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William Parker Snow

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William Parker Snow (1817–1895) was a sailor, explorer and writer. In 1850 he wrote to Lady Franklin volunteering his services to lead a land expedition to recover her husband, Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) who had not returned from his 1845 Arctic expedition. Lady Franklin declined his offer, but appointed him as second in command to Charles Forsyth on her first sponsored rescue expedition in 1850 to recover her husband. First published in 1851, this volume contains Snow's account of this rescue expedition. Taken from Snow's personal diary written during the expedition, he describes the hazardous conditions the expedition faced during the brief Arctic summer. The daily life of Snow and the crew, the methods used to ensure safe passage through ice floes and the dramatic Arctic landscapes are described in vivid detail, providing valuable information about nineteenth century Arctic expeditions.

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*A Narrative of Every-Day Life
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WILLIAM PARKER SNOW



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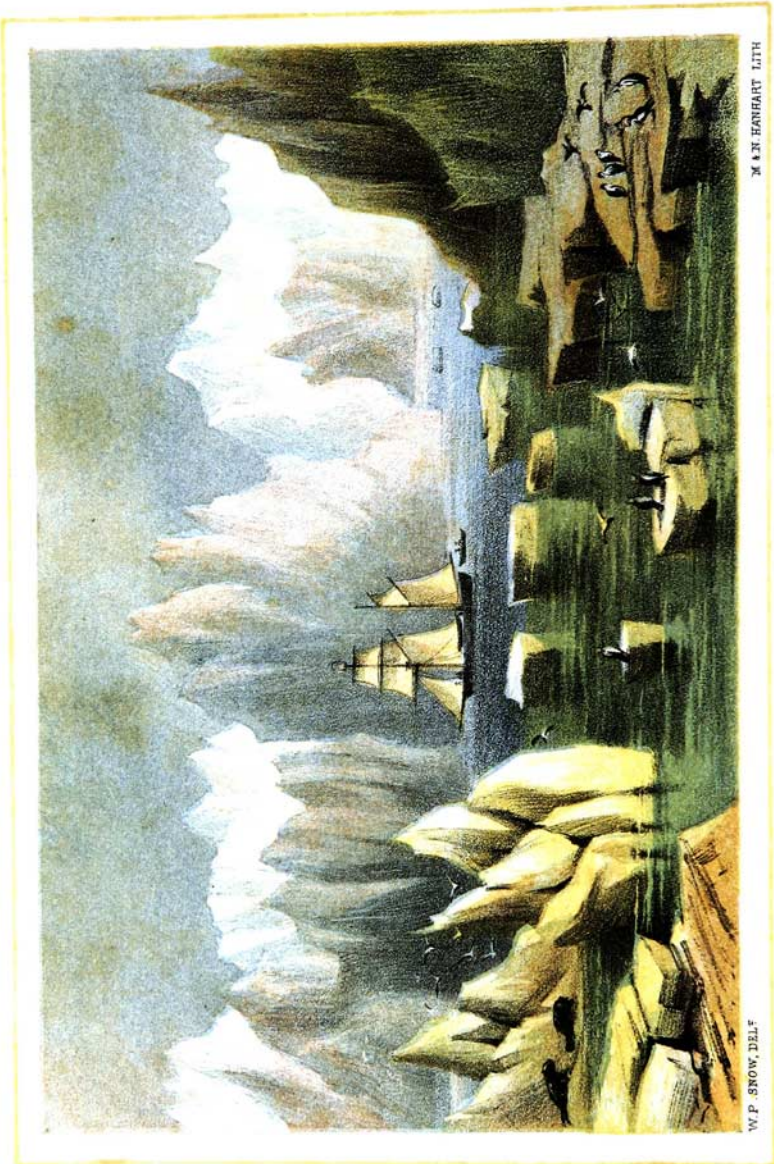
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THE PRINCE ALBERT SURROUNDED BY ICEBERGS.

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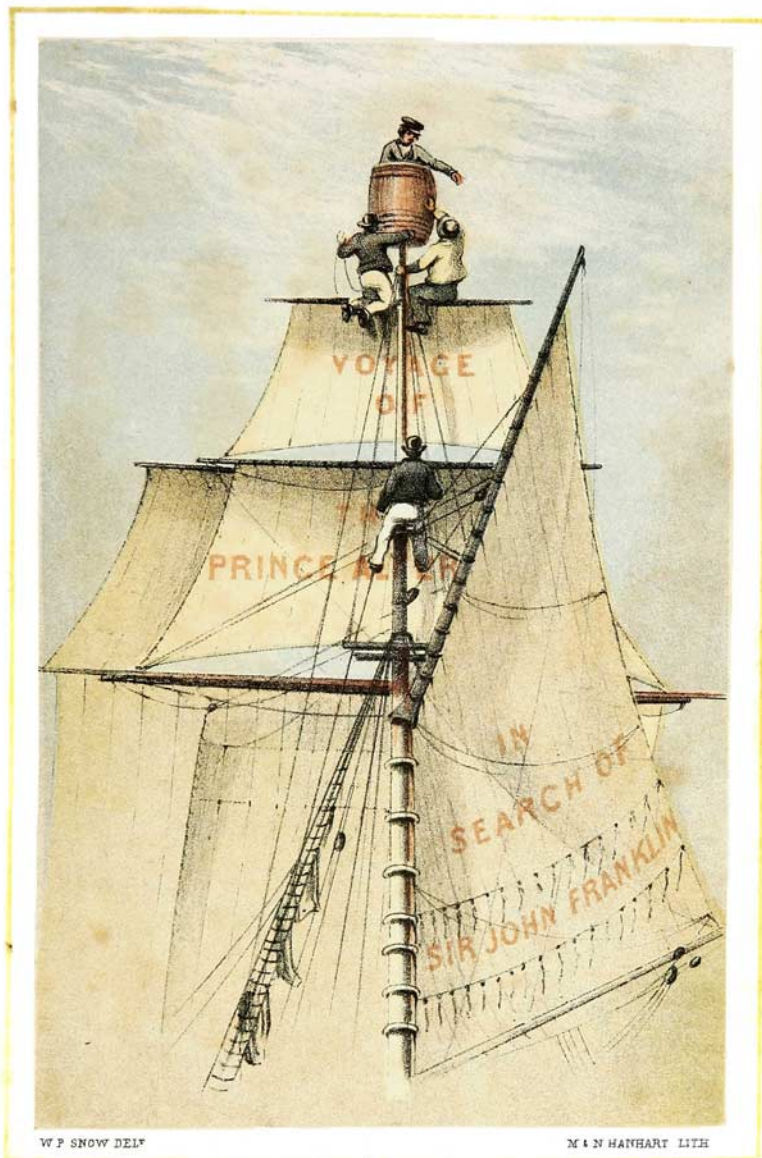
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FIXING THE "CROW'S NEST "

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“ And I have loved thee, Ocean ! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward : from a boy
I wanton'd with thy breakers — they to me
Were a delight ; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror — 'twas a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane — as I do here.”

CHILDE HAROLD, canto iv. ver. 184.

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TO
LADY FRANKLIN,
AND THE
SUBSCRIBERS TO THE PRINCE REGENT'S INLET
BRANCH EXPEDITION
IN SEARCH OF
SIR JOHN FRANKLIN
AND THE CREWS OF H.M. DISCOVERY SHIPS,
EREBUS AND TERROR;

This Volume
IS,
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,
W. P. SNOW.

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P R E F A C E.

AT the request of several kind friends, who were of opinion that my private Journal would not be wholly uninteresting, from its giving a detailed account of the "Prince Albert's" remarkable cruise in the Arctic Seas, I have ventured, though with great timidity and hesitation, to send it forth upon the wide waters of public opinion. What to say about it I really know not. Rough and ready, there it is just as I wrote it, sometimes after a day's toil, and sometimes after many days' cessation from it, when the mind, wearied and distressed about other things, resorted to the pen for relief. No elegance of language nor polished style must be expected. I have merely given expression to a series of facts and feelings, and perhaps have troubled the reader with too many of them. If so, I must plead in excuse that my heart was, is, and always will be most deeply interested in the cause which led to our voyage.

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With reference to myself, I may be permitted to observe, that I came over from America (where I was residing) at three days' notice, especially to join in any expedition going out under Lady Franklin's auspices to the Arctic Seas, in search of her gallant husband, having *volunteered* my humble services for that purpose. Too late, by a few days only, for Captain Penny's vessels, in which I had a hope held out to me of an appointment, I was attached by Lady Franklin to the "Prince Albert," which she had then recently bought. I joined that vessel more in a *civil* than in an executive capacity; but with the express understanding that most of my active duties were to commence upon our arrival in Prince Regent's Inlet, where I was to take charge of one of the exploring parties to Boothia and elsewhere. To Boothia I had long turned my attention in connection with the missing expedition, and had submitted to Lady Franklin a plan of search through North America which has since appeared in the Arctic Returns for 1850.

In reading the following pages, it must not be forgotten, that this is merely my own private Journal, — a record of my own doings: although it will be seen, that in my own labours may be also traced those of other individuals. I have deemed it a duty to mention faithfully facts as they occurred, to give praise wherever I conceived that it was due,

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and to make known the names of any of the men who could be favourably spoken of.

In a letter which I have received from Captain Forsyth in reply to an intimation that I was about to publish my private Journal, he concludes as follows:—

“ To your own personal exertions in assisting me in the arduous duties which devolved upon me, and the zeal and alacrity shown by you on all occasions, I shall be most happy to bear testimony.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your most obedient,

(Signed) “ CHARLES C. FORSYTH,
Commander R. N.”

I have thought it just to myself to give this quotation, and at the same time to state that I am much indebted to Captain Forsyth for the friendliness and gentlemanly courtesy which he displayed towards me throughout the voyage.

I have also to express my heartfelt thanks to that noble lady who, in sending out the vessel herself, allowed me to be a sharer in the Expedition by attaching me as an officer to it, — an honour of which I shall, indeed, ever remain proud. To herself, and to her niece, Miss Sophia Cracroft, who was devotedly attached to the cause, — ever aiding by her sound advice, — I am deeply indebted

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for their constant and generous friendship to one so humble and unknown as myself; nor must I forget several of those whose names appear on the subscription list in aid of the Expedition. Not a few honoured me with their kind notice in an especial manner, and I never forgot it when striving, in the regions whither we were bound, to make myself worthy of their favour. Others too from many quarters most generously came forward to render me every personal assistance for the voyage. To one gentleman especially, whose name, were I permitted to mention it, would give great *eclat* to my humble labours, I am under more than ordinary obligations, and I shall never cease to bear his kindness in remembrance.

My present excellent publishers, too, kindly added to my intellectual enjoyments during the voyage by a timely present of some useful books*; and many more with heart and with hand gathered round to render whatever service was in their power.

Since my return, too, several kind and noble friends, themselves remarkable for their gallant services, have given me countenance. Commendation

* Amongst others, I ought not to omit to mention the last edition of "Reece's Medical Guide," a work which I found invaluable, not only to myself, but to all on board, especially where we had no regular surgeon.

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is acceptable from all parties, but it brings with it a double zest when it comes from the truly noble and good.

There is one more name, however, that I must be excused for mentioning, in consideration, not only of his own kindness to me personally, but of his untiring zeal and generous exertions in behalf of the missing Expedition. Following in the footsteps of his father, Sir John Barrow, — a name familiar as a household word in all that relates to Arctic exploration, — Mr. Barrow devotes a great deal of his own extensive knowledge to the subject, and, in our case, afforded much valuable assistance by his advice and instruction. To him I am much beholden for many important hints and useful papers, and especially so for the liberal supply of books which he sent on board the “Prince Albert.”

Without further preface, I now venture to submit to the public my humble outpourings during the short, but not, I trust, uninteresting voyage of the “Prince Albert” in the frozen regions of the north in search of our brave and long-absent countrymen; and, in conclusion, I may express the hope that the illustrations, taken from some rough sketches made on the spot, will prove not unacceptable to my readers.

W. P. S.

London, Dec. 12. 1850.

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