

TPL 2990

ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

COPY of a REPORT from Sir *John Richardson*, dated *Fort Confidence, Great Bear Lake*, 16th September 1848, reporting his PROCEEDINGS in Search of Sir *John Franklin's* EXPEDITION.

Sir,

Fort Confidence, Great Bear Lake,  
16 September 1848.

I HAVE the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that with the boats and party under my charge I reached the sea-coast at the outlet of the eastern branch of the Mackenzie on the 3d of August, and having examined the coast line from thence to the Coppermine River, including almost every intervening bay, found no traces of any party of Europeans having passed, nor any indications whatever of shipwrecked vessels. We had interviews with numerous parties of Esquimaux, who uniformly declared that they had seen no ships nor any white men; and from the friendly way in which these people met us, I have no doubt of their kindness to any party of Europeans they might see in distress.

From the Mackenzie to Cape Bathurst, which we rounded in 70° 37' N. latitude, on the 10th of August, the vegetation indicated a comparatively mild climate, and we saw no ice; the Esquimaux also who were at this time assembling on the various headlands and islands to chase the black and white whales, informed us, that during their two summer moons they never saw any ice. But after crossing Franklin Bay, and rounding Cape Parry, we had to pass through many streams of drift ice, which greatly depressed the temperature, and when we attained Cape Bexley we found the Dolphin and Union Straits filled with densely packed ice, heaped against the precipitous headlands, and covering the sea as far as we could discern from the heights, entirely across to Wollaston Land.

Winter may be said to have set in with sudden rigour on the 23d of August, and we had frost, and snow either falling or lying on the ground, for many days afterwards. From that date up to the 3d of September, we had to work our way round every bay by cutting passages among the floes of ice, or making overland portages according to circumstances, being occasionally aided in our advance by a little open water, where the shore was shelving. These laborious operations were conducted by Mr. Rae, to whose sound judgment, experience, and personal exertions we were indebted, under Providence, for the progress we were enabled to make.

From the experience of four several visits to Coronation Gulf, by Franklin, Dease and Simpson, and myself, I had expected that on rounding Cape Krusenstern we should find an open sea to the Coppermine, but such is the uncertainty of the navigation in these narrow seas, that we had the disappointment of beholding the whole gulf completely packed; and had to continue our poling, cutting and carrying operations with slower progress and augmented labour as the frost became more severe, up to the 3d of September, when we were finally arrested in Icy Cove to the north of Cape Kendall, by the new ice having so glued the floes together that it was no longer in our power to move them, while the hummocky form of the masses heaped by pressure on the rocky points, precluded our launching the boats over them. Seeing that there was no prospect of a speedy change of weather, and that the ground was already covered with snow, I determined reluctantly on quitting the boats, and commencing our overland march to Bear Lake from that place.