CHAPTER 6

DEATH STALKS THE ESKIMOS

Sheldon Jackson's major achievement in Alaska, if not in his entire career, was that he saved the Eskimos from extinction.

The plight of the Arctic natives stemmed from the fact that they were unable to cope with the effects of the white man's presence in the territory. Their society was simple and uncomplicated, reinforced by a climate which imposed on all the need for a high degree of mutual trust and co-operation. Their way of life was built largely around the whale and the walrus, which provided them with food, clothing, fuel, and materials for making homes, boats, implements, and hunting weapons. To a lesser degree, the caribou and other fur-bearing land animals also supplied their needs.

With the coming of the white man, however, the whale and the walrus were hunted almost to the point of decimation, and his rifle drove the caribou herds into regions inaccessible even to the Eskimos. The white man also brought with him whiskey, prostitution, and illnesses to which the natives had no resistance and little defense. The worst of their situation was that few white people considered the Eskimos worth the effort it would take to help them. As the nineteenth century grew longer, their future grew shorter. Thousands of them had been living along the north and northwest coasts of

Alaska in the 1820's, but they were numbered in the hundreds by the 1880's. Nuwuk, once a village of about a thousand, had dwindled to less than one hundred by the time Jackson arrived in Alaska. Point Franklin, which had been the site of a good-sized community during the first part of the nineteenth century, had become little more than a name. Only three families remained of the one to two thousand natives who had dwelt along Shishmaref Inlet. The death rate among the tribes of the coastal area between Point Barrow and Point Hope had jumped so far beyond the birth rate that they had virtually disappeared.

When all these facts became known to Jackson, he recognized that the Eskimos were doomed unless someone made a sound, long-range effort to save them. His plan was twofold: the introduction of Siberian domesticated reindeer into Alaska to provide a new source of food and a new economy, and the establishment of schools where the Eskimos could learn new trades and find support in their struggle against the debilitating effects of the white man's less admirable qualities. He succeeded in both endeavors, and the magnificence of his achievement lies in the fact that he did so almost singlehandedly in the face of constant ridicule and opposition.

It may appear to those who see Jackson only as a missionary that his efforts on behalf of the Eskimos were relatively unimportant. To be sure, the number of those who became Christians as a result of the importation of the reindeer is out of proportion to the time and money he expended. Those who deprecate his success in protecting the material well-being of the Arctic natives and emphasize his missionary achievements must understand that Jackson's dedication to Christian principles transformed the reindeer work from a venture in social welfare into an act of faith. He believed in the Christian's responsibility as a citizen to help others escape the shackles

of fear and the bondage of want. He believed in the right of all men to enjoy the best possible life. He was more concerned with putting faith into practice then in getting evidence of Christian commitment from the Eskimos. Evangelization was important to him, but he was aware of the prior need for giving the natives evidence of what Christianity means in practice. He knew that "faith without works is dead, being alone."

Great vision was required to save the Eskimos, and the tenacity to make that vision a reality. But Jackson was particularly fortunate in having the co-operation of the Revenue Cutter Service of the United States Treasury Department. This government agency had performed an unheralded mission in Alaska from the time of the purchase; often it was the only evidence of American justice and authority in the territory. It enforced the law against poachers and the smugglers of illegal whiskey, provided food for starving natives, and medical care for the injured, the sick, and the diseased at remote places along the coast. Hundreds of shipwrecked sailors owed their lives to the rescue work of the Revenue Service, whose officers were policemen and good Samaritans, friends and counselors. With no other group of men in Alaska did Jackson have a stronger bond, apart from the missionaries and the teachers. Their relationship developed out of a mutual respect for one another's courage and devotion to duty beyond official requirements. The revenue steamers were Jackson's outposts, and the men who commanded them were his eyes and ears and hands, reaching out to far-flung schools and mission stations.

The revenue officer closest to him was Captain M. A. Healy, commander of the steamer *Bear,* which he used as home and office for months at a time while cruising in northern waters. Healy was interested in more than upholding

the law, for he believed in the right of the natives to protection. He agreed with Jackson on the need for helping them acquire new skills so as to be able to compete in the white man's world. And he abhorred the whiskey trade and its effect upon all who were involved in it.

Among the reports that Jackson received from the Revenue Service about conditions in remote areas, there was one that disturbed him particularly and spurred him to action. It was the account of a visit by a revenue ship to St. Lawrence Island, located at the southern entrance to the Bering Strait, during the summer of 1888. Such visits were always the occasion for rejoicing among the natives, but on this occasion there was no one to greet the landing party. The reason became clear when the men reached the native village: everyone was dead. A check of conditions turned up empty whiskey bottles but no furs or ivory of any value. The same scene was repeated at the next two villages visited by the revenue men, and it was not until they called at a settlement on the southern side of St. Lawrence Island that the cause of the disaster was known. White traders had come to the island and traded whiskey for whalebone, walrus tusks, and furs. The natives in the three upper settlements had then gone on a drinking spree which lasted through the weeks when they should have been hunting and fishing. The few who made an effort to get food were in such poor physical condition from the effects of the whiskey that they brought back only enough for day-to-day needs and nothing to stockpile against the coming winter. As a result, four hundred men, women, and children died, most of them from starvation. Only a few survived. The fourth village escaped the fate of the others because the traders ran out of whiskey and did not stop there.

Jackson wrote a long memorandum to the Commissioner for Education, urging the immediate establishment of schools

among the Eskimos. He also published a series of newspaper articles on living conditions in the Arctic and subarctic to explain that the natives were in danger of dying out if help was not provided soon. Stressing the importance of religious and secular education, he advertised in the religious press for "Christian teachers for mission schools" with the warning that "the rigors of the Arctic winter and the self-denial and patience" that were required should make volunteers think twice before offering their services. "None other will succeed," he wrote, "or be willing to remain there even if sent." The results were amazing. Twenty-four men and women applied for the positions. Of these he selected four men—one to work at Point Hope, another at Point Barrow, and two at Cape Prince of Wales. The Bureau of Education was only able to provide travel funds and money for school supplies and building materials. Jackson, therefore, appealed to the churches to underwrite the salaries of the four instructors and received guarantees of support.

At the same time that he urged the establishment of the three new schools. Jackson outlined his plan to bring reindeer to Alaska. The Department of the Interior gave tentative approval and instructed him to collect data to support a formal recommendation upon which affirmative action could be taken. He asked for the assistance of the Revenue Cutter Service and was authorized to make the trip on the *Bear*. Having arranged to meet the four new teachers in Alaska later in the summer, he left for the west coast to join the revenue steamer.

The timing of his request for transportation was fortuitous because Healy was then under orders to visit the half-civilized Koriaks in the vicinity of Cape Navarin in Siberia. Several years earlier, a number of whaling vessels had been crushed by the ice in the Bering Sea. An American seaman who survived

was found by the Koriaks and nursed to health; he remained with the Cape Navarin natives for over two years before he was found and returned to the States. Congress voted to reward the Siberians, and Healy had the job of delivering one thousand dollars in gifts to them. It was such a strange assortment of items that Healy must have felt he was running a general store instead of commanding a revenue steamer. There were hundreds of yards of cotten material, needles, looking glasses, bread, sugar, tea, molasses, pails, pans, iron pots, a wide variety of carpentry tools, rifles, shot guns, cartridges, caps, shot, powder, lead, axes, knives, fur traps, pipes, tobacco, snuff, goggles, beads, and a box of toys.

While Healy distributed the gifts, Jackson had no trouble finding facts to support his contention that the possession of domesticated reindeer was responsible for the sound economy of the Siberian tribes. The animal furnished food when hunting and fishing were insufficient. Its hide was used for clothing and housing material, and the bones were made into implements. When famine struck Siberian tribes which did not keep reindeer, they were often able to escape starvation by purchasing reindeer meat from those who did. Jackson was of the opinion that the Koriaks' good-naturedness derived, at least in part, from their sense of security, and he was impressed by their healthy and athletic appearance. The men shaved the crown of their heads, allowing a fringe of coarse, black hair to hang down over the forehead and ears. It gave a monklike appearance to their broad, flat faces. The women parted their hair in the middle and plaited it into two long braids that hung down the back. Some wore strings of colored beads, others had pendants in their ears. Almost every woman had tattooing down the center of the forehead, along each side of the nose, and on the cheeks. Some men and women were also tattooed on the arms and hands.

Despite their friendliness, none of the herders showed any interest in selling reindeer. Even though the *Bear* visited other points along the coast, Jackson was still unable to find a native who would trade his animals. Otherwise, however, the trip was a success, for it gave him confidence that the importation of reindeer would give the Eskimos in Alaska a new lease on life. In his formal request for approval and funds, he pointed out that "the sea could not be restocked with whale as a stream [could] be restocked with fish. To feed the [people] at government expense would pauperize and in the end would as certainly destroy the [Eskimos]." He reasoned that the introduction of reindeer would "do more than preserve life. It will preserve the self-respect of the people and advance them in the scale of civilization. It will change [them] from hunters to herders. It will also utilize the hundreds of thousands of square miles of moss-covered tundra of Arctic and sub-Arctic Alaska and make these now useless and barren wastes conducive to the wealth and prosperity of the United States. To reclaim and make valuable vast areas of land, otherwise worthless; to introduce large, permanent, and wealth-producing industries, where previously none had existed; to take a barbarian people on the verge of starvation and lift them up to a comfortable self-support and civilization is certainly a work of national importance."

Jackson made one other proposal in connection with his plan for the Eskimos. He urged the Department of the Interior to get Congress to extend to Alaska the provisions of an act authorizing the establishment of governmental experiment stations for the American Indians. He believed that if such facilities were available, the Eskimos could be trained in agricultural and mechanical arts.

His first trip to Siberia ended in time to meet the schooner transporting the four teachers and the building materials

for the new schools. The two ships met at Cape Prince of Wales where construction was started on a schoolhouse on July 4 and completed in eight days. This was the first mission station and school on the barren coast of the Seward Peninsula. The men who were stationed there were William Lopp and H. R. Thornton. The *Bear* next stopped at Point Hope, two hundred and fifty miles to the north, a journey that took Jackson past a bleak and sparsely inhabited coast, the graveyard of countless whaling vessels. Heavy fog shrouded the area during the two and one-half months when the ice pack receded from shore allowing whaling vessels to sail north. But there was always the threat of a sudden shift in the wind which would drive the ice back toward land. A few years before Jackson passed up the coast in the *Bear,* thirty-three ships had been caught in the ice, stranding more than twelve hundred men who were lucky to escape with just their lives.

Construction on the Point Hope schoolhouse was advanced sufficiently by July 21 for the teacher, John Driggs, who was also a medical doctor, to live in it while he supervised the completion of the work. Jackson took time while at Point Hope to inspect a nearby settlement where the natives lived in underground houses, for he was always eager to see anything new or different. The home he visited was entered through a square opening at ground level that was so small it was a tight squeeze even for him. A long, narrow passageway extended from the bottom of the opening into two large rooms, each big enough for a family of ten persons. A platform-like structure skirted three sides of each room. Against the fourth wall there was a stone two feet long with a shallow depression on the upper side which served as a combination stove and lamp. The natives used whale oil for fuel and a wadding of tundra moss for a wick.

The inhabitants of the houses were "as dirty in their habits"

as any people Jackson had seen. But they appeared to him to be "bright and docile," and he was convinced that "something could be made of them if they [had] a chance." Some of them wore reindeer furs, others had coats made of the skins of birds which had been tanned with the feathers in place.

The last leg of the journey to Point Barrow was through a dangerous three-hundred-mile stretch of ocean. Frequently, the *Bear* had to be anchored to ice floes because its progress was blocked. Each time the ice pack opened, the steamer would move farther north. A cold, wet wind lashed the ship throughout the seven-day trip to Barrow, the northernmost inhabited spot on the continent. Leander Stevenson was the teacher stationed there. It was fortunate that he did not realize how frustrating life would be there, or he might have remained on board the *Bear* and gone back home.

Jackson returned to the States immediately after the establishment of the new schools in the hope that Congress would authorize a reasonable sum of money for inaugurating the reindeer project. But Congress balked. Senators who were sympathetic to the plan supported a fifteen-thousand-dollar figure, but the House would not agree, perhaps under the influence of skeptics who condemned the idea as far too expensive. Some argued that the Siberians would not sell animals because of their superstitions, while others contended the animals would not survive transportation or be able to live on Alaska's tundra moss. In general, those who objected labeled the proposal as another of Jackson's schemes to make something out of heathens who could not be changed.

His superiors then approved a proposal to raise funds privately, and with two thousand dollars secured by such means, he boarded the *Bear* at Seattle on the morning of May 30, 1891. The purpose of this trip was to make the annual

tour of inspection and then return to Siberia. On this voyage as well as every subsequent one on the revenue steamer, Jackson kept a daily record of weather conditions, temperatures at specific hours, wind direction, flora and fauna, geographical and historical information. To which he added descriptions that would embellish any travel book and reports on social and economic problems in Alaska.

As the steamer headed up Puget Sound, he became very seasick. But he was sufficiently recovered by the time the vessel reached the Swedish Lutheran mission at Yakutat to go ashore and visit the spot. The *Bear* resumed the trip in such clear weather that Mt. St. Elias stood out sharp and clear seventy miles away. The mountain range that paralleled the coast had peaks that towered close to twenty thousand feet, some appearing to rise right out of the water. Blue-white glaciers spread across the valleys between the mountains and back into the interior. At other places deep carpets of evergreen trees stretched from the foot of the range almost to the water's edge. Nearer Mt. St. Elias was another group of glaciers thousands of feet deep and more than a hundred miles in length, forming perhaps the largest glacial system outside the polar cap. In this area Healy sought an anchorage from which to land a survey party working under the joint auspices of the United States Geological Office and the National Geographic Society. The captain found a sheltered cove, but before sending the survey group ashore with its equipment, he sent in an exploring party to make certain that the beach could be reached safely. When they had received an all-clear signal, two loaded cutters left the *Bear*. The first negotiated the slightly heavy surf without any difficulty; but the second capsized, and six of the seven men in it were drowned, including two members of the expedition. This tragedy ended efforts to send supplies ashore; the remainder

of the day was spent in a fruitless search for the missing men until it became too dangerous. The following morning, another cutter went as close to shore as possible to open communications with the crewmen who had spent the night on the beach. It was learned that two bodies had been washed up on shore. One was buried on land and the other, that of an officer of the *Bear*, was eventually returned to the steamer. The remaining supplies were landed at slack tide until another cutter capsized, but with no loss of life. The survey party was finally landed the following day, and the steamer returned to Sitka where Jackson conducted a funeral service for the men who had been lost.

From Sitka the revenue steamer headed north once more, bound for Cape St. John on the Alaska Peninsula. Jackson was spellbound by the magnificence of the view:

"Hour after hour I sat watching with unabated interest the ever-changing panorama. To the south, Castle Rock and, beyond that, Big and Little Koniski Islands. In front was Andronick Island and between [it] and Nagai Island the Seven Haystack Rocks stood sentinel across the north half of the straits. Over and beyond them was the main peninsula with its snow-covered mountains glistening in the morning sun. In the lower ravines lay great banks of fog. . . . To the right of us a school of whales is blowing. Then a sea otter tantalizingly lifts his head from his watery house to see what strange monster is passing by. . . ."

A small but important incident occurred when Jackson reached Dutch Harbor to inspect the school located there. A few days before his arrival a drunken native woman had taken her child from the school. As soon as he knew of the woman's action, Jackson asked the United States Commissioner to effect the child's return. When the woman barricaded her home, he had the door knocked in and the child

removed. The affair served notice on everyone that Jackson would not tolerate interference with the operation of the schools nor allow anyone to obstruct their prime purpose, namely, to train native children to live in a world that was changing rapidly.

Beyond Dutch Harbor were Alaska's two great seal rookeries, St. Paul and St. George Islands, also known as the Pribilof Group. The islands were under the control of the Alaska Commercial Company by the terms of a twenty-year lease from the federal government. Between 1870 and 1890 the company netted eighteen million dollars for its fourteen stockholders, but during the last years of its lease, it had taken so many undersized seal pelts that the herds were reduced in number to a dangerously low level. A Treasury Department agent in 1890 reported such extensive damage that it would take an indefinite number of years for the herds to return to normal size. Earlier reports by other agents had given no indication of what was taking place, which in itself was an indication of the control that outside business interests exerted on law enforcement in Alaska. The company was also responsible for the welfare of the natives who lived on the islands; but just as early reports had omitted mention of the declining seal population, so they glossed over the conditions of the natives. The actual state of affairs came to light when special Treasury agent Joseph Murray reported a flagrant disregard for the health of the natives. He claimed that there was a complete absence of toilet facilities in one village where the waste drained into the only source of drinking water. Children on St. George Island who had been attending the company-operated school for seven years were still unable to speak or read English. Conditions on St. Paul Island were no better. To forestall any claim that the natives were incapable of learning, Murray cited the case of six little girls, taken from

the "poorest, lowest, dirtiest, and most ignorant" of the Pribilof natives. The children were placed in the mission school at Unalaska, and in two years they were able to write "English as well as the average white school child of similar age." Reports such as this convinced Jackson of the great need that had to be met here and documented his contention that Alaska's natives were often treated with great callousness.

The 1891 trip almost came to an abrupt and tragic end on July 4 when the revenue steamer neared the southeast coast of St. Lawrence Island. The ship had been sailing due west, but because of the heavy fog she was kept barely under way. During the night of July 3, however, a strong easterly drift carried her so close to the island that with the lifting of the fog the next morning the *Bear*'s lookout spotted a reef within a few yards of the vessel. If the fog had remained for another half-hour, the ship would have foundered on the rocks. Two days after this narrow escape, the revenue steamer sailed into Port Clarence and found itself in the midst of the whaling fleet waiting at anchor for the ice to recede so that they could go north into the Arctic. There were the barks *Orca, Helen Marr, Hunter, Sea Breeze, Sea Ranger, Wanderer, John and Winthrop, Bounding Billow, Bonanza,* and the steam barks *Balaena* and *Tender Jeanie*—all out of San Francisco. The others were from New Bedford, Massachusetts—*Reindeer, Triton, Alice Knowles, Andrew Hicks, Abram Barker, F. A. Barstow,* and *Horatio.*

The officers of the whaling fleet were men of "more than ordinary character and intelligence, typical American seamen of the best type," according to Jackson. "The common sailors [were] made up largely of Portuguese, Italians, South Sea Islanders, and others of inferior grades. Some of them [were] emphatically, hard cases." The whalers operated on a co-

operative plan, with the crew receiving a percentage of the profits rather than wages.

The first whaling vessel ventured into the ice-strewn northern waters about 1840 after the whale had been hunted almost out of existence in the South Pacific. The Arctic slaughter of whales reached tremendous proportions between 1840 and 1890, moving Jackson to compare their fate to the destruction of the great buffalo herds. He also wrote in 1890 that "whereas a few years ago [the walrus] were so numerous that their bellowings were heard above the roar of the waves and the grinding and crashing of the ice fields, this year I have cruised for weeks without seeing or hearing one." Conditions had not improved by 1891.

He took advantage of the meeting with the whaling fleet to make inquiries about the seaman who had been rescued by the Siberian Koriaks and discovered that he was the third mate on the *Abram Barker.* Jackson wanted his assistance because of his friendship with the Siberians and his knowledge of their language. But while the man was willing to co-operate, any agreement between them had to wait until the *Abram Barker* returned to San Francisco in the fall.

The two teachers at the next point of call, Cape Prince of Wales, were disappointed when they found that Jackson had not been able to hire a woman to assist them in the school work. While coal and supplies were being unloaded from the *Bear,* the children at the school demonstrated what they had learned the previous year, and the adults staged a canoe race, the winners receiving three pails of ship's biscuits. Healy then called the natives together and gave them a lecture on the effects of alcohol and the importance of supporting the school. He also appointed ten native policemen to help keep order at the Cape and to control truancy. As a badge of office, each

appointee was given a uniform cap. The festivities ended with the firing of three rounds from the *Bear's* twenty-pound howitzer, and the splashing of the shells in the distance made a deep impression on the natives.

Healy steamed for Siberia the following day, cruising in the area of East Cape, Indian Point, and Cape Tchaplin. The greatest difficulty in making contact with the herders lay in the fact that Jackson did not have a competent interpreter. The Siberians could not understand why he wanted to buy reindeer, nor was it easy to explain that the animals could survive transportation to Alaska and a change in habitat.

At Holy Cross Bay, strong winds, ice floes, and a heavy fog forced the steamer to lie at anchor for hours at a time. When the weather had finally lifted enough for Healy to venture into the entrance of the bay, his ship barely cleared the sand bar blocking half the channel. The sole result of this effort was that one herder offered to deliver twenty-five animals at the rate of five deer for one rifle or twenty for a whaleboat—but not until the following season. He also promised to speak to other herders and assured Jackson that he could expect to purchase about two hundred head in 1892. While Jackson's anxiety grew over failure to get reindeer, Healy became increasingly concerned about the return of the ice and the heavy fog which continually enshrouded the bay. The ship's crew remained on twenty-four-hour alert, as the vessel was moved from one spot to another to avoid being trapped. In desperation, Jackson agreed to sail further south to Plover Bay in the hope that his visit there in 1891 might now produce some results.

CHAPTER 7

FIRST REINDEER FROM SIBERIA

Each of the trips that Jackson made in the *Bear* took him across the path of some hardy explorer. Time and again some occasion or event called to his mind the experiences of one or another of the men who had cruised the Bering Sea, the Arctic Ocean, or the Pacific. Their exploits reminded him of the hazards he had to face if he were to succeed in his efforts to help the Eskimos. One of the early explorers to whom he referred in his journals was the English sea captain James Cook, who sailed along the Alaskan coast in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Cook Inlet was named for him, and Cook himself gave Cape Prince of Wales its name. He also cruised along the Siberian coast and identified St. Lawrence Bay.

Plover Bay, where the *Bear* was headed after the disappointing visit to Holy Cross Bay, had gotten its name as the result of a search for another famous English explorer, Rear Admiral Sir John Franklin, who had disappeared while seeking a northwest passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific. A vessel named the *Plover*, while looking for Franklin, had wintered there in 1848-49. Meanwhile, the object of their search lay dead in the vicinity of King William's Island, hundreds of miles to the east in northern Canada.

Healy was reluctant to enter Plover Bay because weather

conditions were as bad as at Holy Cross Bay. Finally he took the *Bear* inside, anchoring in one of the many inlets that burrowed into the surrounding mountains. When they dropped anchor, Jackson recognized that the 2,300-foot peak at the upper end of the inlet was the point named for Robert Kennicott, an American engineer who had taken part in the Western Union Telegraph Expedition of 1866. The expedition had been organized after the first failure of the Atlantic cable in the hope of constructing a telegraph line from Western Europe across Siberia to the vicinity of Plover Bay, then up the Siberian coast to connect with a cable under the Bering Strait to Alaska. The remainder of the system was to run overland down the Pacific coast to the States, but the project was abandoned when the Atlantic cable started to function properly. Jackson's tribute to the expedition was that the adventures and sufferings of its members read like the account of a polar expedition.

One of the men was R. J. Bush, who had been stationed at Plover Bay for almost two years. Bush learned many things about the customs of Siberian natives, and the reports he had made of his discoveries were known to Jackson. On one occasion he noticed a group of natives gathered on the slope of Mt. Kennicott and investigated what they were doing. He thought at first they were taking part in a sacrificial ritual, but as he drew nearer, it seemed to him that they were on an outing. Bush asked his interpreter for an explanation. Pointing to an elderly native who was crouched to one side, the interpreter explained that he was blind and that he was about to be killed because the old man's son had died the previous winter and there was no one to take care of him. Bush noted in his report of the incident that it was also the custom to make the person insensible by having him inhale druglike fumes before being stoned, speared, or bled to death.

In recalling Bush's report, Jackson remembered that he had seen only one old person among the thousands of natives he had encountered along the Siberian coast in 1890 and only two elderly people during the 1891 cruise. "It seems to be a very common practise," he wrote, "that when a person has an incurable disease or becomes too old to be of further service in procuring the necessities of life, to kill him."

Bush also reported on the periodic famines that swept the coastal area. He told of his experience with a native who had asked his advice about whether to sacrifice his dogs or his children in an effort to remain alive. His provisions were so low that they would not suffice for both animals and children until he could get reindeer meat from tribes to the north. He needed the dogs to get the supplies; if he killed them to save the children, everyone would die. Bush could only encourage the bewildered man to keep both children and animals as long as possible in the hope that the deermen would come south.

"Occasionally," Jackson commented on Bush's experience, "an instance of this destitution and starvation comes under the eye of an intelligent white man and is given to the world. But these periodic seasons of starvation come and go, and hundreds of human beings starve and die, their fate unheeded and unknown by the great world outside. To the starving native of Siberia, there is always the possibility of the men who own the large herds hearing of their straits and coming to their relief. But, on the Alaska side, there is nothing left to the people but to starve and die. God hasten the day when the efforts now commencing to introduce the domesticated reindeer into Alaska shall be crowned with success and this dying people saved from utter extinction." But as far as the visit to Plover Bay was concerned, nothing was accomplished,

and Healy headed for the American mainland after a week of effort.

Driggs came on board the revenue steamer at Point Hope to report on his first year's work. All natives between the ages of five and twenty-one had attended his school. Classes were largest on stormy days when the children did not have to go out on the ice to fish. The coldest temperature recording at Point Hope in 1890 had been thirty-one degrees below zero; inland where the climate was not moderated by the ocean, it had been much colder.

Healy remained at Point Hope only long enough to unload supplies. He then tried to force his way through the thickening ice to Point Barrow, but conditions worsened so quickly that the attempt had to be given up. Supplies for Barrow were put ashore a hundred miles below the school in the hope that Stevenson could come overland and take them north. During this same period Healy received word that an unidentified steamer had sailed north, apparently unaware of the dangerous ice conditions; he went in pursuit of the stranger in order to warn her captain but had to drop anchor when the fog became too thick. A couple of hours later the unknown vessel was discovered working her way south through the ice. She was the Japanese ship *Tsuri Marie* of Tokyo, chartered at Yokahama by an American bridal party for a walrus hunting expedition to the Arctic. The escapade was dropped when the *Tsuri Marie's* skipper realized it would be a foolhardy effort.

Although suffering from another bad cold, Jackson insisted that a further effort be made to get reindeer from Siberia, and this time the trip was worthwhile. He purchased his first animals on August 28 and wrote in his journal that "this is a great event. It has been proven . . . that they can be purchased alive. It is now to be tested how well they bear transportation."

The next few weeks provided a very good test. Healy crossed

the strait to St. Michael to pick up members of a coast and geodetic survey, landed supplies for starving natives on King Island, and then went back to Siberia for additional animals. It was the middle of September before the first group of reindeer were put ashore at Unalaska Island in charge of the manager of the Alaska Commercial Company; another group were landed on Amaknak Island in the care of the United States deputy marshal.

Jackson's account of this history-making event reads as if he were too tired, too drained emotionally to do more than note what he had been able to accomplish. He made no reference to the fact that the animals survived being penned on the *Bear* during extremely bad weather. Perhaps it is understandable when one realizes that bringing the reindeer to an American possession was almost anticlimactic to the rigorous 17,000-mile journey of 1891 that was required to get the animals to Unalaska and Amaknak Island. After he had sold some of his barter goods to mission stations and stored the remainder for the next year's attempt to get reindeer, Jackson went back to the States. Returning to Unalaska in 1892, he was delighted to find that the animals there were in excellent condition. This spurred him to make five trips that season to Siberia and to purchase another one hundred seventy-five animals. The first small herd was landed on the mainland on July 4, 1892, at Port Clarence, inaugurating the work of the Teller Reindeer station. United States Senator Henry M. Teller, of Colorado, had been Secretary of the Interior when Jackson was named general agent for education; he was Jackson's friend and staunch supporter. The opening of the Teller station was the final step in making the reindeer project a reality. Once the animals were put ashore on the mainland, the Eskimos were headed for a new and prosperous era.

However, the sweet was mixed with the bitter. Jackson's joy

at establishing the Teller station was matched by his sorrow over the murder of a Quaker missionary in 1892 and the receipt of an unpleasant report from Leander Stevenson. The Quaker was Charles H. Edwards, who was in charge of the government contract school at Kake, not far from Juneau. The account of the missionary's death in Jackson's papers has a slightly different color when viewed in the light of how others in Alaska saw it, although there is substantial agreement on the general facts.

Edwards became irked when he found that men aboard a sloop anchored off Kake were selling whiskey to the Indians. To make a citizen's arrest, Edwards took a group of Indians aboard the sloop (at night according to contemporary accounts) to overpower the owner, Malcolm Campbell, and his crew. Edwards was fatally shot during the melee; one Indian was shot and presumably drowned when he dived overboard; another Indian escaped unharmed. The account in Jackson's papers is that, while Edwards tried to sail the vessel to the nearest settlement with the aid of two Indians, having sent the others ashore, Campbell broke loose and shot the missionary and the Indian. In any event, Campbell sailed to Sitka, one hundred and forty miles away, giving rise to the belief among Jackson's friends that he made no effort to save Edwards, who died either just before the sloop reached Sitka or after he was taken ashore—depending on which version one accepts. Either way, the affair ended tragically for the missionary.

According to John Brady, Campbell admitted the shooting but claimed Edwards was committing piracy, the implication being that Campbell had shot in self-defense. Campbell pleaded guilty to the whiskey charge, paid a fine and served a brief jail sentence. An investigation of the shooting resulted in evidence being presented to a grand jury which did not indict Campbell for murder.

This refusal is explained as being due to a number of factors. Indians were believed to have murdered the crews of two small trading vessels and there were other Indian depredations against the whites. Many Indians refused to trade unless it was for whiskey and the general opinion was that Indians got liquor because they wanted it and not because it was forced on them. Others, like Jackson, felt this was a form of casuistry that did not place the initial responsibility for trading in whiskey where it belonged: on the white man. The result was an impasse which was not helped by the values which each side attached to the Edwards' incident.

Some months later, an investigation of the Edwards' affair was made by Allan H. Dougall, an examiner for the United States Attorney General. His findings would leave little doubt that Edwards was murdered in cold blood while trying to uphold the law and that the charges of piracy and of immorality were false. Another probe was made at Kake by a United States deputy marshal, Harry Bourwine; he concluded that Edwards had acted within his rights in trying to make a citizen's arrest. As a sequel, Dr. J. E. Counett, a physician who taught at a government school at Juneau, was tarred and feathered by a group calling itself the Vanguards of Civilization in retaliation for his efforts to get publicity for the Edwards' murder. Dougall identified the leader of the Vanguards as an assistant United States attorney in Alaska, but nothing was ever done to apprehend and try Counett's assailants, just as nothing ever came of the various investigations made into Edwards' death.

Dougall once asked Jackson why it was that "men with stubborn backbones [could not] be selected for official positions in Alaska," then answered his own question in the same letter by pointing out that too much money was involved. He distinguished between two groups of white people in the territory. One consisted of the producers, the men who ran the mines

and the fisheries; they favored strict enforcement of the prohibition law because it meant they could then be assured of reliable labor. The other group he classified as the nonproducers, those who preyed on whites and natives and profited from the sale of liquor. Like many persons before and after him, Dougall believed that a federal liquor licensing system would be more effective than prohibition as a means of controlling the whiskey traffic. Jackson, however, never agreed with this point of view. He was committed to groups in the States who stood for total abstinence. Furthermore, a license system had the earmarks of compromise and would still have permitted the natives to get liquor. He was not prepared to accept the lesser of two evils, although under prohibition, bottled goods flowed into Alaska in large quantities from Canada, some of it labeled as Florida Water, Bay Rum, Pain Killer, Jamaica Ginger, and Lemon Extract. One name was as good as another.

Perhaps it was the fact that the whiskey problem was only a symptom of the gross state of neglect under which Alaska languished for years that made Jackson so determined to keep prohibition on the books. But he certainly should have realized that in the face of ineffective law enforcement—even the absence of means to enforce the law—prohibition never stood a chance. Many Alaskans who understood the basic situation quite well tried for years to get Congress to improve the state of affairs in the territory. A nonpartisan convention in 1881 sent a representative to Washington to press for reform, but the mission was doomed before it got under way. A second nonpartisan group met in 1890, elected another representative, and gave him specific instructions. He was to press for improvement in "distorted" jurisprudence, for correction of the faulty judicial system, for a voice for the territory before Congress, for opportunity for Alaskans to get title to land,

and for a voice in the school system. Nothing came of the effort.

One of the barriers to reform in Alaska was the selfishness of the business interests that controlled the economic life of the possession—a combination of American, Canadian, European, and Alaskan financial groups. These interests preferred no legislation to any that might limit their monopolies, regardless of the good intentions that might lie behind reform.

In addition to the Edwards' murder, Jackson's concern for the welfare of Alaska's natives in 1892 was deepened by the report of Leander Stevenson on conditions at Point Barrow. One part detailed Stevenson's experiences with the superintendent of the government refuge station there. Their relationship had so deteriorated that the superintendent was charging him with insubordination, inciting the Eskimos against the whaling seamen, and manufacturing whiskey. Jackson branded the charges as false and malicious. The other part of the report contained Stevenson's opinion of whaling activities and the mistreatment of Eskimos by some whaling men. It is a lurid and emotional account, and one cannot be certain whether Stevenson was describing actual events or reporting what he believed to be true. The teacher felt that many whalers who came to Barrow "never either try or desire to catch a whale, unless one of the great monsters shall try to board them." He claimed that some of these men remained at Barrow, waiting for their ships to return from the east while they had their fill of "squaw hunting." Stevenson was particularly bitter about the fact that Eskimo children were subjected to abuse by some white men. "So lost are the men to every true principle of life . . . and even sense of shame and all those feelings of humanity that prompt to the protection of the weak and defenseless, that they do not hesitate a moment to stultify

with liquor or narcotics children not more than ten years of age, force sexual intercourse, keep them in a state of semi-consciousness during their stay, turn them ashore more dead than alive. . . . Add to [this] the many injuries of fraud and theft, with minor outrages, and you have the picture. . . ."

There is no question that the Eskimos received better treatment at the hands of many white people than this described by Stevenson. Jackson himself was high in his praise of the caliber of leadership among officers of the whaling fleet. Just as there would be exceptions among any group of men, Stevenson probably had some basis in fact for his allegations. Jackson, at any rate, thought so, for he had enough corroborative evidence from other areas to know that the lot of the natives was a difficult one at best. Under such circumstances it is easy to understand why he had little sympathy for those who broke the law, and understood no law beyond that of his own Christian convictions.

The truth of the matter is that he was extremely sensitive to certain facts of life as he had observed them in Alaska. This responsiveness led him to the conclusion—as well it might—that Christian ethics as he understood them had to be applied to the assorted ills of the territory. It is to be regretted that being a Christian was equated in Jackson's mind with being a good official; or, to put it another way, that his support of this view earned him much opposition in Alaska while bringing him acclaim in the States. He was probably the author of a memorial addressed to President Harrison by the Presbytery of Alaska on the subject of Christians and Alaskan officials: the belief that "Christian men in office who will both enforce the law and also use their personal influence in favor of sobriety and chastity [are needed]. While there are many honorable men who are not connected with our Christian Churches, yet from our standpoint, we firmly believe that a

President will be less likely to be deceived or make a mistake in the character of his appointments, if for this district he choose Christian men. . . . Eight-tenths of our population are just emerging from barbarism. Like all barbarous races, these people are quick to imitate the vices and slow to adopt the virtues of the whites. And yet those people are simple, teachable, and easily led toward civilization on the one hand, or on the other, as easily led into intemperance and destroyed by the white man's diseases according to the character of the civil officials and their treatment of the people."

This was stating the case fairly, but it came from a group that was looked upon by many Alaskans as meddlers, do-gooders, and pious unrealists too inflexible in their approach to the frontier life of Alaska. But Jackson had an unending succession of reasons for his adamancy, and if he had to reverse his opinion of a man, he was prepared to be forthright in doing so—as in the case of Max Pracht, collector of customs in Alaska. Early in 1890 he wrote to President Harrison charging Pracht with having sold liquor to whites and natives prior to his being appointed collector of customs and with appointing deputy collectors who were often under the influence of whiskey. He offered evidence that Pracht had used various stratagems to bring contraband into the territory and concluded the affidavit by saying that "in the eleven or twelve years I have been acquainted with southeast Alaska, I have never known so much drunkenness and demoralization from liquor." A year later, Jackson was still importuning President Harrison to remove Pracht from office and at the same time asking that he, Jackson, be protected from recrimination:

"The contents of the letter I sent you last spring concerning Mr. Pracht was sent him, and has brought me more or less persecution. . . . Now I have not lost faith in your earnest desire to give Alaska good officials, but you have been woefully

deceived by politicians urging these men upon you. . . . I have no interest in this matter other than that of good government, and the good name of your administration. In God's good providence, you and a portion of your excellent cabinet are Presbyterians. This has given rise to the term Presbyterian Administration, and it is the constant taunt that Alaska missionaries are called to bear, as the godless point to the Collector, the Judge, and other officials, and say 'see your good Presbyterian officials.' The Lord give you wisdom for your difficult and trying place."

CHAPTER 8

SHIPWRECK IN THE ARCTIC

Of all the predicaments Jackson had to face, the easiest to overcome were the premature reports of his death. Some of his friends believed that they were the result of wishful thinking. He himself paid little attention to them, for the fact of his existence was substantial evidence of the inappropriateness of the obsequies. The first account of the end of his career was carried in a wire service story out of Victoria, British Columbia, dated March 15, 1892:

"Intelligence has been received here of the drowning in the Skirma River, Alaska, of Reverend Mr. Sheldon, Mrs. Cunningham, and two Indians. It is thought the minister referred to is Reverend Sheldon Jackson, the noted Indian missionary, in charge of the Indian schools of Alaska under the direction of the government."

It is likely that the death of the Quaker missionary Charles Edwards was the basis of this story, especially because of the reference to the two Indians. Reports of Jackson's death were still making the rounds in June 1892; one friend wrote to him, "I expect to find you alive notwithstanding the newspaper reports of your recent murder by Yukon Indians. It is not a common occurrence for a man to read his obituary so frequently. . . ."

One of the persons who were anxious to get confirmation