

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE OF NORTH AMERICA

IN THE spring of 1848 the first expeditions sailed in search of the lost Franklin expedition. Unfortunately Franklin and most of his men were already dead. Although this was unknown to the early relief expeditions, it must have seemed increasingly probable to the crews of the forty ships which followed during the next eleven years. Increasingly they felt free to turn their attention to the discovery of those unknown islands among which the expedition had so mysteriously disappeared. Before clear evidence of the tragedy was found, the northwest passage had been negotiated and most of the Canadian Arctic archipelago had been outlined.

Today it is appropriate to look back a century and realize that these same inhospitable regions are the scene of activity such as they have not known in the intervening years. Spurred by no tragedy, assisted by aids unknown even a generation ago, the exploration, mapping and scientific study of the North American Arctic is now being pursued on a scale never before possible.

What an unique opportunity it is! The world revolves about the polar regions. The magnetic poles, the aurora, the effects of continuous summer sunlight, the winter's cold are strange physical attributes that make the background to this exploration of the world's last undiscovered frontiers as fascinating today as it has ever been.

Discovery was not the only achievement of the Franklin search, for it elicited world wide sympathy and support from many nations. Bellot Strait at the extreme northern boundary of the mainland was named for a French volunteer. The Danish and Russian governments assisted search parties. Henry Grinnell of Philadelphia equipped two expeditions which were commanded by United States Navy officers. Although De Haven and Kane did not find Franklin, their discoveries first aroused that American interest in Ellesmere Island and northern Greenland that led to later expeditions in search of the pole.

All these efforts, inspired by noble motives, were happily marked by an absence of quarrelling and a generous recognition of the achievements of others. As an international, scientific society the Arctic Institute of North America can wish for no better guide to its conduct than these examples of international goodwill a hundred years ago. The small group of men who four years ago formed this private society and maintained control of it until it was established upon a secure foundation, are now anxious to see a larger number of those interested in the North American Arctic take an active part in the Institute's affairs. As a means of bringing this about they invite all persons interested to join the Institute; they have limited the number of times any Governor may be re-elected and they now launch this journal as a means of communicating information about the Arctic and the activities of the Institute to all its members and to the wider public that may be interested in the ends of the earth.

J. TUZO WILSON,
Chairman, Board of Governors, 1947.