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A Frenchman in Search of Franklin: De Bray's Arctic Journal, 1852-54

Emile Frederic de Bray

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In April 1852 Emile Frederic de Bray sailed down the Thames on board the Resolute, part of Sie Edward Belcher's Arctic Squadron in search of Sir John Franklin and his men, missing since the summer of 1845. De Bray's diaries of his years with Resolute have not been published before, in any language, and only one other account of this particular Franklin search expedition exists.

Enseigne-de-vaisseau de Bray, seconded at his own request from the French navy, was something of a rarity among those who made up the search parties: he was not British. (One of his shipmates hopes for the best: 'The Frenchman does not seem an Englishman,' he observed, 'but I suppose he will improve on acquaintance.')

Cape de Bray on the northwest coast of Melville Island commemorates the efforts of this intrepid French officer, who gained the respect of his fellows, was made an officer of the Legion d'Honneur by Napolean III, and was awarded the Arctic Medal by Queen Victoria.

William Barr provides an introduction, postscript, and extensive notes, placing de Bray and the expedition in context. This volume tells us much about the life the Europeans led in the unexplored and frozen northern waters.

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