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978-1-108-07084-3 - The Eventful Voyage of H. M. Discovery Ship *Resolute* to the Arctic Regions: In Search of Sir John Franklin and the Missing Crews of H. M. Discovery Ships *Erebus* and *Terror*

George Frederick McDougall

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The Eventful Voyage of H.M. Discovery Ship *Resolute* to the Arctic Regions

The *Resolute* was a merchant ship purchased by the Royal Navy for service in the search for the lost expedition of Sir John Franklin. Its first voyage to the Canadian Arctic, which took place between 1850 and 1851, proved fruitless, so a second, larger expedition was launched in 1852. Again the *Resolute* could find no trace of Franklin, and the crew came close to perishing themselves. With their ship trapped in ice, they endured the freezing temperatures and a harrowing trek to Beechey Island to survive. Published in 1857, the present work is the journal of George Frederick McDougall (c.1825–71), who served as master aboard the *Resolute*. The book features numerous woodcuts and plates, as well as an account of the ship's salvage by an American vessel. Notably, a desk made from the ship's timbers has been used by a number of American presidents in the White House.

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AND THE
MISSING CREWS OF H.M. DISCOVERY SHIPS “EREBUS” AND “TERROR,”
1852, 1853, 1854.
TO WHICH IS ADDED
AN ACCOUNT OF HER BEING FALLEN IN WITH BY AN AMERICAN WHALER
AFTER HER ABANDONMENT IN BARROW STRAITS,
AND OF
HER PRESENTATION TO QUEEN VICTORIA
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
BY
GEORGE F. M'DOUGALL,
MASTER.

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Dedication.

TO

COMMODORE HENRY KELLETT, C.B.

LATE CAPTAIN OF H.M. DISCOVERY SHIP "RESOLUTE,"

THE FOLLOWING PAGES,

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE EVENTFUL VOYAGE, ABANDONMENT, RECOVERY, AND RESTORATION
OF THAT SHIP TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

AS A SLIGHT MARK OF THE HIGH ESTEEM IN WHICH HE WILL EVER BE HELD

BY

HIS DEVOTED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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OFFICERS OF H.M.S. “RESOLUTE” AND TENDER
“INTREPID.”

Captain	-	-	-	Henry Kellett, C.B.
Lieutenant	-	-	-	George Frederick Meham.
„	-	-	-	Bedford C. T. Pim.
„	-	-	-	Richard Vesey Hamilton.
Master	-	-	-	George Frederick M'Dougall.
Surgeon	-	-	-	William T. Domville, M.D.
Mate	-	-	-	Richard Roche.
„	-	-	-	George S. Nares.
Clerk in charge	-	-	-	William H. Richards.
Enseigne de Vaisseau	-	-	-	Emile de Bray (Imperial Navy of France.)

FOR SERVICE IN “INTREPID.”

Commander	-	-	-	-	Francis Leopold M'Clintock
Master	-	-	-	-	Frederick J. Krabbé.
Assistant-Surgeon	-	-	-	-	Robert C. Scott.
Engineer	-	-	-	-	Thomas Purchase.
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PREFACE.

THE following pages, descriptive of the eventful voyage of Her Majesty's Discovery ship "Resolute," are simply what they profess to be; viz. a journal kept by me on board that ship, up to the time of her abandonment in the ice, on the 15th of May, 1854. It was, however,—in common with similar records of other voyages in various parts of the world,—intended to be essentially private, as nothing was further from my thoughts than its publication; but in this I have been overruled by the wishes of numerous influential friends, who deemed it requisite to have the narrative of the voyage of a ship, which has lately been brought so prominently before the public; the more so, as Sir Edward Belcher's expedition, being divided, the "Resolute" and her steam tender "Intrepid," under Captain Kellett, formed as it were a distinct service. An additional reason for

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its appearing was the wish to connect the chain of events in the Arctic regions, during the present century; in which no gap has occurred save the voyage of Sir James Ross in 1848–49; this, it is much to be regretted, has not appeared, for the sledge journeys* then performed opened out a new era in Arctic exploration, greatly to the credit of Captain (now Admiral) Sir James Ross, Captains Austin and Ommanney, and Lieut. (now Captain) Francis L. M'Clintock, who, with Captain Sherard Osborn, Captain Penny, and others, have brought the equipments necessary for travelling to a marvellous state of perfection; so that any portion of the Arctic regions may be traced by means of sledges, with as little risk, and more certainty, than generally attends the exploration of countries, in any other quarter of the globe.

The time, trouble, and valuable advice which has been so freely given me by Mr. Barrow, is another proof of the unremitting kindness he has ever dis-

* *Vide Parliamentary Papers*, 1851. “*Additional Papers—Sledge Journeys of Captains Austin and Penny*,” and *Further Papers*, 1855, relative to the recent Arctic Expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin and the Crews of H.M.S.S. “*Erebus*” and “*Terror*.” Presented to both Houses of Parliament, by command of Her Majesty.

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played towards those who have in any way been connected with Arctic exploration, and the sincere thanks I now tender, not only in my own name, but on the part of all who have served in the North, will, I feel confident, be echoed by every “Arctic,” whether officer or man.

In conclusion I may be allowed to observe, that no one can be more fully aware of the many imperfections that exist in the style of the following narrative than I am myself, and I cannot but feel that it has no claim to the indulgence of the public, save its truthfulness in every respect.

Perhaps I ought to explain that the word “party,” so frequently used in this Journal, is the term by which, in the Arctic squadron, any body of travellers was designated.

G. F. M'DOUGALL.

Denny Street, Tralee.
July, 1857.

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PERHAPS of all the various duties to which a naval man finds himself subjected, throughout a necessarily adventurous career in every quarter of the known world, that of Arctic exploration, such as was adopted by the late searching expeditions, may fairly be considered unequalled in point of novelty, labour, and privation.

With but few resources beyond what the stores of ordinary men-of-war afford, vast tracts of land have been discovered, and our geographical knowledge of one of the most interesting — because so little known — quarters of the globe, extended by thousands of leagues, whilst to the scientific and inquiring mind has been opened out a boundless field of instruction and study.

But the above advantages, great as they are, fall into the shade, when compared with the solution of the long-pending problem of a North-west

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passage, which for centuries past has engaged the attention of the maritime world.

During the early voyages, mercantile enterprise (often of an individual character,) induced the risk of capital, to discover a shorter, and, as was hoped, a safer passage to the Pacific, than the long, tedious, and often disastrous voyage by the way of Cape Horn: where their little barks inefficiently equipped, too frequently foundered beneath the overwhelming seas of that still much dreaded neighbourhood.

It must not, however, be imagined that either of the above advantages were supposed likely to accrue, from the discovery of this much desired passage by the more modern voyagers, or their supporters; as no merchant of the present day would be insane enough to embark capital by such a route, for, setting aside the physical obstacles, in themselves sufficient to preclude the hope of success, the perfection that naval architecture, combined with steam, has now attained, enables the merchant to transmit his goods to a central position between the two Pacific Oceans in little more than a month from the principal ports of Western Europe.

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Science alone of late years has laboured with a zeal and perseverance almost unparalleled, to determine this great geographical question, but without success.

Providence had ordained that the little band engaged in the glorious cause of humanity, should solve what past generations attempted in vain.

Until within the last thirty-nine years, Baffin's Bay, properly so called, was a sealed book to the vessels engaged in the whale fishery, although Baffin during his last voyage in 1616 (241 years since), completed the circuit of Baffin's Bay, discovering also Wolstenholme, Booth, Whale, Smith, Jones, and Lancaster Sounds. Of this voyage, one of the most interesting on record, nothing save a skeleton chart, and a brief letter to Sir John Wolstenholme, has been preserved.

However, the year 1818 saw the portals of the hitherto unknown sea, opened by Captain (the late Admiral Sir John) Ross, who, notwithstanding his voyage was unsuccessful in many respects, has, nevertheless, the merit of being the immediate cause of inducing the whalers to push on to the northward of their usual fishing-grounds, where, if

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the risk was increased, so also was the success attending their labours.

Captain Ross returned to England the same year, and reported Smith's Sound a bay, and entirely closed Jones' and Lancaster Sounds.

But in consequence of some misunderstanding relative to closing the above sounds, another expedition was instigated by Sir John Barrow and determined on by Lord Melville, and fitted out the following year, 1819, the command being entrusted to Lieut. (the late Admiral Sir Edward) Parry, who, as second to Captain Ross, commanded the "Alexander" the previous year.

The 1st of August saw Parry enter Lancaster Sound, the existence of which was thus verified. Prince Regent's Inlet and Barrow's Straits were discovered and passed, and Melville Island, the "*ultima thule*" of Arctic navigators attained.

Melville Island was discovered by Parry on the 1st of September, 1819, and on the 26th the ships reached Winter Harbour, where they remained frozen in for a period of eleven months.

It is not a little singular, considering the many impediments in Arctic navigation, that the ship to which I was attached, viz. the "Resolute," should