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978-1-108-07083-6 - Ten Months Among the Tents of the Tuski: With Incidents of an Arctic Boat Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, as far as the Mackenzie River, and Cape Bathurst

William Hulme Hooper

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Ten Months Among the Tents of the Tuski

In the middle of the nineteenth century, British Arctic exploration became defined by the search for the missing expedition of Sir John Franklin, who had in fact perished in desperate circumstances in 1847. As a newly qualified naval officer, William Hulme Hooper (1827–54) took part in one of the many expeditions which sought to find Franklin. Embarking in 1848, the crew of HMS *Plover* spent three winters in the Arctic, with tragic consequences for Hooper's health. On his return, perhaps realising time was short, he wrote this illustrated account of his travels, and saw it published the year before he died at the age of only twenty-seven. The work is of particular interest because of its detailed descriptions of the Bering Sea region, Alaska and the Canadian Arctic. Especially noteworthy are the observations on the way of life of the indigenous Chukchi people, whom Hooper called 'Tuski'.

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TO

JOHN BARROW, Esq. F.R.S.

&c. &c. &c.

ADMIRALTY.



MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN engaged in the first Arctic expedition (H.M.S. Plover, with my esteemed friend Captain Moore) despatched from England in search of H.M. Discovery Ships Erebus and Terror, (under command of the gallant Sir John Franklin,) in the equipment of which your honoured and lamented father bore so prominent a part, I wrote letters to my friends relating my first impressions of scenes and incidents encountered in a remote corner of the globe, during a long residence amongst an almost hitherto unknown race of people. You saw some of these letters, expressed approval of and interest in

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them, and suggested their being thrown together and submitted to a wider circle for perusal. Hence the following pages, by illness long deferred.

Not alone the strong tie of friendship induced me to crave your permission to dedicate this book to you, but also the knowledge that you have ever stood foremost among those who, verbally and practically, have evinced their conviction that it would be cruel and would be a lasting disgrace to this country to relinquish the search for the missing voyagers until definitive information respecting them shall be obtained, or the lapse of time render an assertion of their being no longer in existence no mere hypothesis.

On another plea also I ask you to stand sponsor to my literary babe (and herein I feel assured I speak for many of those who, like myself, have wandered amid the stern and chilling regions of the North). There can be few "Arctic men" who will not unite with me in earnest acknowledgment of your ever willing aid (not the less energetic because unob-

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trusively exerted) towards their particular welfare, as well as to the more general furtherance of the schemes of humanity in which they were engaged, and the great exertions you have gone through.

You are well aware that I have always entertained the most sanguine views with regard to the discovery ships; and that, notwithstanding nearly eight years have elapsed since tidings were received, I still see no reason to despair. A mass of evidence is before us* to show that the Polar regions abound in animal life: the cases of four Russian sailors who spent six years on Spitzbergen, 1743-9, and that of Sir John Ross and party, who were four years ice-bound, afford precedents for the existence of the party now sought for; and when we consider moreover that only the *mere* portals have yet been passed, and scarcely the threshold entered upon of that vast unknown region, in *any* part of which it is possible the missing voyagers may be detained, we may relieve ourselves from fear of a charge of unreasonableness or obstinacy in the persistence of earnest *hope* that

* Wrangell, Anjou, Parry, Richardson, Petermann, &c.

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their families—whose sad suspense all must deeply
commiserate—their native country, and the entire
civilised world, will yet welcome with transports of
delight the return of at least a portion of the veteran
wanderers.

With sincerest regard and esteem,

I am yours faithfully,

WM. HULME HOOPER.

LONDON, *May* 1, 1853.

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