



# **A Winter Circuit of Our Arctic Coast: A Narrative of a Journey with Dog-sleds Around the Entire Arctic Coast of Alaska (1920)**

*Hudson Stuck*

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Hudson Stuck (1863 – 1920) was a British native who became an Episcopal priest, social reformer, and mountain climber in the United States. With Harry P. Karstens, he co-led the first expedition to successfully climb Denali (Mount McKinley) in June 1913, via the South Summit.

He published five books about his years in Alaska, including "A Winter Circuit of Our Arctic Coast". This account of a winter's journey around the coast of Alaska, made in the regular course of the author's work, presents a notable panorama of arctic scenery, and pictures the lives of the natives in the Eskimo villages.

Archdeacon Stuck is a real man, and that is why we like his books. Incidentally he has skill for his volumes of travel, which under another hand might be merely statistics and records, are peppered with references to literature and comments on life.

The volume before us describes a winter circuit of the entire arctic coast of the United States. It took over six months. It began with a big minus and ended with a big plus, so far as zero weather was concerned.

Of especial interest to readers will be the references to mission work. "I know that very often the measure of the unpopularity of missionaries, with certain classes, is the measure of their usefulness." There is only one answer to this question: "Shall drunkenness and lust, fraud, trickery and violence, be the only teaching received from the white man and civilization?"

We pass over the very valuable comments regarding Franklin and other arctic explorers, to the Esquimo, a study of whom was the object of this journey. Archdeacon Stuck tells us that "invincible cheerfulness is perhaps their most distinctive trait, and has pointed the moral for many a writer since Goldsmith sang of them in that admirable poem, "The Traveler." It may seem strange to some of us that people should be cheerful when half their days are dark and nearly all their days are cold. Perhaps the Esquimo has something to teach the average Christian as well as the Christian a great deal to teach the average Esquimo. As the archdeacon made his way along the arctic coast he studied Shakespeare with his half-breed friend and guide.

Stuck immigrated to the United States in 1885 and lived there for the rest of his life. After working as a cowboy and teacher for several years in Texas, he went to University of the South to study theology. After graduation, he was ordained as an Episcopal priest. Moving to Alaska in 1904, he served as Archdeacon of the Yukon, acting as a missionary for the church and a proponent of "muscular Christianity".

In 1905, Rev. Charles E. Betticher, Jr joined Stuck in Alaska as a missionary. They founded numerous missions. Stuck traveled each winter more than 1500–2000 miles by dogsled to visit the missions and villages.

Stuck writes:

"THIS is my fourth, and will, I am sure, be my last, book of Alaskan travel; indeed I had thought the third

would be the last. When one has described winter travel at great length, and then summer travel (which means the rivers) at great length, and has described the mountains and the ascent of the chiefest of them, there would seem little need to chronicle further wanderings. But my journey of the winter of 1917-18 carried me completely around a distinct region of great interest that had been no more than barely touched by my previous narratives—the Arctic coast—and seemed sufficiently full of new impressions and experiences to be worth writing about."

Originally published in 1920; reformatted for the Kindle; may contain occasional imperfection; original spellings have been kept in place.

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