

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). doi:10.1017/S0032247410000410

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

manner of this fascinating story but, sadly, he was suffering from a combination of his injuries and tuberculosis. He died, penniless, in his early 40s, but there is no record of his death or burial.

Thomas Smith's narrative makes gripping reading, and the sufferings he endured add a tragic element throughout. It was written at a time when such epic voyages were in vogue, based on the personal diaries of sea captains and whalers, notably Owen Chase's *Narrative of the most extraordinary and distressing shipwreck of the whale-ship 'Essex', of Nantucket;* (1821), Richard Dana's *Two years before the mast* (1840) and Thomas Nickerson's *The loss of the ship 'Essex' sunk by a whale and the ordeal of the crew in open boats* (1984) – all, and many others, covered in detail in Philbrick (2000). What is truly amazing, if the author is to be believed, is that Smith wrote his account covering 37 years from memory 'not having kept a Journal of his Adventures; as the idea of their publication had not until recently occurred to him'. The amount of fine detail, with units of weight and distance, frequently given may make the reader a little suspicious of that statement, especially

considering that no dates or rarely years are ever given. However, here Damien Sanders has provided an inordinate amount of detail through his careful research, making this an historical masterpiece.

My only quibble with this excellent new edition is the format. I would have preferred it to have been in the original smaller size, not A4. In doing so, Sanders has inserted the original pagination in square brackets in mid sentence wherever appropriate in the new format. Also, where the annotator refers to a note at the end of each chapter this is indicated by underlining the first two letters of the word or phrase being discussed. Surely this would have been neater and more easily traceable by using sequential superscript numbers? (Ronald I. Lewis-Smith, Torr Lodge, Alton Road, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9LB).

Reference

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