

**THE NORTH-WEST  
PASSAGE AND THE FATE  
OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN**

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The North-West Passage and the Fate of Sir John Franklin by James A. Browne

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**JAMES A. BROWNE**

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THE  
NORTH-WEST PASSAGE  
AND  
THE FATE  
OF  
SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

BY

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JAMES A. BROWNE.

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" Miserable they,  
Who, here entangled in the gathering ice,  
Take their last look of the descending sun;  
While full of death, and fierce with ten-fold frowns,  
The long, long night, incumbent o'er their heads,  
Falls horrible. Such was the Briton's fate,  
As with *first* prow (what have not Britons bared?)  
He for the passage sought."



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1860.

203. f. 383.

TO  
MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD SABINE,

ROYAL ARTILLERY,

A VERY DEAR FRIEND OF THE LATE

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN,

AND ONE WHOSE NAME WILL EVER HOLD A PLACE

IN

ASTRONOMY, GEOGRAPHY, & NATURAL HISTORY,

THESE PAGES ARE (BY PERMISSION),

HUMBLY DEDICATED.

## P R E F A C E .

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The information contained in this little book was originally delivered as a Lecture, at the Soldier's Institute, Woolwich. Wishing, however, to produce in the minds of my friends, and others, a deeper interest in Arctic subjects, particularly the Fate of the Franklin Expedition, than a mere casual reader can possess, I have determined to publish it (with many additions) in order that it may be more extensively circulated, and, at the same time, be more fully understood by those who heard the Lecture, and whom I cannot sufficiently thank for the kind attention they then paid to me. The Lecture (as will be readily seen) was chiefly composed of extracts from the works of Arctic travellers, the principal of which are Sir Edward Parry's, Sir John Franklin's, Sir George Back's, and Sir Leopold M'Clintock's narratives, and a work by P. L. Simmonds, F.R.G.S., in which is

given a condensed history of all the Polar Voyages of the present century. Newspapers and Periodicals have also been freely resorted to.

The undertaking (in which I have received numerous encouragements) is one altogether foreign to my profession; but the subject of it lies near my heart.

The possibility of a short route to Cathay,\* by rounding the northern coast of America, was suggested by our forefathers in the 16th century, and it occupied their attention upwards of forty years. The idea sank into insignificance—almost into oblivion—during the 18th century, but was revived with great spirit at the commencement of the 19th, and persevered in for 32 years, when a passage, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, was discovered; this, however, proved to be altogether useless, for even if a ship could have made the passage (which was very doubtful) it would have taken longer than the ordinary voyage round the Cape of Good Hope. Many valuable lives have been sacrificed, to say nothing of the enormous expenses incurred, in searching out the

\* China.



new passage: at the termination of each unsuccessful enterprise, many persons declared it to be the will of the Almighty that it should not be known, and cried "*desist*;" while others said, "*proceed and proceed again*;" God gave the earth to man for his use and knowledge, that He, the Creator of the Universe, might be glorified thereby; and it would show a distrust of His Holy Word to be discouraged by one or even by fifty failures.

At length a bold party of explorators was sent on this perilous undertaking, but never returned, and in searching for *them* the problem of centuries was solved.—Englishmen love to engage in enterprise, and, notwithstanding the many failures they have ever experienced, and the disasters they have often suffered for its sake, their efforts have, generally, in the end, been crowned with success; they would, therefore, seem to lack the spirit and courage of their ancestors were they not to continue that desire for the progress of discovery which so nobly characterized their forefathers for upwards of four centuries.

The NORTH-EAST PASSAGE, round the northern coasts of Europe and Asia, was attempted many years before that of the NORTH-WEST. The first fleet which

sailed from England on that enterprise consisted of three vessels, under the command of the illustrious Sir Hugh Willoughby, who perished in a somewhat similar manner to the unfortunate mariners of our own time\*.

There cannot, I apprehend, be a person, claiming the title of *Briton*, who can regard, unmoved, the fate of the Franklin Expedition. It is one of the most exciting, heart-rending, and yet most glorious events recorded in modern history. That 137 men, some of them old in suffering, should voluntarily leave their native land, knowing to some extent the climate they would have to endure and the many dangers they would, in all probability, have to encounter, for the purpose of adding one more *bright page* to the scientific history of their country, and that not one of them should remain to tell the tale how, in their last extremity, they nobly filled up that page, is a fact, not only glorious, but also melancholy. Although in our day we mourn their loss, their names will ever be honoured by posterity; and their history will serve as an example to mariners of succeeding generations.

\* See Appendix No. 2.

I would here express my gratitude to Mr. W. P. Snow\*, an officer of the mercantile marine, who has served with distinction in the Arctic Regions, author of "*The Voyage of the 'Prince Albert' in Search of Sir John Franklin†*," "*A Two Year's Cruise in the South Seas†*," &c., for his kindness in furnishing me with some information which saved me considerable time and trouble; and also for presenting me with "A leaf of the Prayer-Book found with the skeletons in the boat," as a relic of the Franklin Expedition.

JAMES ALEX. BROWNE.

*Woolwich, May, 1860.*

\* William Parker Snow—"a very able captain . . . a man who, descended from father and grandsire in the Navy, was brought up at the Royal Naval School, Greenwich, as a King's boy—apprenticed seven years out of Liverpool, has navigated in every part of the globe; is a man of science, recognised as such by the Admiralty, and having had experience of hard service in the '*Prince Albert*,' in which vessel he was second in command, when commissioned in search of Sir John Franklin."—*Voice of Pity*, September, 1854.

Mr. Snow—assisted by a noble Lady, a number of experienced Arctic officers, and some influential members of the Royal Geographical Society—is now engaged in fitting out an expedition to prosecute the search for further journals, records, or other traces of the Franklin Expedition. Those who may feel an interest on this subject, and inclined to aid him, will please forward their subscriptions to the banking-house of Biddulph, Cocks, and Co., 43, Charing Cross, to the credit of "Snow's Arctic Search Fund."

† Longman and Co.