

others were by no means willing to engage in such an enterprise. At length two Canadians were engaged. So far so good, says the captain, but he reckoned without his host, for the two were kept back by their wives. One lady took hold of her lord and master and boxed his ears so mercilessly, that he was fain to cry out "*peccavi*," and seek shelter in a neighbouring tent. The other dame took an equally efficacious method of diverting her husband from his purpose, for she got into the melting mood, took her husband in her arms, and would not let him go till he promised that he would have nothing to do with the gallant captain or his expedition. A man's wife is generally considered his better half. She is so often, in more senses than one. After much trouble, Captain Back succeeded in engaging the requisite number of men, about eighteen in all, part of whom were sent off in advance with Dr. King, while he himself remained behind for a few days, and then, on the 18th June, 1833, started in a canoe for Cumberland House, where two boats and a large supply of stores and provisions awaited him. The captain was an expert at the pen and pencil, could tell a good story as well as draw a good sketch, and although a Nor'-wester might smile at his enthusiasm, and say his descriptions were over-coloured somewhat, still it is allowable, under the circumstances, considering that no traveller ever made an overland journey to the Arctic sea, who had a fairer prospect of reaping a rich harvest of honours and rewards than he. As I have said, the primary object of the expedition was to find out some trace of the missing ships of Sir John Ross, and subordinate to that was the discovery of the river Thlew-ee-chow, which, it was supposed, took its rise somewhere to the north-east of Great Slave Lake; he was to trace this river (which is now generally called the Great Fish or Back's river) from its source to its discharge in the Arctic sea, and afterwards survey as much of the coast as time and circumstances would admit of.

The start from Norway House was, in a measure, the commencement of his expedition, for he had now all that he wanted in men and material. Hear what he says: "This," says he, "was a happy day for me, and as the canoe pushed 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 my 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 spirit to a more than ordinary pitch of excitement."

Shortly after leaving Norway House, Captain Back fell in with two of the Company's officers, Messrs. Smith and Charles, who were on their

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