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William Kennedy

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I.

FROM ABERDEEN TO CAPE FAREWELL.

“THE PRINCE ALBERT” FITTING OUT AT ABERDEEN FOR HER SECOND VOYAGE TO THE POLAR SEAS—STRENGTHENING FOR THE ICE—DESCRIPTION OF THE CREW, AND STATEMENT OF THEIR AGES AND PAY—LIEUT. BELLOT OF THE FRENCH NAVY APPOINTED SECOND IN COMMAND—ORGAN PRESENTED BY H. R. H. PRINCE ALBERT—LEAVE ABERDEEN—ARRIVAL AT THE ORKNEYS—CARRIER PIGEONS—DEPARTURE FOR THE ARCTIC SEAS—OUR INSTRUCTIONS—SIGHT CAPE FAREWELL.

It was a beautiful morning, on the 5th of May, 1851, when, after a smart run in the Royal Adelaide from London, I found myself in the snug little harbour of Aberdeen, pacing the deck of a small fairy-looking craft, which might have been taken for a yacht, or pleasure boat, intended for a summer cruize along the picturesque shores of Scotland, but for some unusual and queer-looking preparations which were going on, on board of her. First, there was a

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

28 SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

mysterious metamorphosis taking place in the upper region of the main-mast, the effect of which, when completed, was to convert a handsome symmetrical little ketch, or schooner, into a rather awkward top-heavy-looking Tom Thumb of a brig, of some ninety tons burden. Along the sides, from the keel to about two feet above the water line, there was a doubling of American elm planking, two and a half inches thick. The bows and stern post were sheathed with wrought iron of about a quarter of an inch in thickness, with a broad strip of thick sheet iron along the water line as far aft as the foremast. Her hold was a perfect labyrinth of cross-beams, one set running across the vessel at distances of about ten feet apart, midway between the kelson and the beams, and another crossing these at right angles, and firmly secured to the bottom and deck. The forepart of the vessel had in addition what whalers call "pointers," that is, a scantling, six inches square, running from the kelson to midway up to the beams around the larboard and port curves of the bow. It was in fact the Prince Albert, fitting out for her proposed renewed search for Sir John Franklin, by way

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Excerpt

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THE SHIP'S COMPANY.

29

of Prince Regent's Inlet—an important part of the field of search for the missing Arctic Expedition, which neither the squadron under Captain Austin's orders, nor Captain Penny's expedition, at that time engaged in the service, were able to provide for; and which it was not to be expected that the American Expedition, generously fitted out by Mr. Grinnell, would undertake to perform.

While our sailing master Mr. John Leask (a veteran whaling captain, who had the previous winter filled the post of ice-master in the *North Star*,) is engaged in superintending these operations, let us introduce you to our little ship's company. First, we have from Aberdeen four stalwart fellows, who had sailed with Captain Forsyth in the *Albert's* last voyage—Henry Anderson, first mate; Robert Grate, boatswain; James Glennie, cook; and Alexander Matheson, able seaman. Next come three Shetlanders—John Smith, who had also made the voyage, and came with the highest recommendation for his steady and faithful conduct, in consequence of which he has now been appointed clerk in charge; his brother, Gideon; and William Adamson, who had

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William Kennedy

Excerpt

[More information](#)

30 SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

accompanied Dr. Rae in his first journey to Repulse Bay. Richard Webb, a smart dashing fellow from London, who had accompanied Sir John Richardson in his boat journey through North America, goes out with us as engineer, in the event of our being able to make any use of the steam-launch, left by Sir James Ross at Port Leopold. Our carpenter is Kenneth Sutherland, six feet high, a *green hand*, in every sense of the term, who if not like Falstaff, a wit himself, is certainly like him destined throughout the voyage to be a cause of wit in others, but withal an honest, steady and industrious man. Four other veteran and hardy seamen, viz. Andrew Irvine, Magnus McCurrus, Andrew Linklater, and William Millar, afterwards to be shipped at Stromness in the Orkneys, will complete our complement of twelve excellent and experienced working hands.

Our muster-roll of officers is rather a large one. Mr. John Hepburn, a name familiar to Arctic voyagers, as the faithful attendant and sharer in the perils and privations of Sir John Franklin's first adventurous, and in some respects tragic journey

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[More information](#)

LIST OF THE CREW.

31

through North America, goes out in his old age, as the best tribute he can render, of his affection for his ancient commander; Mr. Robert Cowie, a member of a family I had long known and esteemed, has kindly offered his services as Medical Officer to the Expedition.* Together with those already mentioned,

* The following is a complete list of the crew, with their rank, wages, and pay per month.

WM. KENNEDY, Commander. J. BELLOT, second in command.

NAMES.	RANK.	AGE.	Wages per Month.			Wages per Annum.		
			£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
John Leask . . .	Master . . .	56	12	0	0	144	0	0
John Hepburn . . .	Supercargo . . .	62	10	0	0	120	0	0
Robt. Cowie . . .	Medical . . .	27	4	3	4	50	0	0
John Smith . . .	Clerk in charge	30	5	0	0	60	0	0
Henry Anderson . . .	Chief Mate . . .	29	6	0	0	72	0	0
Kenneth Sutherland	Carpenter . . .	28	5	0	0	60	0	0
Robert Grate . . .	Boatswain . . .	33	5	0	0	60	0	0
Richard Webb . . .	Steward . . .	28	6	0	0	72	0	0
James Glennie . . .	Cook . . .	50	5	0	0	60	0	0
Alex. Matheson . . .	Seaman . . .	30	4	0	0	48	0	0
Wm. Adamson . . .	„ . . .	39	3	10	0	42	0	0
Gideon Smith . . .	Blacksmith . . .	28	3	6	8	40	0	0
Andrew Irvine . . .	Seaman . . .	46	3	15	0	45	0	0
Andrew Linklater . . .	„ . . .	47	3	15	0	45	0	0
Wm. Millar . . .	„ . . .	33	3	0	0	36	0	0
Magnus McCurrus . . .	„ . . .	45	3	0	0	36	0	0
			Per Annum, £			990	0	0

Besides the above wages the crew received, as gratuities, all the clothing supplied them from the ship, and extra comforts, making their entire remuneration considerably higher.

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William Kennedy

Excerpt

[More information](#)

32 SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

Mons. Bellot and myself, we have thus a total complement of eighteen in all. Mons. Bellot is a young French naval officer distinguished in his own service, who has joined us as second in command, under circumstances so honourable to himself and to the gallant nation to which he belongs, that I make no apology for inserting here, with his permission, the generous offer of his services to Lady Franklin, which led to the securing of his invaluable co-operation in our little Expedition.

M. BELLOT TO MR. KENNEDY.

Rochefort sur Mer,

18th March, 1851.

SIR, —I am informed that you are about to command the Prince Albert. Since the inquiries about his (Sir John Franklin's) fate were begun, I always felt the greatest regret not to be in Europe to partake of the labours undergone by so many brave men that went in quest of the illustrious Lord Franklin. His Lordship's glory and success have made him a citizen of the world, and it is but justice that all seamen should take the most lively interest in his fate.

I would be peculiarly proud, Sir, to have your consent

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William Kennedy

Excerpt

[More information](#)

M. BELLOT'S LETTER.

33

to serving under your orders in such an honourable expedition. I have been now some years in the French service, and if zeal and devotedness may be relied upon, I can afford them to the greatest satisfaction of my wishes.

It would not be, for the first time, sharing fatigues and hard circumstances with English sailors, as I assisted to an action against the natives of Madagascar in 1848, in company of H. M. Frigate Conway; I was wounded there at the same time as Lieut. Kennedy, and wish he were a relative of yours. I wrote to our Navy Secretary for a leave of absence, and to Lady Franklin, but would not do so before warning you of it. I hope, Sir, there may be no objection to my being employed under your orders, and beg of you to give communication of my letter to Lady Franklin.

Please believe me, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

(Signed)

J. BELLOT,

Lieut. French Navy, Knight of the Legion of Honour.

To this letter, after communicating with Lady Franklin and receiving her sanction, I made the following answer: her Ladyship having herself replied to the letter she had received from M. Bellot.

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William Kennedy

Excerpt

[More information](#)

34 SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

London, 1st of May, 1852.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 18th March, conveying the generous offer of your services to Lady Franklin, to assist in the search for her gallant husband, unfortunately did not reach me here (owing to its being detained a considerable time at Aberdeen), until all the arrangements for the fitting out of the Prince Albert, and the appointing of her officers and men, had been completed.

I should inform you that the present expedition, like that of last year, is a private one, fitted out partly by subscription, but chiefly on the strength of the remaining resources of Lady Franklin herself.

Our little vessel measures only 90 tons, and her complement of officers and men, numbers only eighteen. If, however, after being made aware of these facts, you are still not entirely discouraged, and would like to witness our preparations, and to confer with me on the subject, you had better come over to England with the least possible delay. By inquiring at the Admiralty here for Mr. Barrow on your arrival, you would be instructed as to where to direct your steps.

In the enclosed document, which has been prepared and circulated by Lady Franklin's friends, with the view

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

REPLY TO M. BELLOT.

35

of promoting subscriptions in aid of her funds, you will find every information as to the means and objects of our contemplated undertaking.

I have much pleasure in forwarding you the accompanying number of the Morning Herald, one of the most respectable of our daily Journals, from which you will find that your gallant and generous offer has been duly recognized by the public sentiment of this country. As to myself I can only say with respect to it, that I look upon it as one of those noble deeds by which men alike distinguish themselves as individuals, and adorn the age in which they live, and that in having enlisted you, a member of the Legion of Honor, your nation have indeed chosen *un vrai Chevalier*.

I have the honor to be, &c.

WM. KENNEDY.

Lieut. J. Bellot.

P.S.—The vessel will sail from Aberdeen on the 15th of May.

To turn from this *coup d'œil* of our little company (a most satisfactory one at the time to myself, whatever it may be to the reader); let us return once more to the ship, and the state of her equipment for the arduous voyage on which she was about to enter.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

36 SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

The "Prince Albert," originally destined, I believe, for the fruit trade, to and from the Azores, had been purchased by Lady Franklin from Messrs. White and Co. of Cowes, and sent to Aberdeen to undergo additional strengthening and the alteration of her rig under the hands of Mr. Duthie, the ship-builder, for an Arctic voyage. Two splendid boats, the one a gutta-percha boat, presented by the Messrs. Searle of Lambeth, and the other a beautiful mahogany one, given by Messrs. White, were attached to her from the previous voyage, besides a Halkett's Mackintosh boat and a smaller kind of boat called a dingey, sledges and kites. I had long been of opinion that the search for Sir John Franklin must ultimately resolve itself into a grand series of boat and land journeys, and with this view, after taking on board a supply of raw material, for mocassins, snow-shoes, dog-sledges, &c. to be worked up in the course of the voyage, I caused a "kayack" to be constructed of tin, in imitation of the native Esquimaux canoe; intending, in the event of our progress in the ship, or our own boats, being arrested by any unforeseen circumstances, to adopt