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CHAPTER I
Plan of the Expedition

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I

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CHAPTER I

PLAN OF THE EXPEDITION

THE Arctic expeditions which have had as their sole object the reaching of the North Pole, on account of the difficulties of such an undertaking, and the very small advantages to be derived from it, have been few. Since the seventeenth century the English have attempted to penetrate to the far east by advancing towards the north in the Arctic Ocean. The voyages of Henry Hudson were followed by others which are not deserving of notice, until 1773, when the British Government sent Commander C. J. Phipps, with the ships *Racehorse* and *Carcass*, expressly for the purpose of reaching the Pole. Passing to the north of Spitzbergen, Phipps was stopped by ice in the latitude of $80^{\circ} 48'$; and though some captains of whalers attained the latitude of $81^{\circ} 30'$ with sailing ships, and though in 1868 Baron Nordenskiöld with the steamer *Sophia* went so far as $81^{\circ} 42'$ in the same direction, these attempts only proved that, even with the help of steam, ships could not advance into the ice of the Arctic Ocean far away from land.

Short History of
Arctic Voyages
towards the Pole.

But although ships were stopped by the ice, might not an attempt be made to cross it with sledges? Commander Parry, R.N., sailed on board the *Hecla*, which he left in June, 1827, in Treurenberg Bay, on the northern coast of Spitzbergen. With two launches built so as to serve as sledges, three officers, twenty-four men, and provisions for seventy-one days, he sailed north, and then drew his boats over

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the ice-fields. These did not form, as had been reported, a level plain without obstacles. They were, on the contrary, crossed by ridges of ice, over which the boats had to be hauled with ropes, and intersected by numerous channels on which the boats had to be launched, to be drawn up again on the opposite shore, and thus had to be unloaded and loaded. As the snow was



COMMANDER C. J. PHIPPS

softened by the high temperature, the sailors sank in it up to their waists.

Although the ground covered each day was much less than had been anticipated, Parry continued to push on towards the north, hoping that his difficulties might diminish according as he went farther; but as the state of the ice did not change, and as,

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moreover, it drifted every day as much as four miles to the south, thirty-six days after his departure, when in the latitude of $82^{\circ} 45'$, he gave the order to return. For many years this was the highest latitude ever attained by man, and Parry's attempt showed



COMMANDER W. E. PARRY

the difficulty, especially during summer, of travelling with sledges over the ice of the Polar Ocean.¹

¹ Commander Parry was sixty-one days absent from his ship, from June 21st to August 21st. He passed thirteen days in the boats and forty-eight on the ice. The distance in a straight line from Treurenberg Bay ($79^{\circ} 55'$ N. lat. by $16^{\circ} 48'$ E. long.) to the most northern point reached ($82^{\circ} 45'$ N. lat. by $19^{\circ} 25'$ E. long.) is 172 miles.

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In 1875 the English Admiralty dispatched for the third time an expedition to the North Pole. The preceding voyages had shown that it was as difficult to advance with ships as with sledges. It was hoped that by penetrating into the basin lying between Greenland and America, it would be possible to sail along some coast-line up to the 83rd or 84th parallel, where it would winter, and then advance towards the Pole on sledges in the following spring.

The expedition led by Commander Nares was composed of two ships, the *Alert* and the *Discovery*, one of which was to push as far as possible to the north in the above-mentioned basin, whilst the other should take shelter in some safe anchorage, and bring home the crews in case the former met with any mishap. The ships passed by Smith Sound into Kennedy Channel, and reached Lady Franklin Bay. The *Discovery* was left there at $81^{\circ} 44'$, whilst the *Alert*, entering Robeson Channel, reached the latitude of $82^{\circ} 27'$ off Grant Land. The excursions made during the autumn to discover the direction of the coast ascertained that it trended towards the west, and thus took away all hope of utilising it to establish depôts for the expedition towards the Pole.

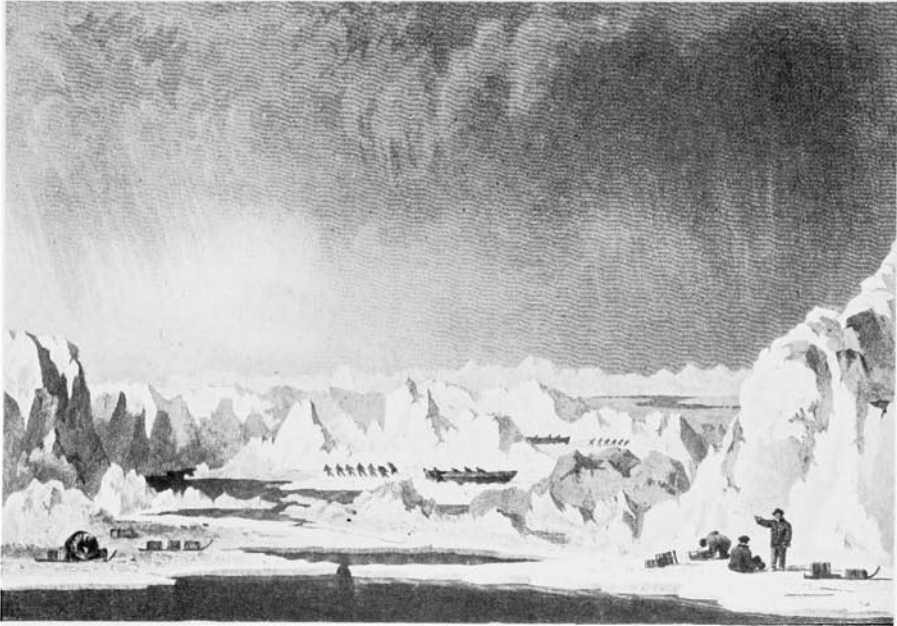
In the following spring, however, Nares dispatched towards the north Commander A. H. Markham, with an officer, eighteen men, three sledges, and provisions for seventy days. He could only advance slowly and laboriously, as it was necessary to return over the same road several times in order to transport the heavy loads. After very great efforts he reached the latitude of $83^{\circ} 20'$, where he was obliged to stop on account of the fatigue of his men, among whom had also appeared some cases of scurvy. On his returning to the ship the situation was still more difficult. To the weight of the baggage was added that of the sick, who had to be carried on the sledges, and the expedition would hardly have succeeded in reaching

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the *Alert* if a man had not volunteered to go forward to seek for help. The latitude reached by Parry was thus slightly exceeded, by a different road, although the advance had been carried out in the most favourable months.¹

A few years later, in 1882, the United States succeeded in bearing away from England the Polar record, which had been jealously guarded



THE ATTEMPT TO REACH THE POLE.—W. E. PARRY, 1827

for so many years. During the sojourn in Lady Franklin Bay of the expedition led by Lieutenant A. W. Greely for scientific purposes, Captain J. B. Lockwood, by advancing along the coast of Greenland, reached with sledges the latitude of $83^{\circ} 24'$. The fact of having gone

¹ Commander Markham started on April 3rd and returned to the *Alert* on June 14th, after being seventy-two days absent. The distance in a straight line from the *Alert* ($82^{\circ} 27'$ N. by $61^{\circ} 18'$ W. long.) to the most northern point reached ($83^{\circ} 20'$ N. by 63° W. long.) is fifty-four miles.

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farther than Markham, though only by four miles, whilst starting from a latitude forty-three miles lower, appeared to demonstrate the advantage to be gained by following the land in order to advance to the north, but it afforded at the same time additional proof of the great difficulty of reaching the Pole.¹



COMMANDER A. H. MARKHAM

Professor Nansen was to give a fresh stimulus to those who were desirous of penetrating the secrets of Arctic regions, but was discouraged by the results of the last expeditions. Abandoning the system followed until then of sailing along some coast-line

¹ Captain Lockwood was absent from Fort Conger for sixty days, from April 3rd to June 1st. The distance in a straight line from Fort Conger ($81^{\circ} 44' N.$ by $64^{\circ} 45' W.$ long.) to the farthest point attained ($83^{\circ} 24' N.$ by $40^{\circ} 46' W.$ long.) is 220 miles.

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into the highest latitudes where shelter could be obtained during the winter, and then dispatching sledge expeditions in the following spring, he formed the plan of taking advantage of the current which causes the masses of ice in the Arctic Ocean to drift from east to west, and allowing his ship to be carried along by them.



CAPTAIN J. B. LOCKWOOD

When he reached the 84th parallel, and was convinced that the *Fram*, while drifting, would not pass by the Pole, he left his ship with a single companion in order to advance towards the Pole, and from thence proceed to Emperor Franz Josef Land. By the use of sledges drawn by dogs, which had one by one to be killed to feed the survivors, and by daring to abandon all hope of retreat, as he had previously done in Greenland, he succeeded in making an immense advance beyond the parallel reached by his predecessors,

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and extended up to 227 miles from the Pole the limits of what was known of the Arctic Ocean.¹

The uncertainty of the existence of a great extent of land to the north of what was already known rendered it necessary, in order to reach the Pole, to travel over the moving ice-fields of the Arctic Ocean. No deposit of provisions could be made on these ice-fields, and, therefore, to facilitate this advance it was essential that the point of departure for the expedition should be established as far as possible towards the north. How could that be done? By letting the ship drift again in the ice, or by sailing along some coast-line as far as possible to the north, by the routes already discovered?

To repeat the attempt made by the *Fram*, and submit to imprisonment by the ice farther to the east than Nansen had done, necessitated remaining for perhaps three or four years in the Polar seas, in which case the sledging expedition could be only carried out after two or three years; and a dépôt of supplies should first of all be safely established on Emperor Franz Josef Land, where the sledge expedition would touch on its return. All honour, therefore, is due to Nansen, who, knowing that he should have to stay so long in the Polar ice, prepared and carried out his voyage with that intention. Although my desire of arriving at the Pole was most ardent, it was not, however, strong enough to induce me to remain for some years in those solitary and icy regions. The danger of losing the dogs by disease, the risk of trusting to drifting on the Arctic

¹Nansen, from March 14th (84° 4' N. by 101° 47' E. long.) to August 9th, the day on which he arrived at Adelaide Island (81° 38' N. by 62° 11' E. long.), having attained in the meanwhile the parallel of 86° 13', and the longitude of 96° E., had covered a total distance of 500 miles. To arrive at Cape Flora he travelled a further distance of about 210 miles.