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THE SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE.

NOTES ON FRANKLIN'S ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS.

By W. SCOTT DALGLEISH, M.A., LL.D.

(*With a Map and Portraits.*)

(*Read at the Franklin Commemoration Meeting in Edinburgh, June 4th.*)

FRANKLIN made in all three expeditions to the Polar region of North America. The first and second were land-journeys; the third and last was a sea-voyage.

1. *First Expedition—Overland Journey.*—His first overland journey occupied the years 1819-1822. He had previously had experience as an Arctic explorer, having been associated with Captain Buchan in an expedition sent out by the British Government in 1818 to seek for an approach to the North Pole between Spitzbergen and Greenland, a route which is now being prosecuted by Nansen, and which, in the opinion of many scientists, holds out the best hopes of success. The reputation Franklin acquired in that voyage, not only for seamanship and scientific skill, but also for intrepidity, endurance, and resource, led to his selection as the leader of a small party sent out in 1819 to explore the Arctic Coast of North America from the land side. That is to say, he was to make an overland journey from the west coast of Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Coppermine River, and was then to survey the coast in an eastward direction.

At the same time, the *Hecla* and the *Griper* were sent out, under Lieut. Parry (afterwards Sir Edward Parry) and Lieut. Liddon, to explore the seas west of Baffin Bay. The intention was that the two expeditions should, if possible, act in concert.

At that time nothing was known of the Arctic Coast of America east of Icy Cape (Cook, 1778) in 162° W. long., except the mouth of the

Coppermine River (Hearne, 1771), and the mouth of the Mackenzie River (Mackenzie, 1789). Practically, the whole of the North Coast was a *terra incognita*, when Franklin entered on his task.

Lieut. Franklin, then in his thirty-third year, sailed from the Thames on May 23rd, 1819, and he did not reach York Factory, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, till August 30th. His companions were Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Richardson and Messrs. George Back and Robert Hood—names now stamped indelibly on the charts of the Arctic Archipelago.

The party started from York Factory on September 9th, 1819. Travelling by way of Cumberland House, they reached Fort Chippewyan, on Lake Athabasca, on March 26th, 1820, and there they remained till July 18th (about four months). They then continued their journey to Fort Enterprise, which was reached on August 20th, and there they passed the winter (nine months).

They started again in the summer of 1821, and on July 18th they encamped on the shore of the Arctic Ocean, at the mouth of the Coppermine River.

The outward journey thus occupied 678 days, or one year and ten months. That was the time that had elapsed since their departure from Hudson Bay; but only one-fourth of that time was spent in travelling. As a rule, the year of the traveller or voyager in the Arctic regions is divided into two very unequal portions—the one, of three months spent in exploring, the other, of nine months spent in winter quarters. The distance traversed on foot and by canoe was upwards of 3000 geographical miles.

Three days after their arrival, they launched their canoes on the Arctic Ocean, and they explored the coasts of Coronation Gulf and Bathurst Inlet, its southern branch, as far as to Point Turnagain, which was reached on August 18th. During the month, they explored 555 geographical miles of coast; and that was the practical outcome of the expedition.

The failure of their food supplies and tempestuous weather compelled them to retrace their steps. When they left Point Turnagain, instead of returning to the mouth of the Coppermine River, they made for the Hood River, paddled up that river to the first cataract, and thence struck across country in a south-westerly direction to Fort Enterprise.

Their sufferings on this return journey—from lack of food, from intense cold, and from dangerous accidents,—were extraordinary and almost unparalleled. Sometimes they had not the means of making a fire. For days all they had to subsist on was the *tripe de roche*, a nauseous and noxious lichen. All their canoes were rendered useless. The putrid carcase of a deer found in the cleft of a rock was regarded as a godsend. For days together their only diet consisted of the injurious lichen aforesaid, varied with old shoes and scraps of leather, and cast-off deer skins. Stories of murder and cannibalism among their Canadian escort added to the horrors of the situation. Several of their Canadian voyageurs died from exhaustion and starvation. On more than one critical occasion, the party was saved from death by friendly Indians.

When at length they reached Fort Providence, the severest part of

their trials came to an end; but it was not till July 14th, 1822, that they returned to York Factory, having traversed a distance of 5550 geographical miles, in two years, ten months, and eight days, of which only one month was spent in exploration of the coast.

II. *Second Expedition—Overland Journey.*—Franklin's second overland expedition occupied the years from 1825 to 1827. Its object was to explore the coast of North America west and east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River, so as to fill up the gap between Icy Cape and the mouth of the Coppermine River, explored by Franklin in his former journey. Dr. Richardson was again his companion; and it was arranged that, while Franklin traced the coast westward from the Mackenzie River, Richardson should take the eastward beat.

Captain Beechey, in the *Blossom*, was to sail through Bering Strait, in order to meet Franklin, if circumstances were favourable.

Nothing daunted by the terrible sufferings which he had recently experienced, Franklin—now a Captain—cheerfully undertook the supreme command of the expedition.

He sailed from England in February 1825 for New York, whence he travelled through the United States and Canada to Cumberland House, which was reached on June 15th. Having been joined a fortnight later by the rest of his party, which had come by way of Hudson Bay and York Factory, he travelled by the same route as on the first journey, to Fort Resolution on Slave Lake. But thence the party took a north-westward course, till they struck the Mackenzie River at Fort Simpson. They proceeded down that river to Fort Norman, whence one party, under Lieut. Back, was sent to prepare winter quarters on the shore of the Great Bear Lake; while another party, under Dr. Richardson, went to explore the north shore of the lake. Franklin, with the remainder, continued his journey northward, and on August 16th—only sixty days after leaving Cumberland House—he reached the mouth of the Mackenzie River, and the shore of the Arctic Ocean, which was found to be free of ice, and to be literally swarming with seals and black and white whales.

Having deposited a message there for Captain Beechey, in the event of his reaching the place by sea, the party returned to the Great Bear Lake, where they met Dr. Richardson, and where Mr. Back had prepared at Fort Franklin three houses for the accommodation of the whole party, numbering fifty souls, during the winter. [During Franklin's absence, Mr. Drummond, the Assistant Naturalist, had been sent by Richardson to the Rocky Mountains at the head of Athabasca river. Starting in June 1825, he rejoined Richardson at Cumberland House in April 1827, having obtained considerable collections.]

At Fort Franklin about ten months—Sept. 5th till June 24th—were passed pleasantly and comfortably enough, although on one occasion the thermometer sank to 49° below zero (Fahr.)—81 degrees of frost.

The plans for the summer campaign were as follows:—

(1.) Franklin and Back were to explore the north coast westward from the mouth of the Mackenzie River—if possible to Icy Cape.

(2.) Richardson and Kendall were to explore the coast eastward to the mouth of the Coppermine River.

(3.) Dease was to remain at Fort Franklin, and to lay in provisions for the next winter.

The two exploring parties started from Fort Franklin on June 24th, 1826. They parted at the bifurcation at the head of the delta of the Mackenzie River; and on July 7th Franklin's party reached the coast, and at once began operations. Their westward progress along the coast was retarded by bad weather, ice-floes, and fogs, while they were tormented by mosquitoes.

In spite of these obstacles and difficulties, Franklin succeeded in tracing the coast westward for 374 miles, to a point which he named Cape Beechey, in honour of the captain of the *Blossom*. But he did not meet the *Blossom*, for it had stayed its eastward voyage when within 160 miles of Franklin's farthest.

Franklin's party returned to the mouth of the Mackenzie, and there they were saved by friendly Eskimo from a wholesale massacre planned by hostile Indians. At Fort Franklin, they were delighted to meet Richardson's party, which had surveyed no less than 863 miles of coast, between the mouth of the Mackenzie and that of the Coppermine River. By way of the latter river they returned to Fort Franklin in September.

The whole party spent a second winter, of five months, at Fort Franklin, or in its neighbourhood. The cold was intense, the lowest temperature recorded (in February 1827) being 58° below zero—90 degrees of frost.

Franklin, with a small party, left Fort Franklin on February 20th, 1827, and arrived, without misadventure, at Cumberland House in June. There he was rejoined by Dr. Richardson, and they travelled together to Montreal and New York, and arrived in England on September 26th, after an absence of two years and seven-and-a-half months.

Among the honours conferred on Franklin was the gold medal of the Paris Geographical Society; and on April 29th, 1829, he received the distinction of knighthood.

Franklin's first wife (Eleanor Anne Porden) had died six days after he left England in 1825. On November 28th, 1828, he married Jane Griffin—the Lady Franklin whose devotion and perseverance we all know.

Eighteen years elapsed between Franklin's second land-journey and his final and fatal voyage to the Arctic regions. These years were spent by him partly on the Mediterranean Station, as commander of the *Rainbow*, and partly as Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), a post which he held for seven years (1836-1843).

III. *Third Expedition—Sea Voyage.*—In 1845, Sir John Franklin accepted the command of an expedition projected by Government for the discovery of the North-West Passage, which seemed then to be within reach. Since Franklin's second land-journey, the gaps he had left on the north coast had been filled up. Beechey had explored the coast between Icy Cape and Point Barrow. Dease and Simpson, officers of the Hudson Bay Company, had explored the coast from Point Barrow to Cape Beechey—Franklin's farthest on the west. The same explorers had traced the coast eastward from Point Turnagain—Franklin's eastern limit—to Back's Great Fish River; and, crossing Simpson Strait, had reached the southern coast of King William Land. The point now to be determined



LADY FRANKLIN.

was, whether there was a practicable channel from Simpson Strait in the south to Barrow Strait in the north. If there was, the North-West Passage would be discovered.

Franklin's expedition consisted of two ships—the *Erebus* and the *Terror*,—already well-trying, and famous in connection with Sir James Ross's Antarctic explorations. Sir John Franklin flew his pendant in the *Erebus*, with Captain Fitzjames as second in command, while Captain Crozier commanded the *Terror*. The crews numbered 134 officers and men. They were conveyed by a transport ship, the *Baretto Junior*, which was to deposit stores at Disko Island (Greenland). The little squadron sailed from the mouth of the Thames on May 20th, 1845, and finally left the British Isles, at Stromness, Orkney, on June 3rd—fifty years ago yesterday.

They doubled Cape Farewell on June 24th, and left Disko Island on July 10th; and the ships were last seen by a whaler—the *Enterprise* of Peterhead—in Melville Bay, Greenland, on July 26th, when all was going well.¹

When two years passed without any tidings of Franklin, search expeditions began to be organised. Other three years elapsed, however, before any definite traces of the explorers were discovered. These were found in 1850 on Beechey Island, off the south-west coast of North Devon, by Captain (now Sir Erasmus) Ommaney and Captain Penny. They consisted of a pile of meat-tins² filled with gravel, and of three graves with rough tombstones; but no record was found, though diligent search was made. In 1854, Dr. Rae reported to the British Admiralty that he had purchased from a party of Eskimo a number of articles which had undoubtedly belonged to Franklin and his party, including Sir John's Star or Order, part of a watch, silver spoons and forks with crests, and other articles.³

At length, in 1859, Captain (now Admiral Sir Leopold) M'Clintock, and Lieut. Hobson, in the steam-yacht *Fox*, equipped by Lady Franklin, found near Point Victory, on the west coast of King-William Land, a very valuable record, in the shape of a "bottle-paper." It contained a two-fold message—the one occupying the body of the paper, the other written round the margin.⁴

The original record, dated May 28th, 1847, was written by Lieut. Graham Gore, who had led an exploring party along the coast of King-William Land to Cape Herschel, probably within sight of the northern mainland. It confirmed Ommaney's report of the wintering of the ships at Beechey Island (though it erred by a year in the date). As Gore's party returned to the ships, then beset by ice to the NW. of King-William Land,

¹ Two members of the crew of the *Enterprise* still survive—Mr. J. Brand of Peterhead (carpenter), and Mr. Thomas Yule, Roanheads (steersman).

² The number of tins found was far in excess of the possible consumption of the expedition; and it was inferred that a fraudulent contractor had supplied the Government with putrid meat.

³ These are in the Rae Collection, and were shown in the Society's Franklin Exhibition.

⁴ A facsimile tracing of this record was shown in the Society's Franklin Exhibition. Also relics presented by Dr. D. Walker, Surgeon of the *Fox*, to the Liverpool Museum of Natural History.

they must have been able to assure Franklin, before he died, that the great object of his quest had been accomplished.

The second message, signed by Crozier and Fitzjames, was dated April 25th, 1848, after the ships had been abandoned. It intimated the death of Sir John Franklin on June 11th, 1847, and mentioned that the party of 105 survivors would start next day for Back's Fish River.

The facts, thus gleaned from various sources, may now be briefly narrated in their proper order.

After leaving Melville Bay, in the end of July 1845, the *Erebus* and the *Terror* sailed through Lancaster Sound and Barrow Strait. They sailed up Wellington Channel and down Crozier Channel between Cornwallis Island and Bathurst Island, to Barrow Strait again. The ships returned to Beechey Island, where they spent the first winter (1845-46). In the summer of 1846 they sailed down Peel Strait, between North Somerset and Prince of Wales Land, and down Franklin Strait west of Boothia Felix, to a point NW. of King-William Land, where they spent the second winter (1846-47).

In May 1847, Lieut. Graham Gore explored the west and south coasts of King-William Land, and returned to the ships.

In June 1847 Sir John Franklin died on board the *Erebus*. As was said in *Punch's* commemorative poem:—

“Not under snow-clouds white,
By cutting frost-wind driven,
Did his true spirit fight
Its shuddering way to Heaven;
But warm, aboard his ship,
With comforts at his side,
And hope upon his lip,
The gallant Franklin died.”

The third winter (1847-48) was spent off Point Victory, at a point to which the drift of the ice had carried the ships.

In April 1848 the survivors (105 in number) abandoned the ships, and started, under Captain Crozier, to make the overland journey to the Great Fish River,—“the river of their hope.”

Before long, the party is supposed to have divided. The weaker section returned to the ships, and were lost with them. The stronger section crossed from King-William Land to Adelaide Land, where their remains were found, at Starvation Cove, in 1869. Their line of retreat was marked by skeletons and graves. No vestige of the *Erebus* and *Terror* was ever found.

It may be mentioned as a matter of local interest, that in 1879 Lieut. Schwatka (U.S. Navy) found on the north of King-William Land the remains of a Scotsman, Lieut. John Irving of the *Terror*, who in 1848, with Crozier, had found at Point Victory the “bottle-paper” record left there by Graham Gore in 1847. Irving's remains, identified by a medal bearing his name, were buried at Edinburgh with fitting ceremony in January 1881.

The results of Franklin's last and fatal expedition did not cease with his death. Some forty search expeditions, due chiefly to the per-

sistent devotion of Lady Franklin, who equipped four of them at her own expense, added very greatly to our knowledge in detail of the Arctic Archipelago, and led directly to the triumphant solution of the problem of the North-West Passage by M'Clure in 1850-51. There is a well-known saying (attributed to Tertullian) that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." With no less truth may it be said, in view of Franklin's fate, and of subsequent explorations, that the bones of the pioneers are the stepping-stones of Discovery.

THE LABRADOR PENINSULA.

By ROBERT BELL, B.A.Sc., M.D., LL.D., of the Geological Survey of Canada.

(*With a Map and Illustrations.*)

Boundaries.—The Labrador peninsula forms the large eastern division of the mainland of North America. In latitude, its centre is midway between the Gulf of Mexico and the northern extremity of the continent at Bellot Strait. It lies between Hudson Bay on the west and the North Atlantic Ocean on the east, with Hudson Strait on its northern side. The dividing line between this great peninsula and the rest of the continent has not yet been authoritatively defined, but it may be assumed to extend from the mouth of Rupert river at the southern extremity of Hudson Bay to Lake St. John at the head of the Saguenay river and fiord, the distance across this neck of land being about 350 statute miles.

Dimensions.—As thus defined, the southern point of the peninsula at Tadousac on the St. Lawrence is in latitude $48^{\circ} 10'$ and the northern extremity, Cape Wolstenholme, on Hudson Strait, in latitude $62^{\circ} 35'$. From this cape the shore runs nearly east for 150 miles. The length of the peninsula from north to south is therefore about 1010 English statute miles. A line drawn from Tadousac to Cape Wolstenholme would run nearly north-north-west, and measure about 1070 statute miles. The eastern coast from Belle Isle, in latitude 52° , up to latitude $53^{\circ} 30'$, runs due north, on the meridian of $55^{\circ} 40'$. On the opposite, or Hudson Bay, side of the peninsula, the sea-coast in the same latitudes also runs due north, and corresponds with the meridian of 79° . In latitude 53° the peninsula will therefore have a breadth of 1015 English statute miles. Cape Jones, where James Bay opens out into Hudson Bay proper, is in longitude 80° and is the most westerly point of the peninsula. A line drawn from the Strait of Belle Isle to Cape Jones would measure 1065 statute miles, so that Labrador is practically as broad as it is long.

Area.—The superficial extent of the Labrador peninsula has been roughly estimated at 420,000 square miles. Unless geographical miles