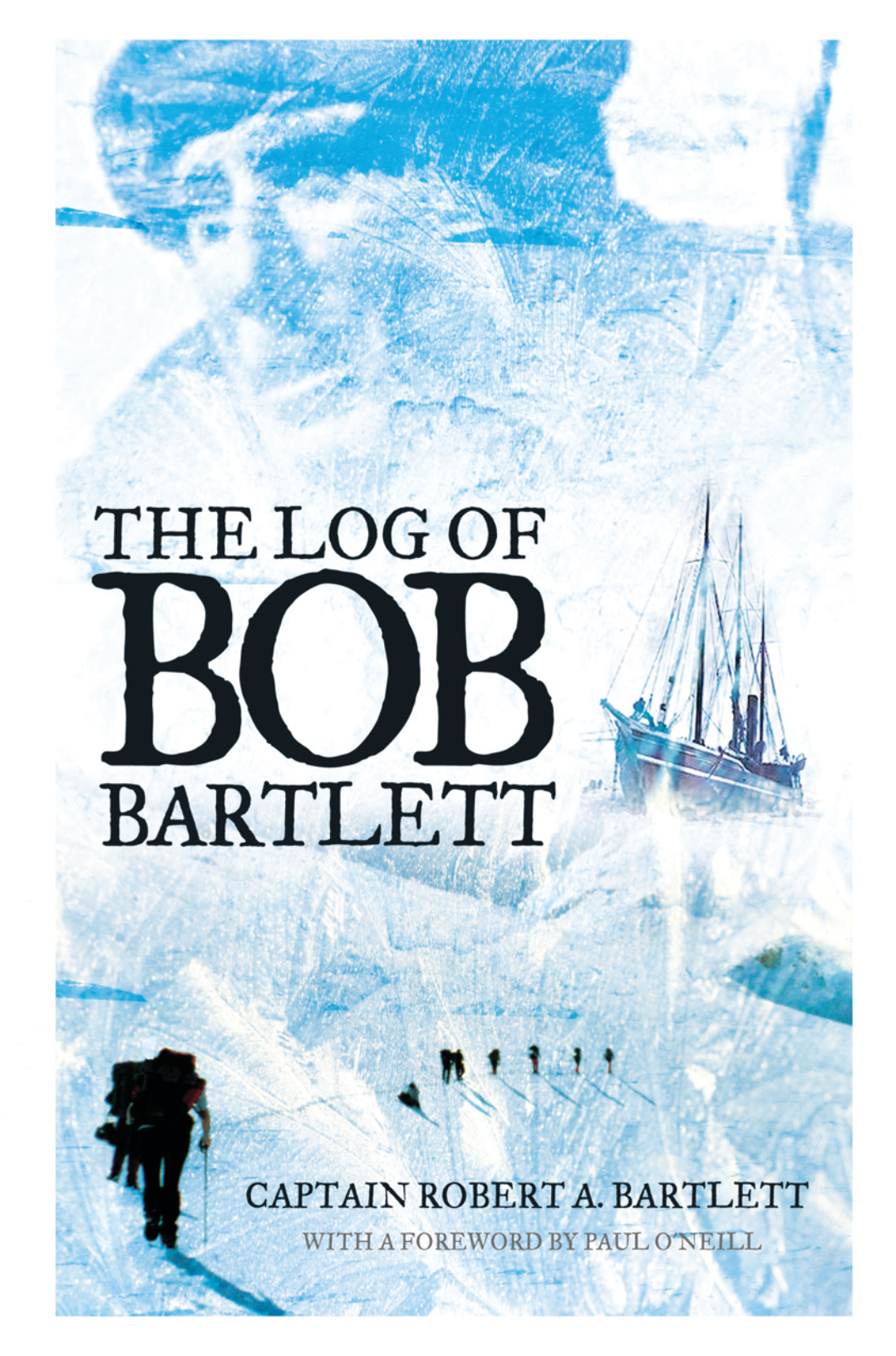




THE LOG OF **BOB** BARTLETT

CAPTAIN ROBERT A. BARTLETT
WITH A FOREWORD BY PAUL O'NEILL

THE LOG OF
BOB
BARTLETT

THE LOG OF **BOB** BARTLETT

The True Story of Forty Years of
Seafaring and Exploration

Captain Robert A. Bartlett

FLANKER PRESS LTD.
ST. JOHN'S, NL

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Bartlett, Robert A. (Robert Abram), 1875-1946.

The log of Bob Bartlett : the true story of forty years of seafaring and exploration / Robert A. Bartlett.

Includes index.

ISBN 1-897317-00-X

1. Bartlett, Robert A. (Robert Abram), 1875-1946. 2. Arctic regions--Discovery and exploration. 3. Scientific expeditions--Arctic regions--History. 4. North Pole--Discovery and exploration. 5. Ship captains--Canada--Biography. I. Title.

G635.B3A3 2006

910.9163'2

C2006-903919-4

© 2006 by Flanker Press

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of the work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic or mechanical—without the written permission of the publisher. Any request for photocopying, recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems of any part of this book shall be directed to Access Copyright, The Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency, One Yonge Street, Suite 800, Toronto, ON M5E 1E5. This applies to classroom use as well.

PRINTED IN CANADA

FLANKER PRESS
P.O. BOX 2522, STATION C
ST. JOHN'S, NL, CANADA A1C 6K1
TOLL FREE: 1-866-739-4420
WWW.FLANKERPRESS.COM

Cover Design: Adam Freake

Originally published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, Blue Ribbon Books, New York, 1928

11 10 09 08 07

2 3 4 5 6

Canada



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR

We acknowledge the financial support of: the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP); the Canada Council for the Arts which last year invested \$20.1 million in writing and publishing throughout Canada; the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

To my mother

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

FOREWORD to the 2006 Edition by Paul O'Neill	ix
FOREWORD to the 1926 Edition by Robert A. Bartlett	xii

I. The Trouble With Women	1
II. A Mangy Lion	13
III. The Sea is a Hard Master	24
IV. Meant For A Minister	35
V. My First Shipwreck	51
VI. I Carry Bananas	62
VII. "Swiles!"	74
VIII. Down To the Banks	86
IX. I Fall In Love	97
X. Skipper at Last.....	106
XI. Polar Poison	120
XII. A Narrow Escape	134
XIII. To the North Pole	150
XIV. A World of Lunatics	177
XV. Face to Face With a King	194
XVI. My Big Chance Comes—And Goes	209
XVII. Shipwreck and Death	225
XVIII. I Go For Help	237

XIX. But the North Still Called	248
XX. Skipper U.S.N.	257
XXI. Alaskan Adventures	269
XXII. North Again!	283
XXIII. The Sea Is Made of Mothers Tears	291
XXIV. Homeward Bound	307
INDEX	327

FOREWORD

TO THE 2006 EDITION OF
THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

BY PAUL O'NEILL

When a book already has a foreword written by the author, providing another may seem illogical. However, the original foreword to the first edition of *The Log of Bob Bartlett*, an autobiography by the captain himself, introducing the reader to a gripping narrative of his legendary experiences, is a personal one that seems a part of the *Log* itself. A foreword to this present edition serves to bring the work to the attention of new readers. Much has happened to Captain Bob's reputation over the nearly eighty years since the work was first published in New York by G. P. Putnam's Sons to the present time, when Flanker Press has brought it back to a new readership.

During the in-between years, Bartlett has become acclaimed internationally, as well as locally, as the province's most valourous hero. There have been others from Newfoundland and Labrador who have done truly remarkable deeds on water and in the trenches of Europe, but none grip the imagination as do the heroic actions of Captain Bob while exploring the Arctic. It is fitting that a monu-

THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

ment to him has been erected on the beach at Brigus, and his home in the community, Hawthorne Cottage, which dates from 1830, has been preserved as an extremely fine museum by the Historic Sites Association.

The American poet Carl Sandburg said, at the dedication of the Overseas Press Club in New York, "Valour is a gift. Those having it never know for sure whether they have it till the test comes." In the intervening years since the first edition of Bartlett's autobiography, we have all come to know for sure that when the test came he had the rashness and bravery that makes a man valorous. To read the story of his life is like having an armchair chat with this great Newfoundlander, so down-to-earth is his style. His book is where the corned beef, cabbage, and pease pudding are cooking and you can catch the scent.

Born to the sea in Brigus, he said that the very salt smell of the schooners moored there was a beckoning lure for any small boy living "right at the edge of the sea" and he found it irresistible. I know the feeling myself, having spent much of my boyhood right at the edge of the sea in Conception Bay's biggest cod-fishing settlement, Bay de Verde, where my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, like the Bartletts of Brigus, operated schooners and fishing punts for generations.

Captain Bob's experiences on land, as he told an admirer at the Explorers club of New York, always made him glad to go to sea again in spite of "rotten meat, frozen fingers, lice and dirt." Those were the least of the challenges he had to meet beginning at the age of seventeen. Being with the American Robert E. Peary when he discov-

FOREWORD

ered the North Pole, as the youthful master of Peary's ship the *Roosevelt*, is just one of the many incredible stories he tells in this remarkable book.

The Log of Bob Bartlett should be on the must-read list for all students in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as for every other person. Bob's life, and the lives of all the Bartletts, made him what he was, a young lion who without pretense treaded his way to becoming our provinces's greatest hero. We should all be uncommonly proud of him and how he mastered events in life. This new edition by Flanker Press provides us with an understanding of Captain Robert A. Bartlett, the man, the myth, in his own words.

FOREWORD

TO THE 1926 EDITION OF
THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

BY CAPTAIN ROBERT A. BARTLETT

It seems there is a fashion of writing forewords to books. I had not intended doing it—after all, a sailor isn't apt to be fashionable. But two things made me change my mind since I have logged off the chapters of this story of mine.

Just after we got back from the Baffin Land Expedition of the summer of 1927, I received a letter. I have had a good share of letters in my time, some of them flattering (plenty contrary!), and many from really important people. But never came a pleasanter, more surprising letter than this one. I wanted to use it in my book. But the book was written.

"We will make a berth for it," I said to myself. "A foreword is the place. If the book cannot carry that additional sail, she's not fit for sea anyway."

Here's the letter*, and that's all I know about this cheerful friend:

November 4, 1927

Captain Bob Bartlett
c/o Explorers Club,
47 W. 76th Street,
New York, N. Y.

FOREWORD

Dear Bob:

I don't know who is paying you wages at the moment but I do know the whole world is in your debt. If your salary were based on the value of your services to mankind and your employer, you would be in the millionaire class, but damn it Bob, that isn't the way with mankind. An inventor hits on a lucky device for polishing teeth and pulls off a fortune—you, not only take care of yourself, but a dozen tenderfeet through 1,000 miles of Arctic waste, and what?—Draw maybe just enough to carry you, while you are trying to find another job. But, we love you just the same. We admire your fearless courage, your clear head, your mastery over the forces of nature, your rugged grandeur, for you really are a master of men and natural forces—a giant among pigmies.

In 1,000 years you will be more famous than today. But, meanwhile hasn't mankind a duty? I think so, and I have one too, namely, to do my little bit, which is to divvy my assets to the extent of a Fifty, which I am enclosing herewith.

I have known you a good many years, but I don't want you to know my real name, lest you might hesitate to accept the cheque. Just consider it a little payment on account of the great debt the world owes to you, and which under no circumstances is it ever apt to pay.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Jedediah Tingle

Address—

Care of American Trust Co.
209 Montague Street,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

* Reprint from the Bowling Green Column of the New York *Evening Post*.

Mr. Jedediah Tingle

Occasionally, in recent years, various people have been startled to receive a letter, most charmingly phrased, expressing gratitude for something they have done or painted or written or said, and signed Jedediah Tingle as a pseudonym, but they have found that the cheque was perfectly valid and cashable or the book worth reading.

Now one of the most pleasing adventures we have had lately was a call from Mr. Tingle himself. He did not come, we must explain, to exert his benevolence upon ourself, but to consult us about a certain phase of his recreation of secretly rewarding, in a modest way, those whose works appealed to him. He did not tell us his real name, and we have no desire to know who he is, other than that he is a thoughtful businessman who has found great delight in these mysterious gestures of helpfulness. To identify him would not only necessarily put an end to his cheerful avocation, but would also deprive the situation of its unique charm.

The secret circle of those who have received these letters from Jedediah Tingle is a curiously assorted one. We have had some of the letters shown us, in the past, by those who have received them. These letters have gone to cabinet ministers and to obscure, struggling poets, to great writers and to unknown heroes. But the point is this—while Mr. Tingle tells us he has greatly enjoyed the occasional acknowledgements that have come to him by being addressed to the banks on which his cheques are drawn, certain individuals and newspapers have made determined attempts to unmask his innocent secret. We should like to ask all managing editors and others to be good sports and

FOREWORD

not spoil this admirable innocent generosity by trying to discover its source.

Christopher Morley

* * * * *

The undersigned feels mildly resentful at being called a “pseudonym.” He harbours a strong suspicion that he is the living incarnation of his own great-grandfather whose name he has taken and who in turn came from generations of Abou Ben Adhems.

In 1820, they placed his bones in a country graveyard in the Middle West, now an abandoned tangle of grasses, briars, and broken trees, but that event was probably merely an episode in an eternal mission, which is to bring smiles and tender thoughts to the great in heart—in high and low places. To comfort and cheer those who do exceptional things, or suffer.

Jedediah Tingle

—

The second reason for this extra literary top-hamper is this. I have been reading a book by a great explorer, a man who has accomplished really big things. It is an amazingly unhappy book. He seems to want to quarrel with all the world. As he writes it, nearly everyone is a rascal, a fake, and incompetent. It is all bitterness and recrimination, without a trace of good humour anywhere.

Well, after I read as much of that as I could stand, I was sort of sick at heart, and really sorry for this poor man who

THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

so easily could have remained as big as his fine record. And at once I said to myself, "If there is any of that kind of sour spirit in this yarn of mine, my log is never going to be launched at all."

Well, I read my book all over again, changed a bit here and there, and threw a few paragraphs overboard. It is my book now about the way I would like to have it—although of course I wish it were more interesting and better written.

At least there is no meanness in it; and, I think, no bitterness and no criticism. I am not taking a swipe at anyone. I am not trying to open up old sores and air old grievances. At the worst, at least it is all set down with a smile.

My log is just a simple yarn of a plain man—a man not particularly well-equipped, who has seen a lot of life in queer ways; who has had his share of success and discouragement and excitement; and who is grateful for what life has given him in adventures, fun, and friends. And I hope the book finds a fine fair wind to take it to the harbour of its readers' friendship.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. A. Bartlett." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "R." is followed by a period, then "A." followed by a period, and finally "Bartlett." with a period at the end. The signature is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.

CHAPTER I

THE TROUBLE WITH WOMEN

I have been shipwrecked twelve times. Four times I have seen my own ships sink, or be crushed to kindling wood against the rocks. Yet, I love the sea as a dog loves its master who clouts it for the discipline of the house.

“How does it feel to face death?” This is a question that has often been put to me.

“That depends,” are always my first words in reply. And it does. Because, if the peril is short and swift, as when a man points a gun at your head, that is one thing. But if you have to cling, half frozen, for many hours to the rigging of a sinking ship, not knowing which moment may be your last, that is another sort of shiver altogether.

One misery I have been spared, the feeling in the face of death that I was leaving wife and children behind me. I never got married. I don't think a seafaring man ought to because women so often break your heart. A fisherman I knew got wrecked on the Labrador one winter. He left his wife in a snow dugout while he went to the nearest village for food. When he got back to his wife, he found the dogs had eaten her. He never got over the shock; which shows what a care and sorrow a woman can be under some circumstances.

THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

Naturally, my life has been mostly with men, hard men, good and bad men, brave men and cowards; but men all the time. With one good look I can tell what a man is like. A couple of questions and I know his character. I can tell whether a man can be counted on or not in a pinch. I can almost say how he will behave when he dies.

Yet, strange to say, I have learned a great deal about women too. I don't claim to understand them. They probably don't understand themselves. But I know how a woman acts under circumstances, and why. Maybe it is this knowledge that has kept me a single man. Women don't often go where I have gone. However, curious to relate, there have nearly always been women on my most exciting voyages.

When I went close to the North Pole with Peary, we had Eskimo women aboard the ship. When the *Karluk* sank in the middle of the Polar Sea one black January night, with the temperature fifty-four degrees below zero, one of the bravest persons in our party was an Eskimo woman—a wife and mother.

Once I was shipwrecked in the North Atlantic and it was a woman that smiled when the great moment of disaster came. The biggest influence in my forty years of going to sea has been a woman—my mother. She is still alive and now and then still tells me where to get off.

You might say it is not fair to look on Eskimos in the same light as one would look on white women. That is not true. An Eskimo woman cooks and sews, gossips and laughs, loves her babies, and worries about her husband every bit as much as any white wife does.

There was Inuaho on Peary's ship the *Roosevelt*. She

THE TROUBLE WITH WOMEN

was a fine bronze study as she sat stripped to the waist sewing away on her skin boots. Her name wasn't easy to say so we called her "The Black Mare," from the long ebony locks that hung over her shoulders.

One day Inuaho came to me on the ice outside the *Roosevelt* and said:

"Captain, you watch my man?"

I could see her hands were gripped tight and her eyes were wide open.

"Sure I watch him. Why?"

"Because Pearyaksoh (the big Peary) do not care if he die. My man go where Peary go. I am afraid."

I patted the girl on her back and told her the best I could that I wouldn't let anything happen to her man. That summer her baby came; its father was one of the first human beings to reach the North Pole. In 1917, I returned to Greenland and told the story to the sturdy little hunter growing up.

In 1914, the *Karluk* sank north of Alaska. She was crushed to kindling wood in the ice. We were many miles from the land. The weather was dreadfully cold. In the biting wind, the powdery snow drifted ceaselessly across the wild and broken icefields. It was a gamble whether we should ever get back. Four men started off towards Alaska and were never heard of again. The rest of us struggled down to Wrangell Island. The trip took weeks and was filled with terrible hardships.

We had an Eskimo woman along. She was our seamstress. She was not trained to sledge work for she had lived a sheltered life in the little village where we had picked her

THE LOG OF BOB BARTLETT

- Seal* 76
 Shackleton, Ernest 189–190,
 209, 213, 227, 239, 249
Seagull 259–260
Shenandoah 269–271, 284
 Siberia 174–175, 221, 238, 243
 Sipsu 125–126, 129–130, 286
 Smith, Captain 114
 Smith, Harry 305
 Smith Sound 122, 124, 142,
 283, 286
Somme 267–268
 South Pole 15, 164, 190,
 200–201, 209, 213, 249
Southern Cross 6, 294
 Spain 25, 90, 104, 202
 Spanish Armada 25
 Spitzbergen 207, 227, 270, 284
 Standard Oil 22
 Stefansson, Vilhjalmur 189,
 226–230, 232
 Stern, Captain 62
 Stonington 39, 49, 84
 Strait of Belle Isle 251
 SS *Strathavon* 108–109,
 111–113
 Stubbs Point 159
 Stupart Bay 252
 Sydney 110–111, 137, 148, 154,
 184, 250, 255, 292, 301,
 304–305
 Teller 281
Terra Nova 199, 289, 323
The Brothers 29
The Leopard 153, 298–299
The Pilgrim's Progress 44
 Thetis Island 229
Tiger 293–294
Tigress 50
 Tingle, Jedediah xiii, xiv–xv
 Tingling, Captain 117–119
 Tower of London 205
Treasurer 291–292, 305
 Trinity 22, 292–293
 SS *Triune* 287
 Turnavik 36, 63, 86, 154, 325
 Tyson, George 30, 50
 Unalaska Island 275–276
 Ungava Bay 252
 Unimak Pass 275
 Union League Club 196
 United States Naval Reserve 24
 Upernivik 285–286, 290
 Victoria 171, 227
Viking 23, 298
 Vimy Ridge 317
 Wall Street 21–22
 Washington 187, 211, 265–266,
 269–270, 281–282
Weekly Witness 44
 Wesleyan Methodist 42
 West Indies 295
 Western Bay 305
 Weyprecht, Karl 191
 Whelan, William 81–83
 Whitney, Harry 14, 154–155,
 250, 254
 Wilkens, Sir Hubert 194–195
 Wilkes, Charles 211
 Williams, “Clam” 175, 241
 Williamson, Robert 175
Windward 120–124, 289

INDEX

Windy Tickle 147

Wolf 76

World War I 31, 40, 62, 240,
244, 272–274, 278, 284

Wrangell Bay 156

Wrangell Island 190