

ART. V.—DISCOVERY OF THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE.

DEASE AND SIMPSON'S ARCTIC LAND EXPEDITION.

In the year of our Lord 1062, just four years before the battle of Hastings changed the laws, the language, and the destinies of France and England, and, with them, those of the world, North America was discovered and colonized by the Norwegians, who appear to have coasted as far south as the Bay of Fundy certainly, and probably even to Massachusetts Bay. We make some allowance for the poetical fervor of the people who gave the name of *Green-land* to a sterile waste of ice, where brandy freezes by the fireside, and nothing green but moss was ever seen. Still, when they assert they found grapes in the country they call *Wineland*, as they left behind them accurate descriptions of the Esquimaux and other natives, such as they are found at the present day, there is no reason to deny them the honor of being the original discoverers. The Norwegian colony, however, was early lost; its story existed but as a vague tradition, and no way detracts from the glory of Columbus and Cabot. From that time till the year 1818, nothing was learned of that region likely materially to affect the interests of mankind.

In 1618, William Baffin discovered and explored the inland sea that now bears his name, though its very existence was long discredited, and the narrative of his voyage was treated as a fable till his veracity was duly attested by Captain Ross. His name was even expunged from the maps. Rather more than a century after, Behring's Strait was passed, and the separation of the two continents in the west ascertained. Hearne reached the mouth of the Coppermine River in 1772, and McKenzie the mouth of McKenzie's River, twenty-one years later. These four points, then, were all that was known of the shore of the American Arctic Ocean; and no benefit resulted from that little, if we except the settlement of Hudson's Bay, till the recent explorations of Ross, Parry, Franklin, Beechey, and, though last, not least, of Dease and Simpson. Let the reader read what follows with the best map he can procure before him. It will be necessary to a correct understanding of the premises.

In 1818, Sir John Ross ascertained that the barrier of ice which closes Baffin's Bay was penetrable, circumnavigated that great inland sea, and opened a new ocean to the whale fishery, which has already been of great benefit to Great Britain. He also invented an instrument for sounding the depths of the ocean, and discovered a people of fishermen who pursued their avocation without boats, or the use or knowledge of iron or other metals, in a climate where the sun has scarce power to shine, and the very brutes are yearly obliged to emigrate. These people knew no others, considered themselves the only men on earth, knew scarcely a comfort, and yet they were contented and happy. More than two thousand miles of coast were restored to our knowledge of geography; and all this, one would suppose, was enough to entitle the gallant officer to the gratitude of the people he represented; but it was not so. He did not do all that it was possible to have done, as subsequent experience has demonstrated. He did not see that there was an open passage into Lancaster's Sound, or enter it; and hence he suffered a temporary disgrace. It was alleged that his officers were more clear-sighted than himself, and hence he lost the confidence of

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