

NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY
TO THE SHORES OF
THE POLAR SEA,

IN THE YEARS
1819, 20, 21, AND 22.

BY
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AND COMMANDER OF THE EXPEDITION

WITH AN APPENDIX ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS RELATING TO
SCIENCE AND NATURAL HISTORY.

ILLUSTRATED BY NUMEROUS PLATES AND MAPS.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL BATHURST.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE - STREET.

MDCCCXXIII.

INTRODUCTION.

HIS Majesty's Government having determined upon sending an Expedition from the Shores of Hudson's Bay by land, to explore the Northern Coast of America, from the Mouth of the Copper-Mine River to the eastward, I had the honour to be appointed to this service by Earl Bathurst, on the recommendation of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; who, at the same time, nominated Doctor John Richardson, a Surgeon in the Royal Navy, Mr. George Back, and Mr. Robert Hood, two Admiralty Midshipmen, to be joined with me in the Expedition. My instructions in substance informed me, that the main object of the Expedition was that of determining the latitudes and longitudes of the Northern Coast of North America, and the trending of that Coast from the Mouth of the Copper-Mine River to the eastern extremity of that Continent; that it was left for me to determine, according to circumstances, whether it might be most advisable to proceed, at once, directly to the northward till I arrived at the sea-coast, and proceed westerly towards the Copper-Mine River; or advance, in the first instance, by the usual route to the Mouth of the Copper-Mine River, and from thence easterly till I should arrive at the eastern

extremity of that Continent; that, in the adoption of either of these plans, I was to be guided by the advice and information which I should receive from the wintering servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, who would be instructed by their employers to co-operate cordially in the prosecution of the objects of the Expedition and who would provide me with the necessary escort of Indians to act as guides, interpreters, game-killers, &c. ; and also with such articles of clothing, ammunition, snow-shoes, presents, &c., as should be deemed expedient for me to take. That as another principal object of the Expedition was to amend the very defective geography of the northern part of North America, I was to be very careful to ascertain correctly the latitude and longitude of every remarkable spot upon our route, and of all the bays, harbours, rivers, headlands, &c., that might occur along the Northern Shore of North America. That, in proceeding along the coast, I should erect conspicuous marks at places where ships might enter, or to which a boat could be sent; and to deposit information as to the nature of the coast for the use of Lieutenant Parry. That, in the Journal of our route, I should register the temperature of the air, at least three times in every twenty-four hours ; together with the state of the wind and weather, and any other meteorological phenomenon. That I should not neglect any opportunity of observing and noting down the dip and variation of the magnetic needle, and the intensity of the magnetic force; and should take particular notice whether any, and what kind or degree of, influence the Aurora Borealis might appear to exert on the magnetic needle; and to notice whether that phenomenon was attended with any noise;

and to make any other observations that might be likely to tend to the further developement of its cause, and the laws by which it is governed.

Mr. Back and Mr. Hood were to assist me in all the observations above-mentioned, and to make drawings of the land, of the natives, and of the various objects of natural history; and particularly of such as Dr. Richardson, who, to his professional duties was to add that of naturalist, might consider to be most curious and interesting.

I was instructed, on my arrival at, or near, the Mouth of the Copper-Mine River, to make every inquiry as to the situation of the spot from whence native copper had been brought down by the Indians to the Hudson's Bay establishment, and to visit and explore the place in question; in order that Dr. Richardson might be enabled to make such observations as might be useful in a commercial point of view, or interesting to the science of "mineralogy.

From Joseph Berens, Esq., the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Gentlemen of the Committee, I received all kinds of assistance and information, communicated in the most friendly manner previous to my leaving England; and I had the gratification of perusing the orders to their agents and servants in North America, containing the fullest directions to promote, by every means, the progress of the Expedition ; and I most cheerfully avail myself Of this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to these Gentlemen for their personal kindness to myself and the other officers, as well as for the benefits rendered by them to the Expedition; and the same sentiment is due towards the Gentlemen

of the North-West Company, both in England and America, more particularly to Simon M'Gillivray, Esq., of London, from whom I received much useful information, and cordial letters of recommendation to the partners and agents of that Company, resident on our line of route.

A short time before I left London I had the pleasure and advantage of an interview with the late Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who was one of the two persons who had visited the coast we were to explore. He afforded me, in the most open and kind manner, much valuable information and advice.

The provisions, instruments and other articles of which I had furnished a list, by direction of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, were embarked on board the Hudson's Bay Company's ship Prince of Wales, appointed by the Committee to convey the Expedition to York Factory, their principal establishment in Hudson's Bay.

It will be seen, in the course of the Narrative as well as in the Appendix, how much reason I had to be satisfied with, and how great my obligations are to, all the Gentlemen who were associated with me in the Expedition, whose kindness, good conduct, and cordial co-operation, have made an impression which can never be effaced from my mind. The unfortunate death of Mr. Hood is the only drawback which I feel from the otherwise unalloyed pleasure I derived from reflecting on that cordial unanimity which at all times prevailed among us in the days of sunshine, and in those of "sickness and sorrow."

To Doctor Richardson, in particular, the exclusive merit is due

of whatever collections and observations have been made in the department of Natural History; and I am indebted to him in no small degree for his friendly advice and assistance in the preparation of the present Narrative. The Appendix is mostly his own.

The charts and drawings were made by Lieutenant Back, and the late Lieutenant Hood. Both these gentlemen cheerfully and ably assisted me in making the observations and in the daily conduct of the Expedition. The paper in the Appendix by Mr. Hood, on the various phenomena presented by the Aurora Borealis, will, it is presumed, present to the reader some new facts connected with this meteor. Mr. Back was mostly prevented from turning his attention to objects of science by the many severe duties which were required of him, and which obliged him to travel almost constantly every winter that we passed in America; to his personal exertions indeed, is mainly to be attributed our final safety. And here I must be permitted to pay the tribute, which is due to the fidelity, exertion, and uniform good conduct in the most trying situations, of John Hepburn, an English seaman, and our only attendant, to whom in the latter part of our journey we owe, under Divine Providence, the preservation of the lives of some of the party.

I ought, perhaps, to crave the reader's indulgence towards the defective style of this work, which I trust will not be refused when it is considered that mine has been a life of constant employment in my profession from a very early age. I have been prompted

to venture upon the task solely by an imperious sense of duty. when called upon to undertake it.

I am indebted to Joseph Sabine. Esq., F. R. S., for the very valuable account of Quadrupeds and Birds contained in the Appendix.
