

Dr. JOHN RAE, LL.D. (Edin.), a traveller in Arctic America, of extraordinary energy and endurance, a keen observer of Nature, and the discoverer of the fate of the Franklin expedition, was born in Orkney in 1813, died in London in 1893, and is buried in the cathedral of St. Magnus at Kirkwall, where a statue is erected to his memory.

He qualified as a surgeon in Edinburgh, and as such he accompanied one of the ships of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose service he joined, and then for ten years he resided at Moose Factory. (1) His first journey of pure exploration was a boat voyage along the coast of Hudson's Bay to Repulse Bay, where he wintered, and, in the following year he surveyed a coast line of 700 miles, connecting the surveys of Ross in Boothia with those of Parry at Fury and Heckla Strait. (2) Next he joined the expedition of Sir J. Richard

son in 1848 in search for Sir J. Franklin, during which the whole coast was explored that lay between the mouths of the Mackenzie and the Coppermine Rivers. (3) In 1851, at the request of Government, he explored and mapped, with the slenderest outfit, 700 miles of the south coast of Wellaston Land and Victoria Land, still in search of Sir J. Franklin, for which achievement he received the gold medal of the Geographical Society. Its result was greatly to narrow the range of possibilities as to the locality of the missing expedition. (4) He took charge of a boat expedition, proved the insular character of King William's Land, and came at last upon relics of Franklin's party and received verbal information from the Eskimo that gave the first definite information as to their fate. The disaster occurred at the mouth of the Back River, a little more than 200 miles in a direct line from the place where he heard of it. For this achievement he received the promised grant of £10,000 from Government. He did not visit the spot himself, but his information as to the site and the completeness of the disaster, was soon abundantly confirmed. After this he made some further travel of interest, though by no means of the importance of the above, surveying a route for a telegraph line across Iceland and in North America.

This bald statement of itineraries will give but a poor idea, except to Arctic travellers, of the severity of the work accomplished. To supply the deficiency, the following quotation is given from the address of Sir R. Murchison when presenting the Gold Medal to Dr. Rae; his remarks chiefly referring to the journeys numbered above as (1) and (3).

"With a boldness never surpassed, he (Dr. Rae) determined on wintering on the proverbially desolate shores of Repulse Bay, where, or in the immediate neighbourhood, one expedition of two ships had previously wholly perished, and two others were all but lost. There he maintained his party on deer shot principally by himself, and spent ten months of an Arctic winter in a hut of stones, the locality not even yielding drift timber. With no other fuel than a kind of hay made of the *Andromeda tetragona*, he preserved his men in health, and thus enabled them to execute their arduous surveying journeys of upwards of 1,000 miles round Committee Bay (the southern portion of Boothia Gulf) in the spring. Next season he brought his party back to the Hudson Bay posts in better working condition than when he set out, and with but a small diminution of the few bags of provisions he had taken with him.

"On his last journeys, in which he travelled more than 3,000 miles in snow-shoes, Dr. Rae has shown equal judgment and perseverance. Dreading, from his former experience, that the sea might be frozen, he determined on a spring journey over the ice, and performed a most extraordinary one. His last starting place at Fort Confidence on the

Great Bear Lake, being at a distance of more than 150 miles from the coast by the route he was compelled to take, he could not, as in the parties of our naval expeditions, travel on the ice with capacious sledges, and was, therefore, obliged to restrict his provisions and baggage to the smallest possible weight. With a pound of fat daily for fuel, and without the possibility of carrying a tent, he set out accompanied by two men only, and trusting solely for shelter to snow houses he taught his men to build, accomplished a distance of 1,060 miles in 39 days, or 27 miles per day including stoppages, and this without the aid of advanced depôts, and dragging a sledge himself great part of the way. The spring journey, and that which followed in the summer in boats, during which 1,700 miles were traversed in 80 days, have proved the continuity of Wollaston and Victoria lands along a distance of nearly 1,100 miles, and have shown that they are separated by a strait from N. Somerset and Boothia, through which the flood tide sets from the north. In this way Dr. Rae has performed most essential service, even in reference to the search after Franklin, by limiting the channels of outlet between the continent of America and the Arctic Islands."

It is easy to understand that Dr. Rae's views as to the equipment of expeditions in Arctic travel would differ in many respects, rightly or wrongly, from those who advocated the costly naval expeditions then in vogue. He could point to instances of his own superior success, and to the disasters that befel the survivors of the Franklin expedition, as they toiled homewards with a miscellaneous collection of heavy articles. Putting forward his views, as he did with point and insistence, his remarks were, as a rule, somewhat unwelcome to the naval authorities.

In early middle life Dr. Rae was remarkable for manly beauty in form and feature, combined with a temper that was quick and somewhat fiery. In a book on Ethnology, where each of the human races was represented by a single specimen, it was noticed that an old photograph of Dr. Rae had been utilised to represent the Caucasian type.

Dr. Rae's house contained an interesting series of specimens illustrating the fauna and flora of arctic America and the domestic methods of the Eskimo, which he delighted to show and to explain, for he was a most courteous host, well aided by his wife. As a narrator he was delightful, being always lucid while full and circumstantial. His memoirs and speeches were stamped throughout with those characteristics.

His interest in the regions where he gained his fame remained unabated to the last. He died, regretted by many friends, in his eightieth year.

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