

After the accounts we have formerly given of the expeditions under Sir John Franklin and Dr. Richardson in the northern regions of America, it would be idle in us to enter into a particular description of the incidents in Captain Back's. In his own nervous and picturesque narrative, the details of even the first part of his travels are most interesting: the best analysis we could afford would seem a mere repetition.

Captain Back left London on the 17th February, 1333, accompanied by Mr. King, a surgeon, and three men, two of whom had gained experience under Sir John Franklin. At New York they received every possible attention and hospitality; and a steam-vessel was offered for their conveyance to Albany. Nothing could exceed the kindness and exertions of Governor Simpson and all the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company. A sufficient number of *voyageurs* were procured at La Chine; and Captain Back was ready to leave Norway House on the 28th June with sixteen persons, consisting of steersmen, carpenters, artillery-men, fishermen, and *voyageurs*, to whom were afterwards added nine others.

'This,' says the Captain, 'was a happy day for me; and as the canoe pushed off from the bank, my heart swelled with hope and joy. Now, for the first time, I saw myself in a condition to verify the kind anticipations of my friends. The preliminary difficulties had been overcome: I was fairly on the way to the accomplishment of the benevolent errand on which I had been commissioned; and the contemplation of an object so worthy of all exertion, in which I thought myself at length free to indulge, raised my spirits to a more than ordinary pitch of excitement.'—p. 57.

At Pine Portage he met with Mr. McLeod, one of the Hudson's Bay Company's servants, and though this gentleman was on his way to Canada for the re-establishment of his health, no sooner did he learn the humane object of the mission, than he determined at once to sacrifice his own plans to the pleasure of becoming the companion of Back; by which disinterested act, six persons—Mr. McLeod, his wife, three children, and a servant—were added to the eight, who with their baggage had already pretty well filled the single canoe. This, however, it appears, was nothing unusual, and not to be compared with the compact way in which the Indians stow themselves. A whole fleet of their canoes was met on the Slave River descending from the Great Slave Lake: the description of one of them is as follows:—

'It was small even for a canoe; and how eight men, women, and children contrived to

stow away their legs in a space not more than large enough for three Europeans, would have been a puzzling problem to one unaccustomed with the suppleness of an Indian's unbandaged limbs. There, however, they were, in a temperature of 66°, packed heads and tails, like Yarmouth herrings—half naked—their hair in elf-locks, long and matted—filthy beyond description—and all squalling together. To complete the picture, their dogs, scarce one degree below them, formed a sort of body guard on each side of the river, and as the canoe glided away with the current, all the animals together, human and canine, set up a shrill and horrible yell.'—p. 79.

From the chief of these people, who went by the name of 'Le Camarade de Mandeville,' Captain Back received important information, which he afterwards ascertained to be correct, of two great rivers beyond the Great Slave Lake, the Teh-lon and the Thlew-ec-choh, the latter of which he was destined to navigate to its source. On the 8th August the party reached Great Slave Lake, and were received at Fort Resolution, a station of the Hudson's Bay Company, by Mr. McDonnell, the gentleman in charge. Determined to lose no time in search of the river that was to conduct him to the sea, Captain Back set out on the 11th, in an old canoe, with his servant, an Englishman, a Canadian, two half-breeds, and two Indians, on an exploring expedition. All was plain sailing as far as the eastern portion of Great Slave Lake, into which fell an unknown river, with a steep and rocky bed, to which the name of *Hoarfrost River* was given. We have a beautiful print of Beverley's Fall, near the mouth of this river, which will convey an idea of what these falls, so very numerous in all the rivers in North America, are. Indeed, this particular river was so encumbered with cascades and rapids, that not only their baggage and provisions but the canoe also had to be carried up the high, steep, and rugged ridges, over swamps of thick stum'ed firs, and open spaces barren and desolate, on which 'crag was piled upon crag to a height of two thousand feet from the base.' The labor was excessive; but, says our traveller—

'The laborious duty which had been thus satisfactorily performed was rendered doubly severe by the combined attack of myriads of sand-flies and mosquitoes, which made our faces stream with blood. There is certainly no form of wretchedness, among those to which the chequered life of a *voyageur* is exposed, at once so great and so humiliating, as the torture inflicted by these puny blood-suckers. To avoid them is impossible; and as for defending himself, though for a time he may go on crushing by thousands, he can-

not long that at throws earth, groans a p. 117.

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