

On the Second Voyage of Martin Frobisher to the North Seas, 1577, in Search of a Northwest Passage to Asia

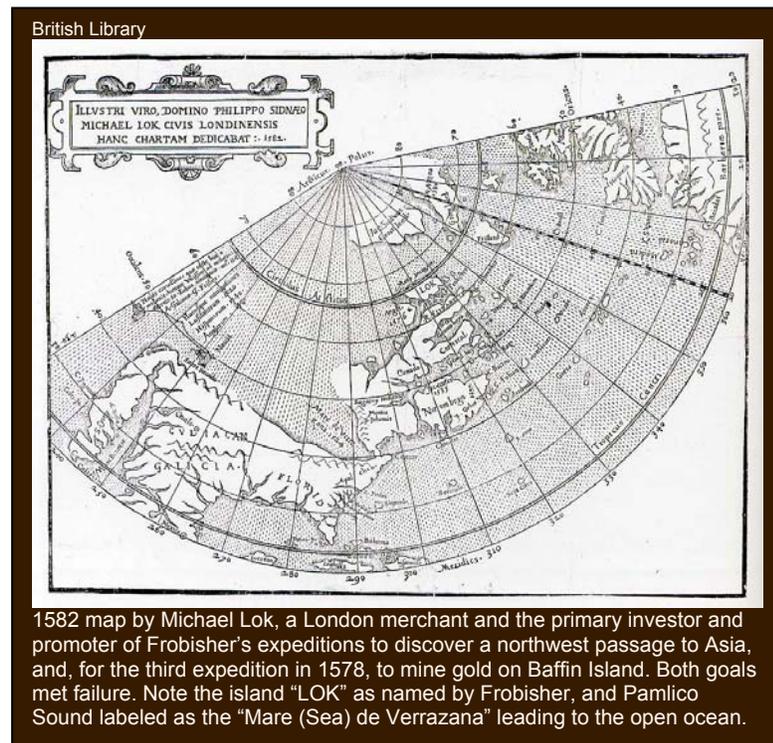
Michael Lok, Memorandum, 28 October 1577

Dionyse Settle, *A true report of the last voyage into the west and northwest regions, &c. 1577, worthily achieved by Capt. Frobisher of the said voyage the first finder and general, 1577*

Michael Lok, On Investing in and Promoting Frobisher's Expeditions, 28 October 1577

Neither need I [say any]thing touching the natural Riches and infinite T[reas]ure, and the great Traffic of rich merchandise that is in those countries of Cathay, China, India, and o[ther] countries thereabouts, for that every book of history and cosmography of those parts of the world which are to be had of every Printer's shop, does declare the same at large . . . But of the matters that chiefly moved me to enterprise my money therein so largely, I will say briefly that three things chiefly moved me thereto.

First the great hope to find our English seas open unto the Seas of the East India[n Ocean], by that way, which I conceived by great likelihood thereof which I found by reading the histories of many men's travels toward that part of the World. Whereby we might take passage by sea to those rich Countries for traffic [*trade*] or merchandise, which was the thing I chiefly desired.



1582 map by Michael Lok, a London merchant and the primary investor and promoter of Frobisher's expeditions to discover a northwest passage to Asia, and, for the third expedition in 1578, to mine gold on Baffin Island. Both goals met failure. Note the island "LOK" as named by Frobisher, and Pamlico Sound labeled as the "Mare (Sea) de Verrazana" leading to the open ocean.

Secondly I was assured by manifold good proofs of divers Travelers and histories that the countries of Baccaliaw [*sic*] Can[a]da, and the new found Lands thereto adjoining, were full of people: and full of such commodities and Merchandise as are in the countries of Lappia, Russia, Moscovia, Permia, Pechora, Samoietza, and the Countries thereto adjoining: Which are furs, hides, wax, tallow, oil, and other.

Whereby if it should happen those new Lands to stretch to the North Pole, so that we could not have passage by Sea that way which we sought to the Northwestward, to pass into East India[n Ocean], yet in those same new lands to the northwestward might be established the Trade of Merchandise[.]

DIONYSE SETTLE. *A true report of the last voyage into the west and northwest regions, &c. 1577, worthily achieved by Capt. Frobisher of the said voyage the first finder and general, 1577.* [Excerpts]

On Whitsunday, being the six-and-twentieth of May, in the year of our Lord God 1577, Captain Frobisher departed from Blackwall with one of the Queen's Majesty's ships, called the *Aide*, of nine score tons or thereabouts: and two other Little Barks [sailing ships], the one called the *Gabriel*, whereof Master Fenton, a Gentleman of my Lord of Warwick's, was captain, accompanied with seven score Gentlemen, soldiers, and sailors, well furnished with victuals and other provisions necessary for one half year, on this, his second voyage, for the further discovering of the passage to Cathay and other Countries adjacent by West and Northwest navigations, which passage or way is supposed to be on the North and Northwest part of America, and the said America to be an Island environed with the sea, where through our Merchants may have course and recourse with their merchandise, from these our Northernmost parts of Europe, to those Oriental coasts of Asia, in much shorter time, and with greater benefit than any others

. . . [On the 16th of July] we came with the making of [near] land, which land our General the year before had named the Queen's Foreland, being an Island as we judge, lying near the supposed continent with America; and on the other side, opposite to the same, one other Island called Hall's Island, after the name of the Master of the ship, near the firm [main]

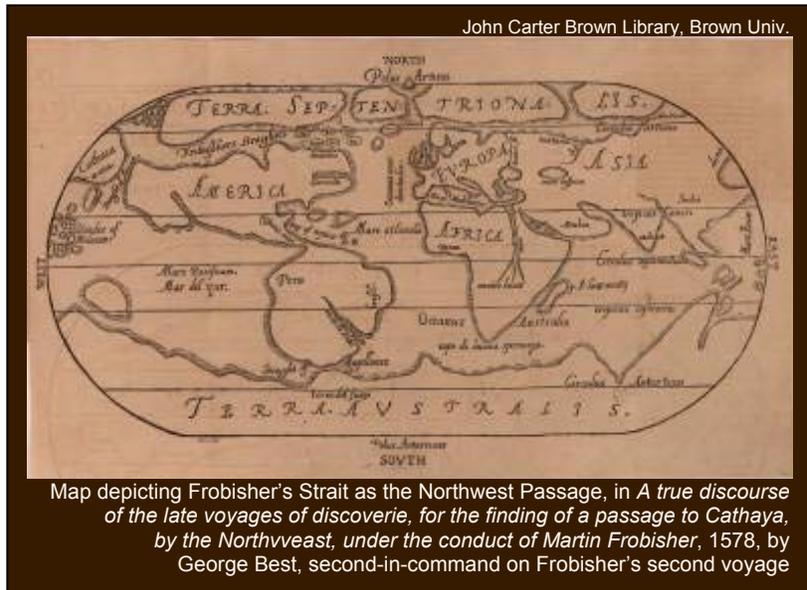
Frobisher's Strait.

land, supposed continent with Asia. Between which two Islands there is a large entrance or strait called Frobisher's Strait, after the name of our General, the first finder thereof [Frobisher's Bay in southern Baffin Island]. This strait is supposed to have passage into the sea of Sur, which I leave unknown as yet. . . .

Captain Frobisher, his special care and diligence for the benefit of his Prince and Country.

Before we came within the making of these lands we tasted cold storms, in so much that it seemed we had changed summer with winter, if the length of the days had not removed us from that opinion.

At our first coming, the straits seemed to be shut up with a long mure [wall] of ice, which gave no little cause of discomfort to us all; but our General (to whose diligence imminent dangers and difficult attempts seemed nothing, in respect of his willing mind for the commodity of his Prince and Country), with two little Pinnaces prepared [for the] purpose, passed twice through them to the East shore, and the Islands adjacent, and the ship, with the two Barks lay off and on something further into the sea, from the danger of the ice.

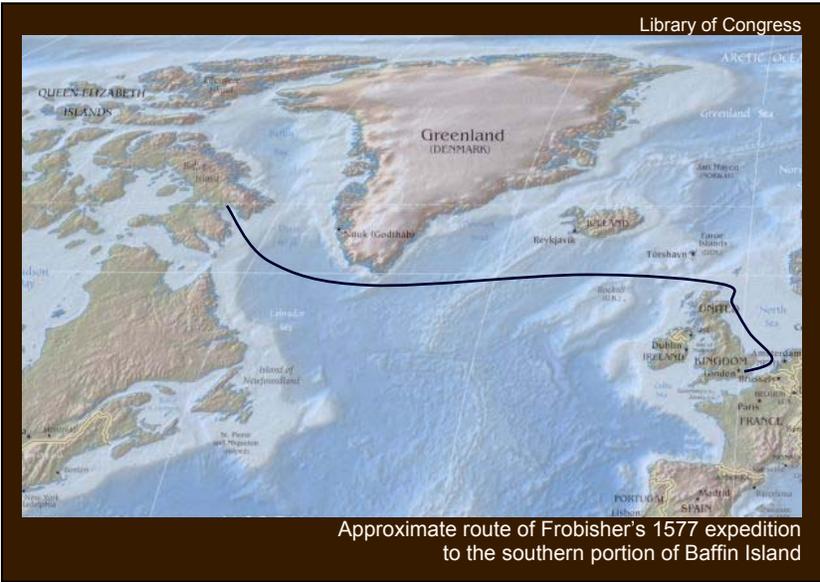


The order of the people appearing on shore.

While he was searching the Country near the shore, some of the people of the Country showed themselves, leaping and dancing, with strange shrieks and cries, which gave no little admiration to our men. Our General, desirous to allure them to him by fair means,

Fierce and bold people

caused knives and other things to be proffered to them, which they would not take at our hands; but being laid on the ground and the party going away, they came and took up, leaving something of theirs to countervail [equal] the same. At the length, two of them leaving their weapons, came down to our General and Master, who did



One taken.

the like to them, commanding the company to stay, and went to them, who after certain dumb signs and mute congratulations, began to lay hands upon them, but they deliverly [quickly/nimbly] escaped and ran to their bows and arrows, and came fiercely upon them (not respecting the rest of our company who were ready for their defense), but with their arrows hurt divers of them. We took the one, and the other escaped.

Richard Cox, Master gunner. Master Jackman. Andrew Dier.

While our General was busy in searching the Country and those Islands adjacent on the East shore, the ship and barks, having great care not to put far into the sea from him [because] he had small store of victuals, were forced to abide in a cruel tempest, chancing in the night among and in the thickest of the ice, which was so monstrous that even the least of a thousand had been of force sufficient to have shivered our ship and barks into small portions, if God (who in all necessities has care upon the infirmity of man) had not provided for this, our [extreme danger], a sufficient remedy through the light of the night, whereby we might well discern to flee from such imminent dangers, which we avoided with fourteen Bourds in one watch, the space of four hours. If we had not incurred this danger among those monstrous Islands of ice, we should have lost our General and Master, and the most of our best sailors who were on shore, destitute of victuals; but by the valor of our Master Gunner, Master Jackman, and Andrew Dier, the Master's Mates, men expert both in navigation and other good qualities, we were all content to incur the dangers before we would with our own safety run into the seas, to the destruction of our said General and his company.

The day following, being the 19th of July, our captain returned to the ship with report of supposed riches, which showed itself in the bowels of those barren mountains, wherewith we were all satisfied.

Within four days after we had been at the entrance of the straits, the Northwest and West winds dispersed the ice into the sea and made us a large entrance into the straits, so that without any impediment on the 19th of July we entered them, and the 20th thereof our General and Master, with great diligence, sought out and sounded the West shore and found out a fair Harbor for the ship and barks to ride in, and named it after our Master's mate,

Jackman's Sound.

Jackman's Sound, and brought the ship, barks and all their company to safe anchor, except one man who died by God's visitation.

Possession taken.

At our first arrival, after the ship rode at anchor, our general, with such company as could well be spared from the ships, in marching order entered the land, having special care by exhortations that at our entrance we should all with one voice, kneeling upon our knees, chiefly thank God for our safe arrival; secondly beseech him that it would please his divine Majesty long to continue our Queen, for whom he and all the rest of our company in this order took possession of the Country; and thirdly, that by our Christian study and endeavor those barbarous people trained up in Paganism and infidelity might be reduced to the knowledge of true religion and to the hope of salvation in Christ our Redeemer. With other words very apt to signify his willing mind and affection toward his Prince and Country, whereby all suspicion of an undutiful subject may credibly be judged to be utterly exempted from his mind. All the rest of the Gentlemen and other[s] deserve worthily herein their due praise and commendation.

These things in this order accomplished, our General commanded all the company to be obedient in things needful for our own safeguard, to Master Fenton, Master York, and Master Beast his Lieutenant, while he was occupied in other necessary affairs concerning our coming thither.

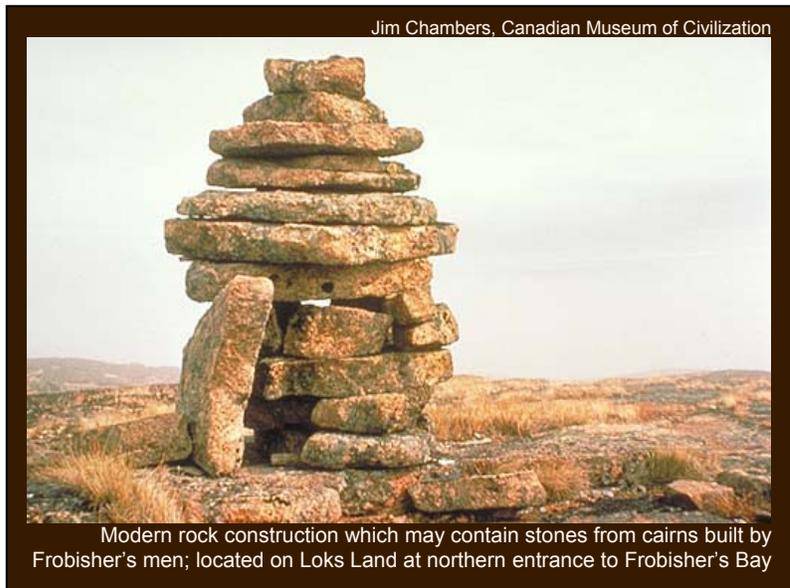
After this order we marched through the Country with Ensign [flag] displayed, so far as was thought needful, and now and then heaped up stones on high mountains and other places in token of possession, as likewise to signify to [those who] hereafter may chance to arrive there that possession is taken in the behalf of some other Prince, by those who first found out the Country.

Ice needful to be regarded of seafaring men.

Who so make navigations to those Countries, has not only extreme winds and furious sea to encounter, but also many monstrous and great Islands of ice: a thing both rare, wonderful, and greatly to be regarded.

We were forced sundry [several] times, while the ship did ride here at anchor, to have continual watch, with boats and men ready with hawsers [heavy rope] to knit fast to such ice, as with the ebb and flood [flow] were tossed to and fro in the harbor, and with force of oars to haul them away, for endangering the ship.

Our General [on] certain days searched this supposed continent with America, and not finding the commodity to answer his expectation [gold], after he had made trial thereof, he departed with two little barks and men sufficient to the East shore, being the supposed continent of Asia, and left the ship with most of the Gentlemen, soldier[s], and sailors, until such time as he either thought good to send or come for them.



*Stones
glisten with
sparkles
like gold.*

*A common
proverb.*

The stones of this supposed continent with America be altogether sparkled and glisten in the Sun like gold; so likewise does the sand in the bright water, yet they verify the old Proverb: "All is not gold that glistens." . . .

After our General had found out good harbor for the ship and barks to anchor in, and also such store of supposed gold ore as he thought himself satisfied with, he returned to the *Michael*, where Master York was Captain, accompanied with our master and his Mate; who coasting along the West shore not far from where the ship rode, they perceived a fair harbor, and willing to sound the same, at the entrance thereof they espied two tents of Seal skins, to which the Captain, our said Master, and

*The people
fled at the
sight of
our men.*

other company resorted. At the sight of our men the people fled into the mountains; nevertheless they went to their tents, where leaving certain trifles of ours, as glasses, bells, knives, and such like things they departed, not taking anything of theirs, except one dog. They did in like manner leave behind them a letter, pen, ink, and paper, whereby our men whom the Captain lost the year before, and in that people's custody, might (if any of them were alive) be [made known] of our presence and being there.

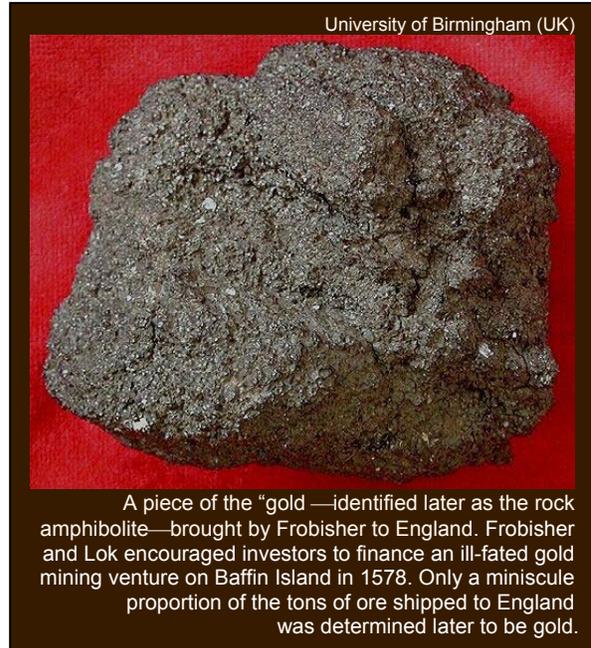
*Master
Philpot.
Master
Beast.*

On the same day after consultation had all the Gentlemen and others likewise that could be spared from the ship, under the conduct and leading of Master Philpot (to whom in our General his absence, and his Lieutenant Master Beast, all the rest were obedient) went ashore, determining to see, if by fair means we could either allure them to [meet us, or otherwise take some of them, and so attain some knowledge of those men whom our General lost the year before.

At our coming back again to the place where their tents were before, they had removed their tents further into the Bay or Sound, where they might if they were driven from the land, flee with their boats into the sea. We, parting ourselves into two companies and compassing a mountain, came suddenly upon them by land, who espying us, without any tarrying fled to their boats, leaving the most part of their oars behind them for haste, and rowed down the bay where our two Pinnaces met them and drove them to shore; but if they had had all their oars, so swift are they in rowing, it [would have] been lost time to have chased them.

*A fierce
assault
of a few.*

When they were landed they fiercely assaulted our men with their bows and arrows, who wounded three of them with our arrows; and perceiving themselves hurt, they desperately leapt off the Rocks into the Sea and drowned themselves; which if they had not done, but had submitted themselves, or if by any means we could have taken them alive (being their enemies as they judged), we would both have saved them and also have sought remedy to cure their wounds received at our hands. But they, altogether void of humanity and ignorant what mercy means, in [extreme danger] look for no other than death; and perceiving they should fall into our hands, thus miserably by drowning rather desired death than to be saved by us; the rest perceiving their fellows in this distress, fled into the high mountains. Two women, not being so apt to escape as the men were, the one for her age, and the other being



encumbered with a young child, we took. The old wretch, whom some of our Sailors supposed to be either a devil or a witch, had her buskins [boots] plucked off, to see if she were cloven footed, and for her ugly hue and deformity we let her go; the young woman and the child we brought away. We named the place where they were slain Bloody Point, and the Bay or Harbor York's Sound, after the name of one of the Captains of the two Barks.

Fair means not able to allure them to familiarity

Having this knowledge both of their fierceness and cruelty, and perceiving that fair means as yet is not able to allure them to [meet with us], we disposed ourselves, contrary to our inclination, something to be cruel, returned to their tents and made a spoil of the same; where we found an old shirt, a doublet, a girdle, and also shoes of our men whom we lost the year before; on nothing else to them belonging could we set our eyes.

Boats of skin

Their riches are not gold, silver or precious Drapery, but their tents and boats, made of the skins of red Deer and Seal skins; also dogs like wolves, but for the most part black, with other trifles more to be wondered at for their strangeness than for any other commodity needful for our use.

Our departure from the West shore.

Thus returning to our ship the 3rd August, we departed from the West shore supposed firm with America [on the continent], after we had anchored there thirteen days, and so the 4th we came to our General on the East shore and anchored in a fair Harbor name[d] Anne Warwick's Sound, to which is annexed an Island, both named after the Countess of Warwick, Anne Warwick's Sound and Isle.

In this Isle our General thought good for this voyage to freight both the ship and barks with such stone or supposed gold mineral as he judged to countervail the charges of his first [equal his claims of gold from the first voyage], and this his second navigation to these Countries.

The country people show themselves to us.

In the meantime of our abode here, some of the country people came to show themselves to us, several times on the main shore, near the said Isle. Our General, desirous to have some news of his men, whom he lost the year before, with some company with him [departed] with the ship boat to common, or sign with them for familiarity [which he is determined to achieve]. They at the first show made [signs] that three of his five men were alive and desired pen, ink, and paper, and that within three or four days they would return, and (as we



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"Englishmen in a skirmish with Inuit," watercolor probably by John White, who may have accompanied the 1577 expedition

judged) bring those of our men which were living with them.

They also made signs or tokens of their king, whom they called Cacough, and how he was carried on men's shoulders, and a man far surmounting any of our company in bigness and stature.

Their usage in traffic or exchange [How they trade or make exchanges].

With these tokens and signs of writing, pen, ink, and paper was delivered them, which they would not take at our hands, but being laid upon the shore, and the party gone away, they took up; which likewise they do when they desire anything for change of theirs, laying for that which is left so much as they think will countervail [equal] the same, and not coming near together. It seems they have been used to this trade or traffic with some other people adjoining or not far distant from their Country.

The people show themselves the third time.

After four days some of them showed themselves upon the firm [main] land, but not where they were before. Our General very glad thereof, supposing to hear of our men, went from the Island with the boat and sufficient company with him. They seemed very glad and allured him about a certain point of the land, behind which they might perceive a company of the crafty villains to lie lurking, whom our General would not deal with, for that he knew not what company they were, and so with few signs dismissed them and returned to his company.

The people show themselves again on firm land.

Another time as our General was coasting the Country with two little Pinnaces, whereby at our return he might make the better relation [narrative] thereof, three of the crafty villains, with a white skin allured us to them. Once again our General, for that he hoped to hear of his men, went towards them; at our coming near the shore where they were, we might perceive a number of them lie hidden behind great stones, and those three in sight laboring

Their first means to allure us to shore.

by all means possible that some would come on land; and perceiving we made no haste by words nor friendly signs, which they used by clapping their hands, and being without weapon, and but three in sight, they sought further means to provoke us thereto. One alone laid flesh on the shore, which we took up with the Boat hook, as necessary victuals for the [feeding] of the man, woman, and child whom we had taken; for that as yet they could not digest our meat; whereby they perceived themselves deceived of their expectation, for all their crafty allurements. Yet once again to make (as it were) a full show of their crafty natures and subtle sleights, to the intent thereby to have entrapped

Their second means.

and taken some of our men, one of them counterfeited himself impotent and lame of his legs, who seemed to descend to the water side with great difficulty; and to cover his craft the more, one of his fellows came down with him, and in such places where he seemed unable to pass, he took him on his shoulders, set him by the water side, and departed from him, leaving him (as it should seem) all alone, who, playing his counterfeit pageant very well, thought thereby to provoke some of us to come on shore, not fearing, but that one of us might make our party good with a lame man.

Their third and craftiest allurement.

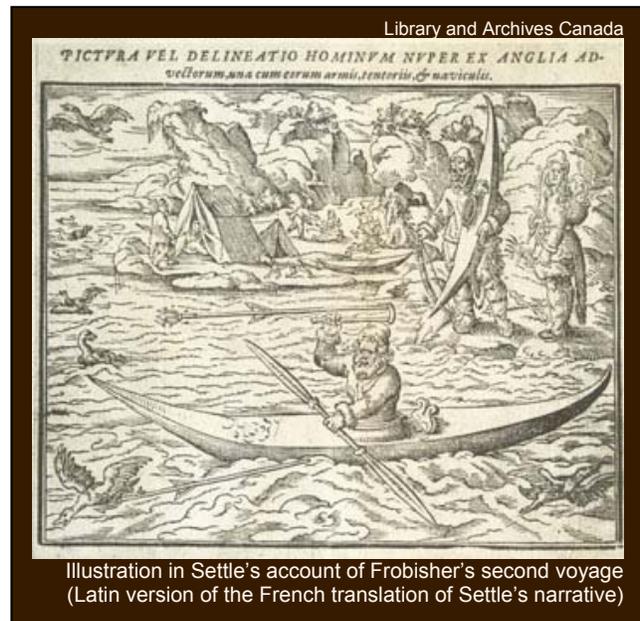


Illustration in Settle's account of Frobisher's second voyage (Latin version of the French translation of Settle's narrative)

Compassion to cure a crafty lame man.

Our General, having compassion of his impotency, thought good (if it were possible) to cure him thereof; wherefore he caused a soldier to shoot at him with his Caleever [firearm], which grazed before his face. The counterfeit villain deliverly [quickly] fled without any impediment at all and got him to his bow and arrows, and the rest from their lurking holes, with their weapons, bows, arrows, slings, and darts. Our General caused some caleevers to be shot off at them, whereby some being hurt, they might hereafter stand in more fear of us.

This was all the answer for this time we could have of our men or of our General's letter. Their crafty dealing at these three several times being thus manifest to us may plainly show their disposition in other things to be [similar]. We judged that they used these stratagems to have caught some of us, for the delivering of the man, woman and child whom we had taken. . . .

[Descriptions of Inuit food, clothing, dogs, habitations, weapons, boats, hunting and fishing, etc.]

Anthropophagi

What knowledge they have of God, or what Idol they adore, we have no perfect intelligence, I think them rather Anthropophagi, or devourers of man's flesh than otherwise, for that there is no flesh or fish which they find dead (smell it never so filthily) but they will eat it, as they find it without any other dressing. A loathsome thing, either to the beholders or hearers.

There is no manner of creeping beast hurtful, except some Spiders (which as many affirm are signs of great store of gold) and also certain stinging Gnats which bite so fiercely that the place where they bite shortly after swells and itches very sore.

They make signs of certain people that wear bright plates of gold in their foreheads and other places of their bodies.

Description of the Countries.

The Countries on both sides the straits lie very high with rough stony mountains and great quantity of snow thereon. There is very little plain ground and no grass, except a little which is much like moss that grows on soft ground, such as we get Turfs in. There is no wood at all. To be brief, there is nothing fit or profitable for the use of man, which that Country with root

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Inuit man, woman, and child captured by Frobisher's men and brought to England. They died within a month of their arrival.

Portraits probably by John White, 1577, who may have accompanied the Frobisher expedition.



yields or brings forth. Howbeit there is great quantity of Deer, whose skins are like to Asses, their heads or horns do far exceed, as well in length as also in breadth, any in these our parts or Countries; their feet likewise are as great as our oxen's, which we measured to be seven or eight inches in breadth. There are also hares, wolves, fishing bears, and sea fowl of various sorts.

As the Country is barren and infertile, so are they rude and of no capacity to culture the same to any perfection; but are contented by their hunting, fishing, and fouling, with raw flesh and warm blood to satisfy their greedy panches, which is their only glory. . . .

Our departure from those Countries.

The 24th of August, after we had satisfied our minds with freight sufficient for our vessels, though not our covetous desires with such knowledge of the Country people, and other commodities as are before [listed], we departed. The 17th of September we fell with the Lands End of England, and so sailed to Milford Haven, from whence our General rode to the Court for order[s], to what Port or Haven to conduct the ship.

How and when we lost our two Barks which God nevertheless restored.

We lost our two Barks in the way homeward, the one the 29th of August, the other the 21st of the same month [due to] great tempest and fog. Howbeit God restored the one to Bristol and the other made his course by Scotland to Yarmouth. In this voyage we lost two men, one in the way by God's visitation and the other homeward cast overboard with a surge of the Sea. . . .

The conclusion.

I could declare to the Readers the latitude and longitude of such places and regions as we have been at, but not altogether so perfectly as our masters and others, with many circumstances of tempests and other accidents incident to Sea-faring men, which seem not altogether strange, but I let them pass to their reports as men most apt to set forth and declare the same. I have also left the names of the Countries on both the shores untouched, for lack of understanding the people's language, as also for sundry respects, not needful as yet to be declared.

Countries new discovered, where commodity [resources] is to be looked for, do better accord with a new name given by the discoverers than an uncertain name by a doubtful Author.

Our general named several Islands, Mountains, Capes, and Harbors after the names of divers Noblemen and other gentlemen, his friends, as well on the one shore as also on the other.

