

Mrs. Edward M. Biddle and her three children . . . Lydia, 7; Richard Dale, 3, and Teddy, 5. . . . This picture was taken just half an hour after Mrs. Biddle had got back from Alaska . . . to find that Richard didn't recognize her.

# What *the* Adventurous Mrs. Biddle Learned *in the* Far North

By MADELIN BLITZSTEIN

SOCIETY life with its gay parties, fashionable balls, and de luxe pleasure resorts may be all right "for them as likes it," but to Mrs. Edward M. Biddle, the young, raven-haired, exotic-looking member of America's 400 who has recently returned from a winter in Alaska's Frozen Northlands, it is all the bunk.

She hates bridge; she detests flitting about from one banal appointment to the next; she disapproves of smoking because it is an enslaving habit, and she abhors every kind of artificial frivolity connected with the doings of the smart set.

Ever since she was a very little girl, Anna Dale Biddle, who is "Nanny" to her select group of intimate friends, had one great and overwhelming passion. She wanted to live in the far, cold north, where people are simple and natural, where all men are he-men and all women are fearless and strong.

The fussy organdie dresses and the dainty hair ribbons which her young friends affected annoyed her. She dreamed of being a Gypsy or an Indian, and she lived in a land of her own make-believe by dressing up in moccasins and multi-colored beads.

Unfortunately for this would-be explorer, her background was an ultra-conservative one. Her dad, Richard C. Dale, was a student and an intellectual. A man of great wealth, he was for years one of the most distinguished members of the Philadelphia bar.

THE Dales, far before the time of Lawyer Richard, were an old American family who traced their ancestry to Revolutionary times. A kinsman, Commodore Richard Dale, received from his heroic associate, John Paul Jones, a sword which Louis XVI of France gave Jones when that great soldier paralyzed the commerce of England by capturing British trading vessels. This valued prize has been in the Dale family ever since.

Nanny Biddle's mother was Maida Wade of New York, one of the most prominent social belles of the last generation. The Wades were English people who came to the United States only about half a century ago.

"People think I must have sprung from a wild background to have gone off on an Alaskan trip all alone," said Mrs. Biddle as she sat, dressed in turkey-red silk pajamas, in the cozy living room of her charming home in Ardmore, a fashionable suburb of Philadelphia. "But they are wrong. It's true that I left my husband and my three small children for six months, but I knew they were well cared for during my absence.

"I have always hated the duties of a society matron. There never have been any women explorers in our family, or any eccentric people of any kind. It just happens that ever since I have been able to read, I have gobbled up books of travel, especially those about the north.



"When I left, I thought I could get away without much fuss. . . . But I had not counted on the widespread interest in the name of Biddle."

"THE more I read, the more I wanted to find out for myself. When an Eskimo's nose freezes, does it fall off? How low can the temperature go before a person's limbs go numb? Are the people who live in a state of semi-civilization and enjoy only simple necessities happier than we are with all our material and mechanical blessings? Are there any true pioneer women left? Can women endure privations as courageously as men?"

"These are a few of the many questions which kept worrying me more and more the older I got. I found answers in books, but the printed word did not satisfy me. I made up my mind that I would borrow the money for my journey in a very businesslike and independent manner from a firm which would agree to publish a book about my adventures when I returned.

"Well, I succeeded. I spent four whole months in Alaska and I am proud to say that it was the cruelest winter which the Weather Bureau at Fairbanks has ever recorded in the 30 years of its existence. I found the answers to the questions and now that I am back in the 'midst of what we call civilization again, I am rarin' to go once more to Alaska. But I guess I will stay put until I have written my book."

Though Anna Dale Biddle will talk freely about her side of the family, she refuses to discuss the Biddles. Her own husband, Edward M., is an attorney of note and she admits that in spite of the loud protests of their acquaintances, he gladly agreed to let her go adventure

seeking. He even added that it would do her good.

"The famous name of Biddle," this attractive explorer explained, "makes me laugh. There are so darned many of them. They have done everything under the sun, but they all remain in the social register.

"THE other day one called me up and said: 'You're pushing us off the front page.' Certainly there have been exploring Biddles. Most recently Nicholas went up to Alaska to shoot moose and Kodiak bears, and then he went down to Honduras to bag the black jaguar.

"I suppose the most famous Biddle is Tony, my husband's third cousin. But he is best known for his good looks and his millionaire wives rather than for his adventures.

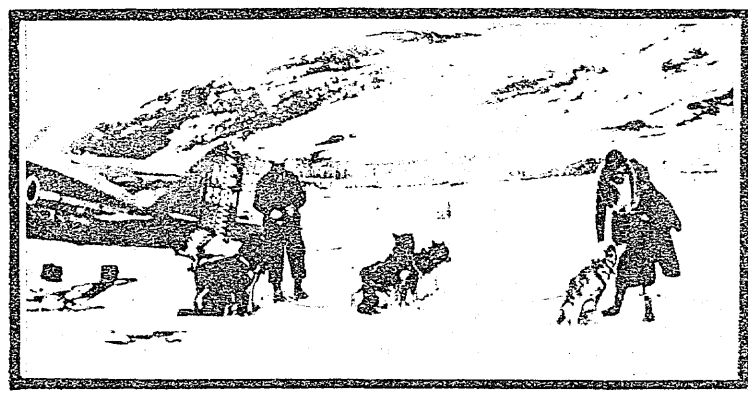
"When I left on my trip I thought I could get away without much fuss. But I had not counted on the widespread interest in the name of Biddle. Wherever I went, until I got far

Back from her thrilling experience in the Arctic, the young Philadelphia matron declares that her "set" could well afford to take lessons in living from the men and women of Alaska, whom she calls the "happiest on earth"

north of the last outpost of civilization, there was a cameraman on my trail."

In all the 17,000 miles which Mrs. Biddle covered she found her 600-mile flight over un-surveyed wilderness from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Whitehorse, Yukon, the most exciting. By dog team this trip would have taken at least a month, with good breaks, but by plane it took only five hours and 10 minutes. Mrs. Biddle had flown only once before—a short trip in an autogiro.

"IT seems to me that the pioneer life of Alaska for the next 20 years will be lived in the air," Mrs. Biddle continued. "Aviation is a thrilling experiment in the frozen north, romantic beyond description.



Rescued by a plane after two months in an Alaskan cabin . . . Mrs. Biddle is shown just before she took off on her return journey from remote Kantishan, Alaska.

"In our 600-mile air journey we saw no signs of human habitation except the cabins of three trappers. Yet I feel certain that our course will soon become a much-traveled air route in spite of the wilderness. There lies the future of Alaska.

"I was amazed to find that the pilots were young American boys of the very finest type, who had come up there deliberately for adventure and thrills. In our modern life romance has disappeared, but up north it can still be found in abundance.

"I DO not mean that everyone who goes to Alaska sticks it out. Many cave in from the severe cold—it went as far as 70 below where I was—but those who are physically and temperamentally fit for an outdoor existence adore it as I did."

When Mrs. Biddle started on her journey, she went with the idea of writing a book on the women of the Far North. But during her stay she met only three females, and her story will therefore tell her adventures as a whole rather than be confined to feminine psychology.

"I suppose each one of the women I met really deserves a volume in herself," Mrs. Biddle went on, "because each one has such a wealth of Spartan courage and fortitude.

There were Mrs. Manny Senft, a fur trapper's wife; Fannie Quigley, a pioneer if there ever was one, and Nellie Neill, an experienced trapper and a genuine heroine.

"EACH is made for hard ships. They do not see any reason at all, and I agree with them, why women cannot be as good in exploration and pioneering as men, except for the fact that the average woman in temperate climates today has become a 'softie' from too

much pampering. "Any woman who is endowed with physical strength, endurance and resourcefulness is the pioneer type. Take Fannie Quigley, a famous character in Alaska. I came to her place after mushing over a long frozen trail with Mike Cooney, a trapper, and 19 Siberian huskies which pulled the sled.

"Fannie's husband, Joe, who is a miner in the summer and a fur trapper in the winter, suffered a severe accident last August. His mine caved in on him and he had to stay in the hospital many long months. All that time Fannie, who is 61 years old, lived in her cabin all alone and made the family living.

"I had read that there were two seasons in the Arctic Circle. Although I did not stay for the warmer weather, I learned first hand that this was true. From October to May it is terrifically, unbelievably cold, but from May to October there is no snow except on the very highest mountain peaks. There are even mosquitoes in the summer.

"IN winter I would say the most important item for comfortable living is proper clothing, especially footwear. Because I had the proper clothing, I was able to withstand the extreme cold except once when my nose froze. However, I was able to treat it so that it soon felt all right and the experience left no ill effects."

Life in Alaska may be more romantic than it is in a metropolis, but Mrs. Biddle has to admit that it is chock-full of hazards. Accidents are frequent because of the snow and ice, and a residence up north requires Spartan fortitude.

As far as her personal safety as a woman was concerned, Mrs. Biddle found that two things are held sacred by Alaskans: gold and women. Everywhere she went she was greeted with generous hospitality, and nowhere did she see any desire for material gain. The people are simple and natural and unhurried.