

**A NARRATIVE OF TWO  
VOYAGES TO HUDSON'S BAY:  
WITH TRADITIONS OF THE  
NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS**

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A Narrative of Two Voyages to Hudson's Bay: With Traditions of the North American Indians  
by J. B. Nevins

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A  
NARRATIVE OF TWO VOYAGES  
TO  
HUDSON'S BAY,

WITH  
TRADITIONS OF THE NORTH-AMERICAN INDIANS.

By J. B. NEVINS, M.D. Lond.

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## PREFACE.

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IN the following Work it must be noticed, that the descriptions of the Indians and Esquimaux of the Hudson's Bay Territory, only apply to the tribes met with near the borders of Hudson's Bay, which are principally the Chippewa and Cree Indians. This remark is necessary, because the account here given differs in some respects from what has been published concerning the tribes inhabiting the plains and the interior of the country. The general term Indian, embraces many nations, which differ exceedingly in size, strength, appearance, and habits: whenever the

Author has mentioned anything concerning them, without giving an authority for it, the circumstances have fallen under his own observation; and he has the most perfect reliance upon the veracity of the Indian chief, from whom he received the traditions related in the following pages.

*Liverpool, 1847.*



## A NARRATIVE,

&c.

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WE sailed from London on the 4th of June 1842, in the "good ship Prince Rupert, bound,"—according to the reverential phrase, introduced when voyages were even more rare and dangerous than at present, and still retained in ships' papers,—“by the Grace of God, to York Factory, Hudson's Bay.”

A summer voyage to this place is not quite so easy or pleasant as an excursion up the Rhine, or down the Danube. And not only must the crew be provided with an extra supply of winter clothing to guard against the cold, but the ship must also be protected against the violent blows she receives from the large masses of ice floating, even in summer, throughout the northern seas. This is done by making her sides double where they are most exposed, and by putting very thick, strong caseings of wood, called ice-chocks, in front of her bows, which add to her strength, though, it must be confessed, they diminish her beauty.

We sailed first to Stromness, in the Orkney Islands, where we remained nearly a fortnight to take some men on board, several of whom go from Orkney every year as labourers in the service of

the Hudson's Bay Company; and though the wages are very low, and they have to endure great hardships and privations, there is so much spirit of enterprize amongst the inhabitants of these islands, that there is little difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number. The custom was so general a few years since, that a person was scarcely considered a man, until he had been to the "nor'-west," and he would stand but an indifferent chance of a favourable reception, should he make proposals of marriage before having given this proof of his manhood; but this feeling is now less strong than it was, and many of the labourers are married before going out.

After leaving Stromness, we sailed direct for Hudson's Straits, and had the usual amount of comforts and annoyances experienced in a sea voyage; but met with nothing of particular interest after passing Rona, until we approached the entrance of the Straits. That island appears at a little distance to be nothing but a bleak and desolate rock, though a few fishermen live upon one part of it. There is so little intercourse between it and other places, that it is said George the Third was prayed for, three months after his death, the news not having reached the island sooner.

The weather was generally pretty fine, but was very thick and disagreeable off the south of Greenland. This region goes amongst sailors by the name of the "Stormy Forties;" and it is curious that whatever the weather may have been in other places, it is generally rough or foggy between 40° and 50° west longitude. If it had been clear, we

might from the mast-head have seen Staten Hook, the southern portion of Greenland, which is very lofty; but as it was, we saw nothing. For several days it continued so thick as to prevent our taking any observation of the sun, and thereby ascertaining our exact position. It cleared up one afternoon, and we saw land distinctly, which we supposed to be Hatton's Headland, the south cape of Resolution Island, at the mouth of Hudson's Straits, and it was so entered in the log-book.

The weather again became thick, and the wind so contrary, that we were tossing about for four days, unable to enter the Straits, and waiting for it to clear. When this happened we found we had been quite mistaken. There is always a strong current down the south side of Hudson's Straits, which in some places runs as fast as seven or eight knots an hour. This had caught us, and carried us even below Cape Chidleigh, on the north of Labrador, the point of land we had observed. It must be very lofty, for at the time we saw it, we were not less than sixty or seventy miles distant.

We were sailing smoothly along six days before entering the Strait, when the man on the look out called out "Ice a-head!" and we soon saw some small pieces floating slowly towards us. Later on in the afternoon, we came into the midst of a small field of ice, which we soon left behind. To those who had not seen any before, it appeared a good deal; and we congratulated each other upon our good fortune in seeing what so few people have the opportunity of doing, viz., large fields of ice in the middle of July. There is really more beauty