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Albert Hastings Markham

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Northward Ho!

Originally published in 1879, this illustrated work by Albert Hastings Markham (1841–1918) opens with accounts of Arctic exploration from the sixth to the nineteenth centuries, including the expeditions led by Constantine John Phipps (1744–92), William Edward Parry (1790–1855) and George Nares (1831–1915). The journal of Thomas Floyd (c.1754–78), who served as midshipman under Phipps in 1773, comprises the most significant part of the work. Outlining the difficulties faced by an eighteenth-century expedition, ranging from encounters with wildlife to adverse weather conditions, Floyd's narrative is notable also for its inclusion of some early episodes in the career of Horatio Nelson, also a midshipman on the voyage. More than a dozen engravings enhance the work. Other publications by Markham, including *A Whaling Cruise to Baffin's Bay* (1874) and *The Great Frozen Sea* (1878), are also reissued in this series.

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Northward Ho!

*Including a Narrative of
Captain Phipps's Expedition*

ALBERT HASTINGS MARKHAM



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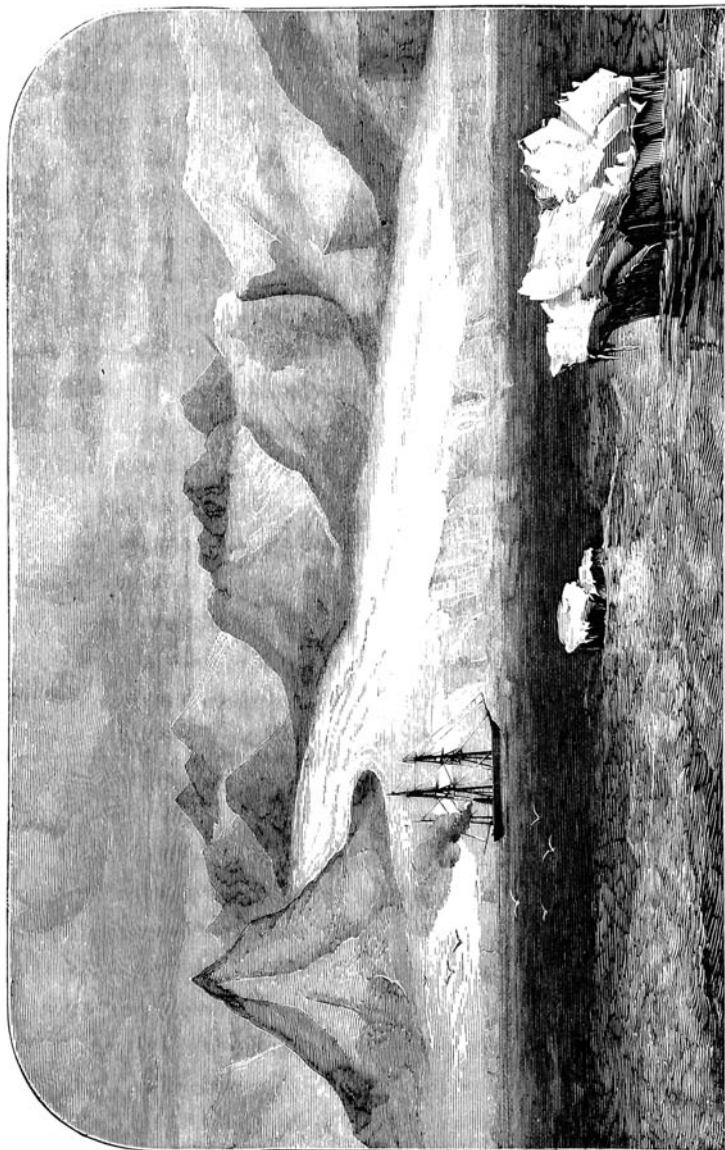
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VIEW IN BAFFIN BAY.

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NORTHWARD HO!

BY

CAPTAIN ALBERT H. MARKHAM, R.N.,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT FROZEN SEA,"
"A WHALING CRUISE TO BAFFIN'S BAY AND THE GULF OF BOOTHIA."
ETC., ETC.

Including a Narrative of Captain Phipps's Expedition,
By a Midshipman.

"And when we came to that cold countrie,
Where the white snow always lies,
Where the storms, and the cold, and the big whales blow,
And the daylight never dies."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1879.

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TO
THE MIDSHIPMEN OF THE ROYAL NAVY
THIS WORK,
DESCRIPTIVE OF ALL NORTH POLAR VOYAGES
UNDERTAKEN BY ENGLAND,
IS
Dedicated.

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PREFACE.

SOME explanation is, perhaps, necessary regarding the publication of the few pages which are here collected together under the title of *Northward Ho!*

During the early part of the present year a friend placed in my hands an old journal which had been written by one of his ancestors, whilst serving as a midshipman in the Royal Navy, more than a hundred years ago.

This journal, or log-book, was in a very dilapidated condition, several of its leaves were missing, others were torn, and in many parts it was nearly illegible.

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Sufficient material, however, remained to form a perfectly connected and intelligible narrative.

As it had reference to a very memorable expedition, the first in modern times to attempt the solution of that difficult problem which has hitherto successfully baffled all nations, the discovery of the North Pole, I conceived, with the kind permission of my friend, the idea of publishing it; and I was the more readily induced to do so, because I was aware that the only account of this particular voyage that had ever been made public, was the official one written by Captain Phipps, afterwards Lord Mulgrave, the leader of the expedition, immediately after his return to England.

The narrative itself appeared to me so amusingly written, and the incidents so quaintly described, that I felt it would be almost a sin to allow the manuscript to be longer buried in

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obscurity, more especially as any relation of that particular voyage must be rendered doubly interesting, from the fact that our great naval hero, Nelson, served as a midshipman on board one of the two ships comprising the expedition.

It had the further recommendation of being the account of a Polar voyage from a midshipman's point of view.

The original narrative has been transcribed almost word for word, excepting at those places where the pages, or portions of them, were deficient. Where these occur the context has been carefully studied, and the deficiency made good by references to the work of Captain Phipps, as also to the official logs of the two ships, as well as to the journals of Commander Lutwidge and the other commissioned officers of the expedition, which latter are now deposited at the Public Record Office, and

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which, through the permission of the Admiralty, I have been allowed to consult.

My first intention was simply to publish Mr. Floyd's journal accompanied by a short introductory chapter relating to Polar exploration; but the latter portion grew to such alarming dimensions, almost unconsciously to myself, that I deemed it expedient to introduce what was originally intended to form, as indeed it does now, the gist of the work in its proper chronological order in connection with the other voyages, being convinced that by so doing I should be more fully studying the convenience of my readers.

It is as well perhaps for me to take this opportunity of stating, that *Northward Ho!* is designed simply as a monograph of *Polar* voyages, or voyages that had specially for their object the discovery of the North Pole, or exploration of the northern regions, as

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distinguished from those expeditions that were despatched in quest of passages by the north-west, or north-east, to which I have scarcely alluded.

The accounts from which I have compiled my sketch of Polar exploration, prior to the expedition of Captain Phipps in 1773, are taken from the pages of Hakluyt and Purchas, whilst those of the subsequent voyages are gathered from the works published by the acknowledged historians of those expeditions.

If the result of my labours in thus briefly chronicling the deeds of those who have gone before us, afford my readers half as much pleasure as the compilation afforded me, I shall feel myself amply rewarded in thus having collected together materials which, I trust, will direct their thoughts northward, and turn the attention of the

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public once more to the great and glorious work of Arctic research and enterprise!

I also hope that the perusal of the following pages may assist in inducing young officers to imitate the laudable example set before them by Mr. Floyd, by putting down, in writing, all incidents connected with any service they may be employed on, no matter how trivial they may at the time appear, whilst the events are fresh in their memories.

From a brief introduction, written on a few loose pages in Mr. Floyd's log-book, I gather that it was evidently in his mind, if not to publish his narrative, at any rate to print it for private distribution amongst his friends, therefore I feel that I am doing no more than complying with his wishes, by thus making public his interesting journal, which so graphically describes the various events of the voyage.

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By dedicating this little work to the Midshipmen of the Royal Navy, I feel that I am also fulfilling the intentions of the young writer, who, notwithstanding his avowal that he wrote with the view of affording information to the executive branch of the naval service, and “particularly those who may hereafter be concerned in an expedition of the like nature,” tells us, directly afterwards, that his writing is “calculated for the easy comprehension of the inferior naval officers,” thereby, I presume, meaning the midshipmen, and I trust I shall be, by them, pardoned for such a presumption!

Should the heroic deeds performed by our countrymen, during the last three hundred years, which I have briefly attempted to record in these pages, inspire an enthusiastic desire in the minds of the young officers of the present day, to achieve distinction and renown

in the ice-clad seas of the far north, and encourage them to emulate the deeds of Franklin and Parry as well as those of Nelson and Collingwood, I shall feel that I have successfully accomplished the object I had in view, and shall be satisfied with the result.

The following slight biographical sketch, imperfect as it necessarily is, may serve to give some idea of the character of the author of one of the Polar voyages here related.

Mr. Floyd entered the navy at an early age, for his name is to be found on the books of several ships when he was only from eight to twelve years old, but as his rating on those occasions was that of "captain's steward," he was so borne, presumably, as was the custom in those days, in order that his naval time might count whilst he was himself completing his education at the Royal Naval School at Greenwich. His first real service was, probably, in the

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Modeste, in the early part of 1771, when he was about seventeen years of age; thence he was transferred, in October the following year, to the *Centaur*, Captain John Bentinck, which ship was paid off in January, 1773.

Young as Thomas Floyd was when he adopted the naval service as his profession, his brother, afterwards General Sir John Floyd, appears to have espoused a warlike career at even an earlier age, for we are told that he served in the army during the Seven Years' War, as a cornet in Elliot's light dragoons (now the 10th hussars,) when he was only twelve years old; and that he was actually engaged with that regiment in the skirmish that took place near the village of Ebsdorf, whilst pursuing the French after the obstinately disputed battle fought near the forest of Amoneburg in which the allies lost 800, and the enemy 1,100 men. He subsequently commanded the 19th dragoons

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in India, and was second in command at the capture of Seringapatam.

On the fitting out of the North Pole expedition, Mr. Floyd, as he tells us, volunteered for, and obtained an appointment on board the *Racehorse*. It is a curious fact that *all* the midshipmen, the majority of the master's mates and the clerk, joined that ship with the ratings of able seamen, being advanced to the dignity and position of officers the day after the ship's departure from England. In the *Carcass* seven young gentlemen joined as A.B.'s, of whom four were rated midshipmen, and three were promoted to master's mates, *previous* to the ship's sailing. Nelson and Hughes were the only two officers in the whole expedition that joined with the original rating of midshipmen.

The services of Mr. Floyd, after his return from the Arctic regions, are entirely lost sight

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of for three years and a half, but, from the contents of a few stray letters, it is supposed that he was, during that time, employed as a midshipman in some ship on the Mediterranean station, and being disappointed at not receiving, as is, no doubt, frequently the case even in these days, what he considered his well-earned promotion, he meditated leaving the Navy, for the purpose of following out some scheme that appears to have presented itself favourably to him.

From one of his letters we gather that he had been serving either as an acting lieutenant, or in some other superior grade, and had been superseded or disgraced from this position; for in a letter to his brother, without date—indeed a fragment of it only exists—he says, “Why should I *now* serve *inferior* to what I have done before? Why, as I grow old in the service, am I to be the more

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exposed to the drudgeries of it, without the smallest credit or profit? Was there any compensation attending it, or any good prospect to result from it, I would, with pleasure, continue, but as the case now stands, I am determined, in preference, to follow my plan, than to go to sea as a midshipman again. Allow me to say, brother, I have a worth of my own, and that I know of no situation so disadvantageous as the one in which I have last acted. If fortune sends me on real service, see if I abandon it! see if I relinquish it, on any consideration!"

His friends seem, however, not only to have induced him to remain in the service, but also to have obtained for him his well-merited promotion, for we find him serving as a lieutenant in the *Conqueror*, Captain Thomas Graves, in May, 1777. This ship sailed for the North American station, to reinforce the

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squadron under the joint command of Lord Howe and Admiral Byron, in June, 1778.

This was the *real* service to which he alluded in his letter to his brother, on which he was so anxious to be employed. His letters from this date are full of enthusiasm, eagerly looking forward to the prospect of a brush with the enemy.

In one of these epistles addressed to his mother in the old style, "Honoured Madam," he writes of the French, "by my soul we will take them, and carry them in a basket to the Admiralty door."

In another letter, describing the sufferings of the men from scurvy, which disease attacked the squadron at that time with great severity, he tells us that only ten men out of the entire crew of the *Conqueror* were able to stand on deck!

Mr. Floyd was not destined to enjoy a

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long career in the navy, for he died on the 16th of October, 1778, whilst his ship was stationed off Sandy Hook.

Had he survived, he would no doubt have distinguished himself in his profession, in the same brilliant manner that earned for his military brother the honour of a baronetcy, and other distinctions prized, and sought after, by members of both the navy and the army.

The relation of the subsequent voyages in this work will, I trust, tend in a measure to reveal what has already been achieved in a northerly direction, and will show the importance and necessity of further exploration.

The fact must not be lost sight of that the same reasons for a continuance of Arctic exploration exist now, that were considered sufficiently potent to warrant the despatch of an expedition by the Government in 1875.

Everything remains, with only one excep-

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tion, exactly as it was when the decision was arrived at four years ago, to continue the work of discovery.

This exception is the sealing up of one route, out of the few, by which the far North may be approached. Sir George Nares has conclusively, and satisfactorily, demonstrated that very little more can be added to our knowledge of the northern regions by further exploration in the neighbourhood of Smith Sound. To send another expedition in that direction would be a waste of money and energy, unless indeed a passage was sought through either Jones or Hayes Sounds.

In deciding then upon a route for future explorers to follow, the chief points for consideration are naturally those, the adoption of which would be most likely to ensure the greatest amount of geographical success; that is to say, the route that would lead to

the discovery of the greatest extent of the unknown region.

From our present knowledge of the nature of the ice in the so-called palæocrystic sea north of Smith Sound, I have no hesitation in saying that it would be manifestly unwise and imprudent, for any commander to risk the safety of his ship by attempting to navigate her amongst the ponderous ice-floes, described by Sir George Nares as existing in that locality, even supposing that the opening of the pack rendered such a proceeding temporarily practicable.

Let us consider what the fate of a ship and her living freight would be, if so unfortunate as to be caught between two large ice-fields, which are over a hundred feet in thickness.

Nothing of human construction could possibly resist the enormous pressure that would be exerted by the closing together

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of these masses of ice, of many thousands of tons weight. The vessel placed in such an unpleasant and critical position must inevitably be destroyed.

There is no possibility of extrication. No ice saws will touch ice of such thickness, therefore the construction of a dock is out of the question. All that can be done for the *immediate* safety of the crew, is to throw out, on the closing ice, all stores and provisions that may be in readiness on the upper deck, and then to abandon the ship and witness her destruction.

In this extremity it is as well to think of the probable fate of those who would be thus rendered homeless by such a catastrophe as we are picturing, occurring, we will say, some sixty miles to the northward of the land forming the southern shore of the Frozen Sea.

I fear their case would be hopeless, and that there would be little chance of salvation to the unfortunate people reduced to such a plight.

Of course the necessary precautions would have been taken, before leaving the land, of establishing large depôts of provisions in order to guard against such an eventuality as the one we are now imagining.

But of what use are these stores?

Will any of the poor castaways succeed in reaching them?

These questions, I fear, must be answered in the negative. For on such ice as that over which the northern division of the *Alert's* sledging parties travelled, it would be impossible, even dragging the very lightest loads, to accomplish more than two or three miles a day.

Loaded as shipwrecked men must necessarily be, and compelled to drag heavy boats