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A Short Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Prince Albert, in Search of Sir John Franklin

William Kennedy (1814–1890) was an explorer and fur trader. In 1851 he was recommended to Lady Franklin as the commander of her second sponsored expedition in search of her husband, Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin (1786–1847), who had not returned from his 1845 expedition to chart the remaining unexplored section of the Arctic and the Northwest Passage. This volume first published in 1853 contains Kennedy's account of his 1851 Arctic expedition to rescue Sir John Franklin. Written in the form of a diary, Kennedy describes in detail the hazardous conditions of the Arctic. The crew's experiences including snow blindness, frostbite, scurvy and explorations of land on foot accompanied by Husky dogs are described in detail. Kennedy's use of Inuit survival methods and the type of provisions which were used are also described, providing valuable insights into early nineteenth century methods of Arctic exploration.

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WILLIAM KENNEDY



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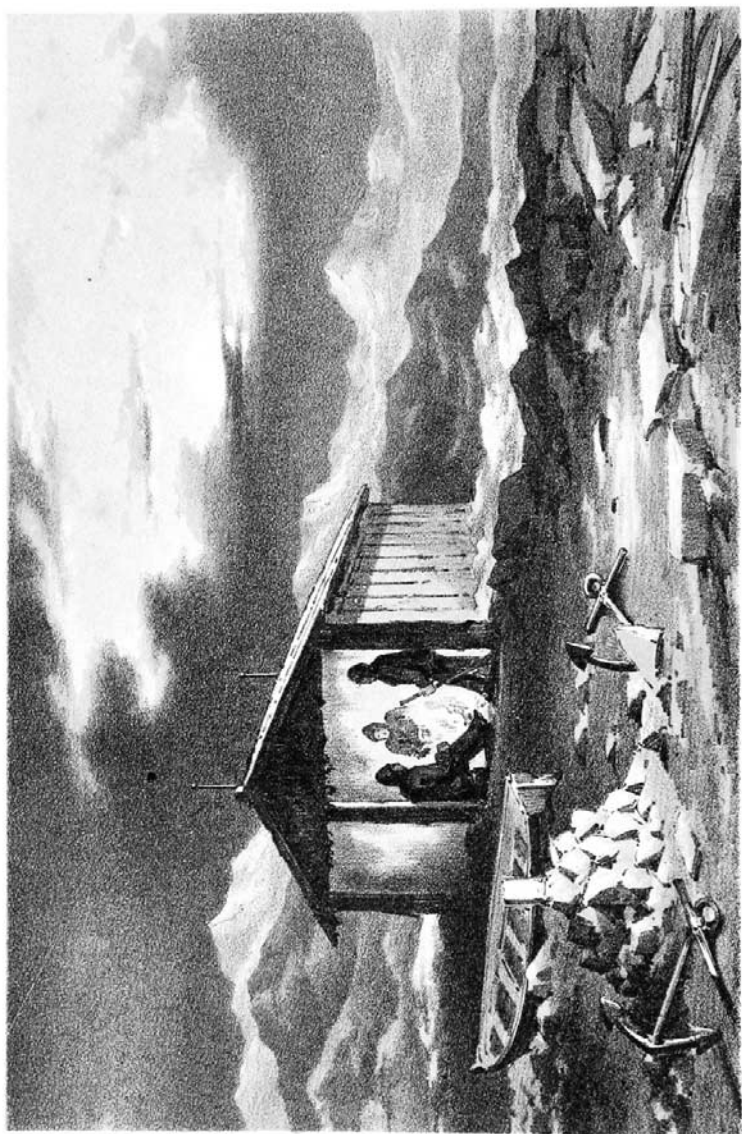
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J. COVENTRY, 1874

SOMERSET HOUSE

MIDWINTER VISIT TO FURY ISLAND.

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A SHORT NARRATIVE
OF THE
SECOND VOYAGE
OF
THE PRINCE ALBERT,
IN
SEARCH OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

BY
WILLIAM KENNEDY,
COMMANDING THE EXPEDITION.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, AND A MAP BY ARROWSMITH.

LONDON:
W. H. DALTON, COCKSPUR STREET.
1853.

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TO
LADY FRANKLIN,
UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES AND DIRECTION THE
EXPEDITION TO PRINCE REGENT'S INLET
IN
SEARCH OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN AND HIS COMPANIONS
WAS UNDERTAKEN,
AND TO THE SUBSCRIBERS WHO AIDED HER,
This Narrative of the Voyage
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,
WILLIAM KENNEDY.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following little work contains a narrative of the last Voyage of the Prince Albert to the Arctic Seas in search of Sir John Franklin; a chart of the geographical discoveries effected in the course of it; and an appendix, embracing a few Nautical and Meteorological details.

Although in placing before the public, the zealous and indefatigable labours of those by whom I was accompanied on the voyage, I feel that I am but doing them justice, I have had another motive in committing these pages to the press, in the desire to assist,—as far as my experience warrants my expressing an opinion on the subject,—in disabusing the public mind of many unfounded and frivolous apprehensions tending to bring into discredit any further attempts to prosecute the search for our missing countrymen. I am glad to think that such apprehensions are already giving way to wiser and juster views of our policy and our duty in this respect.

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I can testify, at least, to the very great interest everywhere felt in the question, both in England and America, among those with whom circumstances have brought me into communication; and I should be unpardonable were I to neglect to record here my deep sense of the many obligations, and the many esteemed personal friends for which I am indebted solely to my fortuitous connexion with an Expedition in search of Sir John Franklin.

The original offer of my services to Lady Franklin was made from Canada, and my appointment to the “Prince Albert” no sooner became known, than I was supplied, through the public-spirited exertions of Mr. Fisher, the Mayor of Hamilton, in that Province, with a free conveyance by the American Railroad Company from Buffalo to New York. Here I had the privilege of making the acquaintance of the noble-minded and munificent Mr. Grinnell, through whose interest I was furnished with a free passage to England in one of Cunard’s steamers. I cannot but regard it as a most fortunate circumstance that one of my fellow-passengers in this voyage was Sir Edward Belcher. I need not dwell upon the interest which

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this distinguished officer, and warm friend of Arctic search, manifested in the object of my mission ; but I should indeed be forgetful, as well as ungrateful, were I to pass over without acknowledgment, the frank courtesy and the generous and unwearied kindness I experienced from him during the period I had the happiness of enjoying his acquaintance. Through his interest with the Railroad Directors of the Liverpool and London lines, my way was literally franked through the length and breadth of the land. From Liverpool* to London, from London to Hull, from Hull to Aberdeen, and thence to the Orkneys, I had simply to present Sir Edward Belcher's letter of introduction at the various offices of the Railroad and Steam Navigation Companies, and a free passage was at once accorded to me. And this interest in the humane and benevolent mission in which I had the privilege of being engaged was not confined to public bodies.

I have had occasion, in the course of the narrative,

* The proprietor of the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, on learning my name and object, declined, in the handsomest manner, to accept any settlement of the somewhat heavy bill, which a residence in a first-class house in the Capital of the West, ordinarily entails upon the traveller.

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to acknowledge many proofs of the interest felt in the general objects of our Expedition by individuals in various parts of England. To Mr. Barrow, of the Admiralty, whose name is so intimately associated with the efforts which have been made for the rescue of our absent countrymen, and on whose shoulders the mantle of his father has indeed descended, my thanks are particularly due, for his constant and unremitting kindness and thoughtful care for whatever could add to our comfort or ensure the success of our undertaking. To my old and valued friend, Mr. Harding, of Islington, my thanks are no less due, for his most useful contributions to the outfit of our winter travelling parties, and for his sound and judicious suggestions in the organization of our land journeys, which his unrivalled local experience, acquired during a residence of twenty years in the northern part of Hudson's Bay, rendered truly valuable.

To the noble-minded Lady, under whose auspices the Expedition was equipped—did not I know how distasteful public acknowledgments on such a subject or publicity of any kind are to her—I would fain ex-

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press my obligations for innumerable acts of personal kindness received at her hands; and my admiration of that unwearied and unexampled devotion with which she has sacrificed her health, her strength, and all her worldly means, to the search for her distinguished husband, and her gallant friends and countrymen.

Were I, however, to record all in the way of obligation, which ought to be recorded, I fear that my preface would prove nearly as big as my book. Let me, therefore, by this general acknowledgment, assure each and all of our numerous friends, that if every act of kindness and of sympathy for the cause on which we were engaged has not always been mentioned, it has assuredly not been forgotten either by me or by any one connected with the Expedition in the Prince Albert.

*East Islington Institution,
December, 1852.*

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SECOND VOYAGE OF THE PRINCE ALBERT.

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It is perhaps a natural result of the various Expeditions which have left this country within the last

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few years, in search of Sir John Franklin, that, amidst the universal interest excited in the fate of the missing vessels, the circumstances under which Franklin's own Expedition left England, now upwards of six years ago, have been in some degree lost sight of. Nothing is more common in conversation, and in the statements of the daily press, and even in publications of higher pretensions, than to find plans and proposals brought forward for the relief of our absent countrymen—professedly based upon what are believed to have been Franklin's instructions, but which turn out, upon inquiry, to have formed no part either of his instructions, or of his intentions.

Under such circumstances, I have felt that I cannot better introduce the following narrative of one of the latest attempts which have been made to penetrate the mystery which still unfortunately envelops the fate of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, than by placing before my reader the instructions issued to the Expedition, on its leaving England in the spring of 1845, of which the following is an authentic copy.

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*Copy of Instructions to Captain Sir John Franklin, K.C.H.,
Her Majesty's Ship Erebus, dated 5th May, 1845.
By the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord
High Admiral of the United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Ireland.*

1. Her Majesty's Government having deemed it expedient that a further attempt should be made for the accomplishment of a north-west passage by sea from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, of which passage a small portion only remains to be completed, we have thought proper to appoint you to the command of the expedition to be fitted out for that service, consisting of Her Majesty's Ships "Erebus" and "Terror;" and you are hereby required and directed, so soon as the said ships shall be in all respects ready for sea, to proceed forthwith in the "Erebus" under your command, taking with you Her Majesty's ship "Terror," her captain (Crozier) having been placed by us under your orders, taking also with you the "Barretto Junior," transport, which has been directed to be put at your disposal for the purpose of carrying out portions of your provisions, clothing, and other stores.

2. On putting to sea, you are to proceed, in the first place, by such a route as, from the wind and weather, you

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may deem to be the most suitable for dispatch, to Davis' Strait, taking the transport with you to such a distance up that Strait as you may be able to proceed without impediment from ice, being careful not to risk that vessel by allowing her to be set in the ice, or exposed to any violent contact with it ; you will then avail yourself of the earliest opportunity of clearing the transport of the provisions and stores with which she is charged for the use of the expedition, and you are then to send her back to England, giving to the agent or master such directions for his guidance as may appear to you most proper, and reporting by that opportunity your proceedings to our secretary for our information.

3. You will then proceed in the execution of your orders into Baffin's Bay, and get as soon as possible to the western side of the Strait, provided it should appear to you that the ice chiefly prevails on the eastern side or near the middle, the object being to enter Lancaster Sound with as little delay as possible ; but as no specific directions can be given, owing to the position of the ice varying from year to year, you will, of course, be guided by your own observations as to the course most eligible to be taken, in order to ensure a speedy arrival in the Sound above mentioned.

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4. As, however, we have thought fit to cause each ship to be fitted with a small steam-engine and propeller, to be used only in pushing the ships through channels between masses of ice, when the wind is adverse or in a calm, we trust the difficulty usually found in such cases will be much obviated, but as the supply of fuel to be taken in the ships is necessarily small, you will use it only in cases of difficulty.

5. Lancaster Sound, and its continuation through Barrow Strait, having been four times navigated without any impediment by Sir Edward Parry, and since frequently by whaling ships, will probably be found without any obstacles from ice or islands; and Sir Edward Parry having also proceeded from the latter in a straight course to Melville Island, and returned without experiencing any, or very little difficulty, it is hoped that the remaining portion of the passage, about 900 miles, to Bhering's Strait may also be found equally free from obstruction; and in proceeding to the westward, therefore, you will not stop to examine any openings either to the northward or southward in that Strait, but continue to push to the westward without loss of time in the latitude of about $74\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$, till you have reached the longitude of that portion of land on which Cape Walker is situated, or about 98°

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west. From that point we desire that every effort be used to endeavour to penetrate to the southward and westward, in a course as direct towards Bhering's Strait as the position and extent of the ice, or the existence of land, at present unknown, may admit.

6. We direct you to this particular part of the Polar Sea as affording the best prospect of accomplishing the passage to the Pacific, in consequence of the unusual magnitude and apparently fixed state of the barrier of ice observed by the "Hecla" and "Griper," in the year 1820 off Cape Dundas, the south-western extremity of Melville Island; and we, therefore, consider that loss of time would be incurred in renewing the attempt in that direction; but should your progress in the direction before ordered be arrested by ice of a permanent appearance, and that when passing the mouth of the Strait between Devon and Cornwallis's Islands, you had observed that it was open and clear of ice, we desire that you will duly consider, with reference to the time already consumed, as well as to the symptoms of a late or early close of the season, whether that channel might not offer a more practicable outlet from the Archipelago, and a more ready access to the open sea, where there would be neither islands nor banks to arrest and fix the floating masses of

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ice, and if you should have advanced too far to the south-westward to render it expedient to adopt this new course before the end of the present season, and if, therefore, you should have determined to winter in that neighbourhood, it will be a matter for your mature deliberation, whether in the ensuing season you would proceed by the above-mentioned Strait, or whether you would persevere to the south-westward, according to the former directions.

7. You are well aware, having yourself been one of the intelligent travellers who have traversed the American shore of the Polar Sea, that the groups of islands that stretch from that shore to the northward to a distance not yet known do not extend to the westward further than about the 120th degree of western longitude, and that beyond this, and to Bhering's Strait no land is visible from the American shore of the Polar Sea.

8. Should you be so fortunate as to accomplish a passage through Bhering's Strait, you are then to proceed to the Sandwich Islands, to refit the ships and refresh the crews, and if during your stay at such place, a safe opportunity should occur of sending one of your officers or despatches to England by Panama, you are to avail yourself of such opportunity to forward to us as full a detail of your proceedings and discoveries as the nature of the conveyance

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may admit of, and in the event of no such opportunity offering during your stay at the Sandwich Islands, you are on quitting them to proceed with the two ships under your command off Panama, there to land an officer with such despatches, directing him to make the best of his way to England with them, in such a manner as our Consul at Panama shall advise, after which you are to lose no time in returning to England by way of Cape Horn.

9. If at any period of your voyage the season shall be so far advanced as to make it unsafe to navigate the ships, and the health of your crews, the state of the ships and all concurrent circumstances should combine to induce you to form the resolution of wintering in those regions you are to use your best endeavours to discover a sheltered and safe harbour, where the ships may be placed in security for the winter, taking such measures for the health and comfort of the people committed to your charge as the materials with which you are provided for housing in the ships may enable you to do—and if you should find it expedient to resort to this measure, and you should meet with any inhabitants, either Esquimaux or Indians, near the place where you winter, you are to endeavour by every means in your power to cultivate a friendship with them, by making them presents

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of such articles as you may be supplied with, and which may be useful or agreeable to them ; you will, however, take care not to suffer yourself to be surprised by them, but use every precaution, and be constantly on your guard against any hostility ; you will, by offering rewards to be paid in such manner as you may think best, prevail on them to carry to any of the settlements of the Hudson's Bay Company, an account of your situation and proceedings, with an urgent request that it may be forwarded to England with the utmost possible dispatch.

10. In an undertaking of this description, much must be always left to the discretion of the commanding officer, and as the objects of this Expedition have been fully explained to you, and you have already had much experience on service of this nature, we are convinced we cannot do better than leave it to your judgment in the event of your not making a passage this season, either to winter on the coast with the view of following up next season any hopes or expectations which your observations this year may lead you to entertain, or to return to England to report to us the result of such observations, always recollecting our anxiety for the health, comfort and safety, of yourself, your officers and

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men ; and you will duly weigh how far the advantages of starting next season from an advanced position may be counterbalanced by what may be suffered during the winter, and by the want of such refreshment and refitting as would be afforded by your return to England.

11. We deem it right to caution you against suffering the two vessels placed under your orders to separate, except in the event of accident or unavoidable necessity ; and we desire you to keep up the most unreserved communications with the commander of the “ Terror,” placing in him every proper confidence, and acquainting him with the general tenor of your orders, and with your views and intentions from time to time in the execution of them, that the service may have the full benefit of your united efforts in the prosecution of such a service ; and that in the event of unavoidable separation, or of any accident to yourself, Captain Crozier may have the advantage of knowing up to the latest practicable period all your ideas and intentions relative to a satisfactory completion of this interesting undertaking.

12. We also recommend, that as frequent an exchange take place as conveniently may be of the observations made in the two ships ; that any scientific discovery made by the one, be as quickly as possible communicated

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for the advantage and guidance of the other, in making their future observations, and to increase the probability of the observations of both being preserved.

13. We have caused a great variety of valuable instruments to be put on board the ships under your orders, of which you will be furnished with a list, and for the return of which you will be held responsible; among these are instruments of the latest improvements for making a series of observations on terrestrial magnetism, which are at this time peculiarly desirable and strongly recommended by the President and Council of the Royal Society, that the important advantage be derived from observations taken in the North Polar Sea, in co-operation with the observers who are at present carrying on an uniform system at the magnetic observatories established by England in her distant territories, and through her influence in other parts of the world; and the more desirable is this co-operation in the present year, when these splendid establishments which do so much honour to the nations who have cheerfully erected them at a great expense, are to cease. The only magnetical observations that have been obtained very partially in the Arctic Regions are now a quarter of a century old, and it is known that the phenomena are subject to

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considerable secular changes. It is also stated by Colonel Sabine that the instruments and methods of observation have been so greatly improved that the earlier observations are not to be named in point of precision with those which would now be made ; and he concludes by observing that the passage through the Polar Sea would afford the most important service that now remains to be performed towards the completion of the magnetic survey of the globe.

14. Impressed with the importance of this subject we have deemed it proper to request Lieut.-Colonel Sabine to allow Commander Fitzjames to profit by his valuable instructions, and we direct you therefore to place this important branch of science under the immediate charge of Commander Fitzjames ; and as several other officers have also received similar instructions at Woolwich you will therefore cause observations to be made daily on board each of the ships whilst at sea (and when not prevented by weather and other circumstances), on the magnetic variation, dip and intensity, noting at the time the temperature of the air, and of the sea at the surface and at different depths ; and you will be careful that in harbour and on other favourable occasions those observations shall be attended to, by means of which the influence

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of the ship's iron on the result obtained at sea may be computed and allowed for.

15. In the possible event of the ships being detained during a winter in the high latitudes, the Expedition has been supplied with a portable observatory, and with instruments similar to those which are employed in the fixed magnetical and meteorological observatories instituted by Her Majesty's Government in several of the British colonies.

16. It is our desire that in case of such detention observations should be made with these instruments according to the system adopted in the aforesaid observatories, and detailed directions will be supplied for this purpose, which with the instructions received at Woolwich, will be found, as we confidently anticipate, to afford full and sufficient guidance for such observations, which will derive from their locality peculiar interest and a high theoretical value.

17. We have also directed instruments to be especially provided for observations on atmospherical refraction at very low altitudes, in case of the Expedition being detained during a winter in the high latitudes ; on this subject also particular directions will be supplied, and you will add any other meteorological observations that may occur to you of general utility ; you will also take occasion, to

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try the depth of the sea and nature of the bottom, the rise, direction and strength of the tides, and the set and velocity of currents.

18. And you are to understand that although the effecting a passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific is the main object of this expedition, yet that the ascertaining the true geographical position of the different points of land near which you may pass, so far as can be effected without detention of the ships in their progress westward, as well as such other observations as you may have opportunities of making in natural history, geography, &c. in parts of the globe either wholly unknown or little visited, must prove most valuable and interesting to the science of our country; and we therefore desire you to give your unremitting attention, and to call that of all the officers under your command to these points, as being objects of high interest and importance.

19. For the purpose not only of ascertaining the set of the currents in the Arctic seas, but also of affording more frequent chances of hearing of your progress, we desire that you do frequently after you have passed the latitude 65° north, and once every day when you shall be in an ascertained current, throw overboard a bottle or copper cylinder closely sealed, and containing a paper stating the date and position at which it is launched, and you