

**THE SEARCH FOR FRANKLIN: A
NARRATIVE OF THE AMERICAN
EXPEDITION UNDER LIEUTENANT
SCHWATKA, 1878 TO 1880**

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The Search for Franklin: A Narrative of the American Expedition Under Lieutenant Schwatka, 1878 to 1880 by William Henry Gilder

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WILLIAM HENRY GILDER

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LIEUTENANT BONWATKA SHOWING THE ESKIMOS THE
"ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS."

Page 45.

THE
SEARCH FOR FRANKLIN.

A NARRATIVE OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITION
UNDER LIEUTENANT SCHWATKA,
1878 to 1880.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,
FROM ENGRAVINGS DESIGNED BY THE ARTIST OF THE EXPEDITION.



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THE SEARCH FOR FRANKLIN.

INTRODUCTION.



MR JOHN FRANKLIN had already earned a high reputation as an Arctic explorer when, in the spring of 1845, he was placed by the British Admiralty at the head of an expedition designed to prosecute the search after a North-West Passage,—that is, a channel of communication between Baffin Bay on the west coast and Behring Strait on the east coast of North America. No better choice could have been made; for he was a man of high scientific acquirements, of large experience, of undaunted courage, and of blameless character. The two ships placed under his command were the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, both of which had already encountered the perils of the Arctic seas: in the former Franklin hoisted his own flag, the latter was in charge of Captain Crozier. Carefully equipped, provisioned for three years, and carrying one hundred and thirty-seven picked men as their crews, the two ships sailed from the Thames towards the end of May. On the 8th of June they left the Orkney Islands, and directed their course towards the extreme point of Greenland, known as Cape Farewell. A month later they dropped anchor for a while among an archipelago of rocky

islets on the east side of Baffin Bay. After a brief rest, Franklin pushed forward across the bay to Lancaster Sound, his course being much impeded, however, by the pack-ice, which had not yet broken up. His ships were "spoken" about this time by a Hull whaler, the *Prince of Wales*, to whose master Franklin and Crozier reported that all were well, and all confident of successfully accomplishing their high enterprise. That same evening, the 26th of July, the ice gave way; and the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, steering to the north-west, plunged into Lancaster Sound. And then a cloud, as it were, descended upon them; a darkness and a mystery: they passed into the frozen wastes of the Arctic World, and disappeared as completely as if the sea had suddenly engulfed them. Of late years, some memorials of them, as we shall see, have been discovered; but even now the record is imperfect, and the whole story of the fate of Franklin's expedition will never be revealed to the curious gaze of mankind.

It was not expected that any news of the progress of the voyagers would reach England until the summer of 1846, or even the spring of 1847; and no apprehensions, therefore, arose as to their safety until the latter date had passed. When the summer of 1848 came, without intelligence, a natural anxiety seized upon the public mind; and when the winter went by, and still nothing was heard of Franklin and his men, the anxiety deepened into alarm. At length the Government resolved to send expeditions in search of the missing heroes. One was despatched under Sir James Ross, and another under Sir John Richardson; but both failed to discover the slightest traces of their course. A third expedition, under Captains Moore and Kellet, started from Behring Strait, and worked towards the east: in their boats they got as far as the mouth of Mackenzie River; but their endeavours

were fruitless. Then, in the spring of 1849, the Government offered a reward of £20,000 to any private adventurers, of any nation, who should discover and relieve the wanderers; and Lady Franklin, a woman of noble devotedness and heroic patience, organized several relieving parties out of her own and her friends' resources. In 1850 no fewer than ten expeditions, under Sir James Ross, Rae, M'Clure, Osborn, Penny, Austin, Collinson, Forsyth, Ommaney, and De Haven, were searching amid the frozen wilds of the far North for Franklin and his companions.

The instructions given to Franklin by the Admiralty had directed him to pass through Lancaster Sound into Barrow Strait, thence to Cape Walker, and from Cape Walker to make his way into Behring Strait by any possible channel. The general opinion was that he had sailed to the west of Melville Island (or Peninsula), and then been caught in the ice among the islands which stud that portion of the Polar Sea. And it was assumed, but on very insufficient grounds, that he would be engaged in an effort to cross the ice and reach one of the Hudson Bay Company's settlements or some whaling-station.

Dr. Rae, therefore, started for Banks Island, whence he proposed to reach Cape Walker. Captains Collinson and M'Clure undertook the eastern route, by way of Behring Strait. Others sailed for Baffin Bay to follow up Franklin's supposed route; others steered for various points of Banks Land and Boothia—these last including an American expedition, fitted out by Mr. Henry Grinnell of New York, and consisting of the brigs *Advance* and *Rescue* (May 1850).

Two of these numerous searching-parties were to a certain limited extent successful. In August 1850 Captains Austin and Penny, who had gained the eastern entrance of Wellington Channel, were forced, by the accumulated ice, to take shelter in a great bay in the rear of Beechey Island. On