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Archives Center - NMAH

Charles Francis Hall's Scrapbook, 1858 - 1860

Extracted on Mar-28-2024 06:28:21

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New Fields of Discovery.

To what new piece shall we direct our flag in reference to increasing our commercial prosperity? We have gone to the southern extreme of the globe; we have visited the waters around the North Pole; Japan has received our ships; China, the East, the West, each has seen the Stars and Stripes waving in its most hidden parts, and the almost ubiquitous American has been found wherever he can penetrate his way. Where then shall we next direct our steps? The answer we venture to give is this: to the final accomplishment of a northwest passage by a ship.

Hitherto this much talked of and long sought for passage has not been discovered, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary. The British claim such a discovery; but, though geographically it may be assumed, yet as a nautical fact it fails to the test. What do we know about it? Why, in 1853 McClure, having abandoned his vessel at a certain place called Banks' Land, walks over the ice to another place, named Melville Island, then by sledge to Peecher's Island, and thence by a second ship to England. This was called a "northwest" passage: but whether a passage or not for a ship we do not know.

Again, in 1857, McClintock went through Bellot's Straits, but not further than five miles. Hence he did not accomplish a northwest passage. The only probability of its having been done is that connected with the lost Franklin expedition, which may have sent some of its members by boat to the open waters laving the Arctic shores of America. Still, in the uncertainty about this, we must conclude that the chance is still open for the United States flag to accomplish it. And the opportunity is now not wanting.

Our readers are tolerably well acquainted with the late explorations of Captain C.F. Hall during two years sojourn among the Inuit tribes of the Arctic seas. His discoveries there in connection with the Frobisher voyages, have been laid before the geographical societies of this country and England, and have been wholly endorsed. He now proposes continuing his explorations through Hudson Bay into the Gulf of Boothia, examining all the coasts yet unexamined. He will then try to get through Bellot's Straits, and thence to King William Land, where the mystery of the Franklin expedition can be solved. This done, he intends going along the coast of American, in waters known to be navigable all the way until he reaches Behring's Straits, where he can steer for home without further difficulty. His little ship is already preparing for the voyage, under the hands of C. & R. Poillon, shipwrights, of the city, who have generously proffered to strengthen her and do other work freely, to the extent of \$1,500. Mr. Bigler, of Newburg, has also contributed timber for the purpose to the amount of \$1,000, and the vessel herself was most handsomely given to Mr. Hall by Captain Robinson, of the same city.

The names of other generous contributors will soon be announced; and we hope to hear that in a short time our gallant countryman has succeeded in procuring all he desires for his departure on such a voyage. Let New York now show she is willing to spend a small portion of her wealth in sending forth an expedition that, if successful--as there is every probability--will forever render famous all those concerned in equipping it. To American may yet belong the honor of first carrying a ship through the famous Northwest Passage. [handwritten ? 14/65].

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