

NEW LIGHT ON GEORGE CARTWRIGHT

By C. R. FAY

IT is nearly incredible, and yet a fact, that there is no mention in the Dictionary of National Biography either of Lord Dalhousie, the great soldier-statesman of Canadian history or of George Cartwright, the pioneer of the Labrador. Of his younger brothers John and Edmund there is much: of George nothing; and this is the more remarkable seeing that in his famous Journal he has told the story of his adventurous life. Ahead of him in the Labrador was Banks (Banks 1766, Cartwright 1770). Joseph Banks, 1743-1820, was world-famous—Cook's naturalist in Australian waters, later Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society 1778-1820, contributor to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, botanist, collector, patron of science, and the constant friend of fellow workers in need of encouragement and financial aid. It is therefore very fitting that the Banks Correspondence in the Herbarium Library Kew should contain a run of letters from Cartwright to Banks. Reading them for the sake of Banks, I was delighted to meet once again with 'Old Labrador'.

Cartwright to Banks

1. From Plymouth, England, 22 June 1773.

'Nothing but the very great confusion of my mind could have made me so long neglect informing you of the fate of my Indian friends (so the party of Eskimos whom he had brought over and who got the smallpox).

On my return to this place I had the satisfaction to find Camboick out of danger, she is now recovering fast, having no other complaint except want of flesh and strength, which a good appetite and care will soon restore her to, the men, as I suspected, did not long survive my departure for Town, they both went off within less than an hour of each other the night after I left them. I last night ventured to tell Camboick of the death of all the rest, having prepared her for it this week past. She was a good deal affected, but not so much as I expected.

If you have any further commands, they will reach me before I shall leave this place, and you may depend on my executing them to the best of my power. If Prints are taken from the Drawings of the Indians, I beg the favor of you to bespeak me

six sets. My best compliments to Miss Banks and Dr. Solander. I am with many thanks for all favors, Dear Sir

Your most obedient humble servant

Geo. Cartwright

(D. C. Solander, 1736-1782, the Swedish botanist, who had accompanied Banks to Australia, 1768, and to Iceland, 1772, returned to London as secretary and librarian to Banks in Soho Square, and in 1773 was made Keeper of the Natural History Department, British Museum.)

2. From Sandwich Bay, Labrador, 22 October 1777.

Cartwright sends a few trifles—'sad rubbish'. 'Rascals have broken your bottles, bar one'.

'As you was so obliging to tell me I need not discharge my bond to you at the expiration of the current year unless it was convenient, I must beg leave to make use of that liberty for I have never yet met with so bad a year, everything failed for these twelve months past. I have wrote to my brother (John, the political reformer) concerning the interest, which I hope he will find means to pay.

Compliments to Dr. Solander and Mr. Hunter.

I am (etc.)

Geo Cartwright

3. From Great Island, Isthmus Bay, Labrador, 14 September 1778 (endorsed 'Received March 19, 1779).

'About four days after his (Capt. Kinloch's) arrival the *Minerva* privateer of twenty guns, belonging to Boston (Mass.) came in here and took both the ship and a brig which had arrived from England, together with all my stores, provisions, great part of my household furniture, some of my cloaks, eight hundred quintals of dry fish, and everything they could find, to the amount of upwards of six thousand pounds value; leaving me but a small quantity of provisions together with the remains of my cloaths and household furniture, and such fish as was not in condition to ship. Not only your case and box, which were in the ship, but your other two cases are gone.

This misfortune happened to me by the villainy of two of my late servants, who left my service this last spring and served

Mr Pinson in Temple Bay, until the privateer put in here and served him in the same manner as they have done me, when they entered and piloted them to this place, where thirty two of my people entered (for shelter?), and one of them discovered all my effects. I am now reduced to the utmost distress, and what to do I cannot tell. I scarce have it in my power either to quit this coast or to remain the winter upon it; if I do the former, must trust myself in an open boat 150 leagues in the most tempestuous season of the year; if I determine upon the latter, shall run the risk of starving for want of provisions. I've sent two shallops to the southward in quest of supplies and one vessel to carry my fish to market, having about 560 tierce of salmon and 400 quintals of codfish left.

This is the first year my affairs took a turn in my favor, had this misfortune not happened to me, I should have cleared about £1500 and things were got into such a trim that I should have cleared in all probability between two and three thousand per annum in future; but now I much fear my fortunes are wrecked and all my schemes frustrated. The Americans behaved with great civility but they plundered in a most piratical manner; the Capt. professing himself a man of honor and great humanity, but has proved himself the reverse of both, refused me a number of trifling necessaries, which were of no value to the captors, and broke his honor with me in every instance, and he forced away the Eskimaux as slaves, an inhuman action! My brother John informed me this spring that with the money which my relatives had found me he had not only purchased the brig and cargo, but had also paid off some of my debts. I hope yours was among the number, if not God only knows when I shall be able to discharge it. Believe me, Sir, if no one was concerned in my late misfortune but myself, it would not give me a single moment's uneasiness, but as it will affect more, I am almost distracted.

I have but one consolation left and that is but a very poor one, indeed, it is, that I have not fallen by my own folly, indolence or extravagance, but by the villainy of scoundrels, whom I had used more like my children than servants. Had it but pleased God to keep enemies clear of me, in two years more I should not only have recovered all my former hopes but have been beforehand with the world. But 'tis time to drop a subject, which must be as painful to you to read, as to me to write. Therefore begging my best respects to Dr Solander, Mr Hunter

and all the rest of my worthy friends of your acquaintance, permit me to subscribe myself, Dr Sir,

Your much obliged and very sincere humble servant

Geo Cartwright.

A little to the northward of this place is a bay separated from Sandwich Bay by a neck of land but of no great breadth, and seems forty or fifty leagues up the country (Hamilton Inlet) having many large rivers emptying into it; this place is called by the Eskimeaux Ibouektoke, and upon an island near the mouth of it was one of their settlements. A planter from Newfoundland went there last year, and wintered, and upon the island found an Eskimeaux town with all the inhabitants dead, their boats thwarted up, and all other goods left in their homes and tents; among other things a suit of laced cloaths, and a silver cup known to have belonged to the man Coghlan had in England; and the carpenters foot boxes which my Lord Dartmouth and yourself gave the Indians were found, from which I conclude that after they left me they reached the place in safety and intended spending the winter there, and that some of the smallpox remaining in Camboick's cloaths, they caught that dreadful disorder and all died of it. Pray communicate this intelligence to the Moravians"

(Lord Dartmouth is William Legge, 1731-1801, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, Colonial Secretary 1772-5. Dartmouth College in the United States, incorporated 1769, was named in his honour.)

4. From Collingham near Newark, 24 January 1790.

(Cartwright was now retired and back in his native county of Notts.)

"At the advice of the Duke of Newcastle I am going to publish the Journal of my Voyages to and Residence in Labrador. It will be done by subscription and my proposals will appear in the papers towards the end of this week or beginning of the next. In the first volume I shall give a chart of Newfoundland, and that of Labrador from Cape Charles to Sandwich Bay. My friends here wish me to give a whole length print of myself in my winter's dress with my furring accoutrements, and I wish to add a print of those Indians whom I brought to England."

He therefore asks Banks for information as to the cost of engravings. The price is to be 2 guineas for the set of 3 vols. 'The Duke of Newcastle has subscribed for 25 sets.' (Henry Pelham Clinton, 1720-1794, 2nd Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, Lord Lieut. of Notts. 1768-1794.)

5. From the same address, 27 January 1790.

"I fear you flatter me when you tell me you expect both entertainment and instruction from the perusal of my voyages; they may, perhaps, sometimes excite a laugh, but instruct, I think, they cannot."

He says that in the first instance he never meant to publish and continues, 'The plan which I go upon is as safe as possible, since I shall risk only about £20 for advertisements. (in newspapers, and 'by hand-bills'.) Perhaps my observations on the growth of timber and the effects of manures may be of service to some of my readers.'

Geo. Cartwright

Which last remark serves to remind that the next worth while item in these Banks papers is a great scrawl in the hand of Arthur Young concerning a memoir on Sheep Rot.

"There cannot be any person interested in agriculture that will not hear with satisfaction that a paper has been written on this subject which has your approbation.'

Signed 'Arthur Young Secretary, Board of Agriculture
10 June 1803'.

It was a very great generation, studded with men of genius whom patronage did not demoralise.