

Author's Note

Author's Note: On May 19, 1845, the British ships HMS Erebus and HMS Terror embarked on a momentous expedition from Greenhithe in Kent, intending to uncover the fabled Northwest Passage, a purported route through the North American Arctic that could connect the United Kingdom to lucrative Asian trade routes. This ambitious journey, however, would soon fade into history as the ships were never heard from again after being spotted in Baffin Bay in July 1845, just days before they disappeared. Despite extensive search efforts over a seven-year period, the expedition was officially declared lost on March 1, 1854, with all crew members presumed dead. The only piece of evidence found was a cairn discovered in 1859 by William Hobson, which contained a crucial note left by the crew, a significant part of which is discussed in Chapter IX of this narrative.

The ill-fated journey was led by Sir John Franklin, a man with a notable but controversial history, as he had previously failed disastrously in the Coppermine expedition of 1819. His command on this mission was accompanied by Captain Francis Crozier of the HMS Terror, a skilled and seasoned sailor with significant Arctic experience. Crozier was known not just for his naval expertise, but also his scientific background, which made him a critical member of the expedition. In contrast, the Erebus was led by Captain James Fitzjames, a charismatic but less experienced leader in polar exploration. Despite Fitzjames's charm, he lacked the extensive experience needed for such a perilous voyage, and he was supported by First Lieutenant Graham Gore, one of the few officers in the crew who had prior Arctic experience, though Gore's life remains largely undocumented.

Graham Gore's personal life is somewhat mysterious, with only his service record surviving. He was born into a naval family and was likely about thirty-five years old at the time of the Franklin expedition. While much of his background is obscure, a letter

from Fitzjames to his sister-in-law paints a rare portrait of Gore's character, revealing that he was not only physically capable, but also had artistic talents, playing the flute and creating drawings. This brief character sketch offers a glimpse into Gore's multifaceted nature, suggesting he was a well-rounded man who earned the respect of his peers, though little else is known about his personal thoughts and feelings during the expedition.

Gore was known for his popularity among his peers, a rare achievement in a time when consistent naval employment during peacetime was uncommon. His calm demeanor and unwavering character were qualities that made him well-liked in the often harsh environment of naval life. Gore was also noted for his sporting abilities, particularly in hunting, where he earned admiration for his skill and dedication. A lone daguerreotype captures his likeness, depicting him as a handsome and composed individual, a striking contrast to the grim and grueling nature of his naval service. His image, though few and far between, gives us a rare visual representation of a man who was integral to the ill-fated Franklin expedition.

In crafting this novel, several aspects of Gore's character were amplified for dramatic effect. The portrayal presented here depicts him as a man who remained calm and composed in the face of extreme danger, a man whose ambition was to rise within the military ranks. This narrative began as a lighthearted project aimed at a small audience but quickly evolved into a deeper exploration of the historical realities of the Franklin expedition. As the story progressed, it became a way of understanding not just the historical facts, but the emotional and psychological depths of the characters involved. Gore's role in the expedition, as well as the broader context of the journey itself, provides a compelling foundation for the exploration of survival, leadership, and moral choices during one of the most significant and tragic expeditions in history.

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