

Three years passed away, and no tidings of the expedition reached England. The public mind began to grow disquieted. As an American writer observes, expectation darkened into anxiety, and anxiety into dread. It was at length resolved to dispatch an expedition in search of the missing adventurers. One set out under Sir James Ross, but returned unsuccessful. Another was led by Sir John Richardson, but obtained no clue to their fate. Were they alive, and imprisoned in some ice-bound recess? Or had they fallen victims to the terrors of an Arctic winter? No kind of answer to these questions could be given, until, in 1850, a ray of light was thrown upon the dark sad story by the discovery of some vestiges of the explorers in a bay at the eastern entrance of Wellington Channel. These vestiges consisted of "the ground-plan of a tent, scraps of canvas and rope, a quantity of birds' bones and feathers, and a long-handled dredging-rake." On Beechey Island Captain Penny also discovered a carefully constructed cairn, of a pyramidal form, whose summit was mounted with the remnant of a broken boarding-pike, and close at hand lay three graves, on whose rude memorial-tablets were inscribed the words, "*Erebus and Terror.*"

It was now concluded that Franklin had penetrated into the remote wilds of the extreme north, and in this direction the searching expeditions proceeded, instead of exploring southward, as they should have done. In 1854, some information which Dr. Rae obtained from a party of Eskimos exposed the error that had been committed. These men asserted that, some years before, they had seen a company of about forty men, very feeble and sickly, passing to the south of Boothia, and evidently making towards the Great Fish River. At a later period, they had found their dead bodies; they had perished of cold and hunger. Dr. Rae brought home a number of relics from the Eskimos, bearing the private marks of various officers belonging to the two ships.

The recovery of these eloquent memorials of the missing navigators inspired Lady Franklin, who from the first had been heroically active in stimulating the search after her husband, with fresh energy and heart. She exhausted the remains of her private fortune in the purchase of a strong-built screw schooner, the *Fox*, and called for volunteers to second her efforts. Funds were liberally contributed by a sympathizing public, and numerous gallant men proffered their free services. The command was given to an experienced Arctic voyager, Captain M'Clintock, and with a first-rate crew of twenty-five able seamen, the little *Fox* sailed from England in the summer of 1857.