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CAPTAIN THOMAS JAMES
AND THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE

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This is the nineteenth pamphlet in a series issued by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association. The author is Emeritus Professor of Imperial History of the University of Bristol. One of his earlier pamphlets in this series — *Bristol and the Slave Trade* — is now out of print and the Branch hopes in due course to bring out a second edition.

The Bristol Branch of the Historical Association wishes to express its thanks to the Publications Committee of the University of Bristol for the grants which it made to assist in the cost of producing both this pamphlet and also Mr. Russell Mortimer's work on *Early Bristol Quakerism*. Its thanks are also due to Miss Elizabeth Ralph, the City Archivist, for help with the illustrations and to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol for permission to reproduce one of the letters in the *Book of Trade*.

The next pamphlet in the series will be Professor Peter Marshall's study of the anti-slave trade movement in Bristol, and this will be followed by the twenty-first pamphlet which will be Professor David Quinn's *Sebastian Cabot*.

Other titles under consideration include Bristol Castle; the Blue Maids' Orphanage; the Bristol Corporation of the Poor; the Street Names of Bristol; Landscape Gardening in Bristol; the Medieval Churches of Bristol; and Public Health in Bristol. There will also be further pamphlets in the special series on the Port of Bristol.

The pamphlets have enjoyed a wide circulation and some of them are now out of print. Miss Barker's work on the early history of the Theatre Royal has gone into a second edition, and consideration is also being given to the possibility of reprinting other pamphlets which are not now available.

The price of the pamphlets has been kept as low as possible and the Branch is very grateful to various public bodies which have from time to time subsidised its work, but rising costs of printing and postage are making it increasingly difficult to cover costs, and it may be necessary to raise prices in the course of the next year.

The pamphlets can be obtained from most Bristol booksellers or direct from Mr. Peter Harris, 74, Bell Barn Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, 9. The Branch hopes that readers will help its work by placing standing orders for future publications.

In the early years of the seventeenth century Englishmen vigorously prosecuted the search for a North West passage to the Pacific. The fabled wealth of India and Cathay beckoned them as enticingly as it had attracted their sixteenth century predecessors. The foundation of the English East India Company in 1600 symbolized the determination of the late Elizabethans to share in this trade. This body, however, was determined to limit the Eastern commerce to its own members. All other English merchants, therefore, whether from London or the outports, were strictly debarred. The result was that those who were excluded were stimulated to find some new way to the Far East which would be free of Iberian interference and the arrogant pretensions of the East India Company.

Hudson, Button, Gibbons, Bylot, Baffin and Hawkrigde added materially to England's geographical knowledge and experience of travel in Polar regions, but the riddle of the passage remained unsolved. This period of active exploration ended in 1631 with the despatch of two expeditions organized independently by the Cities of London and Bristol. The promoters hoped that if they had the good fortune to find the passage and enter the Pacific by this back door they might come upon new spice islands and countries hitherto undiscovered, abounding in gold and silver, which would free England from her dependence upon foreigners.

The Londoners were first in the field and it was only when Bristol heard about their activities that its merchants bestirred themselves. Later, when London was on the point of giving up the project, it heard of the Bristol scheme and its interest at once revived. Thus civic emulation characterized these two expeditions from the beginning.

In December 1629, the London group sought permission from the King to send a ship in search of the North West Passage. Before giving an answer, however, the authorities sought the opinion of Sir Thomas Button, the most distinguished Arctic

explorer then living. Apparently Button's reply was favourable, for on 8 June, 1630 permission was granted, and the king placed one of his own ships, the *Charles*, at the disposal of the London adventurers. By the time the royal sanction was given, six months had passed, and it was then too late to send the ship that year. Therefore, in a second petition the Londoners asked the king to allow them to fit out the *Charles* as a privateer for the time being, and letters of marque were accordingly issued on 20 August, but the East India Company intervened, for it was determined that no Englishman should be allowed to interfere with its trade. Indeed, as early as 1625, when the Governor, speaking for Sir John Wolstenholme and the promoters of another expedition, later abandoned, petitioned the Company for its co-operation, their approaches were coldly received :

" . . . it were better the adventure were lost than that the said passage should be discovered, for that it will greatly prejudice the Companies benefitt and trade to the East Indies . . ." (1)

On 30 March, 1631, Sir John Wolstenholme, a former patron of Hudson, Button and Bylot and other searchers for the North West Passage and the leading promoter of the proposed expedition prayed the Court to allow the *Charles* to be laden with pepper if she should have the good fortune to reach one of the Company's factories in India by way of the North West Passage. If, however, she was not fit to make the return passage to England, then he asked the Company to send the crew home in one of its own ships. Although Sir John Wolstenholme was one of the original adventurers of the Company and still deeply concerned in its affairs, the answer was :

" . . . the Company cannot admitt of the lading of the said shipp with pepper otherwise then for their own accompt . . ." (2)

If they did grant this privilege it would be tantamount to allowing " . . . of private Trade, which they may not permitt . . ." (3)

No reference was made to the request to carry the crew back to England if the *Charles* was unable to make the passage. The Company was ready at all times to sell him such pepper as he might require at a reduced price in London. In view of this selfish dog-in-the-manger policy it is little wonder that the East India Company became so unpopular. In this instance it was so sure

(1) *The Voyages of Captain Luke Foxe of Hull and Captain Thomas James of Bristol in search of a North-West Passage in 1631-32*, edit. Miller Christy, 2 vols., Hakluyt Society, 1894, I. lxxviii.

(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, I. lxxxii.

(3) *Ibid.* I. lxxxiii.

of itself and so determined to protect its monopoly that it was prepared to refuse to assist an English captain who had successfully braved the perils of the far North, discovered the long-sought-for Passage and arrived at one of its factories in safety. As there were not enough members present at the time to form a quorum, the matter was left undecided. Later, after much haggling, the Company agreed that if there was any to spare when the explorers arrived in India the Captain should be allowed to take aboard a quantity of pepper, but on the strict understanding that 1,500 pounds should be deemed a ton. Fortunately, the Company's generosity was not destined to be so overstrained as this, as the passage was not discovered and no intruding explorer arrived in India from the Northern Pacific.

Captain Luke Foxe, who was appointed Commander of the London ship, was a shrewd, hard-headed, unsympathetic Yorkshire grumbler. He was dissatisfied with the victualling of the ship and its equipment. He quarrelled with his principal promoter Sir John Wolstenholme and with his officers. He despised his master as well as the master's mate. Speaking of the former, he writes,

" . . . I do hold him the most arrogant Bullkase (?bull-calf) that ever went or came as Master this way, and the most faint-heartedest man . . ." (1)

Foxe was jealous of the Master, probably because he was a friend of Sir John Wolstenholme. In the truculent Yorkshireman's opinion, this man was good only for three things, boasting about his careful study of his work, eating and sleeping. Foxe considered that both the Master and his mate were lazy and insubordinate. It appears that, in his opinion, their defects were mainly due to the fact that they had formerly been in the service of the East India Company. He was contemptuous about his crew, in the selection of which he had had no share. They were a drunken lot, too much given to tobacco, which he particularly loathed :

" . . . of 20 men and 3 boyes, there is but one that takes no tobacco; nay, the pipe (is) never from their nose." (2)

This overbearing conceited man lacked most of the qualities of leadership and throughout the voyage the *Charles* must have been a most unhappy ship. Nevertheless, Foxe was a good practical seaman who received far less credit in his own time than he merited. His contemporaries disparaged him because he returned home in six months, although his ship was victualled for eighteen, and they contrasted him unfavourably with James. In later times,

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, I. xc.

(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, I. xciv.

however, he has been given full, and indeed exaggerated recognition by such writers as the editor of the Hakluyt Society volumes on the two voyages.

Meanwhile, in Bristol the Mayor, John Tomlinson, together with John Barker, Humphrey Hooke, Richard Longe, John Tailer, Giles Elbridge and other members of the Society of Merchant Venturers, agreed to subscribe a sum sufficient to cover the cost of buying equipment and victualling a ship for this hazardous undertaking. They were afraid that if London was successful by her own unaided effort, it was possible that another royal monopoly might be granted which would effectually shut Bristol out from any new trade which might arise. Since the accession of James I there had been far too many of such grants to suit Bristol and if this practice was allowed to continue the Bristol merchants foresaw that it would not be long before the whole overseas trade of the country was canalized through London.

Bristol not only had the resources necessary for the despatch of the ship, she also had, in the person of Captain Thomas James, a man well qualified by training and experience to command her. The date and place of birth of Captain Thomas James, like that of John Cabot, the most famous of Bristol's explorers, his parentage and his early years are all wrapped in obscurity. As there were several men of that name in Bristol in the opening decades of the 17th century, some of whom were prominent in the public life of the City, much confusion has resulted. This has been deepened by the fact that in the writings of at least one author, local patriotism is more evident than zeal for historical accuracy.

It seems probable, however, that he was born in 1590 or 1591 at Wern-y-cwm, near Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, and that he was the younger son of James ap John ap Richard Herbert and Elizabeth Howel. In support of the contention that he was born in Monmouthshire, it may be of some significance that when he was exploring the western coast of Hudson Bay he named the region the New Principality of South Wales, and later the South Principality of Wales. Further, one of the capes indicated on his map is called Cape Monmouth. If he had been born in Bristol as some writers declare, it is improbable that he would have chosen such names as these.

The contention that he was the son of Thomas James, merchant of Bristol, who died in 1619 and who was successively Sheriff, Alderman, twice Mayor, Master of the Merchant Venturers and three times Member of Parliament for the city appears to be untenable.

It was this man's son, Thomas, and not the Captain, who was apprenticed in 1604 to John Guy and Anne his wife. Further, the name of another Thomas James, grandson of the Member of Parliament, appears on the monument in the south aisle of St. Mark's Church erected in his memory. This man also has been confused with the Captain, mainly because he was also a barrister at law, but, in fact, he belonged to a later generation for he died in 1665. Although there is no sound reason for believing that Captain James was the son of the eminent Member of Parliament he may well have been related to him in some way and this may help to explain why he was held in such high esteem by the promoters of the voyage.

Captain Thomas James was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1612 and in due course appears to have qualified as a barrister. In a letter to him from Thomas Nash which is quoted in his book he is addressed as "my worthy friend and fellow-Templar, Captaine James".⁽¹⁾ There is no record that he ever practised law but if he did, it must have been for a few years only. At some date unknown, between 1612 and 1628, he forsook the profession of law for the more alluring prospect of life at sea. In the latter year he was Captain of a privateer, the *Dragon* of Bristol. Such a post would not have been entrusted to a mere novice and he must, therefore, by that time have become a competent and reliable officer. When he was selected to lead the Bristol expedition in 1631, he was spoken of as a man skilled in navigation "and well seen in the Mathematical Science".⁽²⁾ In describing the preparation for the voyage he himself states that he had been for many years importuned by his honourable and worshipful friends to undertake such a journey.

Having raised the funds required for the voyage and chosen the man to command it, the Bristol Merchant Venturers were not yet ready to proceed with the final arrangements. They wanted to be assured on several important matters before committing themselves irrevocably to the venture. In particular, they wished to obtain the royal promise, in which they did not place unqualified trust, that it they should succeed in finding the Passage themselves, or if they should jointly succeed in it with the ship from London, any new trade which might result would be thrown open to them and not limited to the metropolis.

With his legal training and experience as a captain, coupled with his scientific knowledge of the art of navigation, James was

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, II. 451.

(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, I. cxxxii.

(3) *Ibid.*, II. 455.

well suited to be sent as an ambassador to London. In his introduction to *The Voyages of Captain Luke Foxe and Captain Thomas James*, Miller Christy states that James carried with him a letter to Sir Thomas Roe which set forth the Bristol plan. No copy of this letter, however, exists, but it may well be that the Mayor provided James with a formal letter of introduction to Roe. The letter from the Mayor to which Roe refers in his letter after his interview with James is clearly a private personal communication which he had received some time before. Indeed, there was no need why James should have been given a detailed letter for Sir Thomas Roe, as it was in order that he should explain the project himself that he was sent to London.

Roe was under the impression, after his conversations with James, that the Bristol ship was almost ready to sail, whereas in fact no ship had so far been found. This was the kind of mistake that a man could make when he was writing from memory about his interview. It would have been quite impossible for such a mistake to occur if the Merchant Venturers had sent him a detailed account of their project. Moreover, Roe stated in his letter to the Mayor dated 25 January, 1630-1 that he did not know the name of the promoters, which would certainly not have been possible if a formal letter had been sent. It may reasonably be assumed, therefore, that Miller Christy is under a misapprehension and has misunderstood Roe's reference.

Sir Thomas Roe, whom James I had sent some fifteen years earlier as ambassador to the Court of the great Mogul, stood high in the royal favour. James was instructed to explain the Bristol merchants' plan to him, and, if possible, to discover how they would stand with the King if they proceeded with their expedition. In the days of the impecunious Stuarts, Bristol had sound reasons for doubting the good faith of London. That City had great influence at Court, she was immeasurably wealthier than her rivals and well placed to influence the crown in her favour.

James was cordially received by Sir Thomas Roe who was delighted to hear of Bristol's intention to send a ship in search of the North West Passage. The King, who was also much interested in the discovery of the Passage, had recently commanded Roe to take charge of the preparations for the London ship. In his letter to the Mayor of Bristol, dated 25 January, already referred to, Roe stated that, as James had arrived when the king was absent from London, nothing could, for the moment, be done. It was impossible for him to answer Bristol's enquiries until the King had expressed his wishes, but, he continued,

"... his Majestie is soe just a Prince and so gracious to encourage and reward all vertuous accons, that I am perswaded hee will make noe difference betweene his subjects, but (will) indifferently proceed to animate you as well as any other, and that he willbee glad that you shall goe forward, and that the accon bee strengthened by your endeavour . . ." (1)

Roe promised that as soon as the King returned he would see to it that Bristol's plea was brought to his attention. He knew of no patent granted to the London promoters though he had seen a draft in writing which he had no doubt would be extended to Bristol. Thus, though he was careful not to commit himself, it is clear that he wished to encourage his Bristol friends:

"... This I suppose you shall obtayne at the least: that yf your shipp haue the fortune to make the passage first you shall haue the priviledge which is due unto you; and yf wee make it, yet that you shall haue such Libertie of your trade as your adventure and industrie doth meritt . . ." (2)

but he repeated that he did not know whether the king would or would not shut up the trade. Before any patent was granted, however, he would do his best to see to it that the Bristol Merchants should have an answer that would content them. He advised them, therefore, to proceed with their arrangements and to trust to the king's justice and equal distribution of his favours as well as to the efficacy of his own solicitations on their behalf. Before Roe wrote on 25 January, he had approached Lord Weston, the Lord Treasurer, on Bristol's behalf. That nobleman, like Roe, was disinclined to commit himself until the king's wishes were known. He agreed that if Bristol should despatch a ship she should have an equal share, "with any whoe beare equall adventure . . ." (3) Weston was most anxious to be of service to Bristol as that City had recently done him the honour of making him its Steward. Roe also pressed upon his Bristol friends the advantages of cooperation between the two groups of adventurers; he felt that they should pool their knowledge as much as possible.

Roe's letter ends with a private message to the Mayor, Tomlinson, who was married to his sister. He excused himself for not having answered a previous personal communication from Tomlinson. This is the letter that confused the editor of the Hakluyt Society's volumes. Roe promised that he would make amends now by sending him some venison as soon as the season

(1) Records of the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 185.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 185.

came in, and closed by sending his love to his sister. The observation which Miller Christy makes on this final paragraph is surprising: "From this and other passages in Sir Thomas Roe's letter to Mr. John Tomlinson, Mayor of Bristol 1630-31, it appears that the two men were brothers-in-law," a fairly obvious conclusion, but he goes on to say that he had not been able to corroborate this. Short of being at the wedding himself it is difficult to see what better corroboration he could require.

The Mayor read this letter to his colleagues but they were not satisfied. A second letter was sent to Roe early in February in which they enquired specifically about the conditions the King would impose on them and the privileges they would enjoy. They felt sure that now that the King had placed the organization of the London expedition in Roe's hands they could rely on his wisdom and goodness to procure the most favourable terms possible.⁽¹⁾

In order that James should be kept in touch with what was happening in Bristol, the Merchants wrote to him and enclosed a copy of Roe's letter and their reply:

"... Hee doth presuppose that wee have already fitted a shipp, But you knowe the Contrary, and that wee have done noe more than to procure adventurers for 800£ or thereabouts."⁽²⁾

and they reminded him that the fitting out of the ship had been deferred until the position was clearer. They had no wish, they stated, to share in an enclosed trade with London but preferred that any commerce that might result from their discovery should be shared among all His Majesty's subjects equally. It would be a sufficient honour and advancement for them if they were made the instruments of so great good. This was a new and strange note for Bristol to sound, for it was only a few years since she had infuriated the other outports by her greedy attempts to monopolise the Newfoundland trade. In fact, however, she was by no means so magnanimous as she appeared. Her Merchant Venturers realised that it would pay them better to appear as the champions of the outports as a whole than to seem concerned solely with the furtherance of their own narrow interests. If, however, the King and the state in their wisdom decided to grant a monopoly to some particular group of merchants in London they would be content to rely upon the promises and good intentions of Sir Thomas Roe as well as upon the provident circumspection of James on their behalf.

(1) Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 184.

(2) *Ibid*, fo. 186.

They informed James that it would be difficult to find a ship quickly, but it appears that they exaggerated the difficulties. The *White Angel*, which belonged to Giles Elbridge, one of their number, would not be in Bristol for some time. She was a vessel of 140 tons burden to which letters of marque had been issued in 1626; another possible ship, the *William and John*, was not due in the Avon for another month. James was, therefore, advised not to commit either the Merchants or himself to have a ship ready to sail by the spring. Of course, the situation would be entirely changed if the king gave a favourable answer to their petition in the next few days. If a vessel could not be found in west country ports it might be necessary for James to look for one in London.⁽¹⁾

At Roe's request, Sir John Wolstenholme wrote to Lord Danby asking him to arrange an audience for James with the King. Danby replied a few days later that he had raised the matter with the king and that Charles was graciously willing to speak with "the man". The king would thank the town of Bristol for this proposed enterprise and also for what it had done in the last war with Spain.

It had been more active and had greater success in fighting the enemy than any other port in those parts. Charles would also encourage James in his worthy undertaking. Danby requested Wolstenholme and the Captain to be in the presence or Privy Chamber on the following Sunday at nine o'clock which was the most suitable time for the audience. Danby promised to be there himself and would present them both to the King.⁽²⁾

The audience duly took place and was most satisfactory for Bristol. James presented the petition of the Bristol Merchants to the king and explained their plan at length.

The petition was to the following effect:

"To the Kinge's most Excellent Majestie

"The humble peticon of Thomas James, in the behalfe of your Merchants Adventurers, Citizens of the Citty of Bristoll.

"Whereas your Majesties most faithfull subjects, the Citizens of your Citty of Bristoll, understanding that your Majestie hath pleased not onely to desire the discovery of the North-west passage into the South Sea, but to grace and protect all those that shall endeavour to seeke it; whereby encouraged, your said subjects, the merchants of Bristoll, haue determined to sett out one good shipp, well furnished and provided for such a service, which shalbe ready in the

(1) Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 186.

(2) Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 189.

beginninge of May next. And, in full assurance of your Majesties gracious disposicon, and equall distribucon of your favors to all your subjects that shall equallie pursue the waies of honour and the benefitt of your Majesties kingdomes, they haue presumed most humbly to peticon your Majestie that you will be pleased to graunt unto them, the adventurers of the Citty of Bristoll, such equall shares and priuiledges, both of Trade and Libertie, as you shall vouchsafe to graunt to others, the adventurers of the Citty of London, proporconably to their Charge and adventures. And they (as in dutie bound) will ever pray for your Majesties longe and happie Raigne.”⁽¹⁾

The Bristol men heartily approved of what James had done but they were still anxious about the future. They wanted a patent to be issued forthwith with the royal signature attached which would make clear the relative positions of Bristol and London.

In their letter dated 10 February 1630 to James they stated that they would like Articles of Agreement to be drawn up and signed by both parties. These should lay down in clear terms what trading privileges the two cities should enjoy when the passage was discovered. They felt that this apportionment should be on the basis of their respective ventures.

Meanwhile, James was not to waste his time in London. He was to consult Sir Thomas Button and any others who might be able to help him about the nature of his work. He should compare his charts and maps with theirs and generally elicit as much information about Arctic travel from them as he was able. They thought he would be well advised to engage two or three men with experience of Northern travel as they would be useful to him on his voyage. James was to find out what was the most suitable time to sail in search of the passage and learn all he could about the problems of victualling a ship for so long and dangerous a voyage. Generally, he was to lose no opportunity of improving his qualifications for command. They informed him that they had not yet found a suitable ship but that morning Giles Elbridge had written to Barnstaple to discover if there was one there. They enclosed a copy of their letter to the Lord Treasurer which had probably been sent to London some time before.

The King's reply was received a few days later. This gave James, Roe and their friends satisfaction and was to the following effect :

“Att the Court of Whitehall, 3rd Feb. 1630.

“His Majestie is gratusly pleased, for the furtherance of the said discouery, to graunt to the petitioners such equall

Liberties and priuiledges of trade as are already graunted to the adventurers of the Citty of London for that purpose. And, yf the said discovery bee made by either of them, then the Adventurers of both the said Citties are to trade hereafter, and to haue advantadge accordinge to the proporcon of their seuall adventures. And his Majesties Attorney generall is to prepare a graunt accordingly ready for his Majesties Royal signature. Sidney Montague.”⁽¹⁾

James at once wrote to his friends in Bristol enclosing a copy of the reply. He hoped that it would give them satisfaction. He also informed them that he understood that no patent would be issued until the voyage was completed. There was no longer any reason, he felt, for Bristol to have any anxiety about the future and he evidently agreed with Sir Thomas Roe that the Merchants should now proceed with their preparations.

Roe also wrote to the Bristol group. He had, he informed them, the signed petition as a warrant in his hands and once more he besought them to trust the King's word and to rely on his own best endeavours.

Despite their avowed wish that any new trade resulting from their explorations should be open to all, the Bristol Merchant Venturers exhibited no regret that the king apparently intended to limit this commerce to Bristol and London. They were still not wholly satisfied, however, but there was little left for them to do but to thank their friends in London for their most generous assistance. Indeed, the rapidity with which this audience was arranged and the swiftness of the King's reply is an example that the Civil Servants of the present age might well try to emulate. This whole complicated business was carried through in about three weeks, whereas, today, it would probably take as many months. The merchants, therefore, thanked Danby for his help. They had now, they informed him, found a suitable ship. The speed with which this was done is surprising in view of their previous statement that this would be a difficult task.

In gratitude to the King and in honour of the Queen, they intended to name her the *Mary* (later changed to the *Henrietta Maria*). She would be well manned, equipped and victualled and ready to sail by the end of April. They also wrote to Roe in much the same vein. They were so grateful to him for what he had done that in order to ensure that posterity should know of his noble kindness to them they had caused both of his letters to be inscribed in their Society's records. If God should be pleased to

(1) *Op. cit. Ibid.*, fo. 190.

(1) Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fo. 190.

crown their endeavour with success they would consider the service done to Him, their king and country, reward and recompense all-sufficient and abundant. Provided that no one else was allowed to monopolise the trade, they repeated their wish that it should be thrown open to all the King's subjects. They ended by thanking him for the help he had rendered to them in general, and to James in particular. Thanks to him they had received a message transcendently gracious from the King. They wished Roe all happiness and honour and humbly kissed his hand.

The *Henrietta Maria* was equipped with everything which at that time was considered needful for Arctic exploration, and James, to whose mathematical knowledge many references are made in these documents, took with him a great assortment of nautical instruments. Indeed, he was so exact in his requirements that some of his contemporaries thought he must have had previous experience of the North. There may be some substance in this as he states :

" . . . A great Ship (as by former experience I had found) was unfit to be forc'd thorow the Ice, . . ."(1)

but he was still anxious to improve his qualifications for he writes :

" . . . the better to strengthen my former studies in this businesse, I seeke after Iournals, Plots, Discourses, or what-euer else might help my vnderstanding . . ."(2)

and elsewhere he adds :

" . . . I haue spent some yeeres of my ripest age in procuring vaine intelligence from forraine Nations, and haue trauailed vnto diuers Honourable and Learned personages of this kingdome for their instructions . . ."(3)

He read all the available records of his predecessors and carefully studied their methods, took note of their problems and their mistakes. In addition to this knowledge it must also be remembered that he was already an experienced captain.

These things taken together would appear to discount the slurs upon his reputation and professional skill cast by Foxe and some others. In the long history of Northern exploration it sometimes happened that the most distinguished captains encountered ice, fog and other hazards in areas which others found clear of all obstructions. It is true that Foxe sailed a degree or so further north than James, and that he returned to England in six months without the loss of a single man, but this does not prove that James was a poor seaman.

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 456.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 458.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 592.

He was always ready to listen to the advice so freely given to him by his Bristol friends but he tended to trust his own judgment. He did not, therefore, act upon the suggestion that he should engage two or three men who had already been in the north; probably he thought that such additions to the crew might prove to be an encumbrance rather than an aid to him. As Woodes Rogers and others were to find, such sea lawyers tended to undermine the authority of their Captain because he lacked the experience of which they were so proud. James knew what he wanted and usually contrived to get it.

" . . . I was euer of the opinion that this particular action might be better effected by one ship than by two con-sorted . . ."(1)

In the icy northern seas where fogs were so frequent two ships might easily be separated and lose a great deal of valuable time in vain searches for each other. " . . . speedy perseuerance is the life of such a businesse . . ."(2) he wanted one ship only and a shallop. Again, as has been seen, he preferred a small ship to a large one owing to her greater manoeuvrability in icy conditions and " . . . wherefore I made choice of a well-conditioned, strong Ship of the burthen of seuentie Tunne . . ."(3). She was provisioned for eighteen months and, in addition to James himself, carried a crew of nineteen choice men, able-bodied and unmarried, and two boys whom he called "youngsters".

The *Henrietta Maria's* crew and tonnage were almost identical with those of the *Charles*. James appeared to have chosen his men well, for in his book he frequently commends them for their steadiness and seamanship.

Early in April 1631 James proceeded once more to London for his final instructions. These were delivered to him by Sir Thomas Roe together with a letter from King Charles to the Emperor of Japan.

On the 2 May, James bade farewell to the Merchant Venturers of Bristol and accompanied by some merchants, kinsmen and fellow country-men he went aboard. There, Master Thomas Palmer delivered a sermon to the assembled company in which he exhorted them to continue in brotherly love and devotion to their Christian faith(4). After James had entertained his friends as best he could they returned ashore. There is no reason for accepting the view of some writers that the parson, Thomas Palmer, accompanied

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 456.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 460.

James on his voyage. Finally on 3 May, after still more prayers, they set sail. As a contemporary chronicler put it :

“One Captain James, a man of great learning, experienced in navigation and well seen in the mathematical sciences set sail from King Road (Bristol’s famous roadstead at the mouth of the Avon) to discover the North West Passage to the East Indies which many worthy men formerly desired to find but all failed thereof.”⁽¹⁾

After a month’s sail the *Henrietta Maria* sighted Greenland on the 4 June. She encountered ice for the first time and she was slightly damaged. They reached Resolution Island on the 17 June and entered Hudson Strait shortly afterwards. The passage through the Strait was tedious as well as dangerous. Time after time they were impeded by ice, great islands of which sometimes as high as their masthead surrounded them. One night they were terrified by “a hollow and hideous noyse”⁽²⁾ which turned out to be caused by the grinding of ice flows upon a bank of ice which lay on the shore. “There was a stinking fog”⁽³⁾, and the night was black. Whenever clear water appeared they pushed forward as fast as possible only to be caught in the ice once more. James was in constant dread lest his ship should strike upon a submerged section of iceberg or that the mountainous masses through which he passed would topple over upon him. Their shallop was smashed; it snowed from time to time and the ship ran upon a rock and almost capsized, but, in spite of these trials, they slowly made their way through the Strait and when he felt that he was reasonably safe in a secure harbour he went ashore. There, he built a beacon upon which he placed a cross and named this place “The Harbour of God’s Providence” in thankfulness for his deliverance. Some of Foxe’s men saw the smoke of his fires but the two ships did not sight each other.

By 5 July, they were in Latitude 63° 15’ and on the 15th of that month found themselves between Nottingham Island and Digges Island, and soon after this they ran out into Hudson Bay. James tried repeatedly to sail north but always encountered the ice barrier. Then he steered south west and when open water appeared, again turned north and west by north, but always his forward progress was stopped. They heard the hateful sound of grinding ice and the nearer they approached the more hideous this sound became.

(1) Adams’ *Chronicle of Bristol*, p. 226.

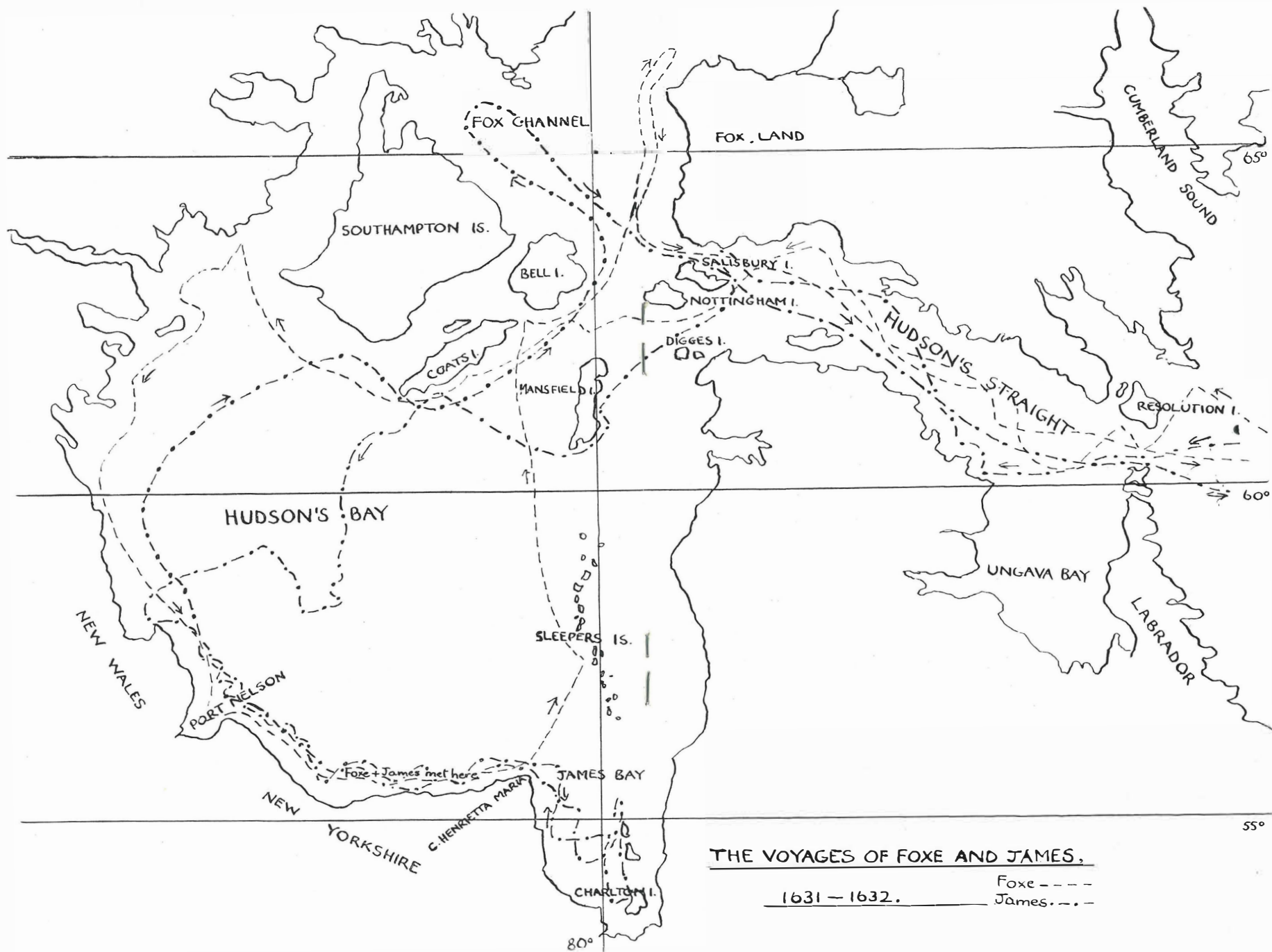
(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.*, II. 464.

(3) *Ibid.*



Tho: James

A picture of James appeared on the map in the account of the voyage which he published in 1633.



enquired from the boat's crew where they had been, what they had seen, how far north they had gone and everything he could think of to help him. Both he and his men were equally ready to answer any questions their visitors wished to ask them. On the following morning, but with great reluctance, Foxe allowed himself to be rowed over to the *Henrietta Maria* to dine with his fellow Captain. The accounts given by these two of their interview well illustrates their striking differences of character. "... I entertained them," writes James, "in the best manner I could..."⁽¹⁾ He gave them fresh game which he had shot ashore and produced his best wine to regale his guest. He told Foxe at length about his voyage so far, and how he had named that part of the west coast of Hudson Bay that he had visited "The South Principality of Wales". To this Foxe rejoined that he had called it "Yorkshire". In his book he makes some further caustic remarks on this subject. James makes no reference to unpleasantness and it is clear that he was quite ready to co-operate with Foxe even though he does not appear to have found him outstandingly congenial. Before his visitors returned to the *Charles*, James gave the sailors presents of various necessities they lacked, including tobacco which Foxe loathed.

The tone of Foxe's account is entirely different. He considered the *Henrietta Maria* a miserable, wet and unpleasant ship, as unfitted as its Captain for the dangerous voyage upon which it was engaged. Compared with the *Charles* she was a bad sailor and in every respect inferior. Foxe made no allowance for the fact that he had been given a king's ship, which, although no longer fit for naval service, was in a better condition than the *Henrietta Maria*. He also forgot that while he had had almost a year in which to prepare himself for the voyage, James was compelled to take the best ship he could find at short notice and had less than three months in which to prepare for the voyage. As the space in the great cabin was so limited, James was compelled to entertain his guests between decks, which afforded Foxe further opportunities for jeering. She threw in so much water, he writes, that if they had been eating mutton, they would have needed no sauce. The ship was "as greedy of liquor" as they themselves, for "her nose was no sooner out of the pitcher, but her nebe, like the Ducks, was in it again".⁽²⁾ Foxe asked himself whether it would be better for his hosts to be impounded in the ice where they might be kept from putrefaction by the piercing air or in open

sea to be kept sweet by being thus daily pickled. He scornfully observes: "... The Gentleman could discourse of Arte (as observations, calculations, and the like), and (he) shewed me many Instruments..."⁽¹⁾ from which Foxe concluded that he was a practitioner in the mathematics. Indeed, the London captain evinced the traditional dislike of the unlearned practical man for the scholar.

They discussed the achievements and mistakes of their predecessors. In the course of the conversation Foxe intimated that James should have lowered his flag when he sighted a king's ship. To this James replied that he was on his way to the Emperor of Japan with a letter from King Charles, and that if the *Charles* had been a ship of His Majesty of forty pieces of Ordnance he could not lower his flag. "Keepe it vp then," replied Fox gruffly, "but you are out of the way to Iapon, for this is not it."⁽²⁾

James suggested that Foxe should winter with him in the Bay. The time was approaching when this should be done, for Sir Thomas Button was laid up for the winter in the month of August. "Hee is no precedent for mee" Foxe replied, "I must paralell my pouerty with poore Hudson's, who tooke no harbour before the first of Nouember,"⁽³⁾ and he said he would certainly not do so before the middle of that month. Moreover, he went on, he had not come so far merely in order to do as much as some other men before him, he would do more than any, indeed, he had already done so. This contention was, of course, quite untrue, for Button and Hudson had both done far more exploring than Foxe. This uncivil Captain goes on to state in his book that if he had not been aboard another Captain's ship as that Captain's guest, he would have said vastly more, no doubt of an even more unpleasant nature. The truculent Yorkshireman concluded his account of the meeting with James by declaring that the seventeen hours he spent with the Bristol captain was "the worst spent of any time of my discovery".⁽⁴⁾

The following morning they both sailed eastwards along the southern coast of Hudson Bay as far as Cape Henrietta Maria, although they never sighted each other again. Foxe's intentions appear to have been to explore the unknown coast line between Button's explorations and those of Hudson. When this was done and he was satisfied that no passage to the westward was to be found in that area, he sailed northward across the Bay. Foxe

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 359.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 359.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.* II. 360.

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 489.

(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 358.

finally reached 66° 47' north in Foxe's Channel. There, he found that the tide came from the south east out of Hudson Strait and the ebb from the north west. He therefore concluded that no passage to the westward led out of Foxe's Channel and so he returned ignominiously to England.

In a letter from Sir Thomas Roe to the Mayor and Burgesses of Bristol dated 28 November, 1631 the writer speaks with contempt of Foxe's performance. He had disappeared from London for the time being, he informed them, and so far Roe had only spoken to the Captain once or twice since his return. Whether his absence was due to shame or not Roe did not know. His official account of the voyage had not yet been presented, but his Master and the Master's mate had been examined at Trinity House. From this investigation it seemed that Foxe had not obeyed the instructions he had been given. Instead of sailing north west in search of the passage, he had sailed down into Hudson Bay, which had already been explored by Button and Hudson. When Foxe refused to winter with James, he stated that he intended to sail north at once in search of the passage, as it was then the best season of the year and freest of ice.

All the hopes of both the Bristol and the London adventurers were now fixed on James, who Roe declared would continue his explorations the following year and who was resolved to die or return with honour. Roe declared that even if he failed to find the passage because it did not exist

“ . . . hee shall and hath gained infinite reputacon to haue taken this resolution, and not to come home like a sluggard and say a lion rores or was in his way . . . ”⁽¹⁾

but and added that he had never known men to seek a north west Passage on a north east shore. In this Roe was doing Foxe an injustice for in the six months of his voyage he had done more than James was to do in eighteen.

Meanwhile, James sailed south in search of winter quarters. Why he did not establish himself in Port Nelson is a mystery. It was a far more convenient place in which to winter than Charlton Island which he finally chose. It was further north than that place and nearer to what he intended to be the scene of his explorations the following year. Moreover, Button had wintered there and apparently found the place convenient and abounding in game.

During the month of September, James cruised about the Bay that now bears his name. In view of the explorations of

Hudson and Button it is impossible to believe that he still thought a passage to the Pacific was to be found out of James Bay.

During this whole month the sea was constantly running so high that he said “they were like Jonah in the belly of the whale.”⁽¹⁾

He writes at length about his sufferings and his anxieties. Indeed, he was so perturbed and carried away by his feelings that he was constrained to write some verses of a highly devotional, sad and improving nature :

“Oh, my poore soule, why doest thou grieue to see
So many Deaths muster to murder mee ?
Looke to thy selfe; regard not me; for I
Must doe (for what I came), performe, or die . . .

Having compared himself with the sailor at the mercy of the compass he concludes :—

Now thou must steere by faith, a better guide ;
'Twill bring thee safe to heauen, against the tyde
Of Satan's malice. Now let quiet gales
Of sauing grace inspire thy zealous sayles.”⁽²⁾

Unquestionably, James was a sincere, pious man. This comes out constantly in his book; whether he was a good seaman or not may be open to question but, certainly, he was a bad poet.

It was not until early October that he selected his winter quarters, which he named Charles Towne in honour of the Prince of Wales. This was later shortened to Charlton, the name they gave the island upon one of whose coves they established themselves.⁽³⁾

The winter was now fast closing in. “ . . . Seeing therefore that we could no longer make use of our sayles (which be the wings of a Ship) . . . ”⁽⁴⁾ the *Henrietta Maria* was anchored in shallow water and stripped of her rigging. James proposed to carry all his stores ashore and partially to sink the ship in order to protect her from drifting ice or from being carried away. It is difficult, however, to follow his reasoning and many have doubted whether the partial immersion of the *Henrietta Maria* was necessary or wise. Before the work was completed, the cold became so intense and the ice was growing so thick and filling the bay that he was unable to complete his task. Holes were therefore bored in the ship's hull, but even then she took a long time to sink. Gradually

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 492.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 505.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 552.

(4) *Ibid.* II. 509.

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* I. cvii.

the water rose, but as it did so, the cargo still left aboard floated and crashed upon the bulkhead, while the ice beat upon her from the outside.

"... we looking from the shoare towards the Ship, she did looke like a piece of Ice in the fashion of a Ship, or a Ship resembling a piece of Ice . . ." (1)

"... the chests fled wildly about, and the water did flash and flie wonderfully . . ." (2)

James and his men felt that she would break up at any minute and sink, but at last she settled and much of their stores, food, clothing, medicine chest, tools and other necessities went into cold storage with the ship.

"... Our men that were ashoare stood looking vpon us, almost dead with cold and sorrowes, to see our misery and their owne. We lookt vpon them againe, and both vpon each other, with woefull hearts. Darke night drew on, and I bade the Boate to be haled vp, and commanded my louing companions to goe all into her, who (in some refusing complements) expressed their faithful affections to mee, as loth to part from me. I told them that my meaning was to goe ashore with them. And thus, lastly, I forsook the Ship . . ." (3)

Meanwhile three huts had been built ashore. These consisted of logs piled against stakes driven into the ground. The hut in which they slept was twenty feet square. It had a hearth in the centre and a low door through which they could creep. There were two holes high up in the walls to let out smoke and to let in the light. Its roof was provided by the ship's mainsail and the walls were lined with sails. It had a double row of bunks built in against the walls. The second hut, which was of similar construction, was their cookhouse and the third their store. At best, their quarters were cold, draughty make-shifts. In the course of the winter, the snow was so deep and fell so incessantly that they were barely able to keep paths clear to connect the three buildings. Thanks to their hasty departure from the ship before the cargo had been shifted ashore, James and his men lacked many things, including towards Spring, axes with which to cut wood for fuel for their fires. Their shoes wore out and they had to manage as best they could with pieces of cloth bound around their feet. Scurvy smote them in February and from then on to their departure they were never free from illness.

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 513.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 520.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 520.

James realised that he must, somehow, keep up the spirits of his men, but it cannot be said that his first attempt to do this was particularly wise. He told them that they were as near heaven there as in England, and that they would now have plenty of time in which to repent and prepare for the life to come. Some of the men, led by the carpenter, were incorrigible grumblers. They lamented that the *Henrietta Maria* was a total loss and would never sail again. It would be impossible for them to return to their native country and they would all perish in this miserable northerly wilderness. At Christmas and Easter, James did all he could to give his crew good cheer. Indeed, throughout the winter he was most careful about their diet. In this task he was always supported by the cook who contrived so well that all the week, except Friday nights

"... we had some warme thing in our bellies euery supper . . ." (1)

On May Day, he writes :

"... we returned late from our worke to our house, and made a good fire, and chose Ladies, and did ceremoniously weare their names in our Caps, endeauouring to reuiue ourselues by any meanes." (2)

Early in the winter the men were greatly encouraged when their Captain ordered the carpenter to build a pinnacle in which they would be able to make their way home the following summer if it turned out that it was impossible to refloat the *Henrietta Maria*. Throughout the ensuing dreary months, that gloomy but excellent craftsman completed the greater part of this work before he fell seriously ill in the spring. In April, after much discussion, James determined to hack the ice of the ship in the hope that she might be made seaworthy. This proved to be a very tedious and a heavy task for sick men enfeebled by months of privation. At the beginning of April, five of the crew, including the carpenter, were incapable of work of any kind and only five others were fit enough to take their proper meals. Before that dismal month ended, James had only four men left who were able to struggle through the snow over the ice, but, despite all difficulties, the digging out of the ice aboard the *Henrietta Maria* continued, and before the month was out some of the crew were already sleeping aboard. All were cheered by the discovery of beer which had lain in the ice throughout the winter. This, the men greatly relished, even thought they said "it tasted of bulge-water". (3) Later they

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 544.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 543.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 542.

discovered casks of meat, clothing, shoes, bedding and other necessities which they sorely needed.

Throughout this time, James sent various parties out in search of game but they returned empty-handed, for the island was bare. During the month of April, although the weather was improving, the condition of the men grew steadily worse. The carpenter and one of the men, John Wardon, died, and to add to the depression, the body of the gunner whom they had buried at sea in the previous autumn was found in the ice close to the ship. These three were all buried on a slight eminence near the camp which they named Brandon Hill after Brandon Hill, Bristol. When the ice was cleared out of the ship, the pumps were got going, the holes in the hull were plugged up, cables were cleared of ice and the lost rudder was retrieved. At the end of May, James found some vetches growing on the shore which proved to be edible and provided a nourishing broth for the sick men.

The sand was cleared away from the ship's hull by the lustiest of the men but they were unable to endure the immersion in the cold water for more than half of a quarter of an hour at a time

"... yea, vse what comforts we could, it would make them swound and dye away..."⁽¹⁾

The ship was lightened of her ballast and at length on 17 June the vessel was afloat once more. The mending of the sails and the difficult task of re-rigging the ship went on apace while the weather improved and the men rapidly recovered their health. Yet this Jeremiah of the North still found ample reasons for lamentation. Now it was not the cold or the dangers of the sea, but that familiar pest of the Canadian North, the mosquito, that afflicted James and his men :

"... Here had lately appeared diuers sorts of flyes, as Butter-flyes, Butchers-flyes, Horse-flyes, and such an infinit abundance of bloud-thirsty Muskitoes..."⁽²⁾

as these Englishmen had never before seen. James declared that they suffered more from these new enemies than they had from the cold in the depths of the winter. Later, in order to protect themselves they tore up an old flag out of which they made bags to cover their heads, but all to no avail, for somehow, the mosquitoes still contrived to reach their goal :

"... our faces were swolne hard out in pumple, which would so itch and smart that we must needs rubbe end teare them..."⁽³⁾

(1) Hakluyt Socyety, *op. cit.* II 554.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 556.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 562.

Before they quitted this place, James placed a cross on Brandon Hill near to the graves of their three dead shipmates. Affixed to it was an account of the voyage up to that date, together with a declaration that all the land in the region, extending to the 80th degree north latitude and westward to New Albion, belonged to King Charles. Enclosed with these documents were pictures of the King and Queen, and the whole was wrapped in lead to provide protection from the weather. They built cairns over the graves, consisting of great stones and sand.

James had a tree from which he was accustomed to make his observations and to scan the adjacent sea. On the last occasion he went there, he almost lost his life through the carelessness of one of his men in carrying out the commander's order to light a signal fire to attract anyone that might happen to be in the neighbourhood. This man unfortunately set the forest afire to the windward of the tree in which James was making his observations. It was soon blazing, and he barely managed to escape with his life. The rapidity with which the fire spread astounded these strangers to the north and its noise was terrifying to them. On the following day it swept down upon the camp and they had scarcely time to carry their remaining goods to the shore before their three houses were in ashes.

At last, by the end of June, the ship was ready for sea again. Ballast and cargo were replaced aboard and James and his men paid their farewell visit to the graves of their companions over which James pronounced a funeral oration in verse and then they departed.

It was now almost a year since they first entered Hudson Bay. Thus the suffering they had endured by wintering in the north was of little or no advantage to them. If they had returned to England in the previous autumn they could have been back in the Bay at about the same time that they were now resuming their explorations. Their ship could have been refitted during the winter and their crew brought up to strength.

During the months of July and August they sailed in a generally northerly direction, but the same calamities with which they were already so familiar still dogged their course. They were blinded by fogs; they encountered rocks, shoals, and ice which battered the ship incessantly. The result was that they were unable to do a great deal in the second season of their exploration. James followed the shore line of James Bay and Hudson Bay to the north with the intention of searching for a North Westerly passage. He hoped to find this somewhere north of Nottingham Island. He

entered Foxe's Strait, but when he reached 65° 30' he encountered an impassable barrier of ice.

"... This strooke vs all into a dumpe, whereupon I called a consultation of my Associates . . . requiring them to aduise and counsell mee how to prosecute our businesse to effect..."(1)

The winter was coming on, it was so cold that men were barely able to work the ship, which was by now very leaky. If they delayed much longer they would be unable to pass through Hudson Strait that season. His officers gave him various reasons in writing why he should return home :

"... Wherefore" they concluded, "we here counsell you to returne homeward, hoping that God will giue vs a fauourable passage, and returne vs home safe into our natiue countreys, if we take time, and not tempt him too farre by our wilfulnesse."(2)

As James agreed with them he took their advice and,

"... (with a sorrowfull heart, God knowes) I consented that the helme should be borne vp and a course shapte for England..."(3)

He was then in Latitude 65° 30'. He hoped that the King would understand why he had returned and pardon him for coming home without discovering the Passage.

After all the sufferings they had endured they had not discovered populous kingdoms, nor taken notice of their magnificent powers and policies, nor did they bring home with them samples of the riches of these countries, nor had they pried into the mysteries of their trade and traffic, nor made any great fights against the enemies of God and our nation. In fact James did not believe that there was any North West Passage out of Hudson Bay. He held that the stories of Portuguese coming from the Pacific into the Atlantic around the North of North America were fabrications :

"... For mine owne part, I giue no credit to them at all, and as little to the vicious and abusiuw wits of later Portingals and Spaniards, who neuer speake of any difficulties, as shoald water, ice, nor sight of land, but (write) as if they had beene brought home in a dreame or engine . . ."(4)

He appears to have thought that if there was a passage anywhere it must lie to the north of Latitude 66°. He was convinced

that if the passage was discovered it would prove to be of slight commercial value, an opinion which came very near to the truth.

On the 3 September they passed Resolution Island and on the 22 October 1632, after an absence of almost eighteen months, the *Henrietta Maria* dropped anchor in Bristol.

James was warmly received by the Bristol merchants, who were now convinced that no North West Passage to the Pacific led out of Hudson Bay.

From then on they turned their attention to the mainland colonies of North America and the Caribbean Islands. They praised James for the gallant manner in which he had discharged his task, and later, when they discovered what a sorry state the ship was in on her return, their admiration was unbounded. When she was hauled up on the shore it was found that all her "cut water" and stern were torn and beaten to pieces and she had lost fourteen feet of her keel. Much of her sheathing was cut away, her bows were broken and many of her timbers were cracked. Under the starboard bulge a sharp rock had cut through the sheathing. Indeed it was a great achievement in itself that James had been able to bring home a vessel in such a miserable condition.

The Merchant Venturers wished the King to hear James's story as soon as possible. On the 2 November, therefore, they wrote to Roe and Danby, Lord Treasurer, and Mr. Cary, and they requested James to proceed to London at once with these letters. They asked their friends at Court to arrange for James to be given a second audience with King Charles. This was done, and on the 19 November, James wrote to them to report his interview with the King. At the audience the King had been most gracious. He had examined a sketch map which James presented to him and listened carefully to his account of the voyage. At the conclusion of his story the King asked James many questions and the audience lasted two hours. Charles was so pleased with what he heard that he commanded James to come again and bring Captain Foxe and Captain Bruton with him, in order that he could judge their proceedings better. As there is no reference to a Captain Bruton in either Foxe's book or that of James, it would appear that a mistake has been made. The reference may be to Captain Dune, Foxe's Master. Charles also ordered James to write a full account of his voyage and to bring it to him. When James wrote to the Merchant Venturers on the 19 November he had already begun to write his book. There is no record of the meeting of the King with Foxe, James and the mysterious Bruton, and it probably never took place. How the surly Foxe would have got on with the fastidious

(1) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* II. 584.

(2) *Ibid.* II. 585.

(3) *Ibid.* II. 585.

(4) *Ibid.* II. 588.

King is hard to imagine, but such an encounter would certainly not have been concluded without some comic incidents.

The fame of James's exploits and news of the royal favour shown to him spread rapidly, and everyone was anxious to entertain him. He was feasted by the nobility and by people of note in London and Bristol, but this did not deter him from the task which the King had set him. His book was published early in March and James was now ready to serve the King in some other way.

On the 6th May, he was given the command of H.M. Ship of the Line 9th Whelp and ordered to assist in clearing the Bristol Channel and the Irish Sea of the pirates who then infested those waters. Owing to various difficulties, including the behaviour of his predecessor, who tried to arrest some of his officers, he was not able to put to sea for six weeks.

Not long after that, Admiral Sir Richard Plumleigh reported that the 9th Whelp had captured a pirate in Milford Haven. This was the first of a series of successes which enhanced James's reputation. In October 1633, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, the Earl of Strafford, informed the Lords of the Admiralty that James had acquitted himself so well that

“ . . . I must give the Captain the testimony of (being) a very diligent attendant upon his charge; of (being) a very civil man in his conversation, and (an) able man in his profession . . . ”⁽¹⁾

Strafford felt that their Lordships should bear James in mind and take the first opportunity of promoting him. Coming from such a source as the mighty Lord Deputy this was no empty compliment. When James reported to him about the infamies of the victuallers, the great man was furious. He would hang them, he declared, or, at least, slit their ears to discourage others from doing likewise. James had informed him that, thanks to the dishonesty of the traders ashore, he and his men had been living on rotten meat ever since they put to sea. The crew were poisoned, their faces would break out in sores and they were threatening to desert. “It was the greatest shame and dishonour in the world,” Strafford went on to say, “that such things should occur.”⁽²⁾ Later, he informed the Lords of the Admiralty that he would have no one in the Irish Sea to protect peaceful shipping but Admiral Plumleigh and Captain James.

(1) The Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* I. cxcviii.

(2) Hakluyt Society, *op. cit.* I. cxcix.

In a later despatch of 24 June 1634 Strafford reported that the merchants had been

“ . . . much comforted, finding these rovers (i.e. the pirates) in a manner quite driven off this coast by the guard of His Majesty's ships, who have indeed so well attended their charge as I hear not of any complaint at all this summer.”⁽¹⁾

During these two years as a Naval Captain, James not only showed himself to be a distinguished and capable leader, he also protected his officers from the malignity of their former commander. Indeed, one of the last official acts of his career in the navy was to recommend his Master's mate, William Purser, who had served him faithfully for two years; although he had only one hand he was the best man for the work that James had known.

Rapid promotion, therefore, seemed certain for this Bristol Captain, but in 1635 he was struck down with a mortal illness. Fearing that his end was near he made his will in which he bequeathed all his worldly goods to his only surviving sister, whom he made his executrix. Soon afterwards he died. Captain Thomas James is probably buried in the Lord Mayor's Chapel, but the place of his grave is unknown.

It has been frequently said that his book influenced Coleridge in the writing of “The Ancient Mariner”, but this is still a matter for conjecture. It is a fact, however, that when the poet was reading in Bristol library, a copy of James's book was on its shelves. Undoubtedly, some of the language in “The Ancient Mariner” is reminiscent of phrases that recur in James's book, but it is impossible to be certain about this connection.

“ And now there came both mist and snow
And it grew wondrous cold :
And ice, mast high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

“ And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

“ The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound ! ”

(1) *Op. cit.* I. cciii.

As an explorer James is not in the first flight. He does not stand in the same class with such men as Hudson and Button; even Foxe reached a point further north than he did, although James got further west.

A kindly, scholarly man, with a deep sense of duty, always careful for the welfare of those serving under him, James deserves unqualified respect. He showed great resource on many occasions and his naval career established his capacity as an able commander at sea. He may have dramatized himself somewhat, and he unquestionably stressed the sufferings which he and his crew endured. His description of storms and ice and the terrors of the North are graphic. He knew how to write a good story, while Foxe's book is little better than an enlarged ship's log padded out with a good deal of bogus history. James's work, with all its defects, is a vivid narrative of travel in the far North.

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C. M. MacINNES

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