
Voices of the Past

Lady Franklin Bay Report by Adolphus Greely

Army Explorers

1888

Pages 40-41

As was natural, the first days of spring brought a sense of relief that the second winter had ended, and the entire party was in strength and health. The knowledge that no expedition had ever passed a second winter in such a high latitude, added to the forebodings repeatedly expressed by the surgeon of the expedition, had caused me great uneasiness, and been a serious mental trial through the late months.

The February report of that officer, received on the 3d, stated that the health of the men was good, with no signs of scurvy, and but two men, Long and Bender, on a special diet. During the early days of the month the depot at Cape Baird was supplemented by additional supplies of food as opportunity presented. The weather, however, was trying, as up to the 7th of March the sun had been visible but three hours.

Lieutenant Lockwood was ordered to prepare for the continuation of the exploration of the North Greenland coast, in which it was believed he would be able to reach, unless unfortunate, the eighty-fourth parallel. The trip to be made early in March was with a view to establishing special depots for the final journey.

On March 9 I received from the surgeon of the expedition what appeared to me as a remarkable letter (Appendix No. 62), which practically recommended the abandonment of all work of exploration. My own views at the time are shown in my answer (Appendix No. 63), in which I declared that the abandonment of field work through a fear or possible contingencies seemed to me dishonorable and unmanly. Owing to the death of Dr. Pavy, I have no desire to add further to my letter of March 10, 1883, than to say that the spring journeys of that year were fruitful in geographical results of great importance and value, and that such work was done without accident or injury, and that it in no way interfered with our arrangements for subsequent retreat by boats.

Page 90

On the 4th Henry was detected taking shrimps, and Schneider and Bender were also suspected.

June 5th I had a conversation with Private Henry, in which he admitted his many offenses and promised to deal fairly in the future. In default of moral feeling I appealed to his senses, pointing out the certainty that the few remaining could survive only by unity and fair dealing, and that otherwise everybody would perish; and I cautioned him of his coming to grief if he did not act properly. I felt doubtful of his sincerity, however, and consequently gave written orders (Appendix No. 122) to watch him, and, if found stealing, to shoot him. On the 6th Frederick,

while cooking, detected Henry taking shrimps from the general mess-pot when his back was turned, which Frederick reported to me. Not being armed at that time he couldn't comply with my orders. Later Henry made two trips to our winter hut, and, after the second, passed me, and on being questioned admitted that he had in a bundle on his shoulder some seal-skin thongs, and had elsewhere concealed seal-skin. An order (Appendix No. 118) was issued, directing his execution. Owing to Henry's strength, which was greater than that of any two men, the necessity of caution to prevent general disaster was obvious, and arrangements were made accordingly. Shots were heard about 2 o'clock, and later the order was read to the general party. Every one, without exception acknowledged that his fate was merited. Considerable quantities of seal-skin were found in his clothes-bag, nights before, and also a pair of my seal-skin boots, loaned to the hunter and stolen from him a few nights before, though Long thought they had blown away. On Henry's person was also found a silver chronograph, which had been packed and left behind by me at Conger and stolen by him on leaving the station.

All appendices mentioned in the above excerpts are available to view and print on the Army Heritage Center Foundation website.