

# Author's Note

On May 19, 1845, the HMS Erebus and HMS Terror set sail from Greenhithe in Kent, aiming to uncover the Northwest Passage—a supposed route through the North American Arctic linking the UK to Asian trading kingdoms. In July 1845, whalers spotted the ships in Baffin Bay, poised to enter the Arctic maze, but they were never seen again. Seven years of searches concluded on March 1, 1854, when the expedition was declared lost, and the crew presumed dead. The only clue, discovered by William Hobson in 1859, was a cairn containing the Victory Point note, detailed in the IX chapter of this narrative.

Led by Sir John Franklin, an experienced Arctic explorer infamous for the disastrous Coppermine expedition in 1819, the voyage included HMS Terror under Captain Francis Crozier, a skilled sailor and scientist with a wealth of prior expedition experience. The flagship Erebus was captained by James Fitzjames, a charismatic yet inexperienced leader in polar exploration, with First Lieutenant Graham Gore, one of only six officers familiar with Arctic conditions.

Little is known about Gore; his birth records, will, and expedition letters are missing, save for his service record. His father, John Gore, had introduced him to naval life at an early age, suggesting he was approximately thirty-five when the Franklin expedition commenced. A rare character sketch is captured in a letter from Fitzjames to his sister-in-law, noting Gore's strength of character and artistic talents, including well-done flute playing and drawing.

Gore's demeanor earned him popularity among his peers, with consistent naval employment throughout his career, a rarity during peacetime. He also had a reputation as a keen sportsman and an affectionate companion, often noted for his hunting accomplishments. Based on a solitary daguerreotype, he is depicted as an attractive man.

In crafting this novel, many attributes of Gore were enhanced for dramatic purposes, crafting a character who appears calm and amiable in perilous situations while also having an ambitious outlook regarding his military standing. The book's origins trace back to a lighthearted project intended for a small audience, ultimately resulting in a deeper understanding of the narrative's historical footnotes.

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London, 2024