic rules, are able to supply – obviously not as refreshment – but as a sign of recognition by the end of a working day; as a song without words that was understood very well by the Greenlanders. Now was the time to experiment with the language. Unlike Hannibal in Peobene (ed. Fertile plain in northern Italy on the border with Switzerland), I pointed towards the distant hillsides on the Karajak Nunatak; at the same time Stolberg raised the bottle of schnapps between his thumb and forefinger and without words promised to give a drink, which would touch any seal hunter’s heart, once we were on the other side. The pantomimic invitation was not without effect on the crew, but they looked at the pieces of ice that pressed close around our boat, on the wall of ice ahead of us and left us with a resigned laugh that made us understand that it was not possible even with such a large quantity of the beloved schnapps.

Our Greenlanders had soon been consoled; both our accompanying kayak men had harpooned a seal, and found a good place to cook on the beach. But the break was soon over as a thick swarm of mosquitoes showed greater pleasure for a human meal than the Greenlanders’ enjoyment of a meal of seal meat. There are only 10,000 people in Greenland, but many millions of mosquitoes which await their victims night and day. We had to break camp and escape to the water and icebergs on our boat. We had rowed for a few hours when a light wind arose and our Greenlanders once again went ashore to wait for the wind to subside. They did not understand that we were busy. They had no sense of respect for time. I heard from a Danish officer in South Greenland the following story, which is very indicative of this situation:

He had sent a couple of Greenlanders by boat to the other side of the fjord a few hours’ sail to get grass for his goats. Day after day passed without their coming back, it was feared that there had been an accident and went to the site. There, they found the Greenlanders in good shape; they had set up a tent and explained calmly that because the grass was too short, they waited for it to grow a little longer.

This story came to my mind and I explained our boatman Titus that we would carry on; we feared that the wind would eventually become stronger and the Foehn clouds, which I knew from Switzerland and rediscovered here on the Greenlandic sky, were unmistakable. We had not yet reached our goal as a regular Foehn storm broke loose, making the waves break over our boat. It was only with great effort that we could move forward in the storm and rain, and it made us sad to see our crew work so hard. Unfortunately we did not know enough ourselves to handle these heavy oars to be of any help.

The second boat was left behind; the rowers had during a little break in the storm anchored by a rocky island and went ashore to look for birds’ eggs. At first we were incensed by this genuine Greenlandic childish interruption; after all they had the tents and most of the supplies on board and let us wait in the storm. However our reluctance soon turned to care as the other boat had also worked its way through to a landing in the bottom of the fjord, but it looked very dangerous if not impossible to bring the vessel across the storm from there to our landing place, because the Foehn howled so furiously off the mountainsides causing the water to froth in height already at the beach making it impossible for us to stand or walk upright. It was terrifying minutes where we had to look without being able to do anything how the boat struggled to get to us while we every moment expected that the strong crosswind would capsize the boat.

But fortunately they got through, and now after the ended troubles, everybody got some of the longingly awaited schnapps.

The beautiful Anna, who had been as good at rowing as she had previously been with pots, rejected all thanks. But we still had a red ribbon to spare, bought at Henneberg in Zurich. This was for her to have. We had long looked forward to seeing her face when we gave it to her. And the happy smile which lit up her red-cheeked Eskimo face lived up to our expectations. A few days later she artfully repaired my boots in exchange. They had been so torn asunder that I went on my own soles. The Greenlanders seemed to find amusement at the presentation of this beautifully conceived quid pro quo. There were many – without doubt – witty comments which were received with general laughter, and from Anna's side it was also received with a certain embarrassment and lively comments. We did not understand a word but laughed as befits.

We had now set up the tents; Anna had seal meat on the pan and was engaged in seeking and bringing dry heather and dwarf birch branches to the camp. Also our kerosene stove, which was the centre of our lives, growled its bass. Tent and pot – these are necessities and sufficient conditions for ones well-being in this country. In addition, the storm abated and our landing site was not a bad choice. It was a good spot, at least in relation to Greenlandic requirements to vegetation and heat. Between the bare, smoothly polished rocks of gneiss, there were green lawns mixed with low heather growth, Arctic willow and even blueberries with ripe berries. We had not expected this so close to the ice cap! Unfortunately, we could not enjoy this happiness for long in our shelter, though it was the second night – for some even the third night - where we barely had slept. But at this time of year when the sun is on the sky day and night, you are not so particular about this according to custom in this country.

After a few hours' rest, we, the two Swiss, went off to find a path through the rocky wilderness that our Greenlanders could follow when carrying our pack to the edge of the ice cap. We climbed a 1200 metres high gneiss peak called "Ajnerk" (the split) by the Greenlanders, because of its appearance. From there we could easily see the foothills of mountains and a long distance over the ice cap. An unforgettable impression! That was really the Arctic Ocean, unlimited, rising to the east to the ice in the distant horizon in a nice straight line almost seamlessly united with the sky. The ice masses moved forcefully toward the snow-free border mountains ahead of us and sank into wild craggy glaciers to the left and right toward Sermilik and Karajak fjords.

Between us and the ice cap the mountain landscape was traversed by a deep valley – an ancient fjord – now abandoned by ice and sea. We had to cross this. Fortunately we discovered a crevice in the rock wall that rose on the opposite side of the valley, where we figured we might be able to direct our carriers up. From there, we still had to pass a wide mountain plateau dotted with small lakes before reaching the edge of the ice cap.

From the distance, it looked like there was a flat and white area toward the edge of the ice, which gave us the impression of a snowy surface. It would be highly desirable for our forward march. We had previously looked at Drygalski's map quite often and could therefore quickly orientate ourselves.

To the southeast, Karajak-Nunatak's long mountain massif wedged deep into the ice and separated the big and small Karajak glacier apart. Further out behind the big Karajak glacier was the big Reindeer Nunatak

isolated in the ice cap. With amazement, we saw that it stretched far into the ice cap, much further than the map showed. Parallel towards the south, we could spot one wave of ice after another. I counted 7 such clear and distinct ridges of ice. Similar waves of ice also extended from the big Karajak glacier to the east as far as the eye could see, and now we sensed the troubled grey in the ice ridges, which also made us uneasy. We sensed far more than we had realised that all sorts of difficulties awaited us. In a rush, I drew an outline of the places that were of particular importance to our onward march. There were some motionless dark surfaces. It had to be small lakes or swamps of ice (Eissümpfe). Other surfaces were moving slowly; these were shadows of drifting clouds. Our stay at the pinnacle did not last long. Up there, a constantly biting east wind howled and moreover we all had a reason to be tired. Nevertheless, Baebler's zoological instinct for invertebrates awoke during the descent. He began to hunt for a lone butterfly. I would wait for him, but immediately fell asleep leaning against a rock until his horn sounded in my ears at close range.

At noon, we could give the good news in the tents down by the fjord where Stolberg meanwhile had prepared for our departure that a path had been found and that the ice cap did not look too formidable – at least from a distance. Experience within the next week would teach us something else!

We then started to create a cache dump and packed, and then distributed the load to be carried for the ride up the mountain. In this regard, it was discovered that the hypsometer (altimeter), which was used to check height information through the principles of the boiling-point, might have been left behind in Umanak. Whose fault was that? It was not the time to investigate this. One thing was sure however, it would be difficult to do without the device. Again, the kayak celebrated a triumph. The brave Andreas Andreasen, former companion of Drygalski, offered to sail to Umanak despite the mediocre weather and promised proudly to be back within 24 hours. He was given a written message and quickly disappeared out of sight on the fjord. It was now decided that I should wait down by the fjord, while Stolberg and Baebler would lead the carriers to the ice. Baebler had distributed the load in the best possible way, and showed in general a good knack for organising and directing the column of carriers, which I had expected.

The Greenlanders showed at first concerned expressions, when they saw the various oddments, but when they realised that there was nothing to do about it they became more than willing. A package was left behind when all had taken their honest share; two men stepped silently forward voluntarily and took the supernumerary on their back. Soon the column disappeared in the mountains, in front a Swiss flag flapped and the men followed it with pride. Both of the two small Swiss flags and the Berner Bear (Canton of Bern's flag), which were donated by dear relatives, turned out to be very useful often. When we had to split up in the mountains for a long time, the one alone always used to tie such a flag to his stick or ice pick so that from a distance you could spot it and rediscover each other. It turned out to be very useful.

I stayed behind with a hunchbacked Greenlander at the tent and while waiting I wrote the last instructions for Ikerasak. After 3 weeks, a kayak man should be sent here to (the otherwise uninhabited) Sermidlet Fjord to look out for us. If we were not back at the cache dump on 3 August, they should assume that we had begun an attempt to cross the ice cap or that we were wrecked. A fitting message should then be delivered to the steamer "Godthaab" in Umanak that would later sail to Angmagsalik. As a precaution, I also wrote a short application for leave extension to the Swiss Federal Council.

While this was going on, I waited patiently for Andreas Andreasen and climbed more than 20 times up the slope and looked out over the fjord with binoculars. In the afternoon on the second day, I suddenly saw

something that true of virtue was not an ice floe! The movement of a two-bladed paddle from left to right was unmistakable. I called the hunchback and two carriers, who according to the agreement only had gone half way to the ice cap and had already returned. They looked through the binoculars and confirmed carefully: “Imara Andreas.” Imara, maybe! Greenlanders speak cautiously. This “Imara” is for them just as typical as “Nitschewo” is for Russians. And the Danes have learned this “perhaps” of the Greenlanders, and use it in a way approaching the offensive. You tell a fact and as a gentleman you expect that you will be believed on your word. “Maybe” answers the sceptical, diplomatic Dane.

But this time it was not “Imara”, but surely, it had to be Andreas. I could no longer hold myself back, but put my kayak in the water, and soon I was on my way to the amazement of the remaining Greenlanders. But I had overestimated my strength. When I reached Andreas, I had a feeling that my arms were about to fall off from fatigue. With so much greater respect I looked at this man who had completed 80 km. Andreas smiled (more precisely, it was rather a laugh, but it seemed to me angelically gracious) and said as he patted his kayak: “Ajungilak”. At the same time he gave me a note confirming that the instrument had been found, and the note said moreover: “Having the opportunity, I can tell you that Mr Cook reached the North Pole on 22-23 April...” No man has received such a message under more stylish manner: Sitting in a kayak in the shadow of icebergs presented by a son of the Arctic! At that time I had no idea that Mr Cook, who was almost unknown to me, would play a significant role in our lives over the coming months.

Upon arrival at the camp site, I made the stupidity that I, of my heart’s delight, offered the beautiful Andreas not just one snapsemik but one snapsemik more than he could tolerate. Andreas did not say no. I had to wear the consequences the next day, literally. We were on our way, me and Andreas and the two remaining carriers, bringing the rest of the equipment to the ice cap. Andreas carried the two kerosene cans. But he always lagged behind, and pointed first with justifiable pride on his upper arms and said “ajungilak” and pointed with sadness at his feet and said “ajorpok”.

This hike on land was after his strenuous kayaking – his age taken into account – in itself a major accomplishment, but the two snapsemik evidently put the icing on the cake. Briefly, my own load, which was already big, was burdened with 40 pounds of kerosene – which was an additional burden up the mountain, all the while still finding my way. From Ajnuk (Ajnerk) we had only examined a rough march route. Stolberg and Baebler had the maps; I had to make do with a rough pencil sketch and compass. Again and again a small lake; again and again a mountain ridge and still no ice cap.



The bottom of Sermierlik Fjord at the Aannerit Mountain where Quervain entered the ice cap.
(Photo: Erik Torm, August 2011)

For the Greenlanders, the situation was obviously uncomfortable. They stayed close to me and did not go a step further without me. I was moreover concerned as to whether the vanguards' tent could be seen at all in this mountain desert. We had made no firm agreement on the location of the camp site by the ice. I could not let my uncertainty be noticed by the Greenlanders, but had to proceed as if I was sure of the direction we were heading.

After 12 hours' marching, we finally reached a mountain ridge where the horizon was not yet again dominated by a new mountain ridge, but by the ice cap although some distance away. Excited I examined the rocks and the white surface with binoculars, and relieved I spotted a flickering square with a few dark dots next to it delineated on the edge of the ice – the tent! The vanguards had carefully placed it on the ice so it appeared evident.

When we arrived at the camp site exhausted – I totally forgot to let all the emotions flow through me that ought to belong to my first steps on the ice cap – I expected a warm welcome and a confirmation of our friendship, because we were together again. But no one came to meet us, only one person stuck his head silently out of the tent; I guessed and learned afterward from their story that they were both fairly exhausted and that the trip to the ice cap had been fatiguing.

When we late-comers arrived, all the carriers had returned without us meeting them along the way. It was as such fatal, as I had anticipated being able to sequester their help for another day or two on the ice. Although we had renounced further accompaniment as they were not equipped for this, nor had the slightest desire to do so. The ice cap, the great "Sermerk", is for them something sinister, a place where ghosts roam and where you do not come back from easily. Therefore, we had to carry our equipment further on our own: a tent made of canvas with a waterproof floor with room for 3 in case of emergency 4 men (for Greenlandic standards, it could conveniently shelter a dozen people), three sleeping bags, furs, cooking apparatus, astronomical and meteorological instruments, 3 pairs of snowshoes, 8 ski poles, ice picks, 3 glacier ropes, 120 kg supplies designed for 6 weeks, not to mention a box of medical and surgical equipment. All this should be loaded and pulled on our two Nansen sledges of 2.8 and 3.2 metres in length.

We knew in advance that this pulling of sledges would pose its difficulties, and the expectation was also "fully" met. Already the passages from rock to ice were awkward, because these were sometimes either small glacial lakes or rivers that you had to wade through without being able to predict whether the water would reach your chest. In those situations, I took prescient my chronometer out of the bag and hung it around my neck. I could do no more. Subsequently we discovered that the ice cap had the following characteristics:

At the rim, the width of the ice was 50 metres and grey, because of the content of mud and stones; then it was all white and pure as snow when you looked horizontally across the surface. However, when you looked at it perpendicularly above the surface, thousands of black, closely spaced cracks became visible, as did circular holes in the ice, half a metre deep covered with black mud on the bottom called cryoconite, one millimetre to 2 metres deep; these holes were filled with melt-water. When we pulled the sledges, we often did not discover these until we were standing in them.

In this outlying area, there were rarely crevasses; in turn, the surface was intersected by countless channels of melt-water besides the cryoconite holes. For which reason, it was unusually difficult to move forward

with the sledges. Step by step we had to spot a path. The extremely heavily loaded sledges were often lifted and carried more than they were actually pulled. Many times, we could not pull them forward with the full load and had to take the same trip three times.



On reconnaissance in the crevasse area
(Photo: "Durch Grönlands Eiswüste", Starsburg 1911)

The difficulties were from then on even greater. After the third campsite, the surface of the ice rose steeper. We had to overcome increases of up to 12% at the same time as the ice became more cracked. To the north and south, the eye could not find anything but intersecting systems of crevasses. We lost several days until we finally on 15 July after much searching found a narrow passage to the east; the only option for many miles both north and south. It was particularly important not to take the wrong way. I wrote in my journal:

"New comprehensive reconnaissance which acts clarifying, because it now gives a greater insight into the inner areas and provides a secure practicable route. The impression of these unpredictable internal cracks and surfaces has increased tremendously. I am impatient to get in there."

Our supplies have, however, already been heavily absorbed, and our advance speed is so slow that we have had to abandon the idea of crossing the ice cap. It was a bitter decision. At campsite 4, we established a cache dump with the equipment and the supplies which, in the changed circumstances, seemed superfluous and we went ahead with a smaller load. When we set up our tents on the ice for the fifth time, on the "serac ridges", we had reached an altitude of 1000 metres, and we had hoped that from then on we would be able to move faster. The ice surface was flatter and with less holes.

We could now establish a regular daily routine: in the evening at around 10pm, we used to break camp; 2 men at the big sledge and one at the small sledge. There was no exchange of superfluous words. At 2am, we assigned ourselves a short break. We sought shelter behind sledges for protection against the almost incessant east wind as we drove towards the weakened rays of the sun, which was low on the horizon. The ice cap spread out before us bathed in red and blue light. We imbibed the greatness and beauty of these atmospheres. Should we, however, be completely honest we were just as interested at each stop in getting a piece of Emmenthaler and a slice of bacon, which unfortunately became smaller by the day. Bacon,

wonderfully refreshing, only now fully appreciated! We could at that point not imagine otherwise than the first thing we would do would be to buy a side of bacon each when we were home again.

After the midnight break, we once again hitched to our sledges and continued until 6am or 7am; then we pitched the tent. It had to be anchored carefully with sticks, ice picks and sledges against the wind, and even then it was time and again a question as to whether or not we would blow away with the tent. The wind was blowing in a steady easterly or south-easterly direction against us. The temperature was moving between +4 and -8 degrees throughout the sledge journey. "At night" the puddles froze already by the edge of the ice cap. Meteorological interesting was the frequent formation of Foehn clouds.

As for our domestic arrangements, the comfort was not excessive. Soon we only had two spoons to share between the three of us. It did not disturb our joy, just as it did not disturb us when our chef, who advocated careful washing, with his facial expressions showed his culinary disapproval when drops of fat swam from the morning soup into the evening tea. We could, however, no longer allow ourselves the luxury of using water for washing and dishwashing, because this could soon only be obtained by melting ice and we had to ration our petroleum consumption.

Our pantry was pretty well supplied. We had gone from the basic assumption that we should rather bring food not only with great nutritional value, but also tasty. Therefore the widely used Pemmican for polar expeditions (a kind of compressed mass of fat and anhydrous meat powder) was only included as 10 kg of emergency supply. We were discouraged by statements like "Pemmican tastes like sawdust mixed with Vaseline". We found it bearable to chew on these cubes, about which others later said that it was like chewing on soap. Stolberg even showed love for this polar product. In my journal from 28 July, the following extract about our food system says:

"Dr S. almost always makes the food. In return, B. or I prepare the Pemmican and brew coffee, as S. cannot or will not, true to his nature, give the necessary love to these splendid trifles.

We get 13 biscuits and 1 pumpernickel chop daily. On the morning after the arrival, soup of 4 Maggi cubes with 30-40 grams of Pemmican; thereto canned meat, mostly meatloaf or the cherished "little frankfurters" (the last one this morning). Furthermore, ham chopped by Stolberg (in the beginning terribly clumsy), distributed by me. I also distribute some honey for the biscuits for dessert. Baebler does not eat butter, and therefore a little more honey. At 3pm after having awakened the other two, we mainly get tea with two biscuits with a little honey and butter. In the evening at 8pm or 9pm, we get coffee or cocoa (with ham and butter), until 26 July also with cheese, honey, every fourth day fruit preserves. While preparing this, the thermos is filled with tea or cocoa (or Maggi bouillon) for use at night.

A Notes: Dr S. sticks to a certain ratio between the amount of food and water. The soup is frequently watered – but you are thirsty; frequently also the cocoa. Especially at the beginning it was necessary to adjust the overall form of preparation by means of excessive addition of milk. In general, it would be safe to say that he cooked in an uncontrollable manner, and in general preferred to use a minimum time of cooking, stirring and pressing lumps out. Here, he left his idealism ἕως τετέλειον (bis zum Ende) completely in the lurch. But the main thing: He made dinner

and made during his work many joyful pleasantries, he got himself organized under the circumstances and had in general a good mood, not so easily shaken by the people's criticism."

The people, i.e. Baebler and I, and as this journal transcript shows, the people were often in the mood for criticism.

The first couple of days, a substantial disorder and lack of space had prevailed in our tent. Especially the big Stolberg could not put up with the reduced allocation of space. But from day to day, the tent seemed to get bigger, and finally we had on the 2 times 2.3 metres sized base the following well-defined rooms: The three bedrooms of DR S., B. and Q: the library and work room and chronometer room reserved for Q.; there was the fine room that had a floor made of the green waterproof groundsheet and where you were not allowed to walk with dirty shoes. In addition, we had a kitchen, a storage room and a chamber for shoes and clothing. One realises that even in the smallest of cabins, rooms are needed.

After breakfast we climbed into our sleeping bags and despite the fact that the ice under the tent floor quite often creaked eerily and despite the daylight, we always fell asleep immediately. Our bedtime was relatively narrowly restricted, and it goes to show that Baebler once at the appeal exclaimed: I could sleep for 2 whole weeks more. I was the one who had it relatively worst. Somewhat before noon I had to go out to make the first measurement for the astronomical determination of the location of the tent. Toward 6am, the second measurement of solar altitude was made and then followed immediately by the calculation of the measurements, which took approx. 1 hour. This astronomical determination had to give us a reliable assurance of our real position on the ice cap, like the sailors on the ocean we were on this sea of ice dependent on such measurements.

It might be of interest to mention that it is possible to define your position with about 200 metres accuracy in the longitudinal direction (north-south) and with 500 to 1000 metres accuracy in the latitude (east-west) if you are very careful. The accuracy of the final determination of position depends, besides on the quality of the measurement of the altitude of the sun, on the quality of the chronometer. In this respect we were excellently equipped with two Swiss timepieces of the highest precision with the utmost courtesy given to us by producer Mr P. Ditisheim.

Besides the astronomical location of our position and also meteorological measurements which Baebler mainly took care of while Stolberg took care of our actinometer (measurement of the sun's ray), we made on each campsite a careful survey of the surrounding horizon behind which the border mountains every day dived more and more into until they completely disappeared. The processing of all our measurements on the campsites and along the journey would allow us the opportunity to fairly accurately describe the surface conditions on our route in accordance with the purpose of this expedition.

During the day there was – especially in the closed tent –comfortably warm when the sun shone; occasionally even hot and around the tent small puddles formed, at least in the lower areas of the ice cap. All objects that were left on the ground quickly made the ice melt. We also had to be careful that nothing slipped into the cryoconite holes. Towards the evening, it became colder, the ponds froze and the sharp east wind that met us made the cold appear more noticeable.

It was the most unpleasant time of the day when we in the evening at around 9pm had to pack our tent and put our numerous oddments on the sledges with frozen ropes and stiff fingers. The position of the sun

was determined with the compass, the shadow direction was determined, and so we carried on beyond the ice desert towards east.

From our camp “the Serac Ridges”, we saw in the distance a north-south directed ridge of ice that had a sheen of the expected snow blanket across some kind of ice plain, a distance which we estimated to be 5-25 kilometres – even our state-recognised specialist in distance judgement, Captain Baebler waived making cocksure statements on the ice cap; I called it, influenced by the Old Testament, the Mountain of Promise. We spent a day’s journey on foot to reach it. As for the “mountain” and the steepness of the cliff, it was not that bad, especially the southern part, which because of its crevices suggested a connection with the Karajak glacier, looked close up much smoother than from afar. We therefore named this part “the Bragging Hill”. At its foot we found to our surprise a small lake which we called the South Lake, opposed to its brother the North Lake, which lay a few kilometres further north just before the Mountain of Promise. This South Lake had previously been larger, it was proven by a large expanse of ice lumps, which, with its clean, white ice stood out from the grey ice cap and gave rise to the formation of “glacier tables”, because of the protection they afforded against the sun’s radiation. From north to south, a glacial river streamed; it seemed to come from a large decrease in the Mountain of Promise, which we called the Valley of Secrets. We had our trouble passing these melt-water rivers, which we encountered more of on the following days, and it was at times a good thing that our cargo was packed in watertight bags of sealskin. In the Valley of Secrets at an altitude of approx. 1200 metres, we found the first snow covering, and it was not long before one of us squirmed in the first crevasse. – From then on we took all the technical precautions for glaciers; long haul ropes, sledges and the towing persons bound together in a system.

Since the beginning of the actual sledge pulling on 9 July, until now 18 July, we always had fetters on our feet; they proved to be almost indispensable in order to stand firm and not slip backwards when the sledges were dragged on very uneven surface of ice. In addition, the soles of our “Laupar shoes” were better protected; later when we had reached greater heights on the ice cap it turned out to be more advantageous to put on skis, because we were not supported sufficiently by the shoes as a result of crevasses and also partly because of the powdery snow and partly the rigid surface of the old snow.

In the Valley of Secrets, we found to our surprise yet another lake. We wanted to walk around this from the south side, but it turned out that it had such a strong and deep debouchment that we had to turn around, and had to pitch a tent with great difficulty in the stormy winds on top of the deceitful lake. From this campsite, called the “Lake of Deception”, we carried on the following day behind the lake to the “Circus Lake”, and this time on the left side taught by bitter experience. These lakes in hollows surprised us again and again. The following day we reached yet a third pond, or rather a puddle. We had already amused ourselves with naming all kinds of swamps, puddles and snow deserts as we passed these with our dear friends’ names, when it seemed to lend itself to such a combination. Therefore, we had a G....desert, an R...puddle, En.....swamp. But this private list of names will remain a secret for those involved until the destruction of the ice cap. And the official name for the last campsite was “Misty Valley”, as we had to overlie one day because of fog.

The following morning Baebler and I thought that we in the horizon ahead of us could see a black point through the binoculars, which rose sharply up from the ice. A rock, a Nunatak! A veritable fever seized us, but we did not want to say anything to Stolberg yet and provisionally named it the “Swiss Nunatak” and carried on with a quiet enthusiasm heading south 45 degrees east. After 2 hours of shifting expectations,

we realised that we had only seen the black shadow of a distant dune of snow, which, because of the special deflection of the rays, was magnified in height. The disappointment was somewhat mitigated by the fact that we had come to an almost crevasse-free glacier surface and had a wonderful weather, calm and sunny, so we could dry all our wet items, cook outdoors, and finally we could sleep in shirtsleeves with open tent. We called the place for "Mont Soleil". After walking around giant flat terrain hollows that did not have any hidden lakes – during the day there was no liquid melt-water anymore either – we still had to be in the hinterland of the Karajak glacier.



Baebler in polar outfit at the storage area
(Photo: "Durch Grönlands Eiswüste", Starssburg 1911)

Already in the evening we carried on and soon realised that the troubles with the crevasses had not ended. Over a plateau, we came to a slight decrease which was surrounded by the worst imaginable canyons which carried on endlessly to the right and to the left, one after the other. In addition to this, most of the snow bridges were unstable. The situation eventually became so precarious that even Baebler, who had extensive experience with glaciers and crevasses, disagreed with the path we had chosen, so the entire responsibility was now placed on me. We moved forward from bridge to bridge as good as we could when the advancing fog once again made us weather-bound at the campsite "Kivigkok". The time we had available for our forward march had almost already expired. The great council was held, and it was decided that we should do yet another day's journey with sledges. Baebler and I would from there make another push to the east on skis, while Stolberg had to wait by the tent and make the necessary concurrent observations.

On the last day we advanced fairly well with the sledges; we had put on the skis, and they were quite useful; at the passages of the crevasses we hardly had to make stopovers. An elongated soft glacier ridge ran to the left of our route, the North Hill; it was cut by 20 to 40 metres wide crevasses covered in old snow and which only gaped a few places. At this point there were always dunes of snow which formed the only breaches in the endless monotony of the surface.

Stolberg wrote about this part of our journey:

"When we trod the now incipient plateau, we came to crevasses as wide as boulevards in a city, and which had banks rather than edges, and yet the passage of these crevasses were not as

difficult and very safe to pass due to the existing abundant amount of old snow. Such huge crevasses are probably centuries old, and they were as mentioned to a large extent filled with old snow and had more similarity with white roads that had sunk down slightly into their surroundings. Sometimes we went for a long time in these natural sunken roads, i.e. in the longitudinal direction of the giant crevasses. Nevertheless, it was very hard to struggle forward on the plateau at temperatures up to minus 10 degrees and against the strong, icy east wind that went to the marrow. The eastern wind swirled detached chunks of crusty snow up into a shimmering and biting play and danced close by us and in the distance over the semi-illuminated surface. We protected our faces as good as possible with our fur mittens, because the stabbing crusts of snow easily tore the facial skin. If, for instance, you fell while pulling the sledge and took off with the unprotected hand in the snow, we immediately got abrasions because of the harshness of the snow. It was advisable to protect your face and hands in the best possible way not only against the cold, but also against the hard snow. “

To the east in front of us, there was a motionless cloud in the sky which played in all the colours of the rainbow. It stood so motionless on the sky despite the wind that we for hours – even occasionally in the days before – could have it as an aiming point right up to campsite 11. Both of us had a longer rest ahead of the planned ski trip, and Stolberg prepared in the meantime all sorts of good things to strengthen us.

On 24 July in the evening we started and ran on skis almost without breaks throughout the night against the howling wind from the east until the following noon.

The nature of the ice cap in this area that we had traversed was as follows: We passed one after the other 3 flat plateaus, each 10-12 kilometres wide and separated from each other by an increase of 50-100 metres. Above the increases, which limited each plateau, we came across 10-20 crevasses each time which stretched endlessly from north to south, but for the most part were covered by bridges of snow. Where the bridges had sunk in the depths one could clearly see the ice cap's layering year by year. Icy and less dense layers regularly alternated with each other. The crevasses were moreover not the broadest, we encountered; on the way back from campsite 11, we found some that were up to 40 metres wide.

The ice cap reached at this point on our farthest stopover an altitude of 1700 metres. To the east, the rise continued in the same way as far out as we could see.



Midnight halt at the ice cap



Alfred de Quervain on the farthest point

(Photos: "Durch Grönlands Eiswüste", Strassburg 1911)

With our sextant we now made an astronomical longitude determination, and then we had a few hours sleep on the skis. Then I once again made a number of observations of the sun to determine the longitude, and we took one last look in all directions. We fixed our eyes to the east the longest time. The fact that we had to turn back just at this moment when we had free passage and we felt strong and energetic!

Annoying, annoying! – We were bound to return again!

We turned around and ran on our skis throughout the evening and night. The wind had already completely obliterated the traces of the outward journey. I used diligently the compass, and so we returned the following morning happy to the tent. The calculations later showed that we had crossed the 100 km point; we had during this forward thrust travelled approx. 85 kilometres on skis back and forth.

For the deserted Stolberg, the loneliness and uncertainty may have psychological been no less a performance than to participate in the strenuous skiing. He wrote in his journal about the loneliness:

“With the most necessary instruments and heavy backpacks, Quervain and Baebler went 24 July at 9 pm off on skis struggling against a strong easterly wind. The wind pushed hissingly against the canvas and pressed it strongly inwards. I put my skis in the tent with the tips toward each other, because they surprisingly managed well against wind pressure

Now I am all alone and can enjoy the solitude, which I cannot imagine more undisturbed anywhere else in this world. Of course, it is in the back of my mind what to do if they both get lost or an unforeseen event prevents them from coming back within the agreed two times 24 hours. I am preparing myself for the fact that the waiting time may be increased by a few days, and only in case of the prospect of serious shortage of supplies will try to follow the route back with the big sledge, which is best suited for crossing the crevasses. I make no bones about the fact that the probability of ending up in a glacier crevasse in relation to a fortunate journey back through the maze of thousands of threatening dangers in the depths bears the ratio of 10 to 1. The perhaps still visible keen landmarks pose no security. Should I be fortunate enough to pass through the narrow passage between the lakes to the cache dump at the forth campsite, then after overcoming the subsequent glacial threat I would be facing a possible starvation in an attempt to seek a path out of the trap which the border mountains form.

However, why have such thoughts? It is not going to happen that Quervain and Baebler cannot find their way back to the tent. Therefore, I continue with my readings every two hours, measure the baseline, sleep from time to time and melt a kettle of water for the absentees who must be returning with a desert thirst.

30 hours elapsed like that. When I have something to do outside the tent, then I have the same silent wasteland around me, the same ring of infinity, the white desert, the blue sky. – Early on 26 July I sense a faint shout, and then Baebler appears. His first words are as expected: “Do you have water?” And that was at hand! Shortly after, Quervain appeared. Both had achieved what could be achieved.”

I will be very brief about the trip home. We chose to take a more northerly route than on the outward journey to learn more about the surface of the ice cap. For two days we could use the wind, which had

blown against us in the past, to set sails on the sledges. Then we came to a crevasse area, which made the use of sails impossible.

Our twelfth campsite we called Burglary Camp, not because we had to deal with burglars, but because it was an unpleasant place where the snow at the top had a hard crust making you fall through frequently without skis on, sinking completely to the hips in the powdery snow which was under the crust. Because the crevasses, which ran in all directions, were hidden under the snow you were never sure if a "break-in" would carry with it tragic consequences, and among the audience went (despite the official denial) the rumour that we had set the tent over a hidden abyss. A thought which at once was likely to influence the sleep for some of the participants.

There were yet another two specific difficulties on the journey back which must be mentioned: First, we had to go back following the former route from the old campsite 6 at the South Lake, because it was the sole place from where we could find the only way out through the previously mentioned critical areas farther west. It was a rather delicate matter to get to campsite 6 again through all the crevasses along the route from the new route back. For a while it looked as if the ice cap would not really let go of us. It was on the stretch between campsite 6 and the cache dump. The crossings between the serac ridges were almost impossible to find, and without my thorough compass bearings on the way back they would have been impossible to find. This stretch, which had taken us two days on our outward journey, we made in one stretch this time. We would probably not have recovered the cache dump without great loss of time if the Swiss flag, which we had placed there, had not still been flapping and waving to greet us. It was good to be back at the cache dump. We had a little pathetically named the second-last camp for the Hunger Site, because we had run out of sugar, biscuits and milk. I wrote in my journal on this last stretch:

"Das war eine Nummer!" (Roughly translated: It was a bang!) – to use Stoltenberg's expression. 24 hours on our way. – 3 serac ridges overcome in slow pace; brief stops with Pemmican and reflections on the compass courses and whether the ice cap would allow us to leave.

The entrance gate had been hard to find, but the exit even harder. To his credit, B. retained his good spirits; I reconnoitred a long distance over the serac ridge and down on the other side. Many times the possibility of a passage was only half a metre – but it worked out. The "flat" part at the foot of the serac ridge was bad. B. alone with the small sledge only came forward with great difficulty. He understandably wanted some relieve halfway through. Then I took the small one (sledge). This devil disguised as a sledge. Wherever it could tip over, it tipped over. Where it should not be able to tip over, it did so anyway. Got stuck at the front at every opportunity, suddenly hit my legs from behind and stood defiantly. It made me want to scream.

We encountered another difficulty on the trip home; the surface of the ice at the border zone had in the meantime become even more uneven and the gullies from the melt-water even more profound.

Particularly the path between the cache dump and the ice margin remains ineradicably fixed in our memory on all of us. We had planned the route a little further north to shorten it.



On the move on the ice cap
(Photo: "Durch Grönlands Eiswüste", Strassburg 1911)

It was also a shorter route, but that did not make it more boring, although there was no shortage of boring episodes altogether. On both sides the sledges would topple with the heavy load into the ponds, in the front and the back, the sledges would slip into the melt-water gullies. Particularly the small sledge which did not possess its big brother's hose-like flexibility would drive you crazy. We even got to hate it which was reflected in all sorts of nicknames. I fear that we at that point reached or even went beyond the limit for a decent, presentable vocabulary, despite the fact that our personal tone during the expedition had improved noticeably.

Already on 27 July I had made a note about this: "We have come to a more welcoming and above all a more cautious tone between us: "Maybe", "Don't You suppose?", "What is your opinion about this?", "We may have misunderstood each other?" And still with complimentary testimonials: "S., by the way, always expressed himself in that manner."

Even during the most strenuous work, where we lay exhausted and panting over the sledges, we maintained our sense of humour. For instance, we divided, on Stolberg's request, the melt-water gullies into 2-men gullies or 3-men gullies depending on whether we had to be two or three to tow the sledges across.

On 1 August we once again reached the edge of the ice. It was for us a hard-earned rest and day of celebration. Stolberg describes his impressions as follows:

Sunday, 1 August 5am, reached the outer edge of the ice and we got in a somewhat festive mood when we for the last time put up the tent on the ice; and on the steep slope high above a melt-water lake, we shouted at the first sight of the revival of organic life. Now the wide, beautiful world lay before our feet. One mountain scenery after the other rose in bluish colours to the west all the way to Baffin Bay. The high mountains on the Agpat island and the Nugsuak (Nuussuaq) peninsula's long mountain chain with the tremendous over 2000 metres high Kilertinguak greeted us. The bluish Sermilik Fjord, which pushed its white icebergs westwards towards the open sea, greeted us friendly. Quite near us rose the black silhouette of Ainuk which, with its mighty snow-free walls, is the silent reign of this lonely yet infinitely grandiose world. Now came the big moment which I secretly for 4 weeks had been looking forward to. Officially, we had not taken a single drop of alcohol with us, at least that is what Dr De Quervain and Dr Baebler thought; so much the greater was the surprise therefore when I dropped a quarter litre of rum, which I secretly had taken with me, in front of them. This rum gave us the opportunity to make 6 glasses allotted grog and with this drink and two cigars and a cigarette, which I had also kept as a secret in a tin can, we now celebrated a short victory, which by a beautiful coincidence unofficially could be amalgamated with the "Schweizer Bundesfeier", which also falls on 1 August.

We could allow ourselves to express that we had achieved what was possible under the circumstances. Behind us we had 26 days of pulling sledges and 250 km. shortening the scope of our adventure had also made it scientifically interesting. We had discovered that the surface of the ice was dependent on the subsurface condition at a much greater distance than previously presumed. In distance of 80 km from the edge of the ice there were still huge crevasse formations, where Nansen in his time had discovered the last crevasses at a distance of 40 km from the edge of the ice at the west coast and 15 km at the east coast.

We agreed that Baebler on his own request would stay by the tent by the edge of the ice, to re-check the fauna in the adjacent mountain areas. Stolberg and I had to quickly go down to the fjord loaded with sleeping bags and other things in order to make contact with the kayak people. We were busy because we had to carry out the planned measurements on Karajak Nunatak before the steamer's departure from Umanak.

The outlet from the melt-water lake still separated us from the ice-free land. We found a ford, tied the chronometer around the neck and crossed an approx. 20 metres wide and rather cold river which still separated us from the regained ice-free ground. No matter how frugal this earth was, it nevertheless had an optimistic impression on us with its poppies and cotton-grass.

Down by the fjord, we found the cache dump intact; only the sack with 50 pounds of ship provisions had gone missing. The Greenlanders had apparently lacked supplies for the return trip and had taken everything. Sticking out of a box were two letters from Jens Fleischer left behind by the kayak men. The last one was pretty worrying for our further fate. Why were there no kayaks on the site? The last letter also informed us about an epidemic among the Greenlanders. It could turn out to be fatal. For the time being, it was important to wait. We put up a tent which had remained at the cache dump and tried first and foremost to get some sleep. The air was mild and the time of the mosquitoes was over, so we left the tent open so we could look out on the landscape.

Here I experienced something unpleasant: Every time I woke up I found myself amidst a landscape of ice. Ainuk's high walls, the close cliff, the tops of gneiss, the soil in front of the tent: everything was threatening ice. I walked out of the tent and thrust my feet into the cold water, and finally the visions vanished. But every time I woke up again and looked out of the tent, the ice landscape was there again. In vain I rubbed my eyes; in vain I tried with my mind to convince myself otherwise by imagining the rocks' maroon colour and the green expanses of grass. Nothing helped until I once again went out of the tent and touched the ground and the rocks. Only now I noticed that the challenges of the last days and weeks had gone to the limit of human ability. For me perhaps more than the others, because the concerns and the responsibility for getting through the expedition generally were mine along, and because I most days only had four to five hours of sleep, two hours less than the others. – Ice hallucinations followed me long after on the steamer. Even the vibrations of the ship propeller and touching the cabin walls could many a night not convince me that we were not stuck in a crevasse in the ice. As long as we had been on the move, I had been calm and confident in myself.

During our wait, the wind turned from south-east to north-west and the water in the fjord rose until it reached our tent which was pitched on the beach. At the same time, a huge iceberg had drifted quite close. It was an unpleasant neighbourhood, because it did not seem to be in equilibrium and smaller parts of the ice burst and crashed into the water constantly. If the iceberg this close to our tent at high tide went out of

balance and tipped completely then our tent would definitely be flooded by the tsunami. Such a bombshell while we were sleeping would be alarming. Our concern was not unfounded. The next day, the iceberg lost its balance completely and began to overturn. I was just standing outside a little farther from the shore. It broke up and thundered, the foam rose on the fjord, the previously completely visible wall of ice disappeared in the water and the previously deepest parts rose as a new island. A new tsunami headed towards the beach. Stolberg, suddenly interrupted in his cautious attempts to swim, grabbed his clothes and went up in height, and I ran in wild gallop to the tent and pulled backpacks with our valuables, notebooks and chronometers out. Luckily it was at the time of lowest low-tide, and the iceberg soon floated further away again; the tsunami only leaving some pieces of ice and a large amount of seaweed in front of our tent. Thus we were also pursued by the ice cap afterwards.

The stranded ice floes could in these circumstances have been very welcome, because they could give us drinking water. If it had not been for our fountain, we had only been able to find ice floes after long climbs or a fairly long kayaking to a salmon river. One of the Greenlanders from our first crew always mysteriously disappeared and came back after 10 minutes with the most wonderful drinking water. I learned from him where the fountain was. The later crew did not know of its existence, and I was therefore extremely proud for once to be the knowledgeable one to the Greenlanders.

From the slope, you went up to a giant rock with lichens at whose foot a thicket of dwarf birch clung, which stretched up against the rocky slope, and with its exuberance betrayed the water-rich subsurface. You could not see the water itself, only a soft gurgle; a gurgle that sounded under the rock and invited you to bow down until you could see a natural water-filled cavity which in an invisible way was hiding there under the boulder. The Greenlanders were responsive and laughed, probably not only because they found it easy, but also because they were amused by the secret and the friendly gurgle of the fountain.

Why this much fuss over a fountain, my reader, who is accustomed to wells and water pipes, might be thinking. But like so many other things, we had learned the full dependence on nature's sensitivity. It was a girlfriend that we had a personal relationship to. With hurried steps, you would go there, as you go to your beloved one, to listen to her. You would say to her: "Dear Fountain" and she would reply with her simple and true language. And with a sense of warm gratitude, almost a religious feeling, you would leave her. One who wishes to philosophise deeply about the relationship between man and natural forces and how overall reasoning and ideas regarding nature occur, should not do this in his study. This you learn together with us on the ice and by the fountain.

On the second day of torrential rain, the kayaks finally arrived. Because of storm, they had not been able to leave, and now they also had to wait with us because of the storm. We prepared all the delights we could find for them, and they invited us for their black coffee which they had brewed in a dry crevice in the mountain despite storm and rain. As the weather became slightly better, they asked for my binoculars, inspected the status of the sea in the fjord, and then said: "Imara ajungilak", and left with a letter to Jens Fleischer briefly informing him of our successful return and asking for a ship. Already the following night, we heard shooting out from the fjord: Jens Fleischer came personally and his first nervous question was: "Where is the young man? Is he dead?" The young man was Baebler. None of the two kayak men had seen him with us and had brought the intelligence to Ikerasak: Baebler has perished on the ice cap. It had startled the nervous Jens so much in spite of my letter that he came personally. In addition to his apprehension, he brought with him two smoked salmons – a wonderful meal. The following day our camp

was very busy. The boat with the carriers for the journey home arrived, and after Stolberg had left with them to the ice cap, even the doctor in Umanak, Dr Berthelsen, arrived in person for a short visit as he too had heard about the presumed accident and furthermore was interested in the salmon torrent, which ended not far from the bottom of the fjord.

I attended for a short time in the catching of the salmons. Because the salmons were partly behind an artificial and partly a natural shelter of stones, you could catch them with your hands with the risk of losing your balance on the slippery rocks and fall into the torrent during your fight with the big slimy animals.

Unfortunately the motorised boat had to leave before Stolberg's group had returned from the ice. He told us the following – partly tragicomic - story about the hardship he had endured:

"it was midnight when I, with my 6 men and 2 girls, arrived at the river which separated the plateau from the ice cap. The ice cliff towered with its seracs as crowned peaks high into the sky, as a city protected by moraine embankments and the river as a moat. When my people from a distance saw the tent up on the ice, they became very little motivated by the idea that they had to go up there. And now that the fairly broad river, which I had wisely concealed the existence of, appeared as an obstacle, they were gripped by a justified indignation over the intended task: "Ajorpok", "Ajorpok", this outbreak was unanimous while they hesitated to go even one step further. Having to wade through a 25 metres wide river at a temperature several degrees below zero and as a result of the biting east wind would feel like below 10 degrees in calm weather, and then having to climb up a steep icy slope before the real work could begin, this situation was under no circumstances particularly inviting.

I had half expected this strike and had prepared myself for it. Therefore, I took off my fur boots and went without hesitation across the river while I tried to move at a rapid pace. On the other side – in the shelter of a large glacial boulder – I put on the boots as quickly as possible not to get frostbites on my feet, picked up a bottle of aquavit from the backpack and a 50 penny note from the purse and swung alluringly with the bottle and the note to encourage the "hostile team" to cross the Rubicon with this double magic. And the magic worked! The first one to be persuaded to follow me was the strong Elias, and he deserved his glass and 50 pennies. This laudable example and the honestly allotted reward led Johann and the ever coughing to do the same. The four of us now climbed the slippery, icy slope, where the ownership of one fetter- I had lost the other one – delighted me, and we reached "cuperk" (tupeq=tent) which was still well anchored between the two sledges. The tent had obviously sunk deep into the ice, but the interior was still in same fine order as Baebler had left it a few days earlier. Dispensing a tin of condensed milk and pieces of chocolate from the available supplies in the tent thrilled and touched the Greenlanders to such an extent that they now enthusiastically embarked on the salvaging. As the four of us had spent considerable time on single transport, since almost every object had to be brought down from the ice one by one and it took fifteen minutes for each object, then I parleyed with the support of the other three once again with the "hostile" men on the other side. Barnad, the big joker, and the strong dwarf were persuaded. But on Thomas, who reminded me vividly of a youth picture of Ferdinand Feiligrath and from then on referred to as Ferdinand Feiligrath, every appeal was lost on him. This poet preferred to be on the other side of the river with the girls which I in advance had dispensed from participating in the work bringing down the equipment, which they thanked

me for repeating a sincerely meant “krujanak” (Qujanaq). Freiligrath (Thomas) squatted on the frozen ground as much as possible in shelter for the wind behind large rocks together with his ladies to enjoy his *otium sine dignitate* and with great willingness to follow our efforts.

The 6 of us packed all the camp equipment on the two sledges, which we gently with ropes slid down the ice between Scylla and Charybdis in two steps. To the left of the cliff, an island of ice threatened, to the right cracks and unruly seracs. When a sledge accidentally veered off the path, I pushed back using myself as a 100 kilo heavy brake pad, and that was enough. It was once again admirable how the Greenlanders proved their skills in this difficult transport.

After a few hours, all the movables had been brought down to the foot of the ice cliff. Then followed the passage of the river. Both sledges were placed end to end, representing a 6 metres long stand, where skis were used as spacers. On this improvised loading ramp, the tent, the backpacks etc. were one by one transported across, and eventually Elias – unfortunately wearing my spare fur boots – and Johan were transported across the water together to some of the larger stones on the other shore, where Ferdinand Feiligrath finally got involved and was kind enough to receive the objects with the help of the dry girls. It was 5 o’clock when I finally could breathe out relieved, because everything had been carried across and the river had finally been defeated. We put up a tent on the sparse moss-covered earth. In the tent, I cooked a big portion of soup, which Ferdinand Feiligrath made a fairly large inroad into, and then all 9 of us had a well-deserved sleep lying picturesquely all over the place, while the shining sun outside rose higher in the sky and surrounded the ice cap with its rays.”

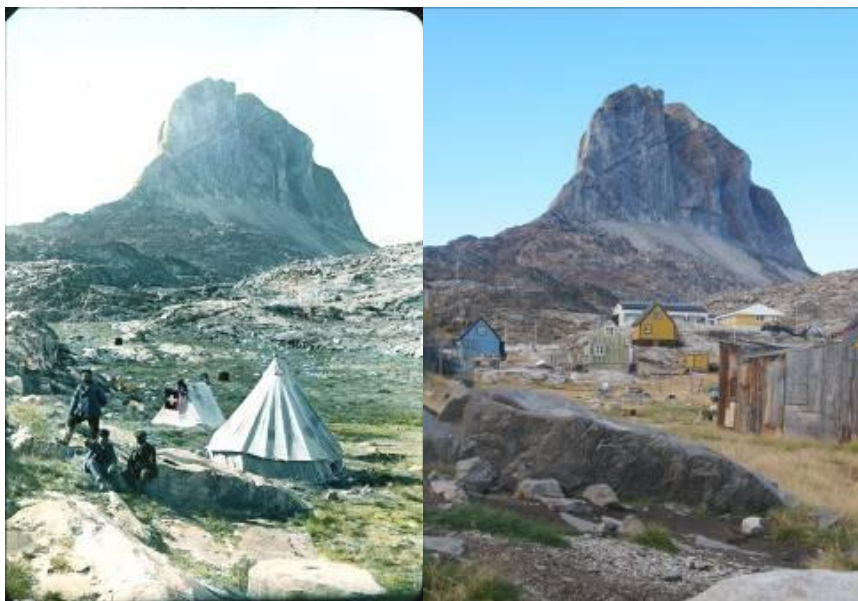
On the following day, when we were all again assembled on the coast, it occurred to us that there was not enough room in the boat for the three of us. Therefore we decided that I, along with two Greenlanders, had to walk overland to Ikerasak. It was an unknown mountain area which the Greenlanders estimated to be a hike of 24 hours and at the end we would be separated from Ikerasak by a piece of fjord. But the unknown lured and I have vivid and beautiful memories of this hike, which admittedly also had its difficulties, because we came across treacherous branched lakes and bays for miles, which we had to walk around, and had to climb steep rock walls; in between, we also encountered real blueberry fields. My companion Feiligrath smiled up to his ears of delight. Also the flag bearer Barnad Poulsen, called the monkey, a lively guy who was always in a good humour, often asked with a meaning look for permission to plant the banner next to a very promising shrub. It was already the seventh of August. We walked in the midnight dawn over a plateau which rose against a pass with a steep fall on the other side down towards Ikerasak. But until we came up the pass! These torments of Dante’s hell.

There, on the other side of this beautiful lake which in turn forced us into a detour, the pass waved to us. Finally we reached it; we stand in the pass. But once again there is a lake in front of us and then comes the real pass. Patience! Everything has an end, and – then we are up!

Alas, no: Before us are two lakes, which are mirroring the night sky wonderfully bright, but force us from the left to the right side of the valley and then up to the pass...

I will not entertain my readers with everything the pass to Ikerasak inflicted us. Even the indomitable cheerfulness of Barnad Poulsen was at risk of dying out.

Nevertheless, the pass was an experience. Bernad burst out from his inmost heart: “Kajanapatlara” (qujanaqaarmi, qujanarsili, qujanassusia – God be praised). I imagined the great Hallelujah from Handel’s Saul. Barnad, who had begun to whistle an American sailor waltz, suddenly went over to a hymn from the Greenlandic church liturgy when the circumstances seemed appropriate for it. This unexpected leap in theme was hilarious. But we were not yet in Ikerasak. There was a piece of fjord in-between. We relied on a common communication method in Greenland and ignited a huge bonfire with as much smoke as possible from the collected dwarf birch in the middle of the slope. We did not have to wait for long. In Ikerasak they saw the smoke and immediately sent a boat, and two hours later we had arrived and were welcomed by the entire settlement and the comrades from Sermidlet(Sermilik), who had arrived two hours earlier by boat. They were with Dr Arnold Heim from Zurich, who had finished his studies of the coal mine at Nugsuak and had come to us for the last part of his stay; if possible, join us at Karajak Nunatak to climb the ice cap which he had not yet inspected. He did not have a good impression of the Greenlanders so far.



Baebler, de Quervain and Stolberg in Ikerasak

(Photo: Arnold Heim, ETH Bibliothek Zürich, Image Archive and Erik Torm, August 2011)

This was linked to the fact that during his brief stay in the coal mine at Karsuarsuk (Qaarsuarsuak) he had practically only been in close contact with some who, even according to other people’s statements, did not represent this people in a good way. Therefore, he was at first very surprised at how we looked at these people, and soon he shared our view and was happy to get to know the Greenlanders from another side. The following day was Sunday; we rested, ate and drank. We invited Heim to eat breakfast in our tent, afterwards we were guests at his place – apple jam and porridge made an impression on me – and at the end we joined the joy of the table at Jens Fleischer’s, where we brought a large pot of cocoa with us. Gilt-edged plates, reindeer roast and pastry baked by Mrs Fleischer were the hallmark of our memories from there. Pastry with brown sugar in Ikerasak! But the pleasures of the day were not yet over. There was also a public coffee table in the open where the whole settlement participated. We sat in the grass in the warm sun – in fact real grass grows in Ikerasak – and wished that this day, this air, this landscape, this peaceful atmosphere would not come to an end. Our work was however not yet fully implemented.

We heard in Ikerasak that the mouth of the Little Karajak Fjord was still clogged with icebergs. There was no other way for the execution of our plan than to sail to Akulioserusersuak (Akuliaruserssuaq) bay where our Andreas Andreasen had left his summer tent and then carry all the equipment over the mountain to the settlement in the inner fjord (Qarassaq), and thence sail with kayak across the fjord through the ice to Karajak Nunatak. The number of participants had for the sake of crossing with kayaks to be minimized as much as possible. Stolberg was willing to stay behind in Ikerasak and surrender his seat in the boat to Heim; in return he offered to photograph instead of Stolberg and to help me with our photogrammetric recordings. We only took the bare necessities with us, above all, the stereo photogrammetric apparatus. Just when we – after a coffee break at Andreasen's – were about to begin our hike over the mountain, a kayak came rowing and from a long distance shouted: "Umiarsuit!" Alas! This meant that "the large skin boat", i.e. the steamer had already come to Umanak. Soon after, I was handed a paper saying that we had to be back in Umanak by latest Saturday. We decided in spite of this to implement our undertaking, but it was in any case hectic. It was remarkable that we on this journey, which again took us over mountains and valleys and past small lakes, now and again could see something that looked like the trail of a path – a surprising sight in Greenland. This route over the mountain was apparently used frequently. Equally remarkable was the skill with which my kayak was swept over all obstacles by one man. When we came to a lake, he was immediately in the kayak and paddled over and once again took the boat on his head.

We found the Greenlanders in Karajak Fjord in a dismal state. Pavia, the head of the family, had been ill for a long time so there was hardly any food. We could only help him a little as we had not brought anything superfluous. We had even left the tent behind. But at least we had our sleeping bags while our Greenlanders had brought nothing with them. We gave the female carriers our jackets for the night and they were received without thanking compliments. Wonderful country! Wonderful because of simple manners and great nature:

Before us was Karajak Fjord dotted with icebergs and small pieces of ice; opposite rose the steep wall of Karajak Nunatak itself and further east the little Karajak glacier flowed from the infinite white into the fjord.

We entertained ourselves well into the night by talking about all sorts of experiences with dogs, and we laughed ourselves half to death. In vain I asked for mercy, because I deep down felt that the evening meal was in danger. The diaphragm could not withstand anymore – then it happened – to the detriment of the good food. Detrimental? The sick Pavia's skinny dogs had in the distance and not in vain followed all our movements. Like lightning, they were there and nothing was lost. During the night I was woken up by my empty stomach, and when I saw that the ladies were shivering in the damp grass, clinging close to each other, I also gave them my blanket. I think it was this incident that gave me the rest of my time with the Eskimos the nickname Nicodemus ("But Nicodemus came by night..."); I had so far not fully consistent with the facts been called "the elderly", probably because I usually did the talking when negotiating. Baebler had the nickname Daniel. I think it is related to the fact that he had been pronounced dead ("Daniel, are you still alive?"). The Greenlanders are very well versed in the Scriptures. Stolberg's nickname had nothing to do with the Bible; because of his conspicuous yellow pants, he was called Kussek (a bird with yellow legs: kussak= wheatear).



Qarassap Imaa. The settlement overlooking the small Qarajaq glacier
(Photo: Arnold Heim, ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Imgae Archive)

In the morning, Andreas Andreasen, his son Hansi and the dignified Pele Therkelsen composited two kayak fleets each made of three kayaks, which obliquely were tied one behind another. The Greenlanders sat in the outer kayak and rowed and we sat in centre with the instruments. More accurately put, I sat in the water rather than in the kayak, and the supply of sugar I had brought along in my coat pocket as the only supply, I found turned into a salty-sweet brew afterwards, which required great persuasion and hunger to be consumed. But it was a small issue. We were more concerned about having to move past the crumbling icebergs ever so often, this we did not like. The Greenlander sitting in front of me was interested in the facial expressions I put up when we passed by. The diagnosis was apparently satisfactory. It took the next three hours before we managed to get to Karajak Nunatak. We climbed on top of the nunatak and saw the mighty glacier Karajak lie before us; probably the biggest producer of icebergs in Greenland. It was important to survey the condition of the ice on the sides of the nunatak. We had after all brought along expensive apparatus for this purpose. This first day was going to be used for reconnaissance for a good stand and to find a connection point to Drygalski's measurements. We only had the following day to do measurements. Otherwise, we risked failing to meet the ship in Umanak. Another bitter renunciation had to be done. We had set ourselves the Reindeer Nunatak as our target. A visit to this yet unexplored rocky island surrounded by ice had the highest zoological and botanical interest. But the photogrammetric measurements could not be omitted. Therefore I had with bleeding heart renounced an expedition to Reindeer Nunatak. Baebler was, however, determined to do it even if it meant doing it on his own; and he was the man to do it if anybody in such a short period of time. I could not hold him back. The case, however, was serious enough for us to agree in writing – it was Tuesday afternoon – that he should be back by Thursday morning. Otherwise, we had to assume that something had happened to him and take all appropriate precautions. We watched with concern as he walked away. Fortunately, our work would soon occupy our full attention.

When we had found a stand for the establishment of the measuring apparatus and by the aid of Andreas Andreasen also had found Drygalski's observation hut, we returned to the fjord. Heim remained overnight on the nunatak, provided with my sleeping bag and with the cheerful Hansi Andreasen, while I this time rowed on my own across the fjord in my own kayak and not ignominiously on the kayak fleet to await the

carriers who had taken the trip over the mountains once again. It was obviously not possible to compete against Andreas in kayaking, and it did not bother me to be towed along when my arms from time to time had to give up. As was the case in the morning, there were a few unpleasant passages of icebergs which were passed in an increased pace by Andreas, and I also swung the double-bladed paddle vibrantly.

Hardly had we arrived on the other side before one of the icebergs which we had just passed with a thunderous roar broke down and brought the surrounding fjord in commotion.

Having settled, Madame Pavia presented me with a wonderful portion of blueberries. Incidentally, it is not our *Vaccinium Myrtillus*, but *Vaccinium Uliginosum*, which we also have, however with a flat taste, but it is better here in the North and tastes excellent.

I became acquainted with the family Pavia's offspring. They were terribly ragged, "but" – as the better European citizenship would put it – of good manners. It is worthwhile to tell the little story that I experienced with them. Like all big and small children in Greenland, they consider it a duty to throw stones at every animal on earth – it could not be otherwise. In the absence of living beings, they practiced against other targets. I modified the exercise to a popinjay shooting as I offered half a sugar cube as a prize for each hit. The excitement increased, and the biggest boy, as expected, took aim not before long. I gave him the prize; he gave it, however, to a 5-year-old kid while stating that the little one had thrown his stone a moment before him and therefore had met the target first. It must have been about half a second. It had escaped my attention. One must consider what a piece of sugar means to an Eskimo in Karajak Fjord. They would very much like to get sugar. But the story has even more moral than that. I had to put an end to my judgeship in order to meet the carriers on the mountain. When I returned after an hour, the aforementioned boy ran up to me and handed me the three remaining half pieces of sugar, which I had left with the children and had long forgotten about. Naturally, he got them back. I urge all authors of moral writings to print this story of Pavia's brave son. This story has the rare advantage of being true.

One of the carriers had a bundle of letters to me that had arrived on the steamer before finally being shipped here as kayak mail. I read them avidly in the midnight-dawn while the Greenlanders amused themselves by brewing coffee. Karen, the pearl among all the carriers, had brought me the first cup and I showed them proudly my bundle of letters: "From people in my country", I told them and stressed that I had an indefinable sense that Greenland in future also will partly "my country". "Now you will soon again be back among human beings" (meaning central Europeans) was written in the first few letters that I received in my hands. And yes, it was clear that I spiritually and materially belonged in the 46th latitude.

And yet: "Among human beings!" Did those whom I was surrounded by here not deserve, with their immediate way of being to the same extent, to also be called humans? Although it might have been my mistake from the beginning not to appreciate the unassuming modest lifestyles, it had not turned out any differently to my companions: Everyone had difficulty approaching these folks – because of their unassuming humanity. "Inuit" (Human", how they named themselves. We, the Europeans, are "Kavdlunat" (Qallunaaq), roughly translated: complicated machinery which may somewhere be hiding a man, hidden in the machinery of convention.

After two hours of sleep, I woke Andreas Andreasen, and we rowed back across the fjord with the missing instruments. At Karajak we had a strenuous day. Heim alternated between helping me and taking some

pictures with his acquired photographic skills. In the evening, Baebler came back to us. The Greenlanders were naturally the first to discover his flapping banner. We left all the equipment standing and ran to meet him happy to see him again safe and sound. He had tried the impossible and had also reached a long way toward Reindeer Nunatak. But when it started storming insanely, he could not reach it in such a short time. Baebler gave himself the following lucid description of his journey:

”Despite the warning which the old Greenlander Andreassen with deprecating gesture had shouted to me when I said goodbye to my friends: ”Sermerk ajornakrak” (It is impossible to cross the glacier), I went off in good spirits and full of hope. I was familiar with the Greenlanders’ fear of the ice cap and therefore did not attach any importance to his words.

It went briskly upward along the right edge of the Karajak glacier, over rounded rocks, moraines, streams flowing from the marginal lakes, over smoothly grounded, yes, smoothly polished rocks toward the place from where Drygalsk had mounted. Burning with desire to climb this stubborn and until now virginal Reindeer Nunatak, I only took short breaks during which I inspected the glacier’s approx. 10 km labyrinth of crevasses with Stolberg’s excellent binoculars. Each time the same sight. The border zone did not seem to offer serious difficulties for a passage, but it showed darker stripes that ran in the glacier’s length. I recognized this sight; it meant very rugged areas and large crevasses in the surface of the glacier. From the trip to the ice cap, I remembered that those areas with multiple crevasses only constituted a serious obstacle for sledging, but otherwise were relatively easy to cross for the experienced glacial hiker. Yet I did not underestimate the difficulties and the feeling that these areas could force me to time-consuming detours which could jeopardise the possibility of going through with it, probably the reason that I from time to time had to fight against a somewhat gloomy feeling. It became clear to me that I only had 36 hours available to complete the task.

After 2 hours I reached the ”entrance corner”. A dirty rapid brook separated the border of the glacier from the snow-free rocks. But a crossing point was soon found and made crossable by means of some blocks of gneiss. A final reconnaissance of the surface of the glacier from the mountain ridge gave the same result: an easily accessible peripheral zone, wide dark bands in the interior. Towards the land to the east, the coherent ice cap seemed whiter and smoother, but I estimated that the detour would take two days’ journey. I therefore had to disregard this longer but much easier route, and there was no other option than to cross the rugged glacier perpendicularly. Through some careful compass bearings, I ensured the exact direction for the way back as well as the exact location of the place for ascent; then I built a small cairn on which a red cloth was planted. This landmark would show my companions where I had climbed the glacier if I did not arrive at the agreed time. I gave myself another half hour to cook soup with Pemmican.

Then backpack and ice pick flew in a wide arc across the brook, a run-up and a jump and I was across myself. I was surprised that I had come across with dry feet. But on the ice cap we had ample training in ”long jumping”. As expected, it went briskly forward in the peripheral zone, here and there I had to jump across a gap of little width or there was a deeply eroded river with many meanders down toward the edge of the ice which had to be crossed.

After half an hour's walk on the ice, the surface of the glacier worsened; the ridges on the bank-like elevations got sharper, the small valleys in the ice deeper and steeper, the crevasses wider and more irregular; the streams flowed in deeply incised beds, with nearly vertical edges, partly slowly and sluggishly in many meanderings, partly quickly when it rushed noisily and roaring down into a crevice or funnel. Then followed a series of obstacles: The glacier constantly became more wild and rugged and after another hour I found myself in a maze of crevasses, deep streams, house-high, yes, towering ice cliffs and icebergs, funnel-shaped gaping abysses, in a maze impossible to describe with words. I still remembered vividly my hikes on the Aletsch and Fiescher Glacier and the Monte Rosa's massif glaciers in the previous years. But their seracs, their crevasses and glacier slopes, however, were miniatures compared to this huge glacier's giant formations.

From time to time I climbed such a tower of ice from there to make new bearings, always in the quiet hope that I, on the other side, will find better conditions. In vain. Each time the same disappointment. How often I had to turn back because a gaping abyss blocked my path. But this view of the surface of the glacier impressed, not only because of its size, but probably as much because of the strange and fantastic shapes. Here a part of ice formed a bridge over a green brook; there the path was blocked by a high ridge of ice with sharp edges and dangerously slippery sides. Its counterpart ran next to it, a ridge that looked like a giant saw. On slightly lower glacier ridges, formations towered that looked like sugar peaks into the sky as pyramids, below there were large loose blocks of ice, which lay in longitudinal rows like giant boulders in a moraine area – remnants of collapsed ice towers. Between these barriers the basins formed equally major obstructions. The basins of the peripheral zones have made room for deep narrow glacier ravines whose crevasses do not run in fixed directions, but in circles and in a ring around a funnel.

Laboriously I worked myself forward at all times by chopping steps in the ice, jump over gaps, wade through the creeks and swamps of ice, while I trusted my life to a sharp edge of ice, an uncertain glacial bridge or a block of ice that was wedged into a crevasse.

It was 6am when I, not paying any attention to dangers, once again climbed a serac to get an overview of my onward journey over the ice, but I had barely reached the top before I lost my balance on the sharp edge of ice and rolled down the steep ice on the other side. Fortunately my fur pants and padded backpack softened the fall, so I came unharmed from the incident. But I kept lying there without moving and without taking off the backpack or detach the ice pick that was attached to my wrist. With eyes turned toward the little piece of sky still visible from this crack in the ice, I began to calculate how much time I had left and whether it was really advisable to continue my attempt.

Now I could also hear how the glacier worked. With short intervals I soon sensed a quiet creaking, then a thunder-like rumble and occasionally a shot-like bang and occasionally the sound of a stream in the glacier. Soon I was overwhelmed by a light slumber. I must at that point have been in a strange mental state. At least I wrote in my diary when I had woken up from my doze: At first I experienced the glacier's language, a creaking and squeaking, as comforting music, but then as a scornful laughter of man's powerlessness against the mighty forces of the glacier.

After nearly half an hour of slumber, I cooked breakfast consisting of cocoa and again a little bit of Pemmican; then I climbed for the second time the previously mentioned ice tower. Reindeer Nunatak waved challenging at me and despite the fact that the condition of the ice did not look better, I decided to do my utmost to achieve the coveted goal. I slowly moved forward. But the distance to Reindeer Nunatak did not seem to diminish and Karajak Nunatak seemed to pursue me like a shadow. When after an hour I had hardly advanced more than I could sling my ice pick back to my sleeping place, I realised the futility of proceeding. I had not yet reached the centre of the glacier, and almost half of the time I had available had passed.

But what information on Arctic fauna and flora could the isolated nunatak give me? How important would it not be to identify the animal and plant life there? Thus, carry on! Only bringing along with me a small part of my equipment. It was the questions and desires that constantly stimulated me to continue. Yet some more seracs! Yet some more crevasses! But always the same disappointment, the path did not become any better. The time flew by proportionally faster than I progressed. Once again, I calculated time and distance accurately. The same result. There was not enough time. Thus, back! Discouraged and disappointed I turned around and went back; it was 9am, I often looked back on the nunatak, which now seemed even more cocky and prouder than before. The return trip was no less difficult, no less strenuous. The sun rose higher and higher and the streams swelled, the refreshing wind ceased, and it became oppressively sultry. All the elements seemed to unite to make my tired legs completely incapable of walking. I realised that forced march was not possible; sometimes I rested in a shady niche on the glacier, at times I found my way through the tangle in a slow and mechanical way. Late in the afternoon I reached the border zone and immediately after the edge of the ice. The stream was so swollen and rapid that it was impossible to jump or wade across. I therefore walked down the glacier until the melt-water ran into a muddy marginal lake. Below this lake, I once again walked on the rocks of Karajak Nunatak.

On a rock ledge, I arranged a place to sleep with dwarf heather and moss. I fell into a deep sleep, while I pondered how powerless man really is against nature's great phenomena. Already after two hours of sleep I woke up and had gained so much energy that I began to wonder if I could make the same studies I had planned on doing on Reindeer Nunatak here on Karajak Nunatak. Late in the evening I went to the agreed venue. Even at an hour's distance, I saw the flickering Swiss flag, then Heim with camera and Quervain with the theodolite. Shortly after, they also caught sight of me, they rushed to meet me. A stormy "Grüss Gott", a strong handshake. Now there were many questions to be answered. De Quervain liberated me from my backpack and Heim hastened in advance to cook me a "Schöpf" (a large portion) tea, as he put it to mimic my Glarner-German. In cheerful mood we sat around the whirring primus. I was pleased to be with my mates again. The old Greenlander had been right: Sermerk ajornakrak!"

It was almost midnight when we dead tired sought shelter in some suitable clefts. We all froze in the cold wind as we had no special protection. Heim, who could not find peace no matter what sleeping position he attempted, in the end passed time indiscreetly capturing with his camera the others sleeping. Only Hansi Andreasen had built himself a wonderful nest, he had been kind enough to offer it to me also, and he slept soft and warm like a prince. The following day we were soon picked up directly from Karajak Nunatak by

the boat from Ikerasak, and the following day we left the dear settlement to sail to Umanak. All corporeal Greenlanders went up on the rocks by the beach and waved to us, for a long, long time. And Jens Fleischer, who was a man of tact, voted in: "Wenn weit in den Landen wir zogen umher...". (*A German ballad. Text: Ferdinand Freiligrath before 1858, based on Robert Burns's: Home Sweet Home. Music: trad.*).

The last impression of Ikerasak island was, however, more grotesque than sentimental. We once more docked on the island's tip at Umanatsiak (Uummannatsiaq), because we wanted to see the drum dance, which was exercised here as the only place on the entire west coast. We got full value for our money. The name stems from the drum dancer accompanying his movements with beats on a ring with stretched skin, a kind of tambourine. He repeats some words again and again in a recitative tone and with a certain rhythm; the instrument is moved in still wilder movements and ultimately into a veritable frenzy until it becomes uncomfortable for the spectators. A double choir accompanies the drum dance; the women sing monotonously the same words over and over again with small intervals in an ascending and descending melody. The men shouting in rousing voice: hoho-hoho.

Women and men perform as drum dancers; one of the latter snatched in his ecstasy so ruthlessly after our noses that I felt happy to know that this noble part of the body for my part was protected behind a tent pole, while Heim headlong withdrew. We did not experience the drum dance as childish pleasure, as for instance Nordensiöld had described – and we understood why the Danish missionaries had banned the Greenlanders from doing it. Even here in Umanatsiak there was a Greenlander who left the place with a statement that if the Danish Nalagak (naalagaq), the King, heard of this he would not want to have anything to do with it. Many of the texts accompanying the drum dances are by the way improvised and innocuous hints such as:

The stranger with the big beard has a lot of coffee,
I have no coffee,
But the stranger gives me nothing of his coffee...

In Umanatsiak we gave some of the participants of the Cape York expedition the opportunity to sail with us, as they had no boat; among them the Greenlander Hendrick Ohlsen who had also participated in Mylius Erichsen's Denmark Expedition together with the perished Well Lund. Ohlsen had an attitude of a grand duke. – Too much culture damages people.

The evening became cool; we put ourselves in the middle of the rowing boat to keep warm; our destination was the Umanak Mountain. The setting summer sun shed an unearthly palette of colours.

The next day we packed our 70 boxes in the snowstorm.

This is how we said goodbye to the north. Our last greeting was not "Farewell", but "See you"!

We already felt then, what the enthusiastic expert and explorer of this country Morten P. Porsild later wrote to me: "Having experienced one summer in Greenland will be an experience for life for a researcher; a winter would be an Elysium (the island of the dead). He who has seen Greenland will go through the same as he who has seen Rome; he has become entwined by a ribbon which sooner or later draws him back. How long will it take before this yearning becomes unbearable?"