

Papers relating to the Arctic Relief Expedition.

— No. 1.—

NARRATIVE of the PROCEEDINGS of Sir *John Richardson* on the Shores of the *Polar Sea*, between the *Mackenzie* and *Coppermine* Rivers; and INSTRUCTIONS delivered by him to Dr. *Rae*.

NARRATIVE of Sir *John Richardson*.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, of my return from America in the Royal mail steamer "*Caledonia*."

No. 1.
Narrative of Proceedings of Sir
John Richardson.

Having, as opportunities offered, sent you from time to time detailed accounts of the progress of the Arctic Searching Expedition under my command, I beg now to submit, for the consideration of their Lordships, a connected summary of the whole proceedings of the party up to this time; and also to report the organization of a detachment, under charge of Mr. *Rae*, to ensure the completion of the entire scheme of search comprehended in their Lordships' Instructions to me.

On the 4th of June 1847, five seamen, 15 sappers and miners, with four boats, 15,800 lbs. of pemmican, and other provisions and stores, were embarked at Gravesend on board the Hudson's Bay Company's ships "*Prince Rupert*" and "*Westminster*." The arrival of these ships at York Factory was later than usual, and some of the expedition stores still remained on board on the 10th of September; but Chief Trader Bell, of the Hudson's Bay Company, who now took charge of the party, considered it imprudent to wait longer for their landing. At this date, therefore, he commenced his voyage into the interior, taking with him, in addition to the English boats and their crews, a large batteau, with sixteen Canadian *voyageurs*, and the stores necessary for building a winter residence, providing for the fisheries, and equipping and paying Indian hunters.

Owing to the extreme dryness of the summer, the rivers were uncommonly low, and the boats being therefore unable to carry more than two-thirds of their ordinary load, it was necessary to leave a considerable quantity of pemmican at York Factory to be forwarded inland, with the additional supplies next summer. The difficulties which Mr. Bell encountered, as well from the lowness of the waters as from the very early setting in of winter, were great; his progress, consequently, was slow, and he was finally arrested by the freezing of the lakes, six days' march short of his intended winter quarters at Cumberland House.

He immediately housed the boats, constructed a store-house for the reception of the provisions and other packages, established fisheries, and as soon as sledges could be made, accompanied the bulk of the party on snow shoes through the woods to Cumberland House.

At that place, and at Beaver Lake, about 60 miles further to the northward, the men were supported through the winter by the fisheries, but at Cedar Lake, where the boats were laid up, the fishing was unproductive, and there was, consequently, an unforeseen consumption of pemmican by the boat-keepers, and the wives and children of three of the *voyageurs* who could not travel over the snow to Cumberland House. This deficit of pemmican was fully made up during the winter by the exertions of the Hudson's Bay Company's officers on the upper portion of Saskatchewan. Mr. Bell made winter journeys to Cedar Lake, and early in the spring sent carpenters down to put the boats in repair, so that everything was ready for the resumption of the voyage on the breaking up of the rivers, which took place in the beginning of June 1848.

On the 25th of March 1848, Mr. *Rae* and I left Liverpool in the North American mail steamer "*Hibernia*," landed a fortnight afterwards at New York, and proceeded by way of the Hudson and Lake Champlain to Montreal, where we