

condescending attitude towards Lady Franklin (which women readers may well find objectionable and even offensive), how likely is it that a man who loved and trusted his wife would have said nothing whatever to her about his expedition's true purpose?

Jane Franklin comes in for yet more barbed criticism in the final portion of the book. Determined 'to rewrite the past', she insisted that her husband should be acknowledged as the discoverer of the northwest passage. The result of her efforts was the statue in Waterloo Place. Victorian society thus 'lost sight of the greater man: John Franklin, navigator, scientist and humanitarian, was crushed beneath the granite and bronze of an ill-conceived outsized effigy' (pages 288, 295). Misled by this heroic myth, Robert Falcon Scott and his comrades went to their unnecessary deaths in the Antarctic, and thousands more Englishmen willingly volunteered for the carnage of the First World War. Later students of Arctic history, equally blinkered, 'have been unable to explain the otherwise astonishing fact that Britain willingly spent an imperial fortune to solve a minor geographical curiosity of no possible economic benefit' (page 301).

Lambert ridicules the historians who have explained the Franklin disaster as the result of lead poisoning or botulism. Dismissing Owen Beattie's discovery of high lead levels in the bodies of Franklin's men (Beattie and Geiger 1987), and ignoring the highly speculative nature of his own theories, he remarks piously that 'the most plausible explanations are the ones that require no flights of imagination, speculation or guesswork, and do not stray beyond the evidence. Historians should check that their evidence would stand up in a court of law' (page 344). Then he offers his own reconstruction of the expedition's tragic end. In the days immediately following the abandonment of the ships, the officers were able to 'maintain the illusion of normality, hope and progress.' But only a few officers remained, and they soon died. Without them, according to Lambert, 'discipline weakened. With their death[s] went any hope of escape: only the officers possessed the navigational skills to find the way out. Once the men realised their fate the bounds of civilised behaviour were loosed' (page 345). Needless to say, this version of events rests entirely on speculation. There is no proof as to where or when most of the officers died, and such proof as does exist runs counter to Lambert's claims. He states that the cannibalism began at Terror Bay in May 1848, but

the skeleton of Lieutenant Henry Le Vesconte was found near the mouth of the Pfeffer River, well beyond Terror Bay on the line of the last march (Owen 1978: 418, 421–422). Therefore, there is no way of telling whether the men who resorted to cannibalism were officers or sailors or a combination of the two.

Why Lambert should wish to convince his audience that no officers participated in the cannibalism, and why he believes so passionately that Franklin the magnetic scientist is an inherently more admirable figure than Franklin the geographical discoverer, remains obscure. At times his book begins to resemble the work of such Arctic cranks as Noel Wright, whose *Quest for Franklin* (1959) also purported to reveal the long neglected key to the Arctic mystery. Unquestionably, Franklin and his fellow Arctic officers took a very serious interest in science, but there is no reason to believe that they valued it above geographical discovery, either for its intrinsic worth or as a means of advancing their careers. The past, as L.P. Hartley wrote, 'is a foreign country: they do things differently there' (Hartley 1953: 9). Historians who want to defend Franklin must come to terms with the stubborn 'otherness' of the past and with the irrefutable fact that he was willing, even eager, to risk his life in search of the northwest passage. (Janice Cavell, Historical Section (PORH), Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2, Canada and Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6).

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THE FIRST PACIFIC WAR: BRITAIN AND RUSSIA, 1854–1856. John D. Grainger. 2008. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press. xv + 207p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-1-84383-354-3. £50.

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There were two theatres of the 'Crimean' War, 1853–1856, that are of interest to readers of *Polar Record*. The first was the White Sea in which the British and French navies maintained a blockade of Russian ports, notably Archangelsk, interdicting trade and tying up military resources that would have been more useful in the area of the main hostilities. The other was the sub-Arctic northwest Pacific where the strategic situation facing the allies was much more complex as there was imperfectly understood geography, difficulties concerning sea ice, with which the allied commanders were largely unfamiliar, prob-

lems, actual and potential, with neutrals, notably China, Japan, which entered into treaties with the USA, Russia, and Britain in the period, and the USA itself which was adopting an expansive posture in the Pacific. Moreover, the allies were confronted by probably the most outstanding Russian commanders in the whole conflict.

The recent literature in English concerning the war in the second area, the subject of this book, is scanty. The seminal paper was John Stephan's 'The Crimean War in the far east' (Stephan 1969), and this was followed by sections in his important books entitled *Sakhalin* and *The Kuril Islands* (Stephan 1971, 1974), an analysis by Barry Gough of the only battle, that at Petropavlovsk/Kamchatsky in 1854 (Gough 1971: 108–122) together with a very few other papers (for example Stone and Crampton 1985; Stone 1992).

The present volume is the first attempt to present a coherent account of the whole episode and is thus to be warmly welcomed. The topic is dealt with chronologically with equal

stress on the events of 1854 and on those of 1855 together with comment on the plans for 1856, which had they ever been implemented, might have had profound effects on the geopolitics of the area right up to the present. The main outlines of the story are simply stated. The book starts by explaining the wide ranging responsibilities of the Royal Navy's Pacific squadron, normally based at Valparaiso in Chile, and of its China squadron based at Hong Kong. It was the former that had the primary duty of removing any Russian maritime presence in the Pacific. This was done by a 'pursuit' of the frigate *Aurora* by the squadron across the ocean to Petropavlovsk. However this 'pursuit' was not pursued with any great vigour and in the end the allied squadron arrived at the port after the Russians, under the able leadership of Rear Admiral Vasily Zavoiko, had had ample time to place it in an efficient state of defence. The ensuing battle was delayed by the death of the British commander, Rear Admiral David Price. This was by his own hand. The author subscribes wholeheartedly to the opinion that it was suicide. However, it certainly could have been an accident. Be that as it may, command devolved on the French Rear Admiral Auguste Febvrier-Despointes. Price's original plan was put into effect on 31 August 1854. This involved a bombardment and destruction of the batteries constructed by the Russians to defend the harbour after which the aim was to destroy the Russian vessels within it. The initial bombardment succeeded but then there was a gap until 4 September 1854 during which the new allied command revised its plan and, when the revised version was put into effect, there was a *debacle*. The allies landed in force but due to bad leadership and superior Russian competence were driven off with proportionally high casualties.

This defeat had unfortunate consequences since it had to be 'avenged' the following year by which time the strategic situation had changed because the Russians had consolidated an advance down the Amur River and were establishing themselves close to its mouth, legally Chinese territory at the time. Instead of tackling this new development the Allies were distracted into a further attack on Petropavlovsk but by the time they arrived the place had been effectively abandoned. The Russian vessels carrying the garrison etc sailed along the chain of the Kurils and into the Gulf of Tartary between the mainland and Sakhalin. Here they were followed and found in De Castries Bay by a detachment of the China squadron under Commodore Charles Elliot. The Russians knew, but the British did not, although they ought to have suspected it, that Sakhalin was an island and not a peninsula and that there was a channel, difficult, true, but still a channel leading into the mouth of the Amur River. The Russians were delayed only because of the need to wait for the winter sea ice to clear. Elliot decided not to attack the Russians because they were in an easily defensible position and he was outgunned. He retired southwards and waited for them to emerge but, culpably, did not maintain a watch on their position. The Russians escaped north through the channel and into the Amur estuary to the fury of the British press when the news reached London.

The Russians proceeded to strengthen their positions near the mouth of the river and there they would certainly have been blockaded and attacked in 1856 had the war not ended. The main loser of the whole 'Crimean' war was China which was unable, due to extensive rebellions in the south of the country, to prevent Russian occupation of the Amur valley to its mouth, positions they occupy to this day.

A definitive account of these events would be a major feat of scholarship since long periods of work would be necessary

in the archives of the United Kingdom, France, Russia, as main participants, and also in those of China, Japan and the USA. The linguistic skills required would be formidable for one author and a team would probably be necessary. But in the case of this book the only primary sources referred to are British but there is no doubt that these have been studied carefully. The main deficiency is the complete absence of any primary sources from any of the other nations involved. Indeed with regard to the Russians fewer than 10 sources are listed in total and the major Russian secondary source for the war, Tarle's *Krymskaya voyna*, is absent (Tarle 1950). This inevitably means that the account can be relied upon as a statement of events from the British side but not at all with regard to their opponents and also not from that of their ally. Only one French source is cited.

An idea of the limitations of the book is provided by the frequent references to the Russian navy in a derogatory fashion; they were unwilling 'to stand and fight' in the open sea (page 38); 'there was in fact absolutely no evidence that the Russians intended to use their ships for any intelligible naval purpose' (page 163); 'the Russians had foiled the search by reacting in a landlubberly fashion, by withdrawing the ships from all possible contact' (page 185), as if the only possible use of naval power is in pitched battles fought on the high seas. The author completely overlooks the fact that the Russian strategy perfectly encapsulated the 'fleet in being' concept that became so important in later conflicts. Moreover, he does not mention that it was the Russians, and not the allies, that won the only decisive naval victory of the entire war when in an efficiently conducted operation they destroyed the Turkish fleet at Sinope in the Black Sea in 1853. The author's judgements might have been amended if he had studied the Russian sources with the same diligence that he devoted to the British ones.

Moreover the book is littered with tiresome errors. Space does not permit a full listing but, for example, Richard Collinson was not captain of *Plover* in 1853, the transliteration of the surname of the Governor-General of eastern Siberia should be Muraviev and not Muravev, 'gavan' in Imperatorskaia Gavan should be translated 'harbour' and not 'bay', and while there is note of the 'neutrality' agreement between Britain and Russia concerning Alaska there is no mention that there had been a long standing contract of cooperation between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Russian American Company which made the agreement more logical. The contention that the activities of the allies in the Pacific had 'no visible effects on the wider war' (page 70) is incorrect. Morale in St Petersburg was sustained by Russia's undoubted victory at Petropavlovsk and this went some considerable way to redress depression at the defeats of the Alma, Balaclava and Inkermann, news of which reached the capital at approximately the same time. We are informed that the administration of Lord Palmerston had not been firmly based but after the bombardment of Bomarsund (in the Åland Islands) support for it accrued. (page 170). This is curious. Bomarsund fell to the allies in August 1854 while Palmerston's administration was not formed until February 1855. The author clearly means the fortress of Suomenlinna (Sveaborg) outside Helsinki that was indeed bombarded in the summer of 1855. Even the bibliography offers examples of carelessness. The book by Greenhill and Giffard (1988) includes the years 1854–1855 in the title and not the years 1855–1856 as is claimed. Moreover the second author is referenced as Gilford. And so on.

Sufficient has been written in this review to make it clear that this book merits attention precisely because it is the only

modern one that covers all the events in the Pacific during the Crimean War. The situation with regard to the activities of the Royal Navy is thoroughly set out but that with regard to all of the other powers involved is simply based on a cursory reading of an incomplete, and in the case of China non-existent, set of secondary sources. It would have been much better for the book to have appeared as one of the volumes of the Navy Records Society, the main bulk being extracts from the relevant British papers, which the author has studied in great detail, with an interlinking text outlining the activities of the other participants.

The presentation of the book is adequate but the illustrations are very poor. There are 5 maps of which 4 are of the simplest sort. The most interesting is one of the mouth of the Amur which amply demonstrates the confusing geography of the area.

To sum up, a useful book but a full account of events in the north Pacific theatre of the 'Crimean' war is still awaited. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB 2 1ER.)

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A NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE, TRAVELS AND SUFFERINGS OF THOMAS W. SMITH: COMPRISING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS EARLY LIFE, ADOPTION BY THE GIPSY; HIS TRAVELS DURING EIGHTEEN VOYAGES TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD, DURING WHICH HE WAS FIVE TIMES SHIPWRECKED; THRICE ON A DESOLATE ISLAND NEAR THE SOUTH POLE, ONCE ON THE COAST OF ENGLAND AND ONCE ON THE COAST OF AFRICA. HE TOOK PART IN SEVERAL BATTLES ON THE COAST OF SPAIN AND PERU AND WITNESSED SEVERAL OTHERS; WAS ONCE TAKEN BY PIRATES, FROM WHICH HE WAS PROVIDENTIALLY DELIVERED, PLACED IN A SMALL BOAT AND SET ADRIFT A GREAT DISTANCE FROM LAND, WITHOUT THE MEANS FOR CONDUCTING HER TO THE SHORE. HE AFTERWARDS TOOK PART IN FOUR MINOR ENGAGEMENTS WITH SAVAGES NEAR NEW GUINEA. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF. Thomas W. Smith. 1844. New Bedford: Wm. C. Hill. (2009 edition. Annotator D.J. Sanders. Dinan, France: Nunatak Press. 213p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 978–2-7466–0930-3. £20).
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Don't you just love these 19th century titles? You barely need to read the book to know all about it! When I read the original a long time ago, I was enthralled by the graphically detailed accounts of Englishman Thomas Smith's exploits around the world and, in particular to South Georgia and the South Shetland Islands on sealing voyages. What I didn't realize then was that Thomas Smith was very probably a pseudonym or adopted name, his real name still being unknown. He wrote his autobiography about 35 years after he began his travels. Damien Sanders has been meticulous in his research on almost every aspect of Smith's accounts, and his annotations at the end of each of the 16 chapters, together with five appendices, provide a great deal of additional information about places,

events, dates and nautical terminology referred to in the text. To clarify possible confusion introduced by the author, the annotator has rearranged some chapters so they follow a more logical chronological order.

Smith's father died shortly after his birth around 1801, leaving his mother destitute. They lived with his farmer grandfather and blind grandmother until he was seven years old. From then on life for Thomas Smith went downhill. He ran away from home and lived with an itinerant gypsy community, living some of the time in a cave, before embarking on the first of his many sea voyages. In 1811, by the age of ten, he had already made two voyages, on one of which he was shipwrecked. Between 1815 and 1820 he had been on several sealing expeditions to South Georgia, and was in the South Shetland Islands the year after their discovery, in 1820–1821. He was also a seaman on several whaling voyages. Over the next 25 years he made many long voyages to western South America and the eastern Pacific islands, East Africa, New Zealand, Japan, New Guinea and other western Pacific islands, during most of which he or his ship was involved in some sort of catastrophe. Throughout his career as an apprentice seaman he experienced naval battles, including the Napoleonic wars at Gibraltar and in the Mediterranean, and the Spanish war in Peru, and became embroiled in native battles in Mozambique, New Zealand and New Guinea. He describes in vivid detail various murders, injuries, abuse, native attacks on his ships, shipwrecks, starvation, frequent loss of wages, and numerous other privations personally experienced or witnessed. Smith's final recorded voyage was on a whaling vessel in 1831–1832 to Lourenço Marques (Maputo), Mozambique. Although he had been lucky to survive numerous earlier near-fatal incidents, he described the one experienced at St Helena, on the return voyage, as coming 'within a hair's breadth of terminating my existence'. While trying out whale oil on deck while his ship was rolling, Smith was struck by loose barrels and severely injured. During his slow recovery, and penniless, he took solace in ecclesiastical matters, living out his life in New Bedford. However, he felt strongly that he should recount his life experiences but, having not had the advantage of an education (yet he had become fluent in three languages), he embarked on a three year course at the Christian Manual Labor Academy, learning the trade of shoemaker. In doing so, he was able to write his memoirs and express himself in the