

2 REPORT OF SIR JOHN RICHARDSON OF HIS PROCEEDINGS

Had we reached the Coppermine, as I anticipated we should do under ordinary circumstances, and ascended the Kendall, we should have been, with tents, stores, &c., in comparative comfort, within four easy days' march of Fort Confidence, but it now became necessary to augment the loads in proportion to the increase of distance.

Each man being supplied with 13 days' provisions, and carrying, in addition, his clothing, spare shoes and bedding, with cooking kettles, the astronomical instruments, ammunition, hatchets, and Lieutenant Halkett's portable boat with lines and nets, we abandoned the boats and tents, having previously concealed the remaining pemmican, and on the morning of the 3d September began our march for Back's Inlet, which we reached the same evening.

Here we opportunely found a party of Esquimaux, who rendered us very essential assistance on the following morning, by ferrying us across a deep river between three and four hundred yards wide, which they informed us retained its width far up the country, and without their help we should have lost much time in passing so large a party across with Lieutenant Halkett's boat alone. I have named this river, which was previously unknown to us, in honour of Mr. Rae. On the following day we crossed the Richardson River, which is of less width, by means of Halkett's boat, and encamped in the evening on the banks of the Coppermine.

I had appointed James Hope, a half-caste native, who had formed one of Dease and Simpson's party, to meet us in the beginning of September, with two Indian hunters, on the Coppermine, but, owing to stormy weather at the time he ought to have set out, he delayed his march a week, and we missed each other altogether, having, we suppose, passed one another in a day of continued fog and snow on the banks of the Kendall.

Yesterday, being the 13th day of our march, we arrived at this place, having for the three last days had the advantage of an Indian guide who led us by easier paths than the direct route across the country.

The way in which the drift ice was packed into Coronation Gulf, and Dolphin and Union Straits, so late in the season as the 3d of September, and glued together by new ice, rendered it very improbable that it would open again this season to afford a passage for ships, and I have therefore no expectation that the Discovery Ships can have made their way in that direction this summer, and hope that they have either found a channel in a higher latitude more directly westward to the open sea off Cape Bathurst, or that they have effected a passage homewards by Lancaster Sound. The circumstances I have mentioned show that my boats could not approach Wollaston Land in this unusually untoward season, but this may be done next summer, and I shall endeavour to make arrangements for sending Mr. Rae with one boat and a select crew of active men, down the Coppermine, next July, to examine the opening between Victoria and Wollaston Lands. The flood tide, which at full and change runs in Dolphin and Union Straits at the rate of three knots an hour, comes from the eastward out of Coronation Gulf, and must flow primarily down the opening I have mentioned, or by the one between Victoria Land and Boothia, being the only two communications between Coronation Gulf and Lancaster Sound and its continuation. On this account, and also for the purpose of aiding a party which Sir James Ross proposed to send towards the Coppermine over the ice, Mr. Rae's intended expedition may be useful.

As the resources of this post are inadequate to the support of our entire party, and the ice remains fixed in this Lake till near the middle of August, too late for men wintering here to reach York Factory in time for a passage to England the same season, I have determined on sending 13 of the men from England up the Mackenzie, without delay, together with six of Mr. Bell's party, to be supported for the winter at the fishery on Big Island, Slave Lake. I purpose joining them myself in the Spring, crossing this Lake on the ice, and ascending the Mackenzie when it opens in May, taking with me the remainder of the English party not required by Mr. Rae for his summer operations. Mr. Rae will have instructions to return hither by the end of August, so as to close the establishment at that

time.