“You shall not be overbold
When you deal with Arctic cold.”
— Waldo Emerson
November 6, Sunday: George Back was born in Stockport, England, the 2d son of John Back and Ann Back.

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT
Sir George Back visited Liverpool with his father, and his imagination was inflamed with the prospect of being able to engage in naval combat. His father would take him to London, therefore, and with the assistance of a relative there, would secure him a position as a “first class volunteer” aboard the frigate HMS *Arethusa*.

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION, THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY

September 15, Thursday: George Back, eleven years of age, sailed aboard frigate HMS *Arethusa* as a “first class volunteer.” The vessel would soon be taking part in naval engagements off Cherbourg and along the north coast of Spain.

By the terms of August 30th, the French army in Portugal was allowed to depart by sea from Lisbon. A new 5-man council of regency took power in the name of King João.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 15th of 9th M / A Silent Meeting, & a mixture in my mind. the forepart of it was pretty much favor'd with the arisings of life, but before the conclusion, a jostling took place & all manner of trash enter'd my brains, with a Seeming impossibility to keep it out. Mary Williams Junr took tea with us this Afternoon & spent part of the evening

Religious Society of Friends
April: At the age of twelve, while serving near San Sebastian aboard one of the English boats seeking prizes, George Back was captured by the French. He would spend the following five years as a prisoner of war, at Verdun.

LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— No, that’s giving too much to the historian’s stories.
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.
March 13, Sunday: When Russian forces made a surprise night attack on French positions at Rheims northeast of Paris, the French repelled the attack, inflicting heavy casualties.

The Allies, having crossed the English Channel, at this point captured the city of Paris. That city’s chief of police, Fouché, seeking alliances among the new authorities, suggested that they consider deporting his former boss Napoléon Bonaparte to the United States of America.

As peace broke out, young George Back found himself released from the prisoner-of-war camp at Verdun.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

1st day 13 of 3 M / Our forenoon Meeting was well attended -
A testimony from friend - Text “We have a little sister who has no breasts &c --Solomon B Boss & wife dined with us -- My H went to meeting in the Afternoon & I staid at home with John who has not been well for a week past. –


George Back, released prisoner of war, returned from France to England. He would become a midshipman aboard HMS Akbar and then HMS Bulwark.
July 6, Wednesday: The Quadriga was restored to its place on the Brandenburg Gate (this symbol of the Prussian state had been removed by the Emperor Napoleon I in 1806 and was brought back to Berlin by Marshal Blücher).

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

4th day 6th of 7th M 1814 / Uncle David Lawton & his daughters Ann & Hannah Dined and spent the day with us also Sister Ruth - In the Afternoon I went with uncle David to Thos Robinsons where we set an hour in agreeable conversation. The old man & his wife relating several old but interesting Anecdotes, some of them particularly of the Wanton family. - We had in addition to the foregoing at tea the company of Hannah Dennis & daughter Anne. Margaret Buffum & Sister Eliza & Mary In the eveng Edw & Mary Lawton & J Sherman came in, making a very pleasant & agreeable circle. —

While I was at Thos Robinsons with Uncle David the old man related the following. He said the way the Wanton family came to settle on R I was - In Scituate Massachusetts where Edw Wanton first settled there was great persecution of Friends of which society he was convinced under the Gallows when Mary Dyre & her friends were hanged The Priest of the town of Scituate took grat pains to do many things to try the feelings of Edw & his family & among which he named his dog Wanton. Edw two sons Wm & John not being in the same spirit of non resistence as their father, was determined on giving the Priest a severe whiping & knowing at the same time it would be unsafe to reside afterwards in Scituate provided themselves with Horses to come off full speed for R I They accordingly put their plan into execution whipped the priest unmercifully, mounted their horses & came away, but before they got far, at a Tavern they were overtaken by a concourse of Presbyterians who surrounded the house. Wm & John looked out of the Windows & determined on an adventure, they accordingly rushed out of the house with sticks in their hands beat their way through the crowd, & seeing the Presbyterians horses were better than their own seized them & galloped off, these two men were no small adventurers thro’ life. Tho John became afterward a very religious Man & Public friend - after they were settled on R I & While they were young in years Pirates infested the Coast the two Wantons volunteered their service to go out after them which they did & finally succeeded in bringing them in - In one of their cruises after these pirates they put into Martha’s Vineyard & Richd Ward was on board, who determined to furnish himself [a number of pages missing]
December: HMS Akbar arrived at Portsmouth after seeing combat.

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.
March 5, Wednesday: George Back became a “passed Admiralty midshipman” (whatever that might be) aboard the HMS Bulwark. This vessel would remain at the port of Chatham.

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT
For Commander David Buchan’s seeking of the North Pole, Lieutenant John Franklin was placed in command of the HM brig *Trent*.

Midshipman George Back’s initial expedition to the Arctic, the “Coppermine Expedition” to survey the northern coast of North America, would be exploring into 1822. Back, who had been refused a promotion aboard the HMS Bulwark, was a midshipman aboard Franklin’s *Trent* in the expedition’s eastern branch, the one in which Commander Buchan was planning to take the *Dorothea* and the *Trent* across the Arctic Ocean.
from Spitsbergen to Bering Strait. Meanwhile Commander John Ross would be taking the western branch of the expedition in an attempt at a northwest passage by way of Davis Strait.

April 25, Saturday: Commander David Buchan took the *Dorothea* and the *Trent* out of the mouth of the Thames River, intending to sail across the Arctic Ocean from Spitsbergen to Bering Strait.

October 22, Thursday: Helen Louisa Thoreau’s 6th birthday.

On his 7th birthday, Franz Liszt accompanied his father Adam Liszt on a business trip to visit a merchant named Ruben Hirschler in Lackenbach. Adam asked Hirschler’s daughter to play something for Franz on her new piano. Franz was so overcome by the music that he began to cry and flew into his father’s arms. Hirschler was so taken by the scene that he gave the piano to the boy.

Commander David Buchan brought the *Dorothea* and the *Trent* back to port in England, having been prevented by ice off Spitsbergen from getting very far at all toward their intended eventual destination of the Bering Strait. The only success of this expedition was the setting of a new northern latitude record, of 82° 34’ N.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

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1st day [sic] 22d of 10th M / Our Meetings was rather small, was silent and to me a season of but little life, tho’ no small activity of mind. – In the last which was preparative Osborn Mowry published his intentions of marriage with Eliza Ann Southwick, daughter of Amasa Southwick Set part of the evening with Abigail Robinson & Mary Morton Where I went to wait on Sister Ruth home D & M Williams was also there.
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May 23, Sunday: Lieutenant John Franklin led an overland expedition to explore the north coast of America from the mouth of the Coppermine River to Repulse Bay. Midshipman George Back set out with Sir John for York Factory on the Hudson’s Bay Company ship *Prince of Wales*. The expedition would pass its first winter at Cumberland House and its second at a base camp they had built by Winter Lake, “Fort Enterprise” between Great Slave Lake and the Coppermine River.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

> 1st day 23rd of 5 M / Our morning meeting was well attended D Buffum was very lively in testimony & Hannah Dennis appeared twice & I believe it was a solemn time to some minds present. — Between meetings wrote to Uncle & Aunt Stanton - informing them that Sister Sally was put to bed this morning about 6 OC with a fine healthy daughter. —
October 18, Wednesday: Midshipman George Back returned south from Fort Enterprise to secure essential supplies expected from Cumberland House.
January 1, Monday: Midshipman George Back was promoted to Lieutenant.

John James Audubon made himself a new-year’s promise that he was gonna paint all of 99 birds in not more than 99 days. He hired some market hunters to bring him dead specimens of various interesting species, stiffing them back up into more or less imaginary naturalistic poses by inserting strong wires inside their flesh. The backgrounds for such naturalistic paintings his student Joseph Mason would add for him, or he would hire others to create for him in bulk.

During this year he and Joseph Mason would go to New Orleans in order to raise funds to continue to travel, and in order to send money back home to his wife Lucy, he would paint on commission and would teach students.

Portuguese troops in Belem, Brazil rebelled and set up a liberal government.

In Newport, Rhode Island, Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

2nd day 1st of 1st M 1821 / News in Town This morning of the Death of James Burrell Senator in Congress from this State — This may be justly considered a great public loss, few so good men go to Congress, he had in this & former Sessions distinguished himself as a friend to the cause of the Abolition
of Slavery, & is worthy of double Honor. -

1821. The Court of Common Pleas was then in session at Providence, and on Monday morning, the 1st of January, Gen. Bridgham, in behalf of the Bar, and as President of the General Bar meeting, rose and addressed the Court in the most feeling and impressive manner, on this melancholy event [the death, late in the previous year, of James Burrill, Jr. U.S. Senator from this State]. To which Chief Justice Martin responded in a brief and appropriate notice of the deceased, and in respect to his memory the Court then adjourned. At a General Bar Meeting assembled on the 3d, Resolutions expressive of grief and the highest respect to the memory of the deceased were passed, and Hon. Tristam Burges was appointed to deliver an eulogy on the 15th January - on which day, the members of the bar, and a great portion of the citizens, formed a procession, and marched to the First Congregational Church, where a most impressive and eloquent eulogy was pronounced by Mr. Burges, and solemn dirges and funeral ceremonies were performed. The auditory was bathed in tears, and the speaker himself was so strongly affected, that utterance was sometimes difficult. The newspapers at Washington, and letter writers there to papers in other places, laid their partisan feelings to rest, and spoke in the most respectful terms of his character as a man, a lawyer and a statesman. Mr. Burrill was born in this town in the year 1772; graduated at the University here in 1788; at the age of 19, was admitted to the bar, and at 25 elected Attorney General, which office held sixteen years, and resigned in 1814. In October of that year he was elected a member of the General Assembly, and was soon after chosen Speaker of that body, and continued as such while he held a seat in the House, but from which he was soon after transferred to the bench of the Supreme Judicial Court,

1. Stephen Wanton Gould Diary, 1815-1823: The Gould family papers are stored under control number 2033 at the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections of Cornell University Library, Box 7 Folder 12 for August 24, 1815-September 25, 1823; also on microfilm, see Series 7
as Chief Justice. In February, 1817, he was elected Senator to Congress, and before the expiration of half his constitutional term, was carried to the silent grave. He was a fine belles lettres scholar, and eminent lawyer, and able statesman. He was remarkably domestic in his habits, home was the cynosure of his delights, and there he was beloved and honored.

January 2, Tuesday: Lieutenant George Back arrived at the trading posts on Lake Athabasca. When the new supplies arrived, he would take them to Fort Enterprise.

George Gordon, Lord Byron had been married to Penelope for six years but only the first year had been happy:

**EPIGRAM ON MY WEDDING-DAY.**

To Penelope.

This day, of all our days, has done
The worst for me and you:—
’Tis just six years since we were one,
And five since we were two.

Early in the month there would occur a spate of marches in honor of Lady Caroline Amelia of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Princess of Wales becoming the Queen Consort of the empire. King George IV’s proclamation as king would be met, in a number of cities, with shouts of “Queen, Queen, Long Live the Queen.” The monarch would be booed even at Ascot. There would be street cries of “No Queen, No King.” London walls would be chalked with the slogan “The Queen Forever, the King in the River.”

January 14, Sunday: Lieutenant John Franklin’s party ventured in two canoes from Fort Enterprise down the Coppermine River to the sea, and then along the coast as far east as Bathurst Inlet. Running low on supplies, the party then ventured across the barren tundra in the general direction of Fort Enterprise. Lieutenant George Back went ahead to search for natives, found some, and sent them to the main group with supplies. Ten men died before the supplies arrived.

In Newport, Rhode Island, Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

1st day 14th of 1st M / The funeral of Esther Bowen was this forenoon & tho’ the day was very stormy the Meeting was very pretty full & it proved a season of favor & Solemnity not soon to be forgotten, our frd D Buffum & Father Rodman were engaged in public testimony, I Thought with life & Authority. —
October: Soon after his return to England, Lieutenant George Back took service on HMS *Superb* in the West Indies to accumulate the qualifications necessary for promotion to Commander.

John Franklin returned from the frozen wastes of the Canadian arctic, having won a certain renown among the native Americans there as “the great chief who would not kill a mosquito.” He issued his travels as NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY TO THE SHORES OF THE POLAR SEA, IN THE YEARS 1819, 20, 21, AND 22... (London).

Thoreau would obtain this new book from the Concord Library and copy portions of it into his Indian Book #9, and into his Fact Book. An extract would be used in WALDEN, and an extract in CAPE COD.
Although in the previous year the US Congress had turned down a petition by Captain John Cleves Symmes to equip an expedition of two ships for the purpose of sailing up to a North Polar opening into the interior of the Earth, where would be found a habitable land, that petition was resubmitted this year — also fruitlessly, as it received the second time but 25 votes.²

² Some people just have no sense of fun!
WALDEN: Yet we should oftener look over the tafferel of our craft, like curious passengers, and not make the voyage like stupid sailors picking oakum. The other side of the globe is but the home of our correspondent. Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely. One hastens to Southern Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after. How long, pray, would a man hunt giraffes if he could? Snipes and woodcocks also may afford rare sort; but I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one’s self.–

“Direct your eye sight inward, and you’ll find
A thousand regions in your mind
Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be
Expert in home-cosmography.”

What does Africa, –what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered. Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a North-West Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clarke and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes, –with shiploads of preserved meats to support you, if they be necessary; and pile the empty cans sky-high for a sign. Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely? Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice. Yet some can be patriotic who have no self-respect, and sacrifice the greater to the less. They love the soil which makes their graves, but have no sympathy with the spirit which may still animate their clay. Patriotism is a maggot in their heads. What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact, that there are continents and seas in the moral world, to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, but that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with five hundred men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one’s being alone.–

“Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.
Plus habet hic vita, plus habet ille viæ.”

Let them wander and scrutinize the outlandish Australians.
I have more of God, they more of the road.

It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar. Yet do this even till you can do better, and you may perhaps find some “Symmes’ Hole” by which to get at the inside at last. England and France, Spain and Portugal, Gold Coast and Slave Coast, all front on this private sea; but no bark from them has ventured out of sight of land, though it is without doubt the direct way to India. If you would learn to speak all tongues and conform to the customs of all nations, if you would travel farther than all travellers, be naturalized in all climes, and cause the Sphinx to dash her head against a stone, even obey the precept of the old philosopher, and Explore thyself. Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve. Only the defeated and deserters go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist. Start now on that farthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a worn-out China or Japan, but leads on direct a tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too.
**CAPE COD:** I was told by the next keeper, that on the 8th of June following, a particularly clear and beautiful morning, he rose about half an hour before sunrise, and having a little time to spare, for his custom was to extinguish his lights at sunrise, walked down toward the shore to see what he might find. When he got to the edge of the bank he looked up, and, to his astonishment, saw the sun rising, and already part way above the horizon. Thinking that his clock was wrong, he made haste back, and though it was still too early by the clock, extinguished his lamps, and when he had got through and come down, he looked out the window, and, to his still greater astonishment, saw the sun just where it was before, two thirds above the horizon. He showed me where its rays fell on the wall across the room. He proceeded to make a fire, and when he had done, there was the sun still at the same height. Whereupon, not trusting to his own eyes any longer, he called up his wife to look at it, and she saw it also. There were vessels in sight on the ocean, and their crews, too, he said, must have seen it, for its rays fell on them. It remained at that height for about fifteen minutes by the clock, and then rose as usual, and nothing else extraordinary happened during that day. Though accustomed to the coast, he had never witnessed nor heard of such a phenomenon before. I suggested that there might have been a cloud in the horizon invisible to him, which rose with the sun, and his clock was only as accurate as the average; or perhaps, as he denied the possibility of this, it was such a looming of the sun as is said to occur at Lake Superior and elsewhere. Sir John Franklin, for instance, says in his Narrative, that when he was on the shore of the Polar Sea, the horizontal refraction varied so much one morning that “the upper limb of the sun twice appeared at the horizon before it finally rose.” He certainly must be a son of Aurora to whom the sun looms, when there are so many millions to whom it glooms rather, or who never see it till an hour after it has risen. But it behooves us old staggers to keep our lamps trimmed and burning to the last, and not trust to the sun’s looming.
December: Lieutenant George Back returned from the HMS *Superb* in the West Indies to London to go on Lieutenant John Franklin’s 2d overland expedition to explore the northern coast of North America, eastwards and westwards from the mouth of the Mackenzie River. During these explorations he would be promoted to Commander.

Per the journal of Albert Gallatin’s son James as recorded in *The Diary of James Gallatin*:

My father-in-law is very ill and we are all in close attendance. Reubel found the air did not agree with him and has betaken himself to New York, much to the relief of all. Madame Reubel is a delightful woman and has suffered much. To be here in Baltimore without money, dependent on her friends, must be most galling to her, having lived at Court all her life, and particularly at the Court of Westphalia, where she was the first lady-in-waiting on the Queen. She often describes to us the splendours of the Palace at Cassel, which was built by the Landgrave of Hesse in imitation of Versailles. His son has it now and I believe the whole of his vast fortune intact. When she was there and King Jerome reigned, she says nothing could equal the extravagance of living. She was not at all surprised at the Westphalian troops being quite useless to Napoleon, as they were never manoeuvred. All was a life of pleasure there, from morning until night. We will have, I fear, a sad Christmas. I am sorry for Josephine’s sake.
March: Lieutenant John Franklin’s 2d overland expedition to explore the northern coast of North America, eastwards and westwards from the mouth of the Mackenzie River, arrived by packet boat at New-York. They would travel overland to the Mackenzie River and Great Bear Lake, where they would construct their winter camp, “Fort Franklin,” on the western shore. This group included George Back.

December 30, Friday: George Back was promoted to Commander. It would be a year before he would learn of this.

A Kyrie in c minor for solo voices and double chorus by Felix Mendelssohn was performed for the initial time, in Frankfurt.

In Newport, Rhode Island, Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

30th 12 M (6th day) 1825 / I am this day 44 Years of Age - time spends with rapid silent pace - & where am I - on the brink of eternity, or yet longer time to remain in this state - I feel my deficiency & the need of greater devotion to the best of causes. –I am poor weak irresolute & low & the longer I live, the more I am of the opinion that if we are saved it is thro’ Mercy, Rich Mercy & the loving kindness of our heavenly father - I have nothing to boast of. –
June 22, Thursday: After wintering at “Fort Franklin” on the western shore of Great Bear Lake, Lieutenant John Franklin’s 2d overland expedition set out for the delta of the Mackenzie River. At Point Separation the party would divide. Richardson and the surveyor Edward Nicholas Kendall would set out in the 24-foot boats Dolphin and Union to explore the coast eastward to the mouth of the Coppermine River, while Sir John and George Back would venture westward in the 26-foot boats Lion and Reliance. Captain Frederick W. Beechey’s HMS Blossom awaited them in the Bering Strait.

A decree by Tsar Nikolai set up a Supreme Censorship Committee over a nationwide system of censorship and guidelines for their oversight of literature and the arts.

The 1st Pan-American Congress meets in Panama called by Simón Bolívar to create a union of Spanish speaking America. After three weeks of discussions, the congress would disband with little accomplished.

Adina o Il califfo di Bagdad, a farsa by Gioachino Rossini to words of Bevilacqua-Aldobrandini, was performed for the initial time, in Teatro Sao Carlos, Lisbon (this would be the only occasion on which a Rossini opera would be premiered in the absence of the composer).

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 22nd of 6th M 1826 / Our Meeting seemed small in comparison with some we have sat in of late. - & to me it was but a poor time. – there was no business in the Preparative Meeting – This Afternoon Solomon Lukins who has travelled in company with Elizabeth Robson most of the time since she has been in America, returned from New Bedford to Newport on his return into Pennsylvania where he lives - he called at our house & put up with us till an opportunity presents for a passage to NYork.

July 7, Friday: Lieutenant John Franklin and George Back in the 26-foot boats Lion and Reliance reached the sea. They would spend an exhausting day fending off Eskimos who were trying to seize supplies. It would take them six weeks to get along the coast to Return Reef, only half-way to Icy Cape, at which point they would be forced by the approach of winter to turn back.
September 21, Thursday: Four songs by Franz Schubert were published by Sauer and Leidesdorf, Vienna as his op.59: Dass sie hier gewesen, Du bist die Ruh and Lachen und Weinen, all to words of Ruckert, and Du liebst mich nicht, to words of Platen.

In a duel fought 6 miles south of Franklin, Kentucky, Sam Houston badly wounded General William A. White.

Lieutenant John Franklin and George Back in the 26-foot boats Lion and Reliance reached Fort Franklin three weeks after Richardson and Kendall, who had completed their survey. That winter Back would learn of his earlier promotion to Commander.

In Newport, Rhode Island, Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 21st of 9th M 1826 / Our Frd Abigail Robinson was engaged in a very favourd testimony to the Truth, & our meeting was a good one. – no buisness in the Preparative Meeting. –
October 10, Wednesday: Commander George Back returned to England. It would take nearly three years for his health to return so he could obtain another appointment.
Promoted to captain, John Franklin was able to wed his Jane Griffith. He issued his log of his more recent journey as *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827...* (London).
August 3, Tuesday: Commander George Back travelled up the Rhine River to Switzerland. He would spend more than a year touring Italy.

Louis-Philippe, son of the Duc d’Orleans, was elected King of the French.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

3rd day 3rd of 8th M 1830 / After Attending the Meetg of the Sub committee My wife & I took the Chaise & rode down to Rhode Island & Staid at Uncle Stantons where I found my Aged Mother as comfortable in health as when I last saw her at the Yearly Meeting time. —
January: In Naples, Commander George Back found out that John Ross had not been heard of since setting out on an attempt at a northwest passage in 1829. He returned to England at once and offered to command a rescue mission. He would attempt to reach Ross by way of the Thlew-ee-choh or Great Fish River, a river known only by Indian report, which was supposed to rise somewhere near Great Slave Lake and flow northwest into the Arctic Ocean (this river would come to be known as Back River).

EARLY in the year 1832 the protracted absence of Captain (now Sir John) Ross, who had sailed in 1829 to the Polar regions, and had not afterwards been heard of, became the subject of general and anxious conversation. A report even reached Italy, where I happened to be, that he and his adventurous companions had perished; but, having ascertained that there was no other ground for this rumour than the uncertainty of their fate, I shortly afterwards hastened to England, with the intention of offering to Government my services to conduct an expedition in search of them.
February 4, Monday: Commander George Back secured his appointment to lead the expedition to rescue John Ross by way of the Thlew-ee-choh or Great Fish River.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having been pleased to lend your services to this office, that you may conduct an expedition now preparing to proceed to the Polar Sea in search of Captain Ross, you are hereby required and directed to undertake this service, placing yourself for the purpose at the disposal of the Governor and committee of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who have undertaken to furnish you with the requisite resources and supplies.

February 17, Sunday: A young Boston couple, John B. Carter and Mary A. Bradley, committed suicide by hanging themselves face to face.

Mehmed Emin Rauf Pasha replaced Resid Mehmed Pasha as Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire.

Taking with him Dr. Richard King as naturalist, Commander George Back left Liverpool by packet boat for New-York.

ON Sunday, the 17th of February, 1833, accompanied by Mr. Richard King and three men, two of whom had gained experience under Sir John Franklin, I embarked in the packet ship Hibernia, Captain Maxwell, from Liverpool; and, after a somewhat boisterous passage of thirty-five days, during part of which the ship was entangled amongst ice on St. George’s Bank, arrived at New York.

April 9, Tuesday: When the Town Meeting of Peterborough, New Hampshire voted on this day to purchase books for its town library using tax money, this in effect created the initial government-supported public library in the United States of America (perhaps in the world).

Two choruses for male voices for Immermann’s (after Calderon de la Barca) play Der standhafte Prinz by Felix Mendelssohn was performed for the initial time, in Dusseldorf.

Commander George Back had traveled from Albany, New York by coach or wagon to Montréal.
May 11, Saturday: Commander George Back reached the Sault de Ste. Marie at the head of the lake, “the extreme point to which civilisation has yet extended.”

When the Lady of the Lake struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic while on its way from England to Québec, 215 passengers and crewmen perished in the chilling waters.

May 20, Monday: Felix Mendelssohn left his family in Berlin to become music director in Dusseldorf.

Commander George Back arrived at Fort William.

Charles Babbage wrote to the Treasury asking that in the future they pay the contractor Joseph Clement directly and make it clear that none of these funds had ever actually passed through his own hands. He then wrote again suggesting the following instructions:

- All drawings not required at Clement’s own workshop should be stored in the fireproof building.
- The drawings necessary for the Calculational Engine should be completed as soon as possible.
- Parts already in process should be finished as soon as the nature of the work would admit, and be stored in the fireproof building.
May 26, Sunday: In Hamburg, Johannes Brahms was christened in St. Michael’s Church.

In Dusseldorf, Felix Mendelssohn conducted Handel’s Israel in Egypt, the first of a series of Handel oratorio performances in Mendelssohn’s arrangements (these would greatly advance the popularity of Handel’s music in Germany).

The arrival of a dispatch canoe allowed Commander George Back to send a report to headquarters.

June 6, Thursday: Commander George Back reached Fort Alexander at the southern extremity of Lake Winnipeg. He would begin his search for John Ross at Fort Resolution.

June 17, Monday: Waldo Emerson left Switzerland for France, after having been dragged by fellow passengers to visit Ferney while protesting that Voltaire was unworthy of their memory.

The Reverend George Waddington was presented by his college to the vicarage of Masham and Kirkby-Malzeard in Yorkshire.

The expedition led by Commander George Back carried the flag of the Hudson’s Bay Company as it reached Norway House on Jack River.

... having hoisted the Company’s flag, we arrived at the depot called Norway House, situated on Jack River.

July 1, Monday: The Connecticut legislature approved a merger of the New York and Stonington Railroad with the New York, Providence and Boston Railroad, which was henceforth to be known by the latter name. (During this month the New York and Erie Railroad was also organized.)

The expedition led by Commander George Back arrived at the Grand Rapid.

An opportune change in the weather allowed us to get away; and, having passed the limestone rocks bordering that part of the lake, we shortly arrived at the Grand Rapid, the interesting particulars of which are too well and too minutely described in Sir John Franklin’s Narratives, to require or even justify a repetition here.
July 5, Friday: The naval forces of the Portuguese absolutists were defeated by those of the Portuguese liberals supporting Queen Maria II, off Cape St. Vincent.

Joseph-Nicéphor Niépce died.

Commander George Back arrived at Cumberland House.

The crew had dressed themselves out in all their finery, -silver bands, tassels, and feathers in their hats,- intending to approach the station with some effect; but, unhappily for the poor fellows, the rain fell in torrents, their feathers drooped, and such was the cumulation of mud, that it was necessary to wade a full mile before we could land at Cumberland House.

July 21, Sunday: August Bondi was born in Vienna, Austria, a son of Hart Emanuel and Martha (Frankl) Bondi. His father was a Jewish manufacturer of cotton goods in Vienna. He would be educated at the Catholic College of the Order of Piarists. He also would have a private tutor.

Commander George Back arrived at Portage la Loche.

It was the 21st of July when we reached Portage la Loche, the high ridge of land which divides the waters running into Hudson’s Bay from those which direct their course to the Arctic Sea. For about six or seven miles on this portage, the voyageurs are exposed to temporary but acute suffering, from the total absence of good water to quench the thirst, aggravated, in our case, by carrying loads of 200 lbs. in an atmosphere of 68° of Fahrenheit. They are, at the same time, incessantly tormented by myriads of insatiable mosquitoes and horse-flies, significantly called “bull dogs,” which, delighted with the rare treat of a human subject, banquet on their victims till, not unfrequently, the face streams with blood.
July 29, Monday: Charles Babbage reported to the British Treasury that he had had an unsatisfactory meeting with the contractor Joseph Clement subsequent to their letter to him dated May 29th, and had requested that the contractor for his Calculational Engine express his views in writing.

William Wilberforce died.

That Sunday in London, Waldo Emerson would attend Wilberforce’s Westminster Abbey funeral — and would be able there to get quite a good look at a much more lively and interesting and living personage, man of the

Commander George Back arrived at Fort Chipewyan.

After some detentions of an ordinary kind, we got to Fort Chipewyan on the 29th of July. We arrived so early, that we were not in the least expected; and the canoe was not seen until within a short distance of the land, - a circumstance by no means pleasing to the guide, who, besides his own decorations of many coloured feathers, &c., had taken more than ordinary pains to display to the best advantage the crimson beauties of a large
silk flag.

August 8, Thursday: Henry C. Wright had a “coffin” dream.

On this day or the following one Marc Isambard Brunel advised Charles Babbage to fire his intransigent contractor Joseph Clement on the Calculational Engine, suggesting instead a man named Spiller.

Commander George Back arrived at Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake.

On the 8th of August we reached Great Slave Lake, and were received at Fort Resolution by Mr. M’Donnell, the gentleman in charge.

August 18, Sunday: Robert Schumann presented his teacher Friedrich Wieck on his birthday with “Impromptus sur un theme de Clara Wieck op.5.”

The Canadian vessel SS Royal William set out from Pictou, Nova Scotia toward the port of Gravesend, England — to be achieved in 25 days largely under the power of steam rather than wind.

Waldo Emerson arrived in Edinburgh.

After his marriage he “resided partly at Comely Bank, Edinburgh; and for a year or two at Craigenputtock, a wild and desolate farm-house in the upper part of Dumfriesshire,” at which last place, amid barren heather hills, he was visited by our countryman Emerson. With Emerson he still corresponds. He was early intimate with Edward Irving, and continued to be his friend until the latter’s death. Concerning this “freest, brotherliest, bravest human soul,” and Carlyle’s relation to him, those whom it concerns will do well to consult a notice of his death in Fraser’s Magazine for 1835, reprinted in the Miscellanies. He also corresponded with Goethe. Latterly, we hear, the poet Sterling was his only intimate acquaintance in England.

Commander George Back reached the Thlew-ee-choh or Great Fish River.

... launching past some rocks, which had shut out the land in their direction, we opened suddenly on a small bay, at the bottom of which was seen a splendid fall, upwards of sixty feet high, rushing in two white and misty volumes into the dark gulf below. It was the object of our search - the river which we were to ascend.
August 29, Thursday: The British Parliament voted to forbid the employment of children under 9 in factories, and to restrict employment of children between the ages of 9 and 13 to 9 hours/day and 48 hours/week. The British Factory Act required that employees under the age of 13 be provided with two hours of schooling per day.

By the Norman “law of constructive treason,” not only was a traitor guilty of his treason but also any and all of that traitor’s blood descendants, for ever. For instance, although there was such a thing as a “widow’s thirds,” by which a widow might support herself by taking dowery possession of a “third part of the lands and tenements of which her husband died solely and beneficially possessed,” the widows of traitors lost all rights of dower. On this day the Parliament allowed that those tracing descent through a traitor might inherit (unless, it was stipulated, that property had been escheated prior to January 1, 1834). On this day the Parliament also enacted, however, a new “Dower Act,” which virtually did away with that “widow’s thirds” thingie, by placing the right of dower entirely at the husband’s disposal.³

Hector Berlioz wrote to Harriet Smithson telling her that he would call on her in two days and that they would go to be married — if she were to refuse, he would leave within the week for Berlin.

Commander George Back turned toward Fort Reliance, the expedition’s wintering station at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake.

September: Commander George Back arrived at Fort Reliance, the expedition’s wintering station at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake.

(Page 190) The site of our intended dwelling was a level bank of gravel and sand, covered with reindeer moss, shrubs, and trees, and looking more like a park than part of an American forest. It formed the northern extremity of a bay, from twelve to fifteen miles long, and of a breadth varying from three to five miles, named after my friend Mr. M’Cleod. […]

In a few days, the framework of the house and observatory were up; but, in consequence of the smallness of the trees, and the distance from which they were carried, our progress in filling up the walls was necessarily slow.
October 1, Tuesday: On the Atlantic coast of South America, Charles Darwin arrived at Rio Tercero, Argentina.

The Reverend George Waddington was made commissary and official of the prebend of Masham.

Felix Mendelssohn entered upon duties as the director of music in Dusseldorf. His duties would include directing the choral and orchestral societies of the city, and music for Catholic services.

In the frozen northlands of Canada, here is Commander George Back.

Starving Indians continued to arrive from every point of the compass, declaring that the animals had left the Barren Lands where they had hitherto been accustomed to feed at this season; and that the calamity was not confined to the Yellow Knives, but that the Chipewyans also were as forlorn and destitute as themselves. There is no reasoning with a hungry belly, that I
November 5, Tuesday: Waldo Emerson lectured at Boston’s Masonic Temple before the Natural History Society on “The Uses of Natural History,” suggesting that God had generously provided the physical energy in the world to us for our use, and that it is through our growing scientific knowledge of the laws of nature that we will return to our rightful place in the system of being, which is that of master. He suggested that perhaps, one day, after we humans have managed to grasp within our minds the whole sense of “all this outward universe,” after the universe of seeming “hath been comprehended and engraved forever in the eternal thoughts of the human mind,” all of this outward seeming “shall one day disappear.” (This would be printed in EARLY LECTURES, Volume I, pages 5-26.)

On this day, on the frigid boreal slope of Canada, the expedition of Commander George Back moved from its tents into the relative warmth and security of the habitation they had been constructing.

(Page 205) On the 5th of November, we had the pleasure of changing our cold tents for the comparative comfort of the house, which, like most of those in this country, was constructed of a framework, filled up with logs let into grooves, and closely plastered with a cement composed of common clay and sand. The roof was formed of a number of single slabs, extending slantingly from the ridge pole to the eaves; and the whole was rendered tolerably tight by a mixture of dry grass, clay, and sand, which was beat down between the slabs, and subsequently coated over with a thin layer of mud. The house was fifty feet long and thirty broad;...

Christmas: Charles Darwin spent this Christmas Day at Port Desire in Patagonia.

Commander George Back and his naturalist had a memory of previous Christmas-Day celebrations at home in England — which featured a menu of roast beef and plum pudding.

(Page 219) Christmas-Day...Mr. King and I made a cheerful dinner of pemmican. Happiness on such occasions depends entirely on the mood and temper of the individuals; and we cheated ourselves into as much mirth at the fancied sayings and doings of our friends at home, as if we had partaken of the roast beef and plum pudding which doubtless “smoked upon the board” on that glorious day of prescriptive feasting.
George Back led an expedition to complete the surveys of the northern coast of North America begun by Sir John Franklin in the 1819-1826 timeframe. He would explore along a river which would receive the name “Back River” in recognition of his accomplishment.

W. MacKay compiled a map of Nova Scotia more accurate and complete than any before.

February: Commander George Back planned the construction, from scratch, of two boats.

(Page 236) The uncertainty of the means of subsistence, and the almost daily distresses and disappointments by which we were harassed, had interfered with many, and altogether marred some, of my plans; among others, the important task of preparing the materials for the construction of two light boats to take us along the coast had been hitherto suspended. The time, however, had now arrived when further delay was impossible. Accordingly, the two carpenters, with Sinclair (a steersman), were sent to the clump of pines found by De Charlôit in September last, and directed to saw sufficient planking for the purpose.

March 26, Wednesday: David Henry Thoreau checked out, from Harvard Library, Thomas Gray’s The Vestal, or A Tale of Pompeii, which although it was a historical novel offered more than 35 pages of explanatory notes in the 1830 edition published in Boston by the firm of Gray and Bowen.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

4th day 26 of 3 M 1834 / Attended Moy [Monthly] Meeting held in Town –Wm Greene preached - followed by Wm Almy. – In the last there was considerable business & a time of exercise & some distress but things ended pretty well.

On the north boreal slope of Canada, Commander George Back received news from York Factory.

(Page 240) ... a person arrived late in the evening with the packet from York Factory, which we had been expecting daily for the last six weeks. The happiness which this announcement instantly created can be appreciated by those only who, like us, have been outside the pale of civilisation, and felt the
blessing of communication with their friends but once through a long twelvemonth.

April 25, Friday: After witnessing a performance of Vincenzo Bellini’s Norma, Jacob Meyerbeer wrote to his wife from Modena. “I tremble and shake at the thought of my new opera (Les Huguenots) being directly compared with this Norma, since it was apparently to be given in Paris at almost the same time as my new opera.”

An application was made on this day and the following one for a charter for London University, a college offering free admission to all sects and denominations that had been being constructed in Gower Street of London since April 30, 1827, and that had been open for business since October 1, 1828. (A special meeting of the proprietors would be held on December 2, 1835 to consider the proposals of the government, and the institution would incorporate as the “University of London” in 1838.)

Commander George Back learned of the safe return of Captain Ross.

(Page 245) “Captain Ross, Sir. Captain Ross is returned.” “Eh! are you quite sure? is there no error? where is the account from?” The man paused, looked at me, and pointing with his finger said, “You have it in your hand, sir.” It was so; but the packet had been forgotten in the excitement and hurry of my feelings. Two open extracts from the Times and Morning Herald confirmed the tidings; and my official letter, with others from the long lost adventurers themselves [...] removed all possible doubt,

4. Would this have been where Thoreau learned of the ruts of Pompeii, which in 1851 he would mention in his journal?

July 7, Monday, 1851: ...Even the facts of science may dust the mind by their dryness –unless they are in a sense effaced each morning or rather rendered fertile by the dews of fresh & living truth. Every thought that passes through the mind helps to wear & tear it & to deepen the ruts which as in the streets of Pompeii evince how much it has been used. How many things there are concerning which we might well deliberate whether we had better know them. Routine –conventionality manners &c &c –how insensibly and undue attention to these dissipates & impoverishes the mind –robs it of its simplicity & strength emasculates it. Knowledge doe[s] not come [come] to us by details but by  lieferungs from the gods. What else is it to wash & purify ourselves? Conventionalities are as bad as impurities. Only thought which is expressed by the mind in repose as it were lying on its back & contemplating the heaven’s –is adequately & fully expressed– What are side long –transient passing half views? The writer expressing his thought –must be as well seated as the astronomer contemplating the heavens –he must not occupy a constrained position. The facts the experience we are well poised upon –! Which secures our whole attention!
and evinced at the same time the powerful interest which the event had awakened in the public, by a great proportion of whom the party had long since been numbered among the dead.

May 5, Monday: The last movement of the Concerto for piano and orchestra no.1 was performed for the initial time, in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, with the composer Clara Wieck at the keyboard and Felix Mendelssohn conducting.

Charles Darwin began a new expedition at Rio Santa Cruz in the South American continent.

The original purpose of his venture into the boreal zone of the North American continent having vanished upon receipt of the news that Captain Ross had been able to return safely to England, Commander George Back determined to embark upon a straightforward exploration of the Thlew-ee-choh and the seacoast adjoining its mouth.

(Page 247) ... now, when I knew of Captain Ross’s safety, [...] I determined at once on going with one boat instead of two along the coast, selecting the best men for my crew. This, in fact, was the only means left by which I could execute my instructions, and discharge the duty that I owed to the public; for though the enthusiasm that had before animated us was now of course much abated, it still set with a strong, because concentrated, stream, towards the region of discovery.

May 13, Tuesday: Commander George Back took note of the migratory patterns of geese.

(Page 248) ... a single goose, the harbinger of summer, flew past the house; and during the day it was followed by five more, all of which took a northerly direction. This was six days later than they had been seen in 1826 at Fort Franklin, though a higher northern latitude.


*There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away*

— Emily Dickinson
All monasteries, backers of King Miguel, were abolished in Portugal.

Toward the end of the month, the summer weather on the north boreal slope was truly amazing:

(Page 252) Towards the end of the month, the weather became sultry, the temperature in the sun being 106°; an extraordinary contrast to that of the 17th January, when it was 70° below zero.
June 7, Saturday: In New-York Fanny Kemble had met Pierce Mease Butler, son and heir of a US senator, who had been following her from place to place and serving as a volunteer musician during her performances in the theatre. Fanny got married with him on this day in Philadelphia and would give up the stage for awhile, but after their divorce in 1848 would return to her career, appearing in plays and giving Shakespearean readings.

This was the day of Greek independence. General Theodoros Kolokotronis was sentenced to death for treason for having resisted the rule of Otto of Greece (he would in the following year be released).

Commander George Back left Fort Reliance for the expedition’s depot on Artillery Lake.

(Page 255) It now only remained to block up the windows and doors; which done, the four persons remaining with me, including the guide, were laden with burdens of ninety pounds each, and two dogs, equipped with saddle bags, carrying meat for the journey; and thus appointed, I left Fort Reliance, accompanied by Mr. King, a little past noon of the 7th June.

June 28, Saturday: William Crotch made his final public appearance, playing the organ at the Handel Festival in Westminster Abbey.

Shortly after its 1st run on New-York’s Harlem Railroad, an engine exploded.

Congress approved the new New Jersey/New York state border.

Commander George Back reached the Thlew-ee-choh or Great Fish River. After spending a month descending this river, his expedition would spend three weeks exploring Chantrey Inlet.

(Page 306) In the midst of one of these groups was my old acquaintance and Indian belle, who will be remembered by the readers of Sir John Franklin’s narrative under the name of Green Stockings. Though surrounded by a family, with one urchin in her cloak clinging to her back, and sundry other maternal accompaniments, I immediately recognised her, and called her by
her name; at which she laughed, and said “she was an old woman now,” begging, at the same time, that she might be relieved by the “medicine man, for she was very much out of health.” However, notwithstanding all this, she was still the beauty of her tribe; and, with that consciousness which belongs to all belles, savage or polite, seemed by no means displeased when I sketched her portrait.

July 29, Tuesday: At about 4PM Elijah Pierson of “The Kingdom” collapsed while working in the field. The Reverend Robert “The Prophet Matthias” Mathews forbade any medical attention.

The Office of Indian Affairs was organized.

Commander George Back reached the Polar Sea.

(Page 390) This then may be considered as the mouth of the Thlew-ee-choh, which, after a violent and tortuous course of five hundred and thirty geographical miles, running through an iron-ribbed country without a single tree on the whole line of its banks, expanding into fine large lakes with clear horizons, most embarrassing to the navigator, and broken into falls, cascades, and rapids, to the number of no less than eighty-three in the whole, pours its waters into the Polar Sea in latitude 67° 11' 00" N., and longitude 94° 30' 0" W.; that is to say, about thirty-seven miles more south than the mouth of the Copper Mine River, and nineteen miles more south than that of Back’s River at the lower extremity of Bathurst’s Inlet.

August 14, Thursday: Harriet Smithson Berlioz gave birth to a son, Louis-Clement-Thomas, at their home in Montmartre.

In England, there had been workhouses in which the able-bodied poor had been kept at constant labor since 1536 during the reign of King Henry VIII. King Edward VI had founded the royal hospital at Bridewell in 1553, for the punishment and employment of the vigorous and idle. In 1601 work had been ordered to be provided by the overseers of the poor. In 1819 parishes had been empowered to enlarge or build workhouses where none existed before. As of this date, per the Poor Law Amendment Act, the boards of guardians of such workhouses were taken under the control of a national Poor-Law Board, and no able-bodied British man could receive public assistance unless he entered such an institution. If you do not work you shall not eat.

Commander George Back decided to turn back from the exploration that had been heading in the direction of Point Turnagain.

(Page 427) Thus circumstanced, therefore, and reflecting on the long and dangerous stream, combining all the bad features of the worst rivers in the country, that we had to retrace, the hazards of the falls and rapids, and the slender hope which remained of our attaining even a single mile farther, I felt that I had no
choice, and, assembling the men, I informed them that the period fixed by His Majesty's Government for my return had arrived; and that it now only remained to unfurl the British flag, and salute it with three cheers in honour of His Most Gracious Majesty.

At the Boston dock, Richard Henry Dana, Jr. boarded the Pilgrim.

**AND NOW, FOR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, A REPORT FROM OUR SAILOR:**

The fourteenth of August was the day fixed upon for the sailing of the brig Pilgrim on her voyage from Boston round Cape Horn to the western coast of North America. As she was to get under weigh early in the afternoon, I made my appearance on board at twelve o’clock, in full sea-rig, and with my chest, containing an outfit for a two or three years’ voyage, which I had undertaken from a determination to cure, if possible, by an entire change of life, and by a long absence from books and study, a weakness of the eyes, which had obliged me to give up my pursuits, and which no medical aid seemed likely to cure.

The change from the tight dress coat, silk cap and kid gloves of an undergraduate at Cambridge, to the loose duck trowsers, checked shirt and tarpaulin hat of a sailor, though somewhat of a transformation, was soon made, and I supposed that I should pass very well for a jack tar. But it is impossible to deceive the practised eye in these matters; and while I supposed myself to be looking as salt as Neptune himself, I was, no doubt, known for a landsman by every one on board as soon as I hove in sight. A sailor has a peculiar cut to his clothes, and a way of wearing them which a green hand can never get. The trowsers, tight round the hips, and thence hanging long and loose round the feet, a superabundance of checked shirt, a low-crowned, well varnished black hat, worn on the back of the head, with half a fathom of black ribbon hanging over the left eye, and a peculiar tie to the black silk neckerchief, with sundry other minutiae, are signs, the want of which betray the beginner, at once. Besides the points in my dress which were out of the way, doubtless my complexion and hands were enough to distinguish me from the regular salt, who, with a sunburnt cheek, wide step, and rolling gait, swings his bronzed and toughened hands athwartships, half open, as though just ready to grasp a rope.

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September 27, Saturday: On the Pacific coast of South America, Charles Darwin returned to Valparaiso.

In the frozen Northern boreal slope of the Americas, Commander George Back arrived back at Fort Reliance.
March 21, Saturday: On the North American continent, Commander George Back left Fort Reliance, leaving the naturalist Dr. Richard King to follow with the men and equipment.


May 28, Thursday: Commander George Back journeyed toward Montréal on his way back home to England and glory.

The morning [...] was so fine, and the channel so free from obstruction, that I immediately prepared for my departure, having arranged that Hassel should follow in one of the Company’s boats, and take the place of the person who was appointed to accompany me. Accordingly, provided with every thing that was necessary for the journey, I took leave of my kind friend Mr. Smith, [...]

In Newport, Rhode Island, Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 28th of 5th M 1835 / Attended the Moy [Monthly] Meeting held in Newport - In the first Father & Hannah Dennis bore short but acceptable testimonies - In the last we conducted the buisness pretty well - Perez Peck & Wm Reynolds came in a little while before the Meeting closed - they were a committee from the Meeting for Sufferings to make provision for the Yearly Meeting & the Moy [Monthly] Meeting appointed a corresponding committee & after the Meeting they came home & dined with us also Asa Sherman. –

August 6, Thursday: Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

5th day 6 of 8 M / Again went to Portsmouth to attend the Quarterly Meeting at large, - It was a season of Watering under the Ministry of Moses Beede & Mead Atwater - Ruth Davis in supplication at the conclusion – The Meeting for buisness was not long - very little buisness but the Answers to the queries
before it. — After Meeting we rode home without dinner & got into town in season to get on board the Lexington for Providence & arrived there just after Sunsett & went to my dear Friend Moses Browns & lodged — found him well & very glad to see me — I spent the evening very pleasantly with him & the company of there. —

Commander George Back arrived at Montréal on his way back home to England and glory.

Bolivia gained its independence.

August 17, Monday: Commander George Back sailed from New-York on his way back home to England and glory.

September 8, Tuesday: Commander George Back arrived in London and received a hero’s welcome.

(Page 472) On my arrival in London, I had the honour of laying my chart and drawings before the Right Hon. Lord Glenelg, Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, [...] I was soon after honoured with an audience by His Majesty; who was condescending enough to manifest a gracious interest in the discoveries which it had been my good fortune to make, and to express his approbation of my humble efforts, first in the cause of humanity, and next in that of geographical and scientific research.
Richard Henry Dana, Jr served his first day’s duty aboard the Alert.
AND NOW, FOR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, A REPORT FROM OUR SAILOR:
Tuesday, Sept. 8th. This was my first day’s duty on board the ship; and though a sailor’s life is a sailor’s life wherever it may be, yet I found everything very different here from the customs of the brig Pilgrim. After all hands were called, at daybreak, three minutes and a half were allowed for every man to dress and come on deck, and if any were longer than that, they were sure to be overhauled by the mate, who was always on deck, and making himself heard all over the ship. The head-pump was then rigged, and the decks washed down by the second and third mates; the chief mate walking the quarter-deck and keeping a general supervision, but not deigning to touch a bucket or a brush. Inside and out, fore and aft, upper deck and between decks, steerage and forecastle, rail, bulwarks, and water-ways, were washed, scrubbed and scraped with brooms and canvas, and the decks were wet and sanded all over, and then holystoned. The holystone is a large, soft stone, smooth on the bottom, with long ropes attached to each end, by which the crew keep it sliding fore and aft, over the wet, sanded decks. Smaller hand-stones, which the sailors call “prayer-books,” are used to scrub in among the crevices and narrow places, where the large holystone will not go. An hour or two, we were kept at this work, when the head-pump was manned, and all the sand washed off the decks and sides. Then came swabs and squilgees; and after the decks were dry, each one went to his particular morning job. There were five boats belonging to the ship,— launch, pinnace, jolly-boat, larboard quarter-boat, and gig,—each of which had a coxswain, who had charge of it, and was answerable for the order and cleanness of it. The rest of the cleaning was divided among the crew; one having the brass and composition work about the capstan; another the bell, which was of brass, and kept as bright as a gilt button; a third, the harness-cask; another, the man-rope stanchions; others, the steps of the forecastle and hatchways, which were hauled up and holystoned. Each of these jobs must be finished before breakfast; and, in the meantime, the rest of the crew filled the scuttle-butt, and the cook scraped his kids (wooden tubs out of which the sailors eat) and polished the hoops, and placed them before the galley, to await inspection. When the decks were dry, the lord paramount made his appearance on the quarter-deck, and took a few turns, when eight bells were struck, and all hands went to breakfast. Half an hour was allowed for breakfast, when all hands were called again; the kids, pots, bread-bags, etc., stowed away; and, this morning, preparations were made for getting under weigh. We paid out on the chain by which we swung; hove in on the other; called the anchor; and hove short on the first. This work was done in shorter time than was usual on board the brig; for though everything was more than twice as large and heavy, the cat-block being as much as a man could lift, and the chain as large as three of the Pilgrim’s, yet there was a plenty of room to move about in, more discipline and system, more men, and more good will. Every one seemed ambitious to do his best: officers and men knew their duty, and all went well. As soon as she was hove short, the mate, on the forecastle, gave the order to loose the sails, and, in an instant, every one sprang into the rigging, up the shrouds, and out on the yards, scrambling by one another;—the first up the best fellow,—cast off the yard-arm gaskets and bunt gaskets, and one man remained on each yard, holding the bunt jigger with a turn round the tye, all ready to let go, while the rest laid down to man the sheets and halyards. The mate then hailed the yards—“All ready forward?”—“All ready the cross-jack yards?” etc., etc., and “Aye, aye, sir!” being returned from each, the word was given to let go; and in the twinkling of an eye, the ship, which had shown nothing but her bare yards, was covered with her loose canvas, from the royal-mast-heads to the decks. Every one then laid down, except one man in each top, to overhaul the rigging, and the topsails were hoisted and sheeted home; all three yards going to the mast-head at once, the larboard watch hoisting the fore, the starboard watch the main, and five light hands, (of whom I was one,) picked from the two watches, the mizen. The yards were then trimmed, the anchor weighed, the cat-block hooked on, the fall stretched out, manned by “all hands and the cook,” and the anchor brought to the head with “cheerily men!” in full chorus. The ship being now under weigh, the light sails were set, one after another, and she was under full sail, before she had passed the sandy point. The fore royal, which fell to my lot, (being in the mate’s watch,) was more than twice as large as that of the Pilgrim, and, though I could handle the brig’s easily, I found my hands full, with this, especially as there were no jacks to the ship; everything being for neatness, and nothing left for Jack to hold on by, but his eyelids.
As soon as we were beyond the point, and all sail out, the order was given, “Go below the watch!” and the crew said that, ever since they had been on the coast, they had had “watch and watch,” while going from port to port; and, in fact, everything showed that, though strict discipline was kept, and the utmost was required of every man, in the way of his duty, yet, on the whole, there was very good usage on board. Each one knew that he must be a man, and show himself smart when at his duty, yet every one was satisfied with the usage; and a contented crew, agreeing with one another, and finding no fault, was a contrast indeed with the small, hard-used, dissatisfied, grumbling, desponding crew of the Pilgrim.

It being the turn of our watch to go below, the men went to work, mending their clothes, and doing other little things for themselves; and I, having got my wardrobe in complete order at San Diego, had nothing to do but to read. I accordingly overhauled the chests of the crew, but found nothing that suited me exactly, until one of the men said he had a book which “told all about a great highwayman,” at the bottom of his chest, and producing it, I found, to my surprise and joy, that it was nothing else than Bulwer’s Paul Clifford. This, I seized immediately, and going to my hammock, lay there, swinging and reading, until the watch was out. The between-decks were clear, the hatchways open, and a cool breeze blowing through them, the ship under easy way, and everything comfortable. I had just got well into the story, when eight bells were struck, and we were all ordered to dinner. After dinner came our watch on deck for four hours, and, at four o’clock, I went below again. turned into my hammock, and read until the dog watch. As no lights were allowed after eight o’clock, there was no reading in the night watch. Having light winds and calms, we were three days on the passage, and each watch below, during the daytime, I spent in the same manner, until I had finished my book. I shall never forget the enjoyment I derived from it. To come across anything with the slightest claims to literary merit, was so unusual, that this was a perfect feast to me. The brilliancy of the book, the succession of capital hits, lively and characteristic sketches, kept me in a constant state of pleasing sensations. It was far too good for a sailor. I could not expect such fine times to last long.

While on deck, the regular work of the ship went on. The sailmaker and carpenter worked between decks, and the crew had their work to do upon the rigging, drawing yarns, making spun-yarn, etc., as usual in merchantmen. The night watches were much more pleasant than on board the Pilgrim. There, there were so few in a watch, that, one being at the wheel, and another on the look-out, there was no one left to talk with; but here, we had seven in a watch, so that we had long yarns, in abundance. After two or three night watches, I became quite well acquainted with all the larboard watch. The sailmaker was the head man of the watch, and was generally considered most experienced seaman on board. He was a thoroughbred old man-of-war’s-man, had been to sea twenty-two years, in all kinds of vessels—men-of-war, privateers, slavers, and merchantmen;—everything except whalers, which a thorough sailor despises, and will always steer clear of, if he can. He had, of course, been in all parts of the world, and was remarkable for drawing a long bow. His yarns frequently stretched through a watch, and kept all hands awake. They were always amusing from their improbability, and, indeed, he never expected to be believed, but spun them merely for amusement; and as he had some humor and a good supply of man-of-war slang and sailor’s salt phrases, he always made fun. Next to him in age and experience, and, of course, in standing in the watch, was an English-man, named Harris, of whom I shall have more to say hereafter. Then, came two or three Americans, who had been the common run of European and South American voyages, and one who had been in a “spouter,” and, of course, had all the whaling stories to himself. Last of all, was a broad-backed, thick-headed boy from Cape Cod, who had been in mackerel schooners, and was making his first voyage in a square-rigged vessel. He was born in Hingham, and of course was called “Bucketmaker.” The other watch was composed of about the same number. A tall, fine-looking Frenchman, with coal-black whiskers and curly hair, a first-rate seaman, and named John, (one name is enough for a sailor,) was the head man of the watch. Then came two Americans (one of whom had been a dissipated young man of property and family, and was reduced to duck trowsers and monthly wages,) a German, an English lad, named Ben, who belonged on the mizen topsail yard with me, and was a good sailor for his years, and two Boston boys just from the public schools. The carpenter sometimes mustered in the starboard watch, and was an old sea-dog, a Swede by birth, and accounted the best helmsman in the ship. This was our ship’s company, beside cook and steward, who were blacks, three mates, and the captain.
September 30, Wednesday: Commander George Back was promoted to Captain by order in council. Among other honours he would receive the royal medal of the Royal Geographical Society.

In the evening, Margaret Fuller’s father Timothy Fuller fell ill.
Sir George Back

1836

George Back’s Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River, and along the Shores of the Arctic Ocean, in the Years 1833, 1834, and 1835.

Richard King’s Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Arctic Ocean, in 1833, 1834, and 1835, under the Command of Capt. Back (2 volumes, London).

The Frozen North
February 8, Monday: Former Congressman David Crockett arrived in San Antonio de Béxar with a dozen volunteers.

Captain George Back was elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.
Waldo Emerson wrote in his journal:

"The sinner is the savage who hews down the whole tree in order to come at the fruit." Piickler-Muskau [Count von Piickler-Muskau, later Prince, a soldier, scholar, traveller, and prolific writer (1785-1871). His *Tour in England* was translated by Mrs. Sarah Austin in 1832.] describes the English dandy. His highest triumph is to appear with the most wooden manners as little polished as will suffice to avoid castigation; nay, to contrive even his civilities so that they may appear as near as may be to affronts. Instead of a noble, high-bred ease—to have the courage to offend against every restraint of decorum: to invert the relation in which our sex stands to women so that they appear the attacking and he the passive or defensive party," etc. Women have less accurate measure of time than men. There is a clock in Adam: none in Eve. The philosopher, the priest, hesitates to receive money for his instructions,—the author for his works. Instead of this scruple, let them make filthy lucre beautiful by its just expenditure. It becomes the young American to learn the geography of his country in these days as much as it did our fathers to know the streets of their town; for steam and rails convert roads into streets and regions into neighborhoods. Steam realizes the story of IEolus’s bag. It carries the thirty-two winds in the boiler.

Sentences of Confucius
(From Marshman’s *Confucius*)

"Have no friend unlike yourself."

"Chee says, Grieve not that men know not you; grieve that you are ignorant of men."

"How can a man remain concealed? How can a man remain concealed?"

"Chee entered the great temple. Frequently inquiring about things, one said, ‘Who says that the son of the Chou man understands propriety? In the great temple he is constantly asking questions.’ Chee heard and replied, ‘This is propriety.’"

"Koong Chee is a man who, through his earnestness in seeking knowledge, forgets his food, and in his joy for having found it, loses all sense of his toil; who, thus occupied, is unconscious that he has almost arrived at old age."

"Chee was in the Chhi country for three months hearing Sun’s music, and knew not the taste of his meat. He said, ‘had no idea of music arriving at this degree of perfection.’"
June: On Captain George Back’s behalf the Royal Geographical Society had approached the government with a scheme that Back had had in mind since 1828: to take a ship to Repulse Bay or Wager River, and then trace the coast by boat as far as Point Turnagain, the farthest point reached by Sir John Franklin on the first land expedition. Back was given command of HMS Terror and the expedition set out. Among the officers of the Terror were mates Graham Gore, who later perished in the ill-fated Franklin expedition, and Robert McClure, who in 1850-1854 commanded Investigator in search of Franklin. The year was notoriously bad for ice throughout the whole of the eastern Arctic and the 325-ton Terror with her crew of 60 men was beset in August on entering Frozen Strait. She drifted throughout the winter in the pack off northeast Southampton Island and suffered heavy damage. She would not get free of the ice, to limp homeward, until the following July.
April 24, Tuesday: David Henry Thoreau’s classmate Henry Jacob Bigelow was dismissed from Harvard College for having been in possession of firearms and ammunition in his dormitory room and repeatedly discharging a firearm inside the room (MH-Ar Faculty Records UAIII 5.5.2.IX, 311).


"There is no Frigate like a Book To take us Lands away" — Emily Dickinson
View to Seaward from Montreal Island

Published by John Murray, London, 1838.
Thoreau also checked out the four volumes of a William Mason (1724-1797) edition of Thomas Gray (1716-1771)’s poetry, The Poems of Mr. Gray. To which are prefixed Memoirs of His Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A. (York: printed by A. Ward; and sold by J. Dodsley, London; and J. Todd, York, 1775) (since this is four volumes, it is presumably the 1778 reprint).

September 3, Sunday: When freed from the ice in July, George Back had turned homeward. On this day his ship arrived in a sinking condition at Lough Swilly in Ireland.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

1st day 3rd of 9th M / Both our meetings were good Solid seasons to me -Father had offerings in both - Recd a letter this morning from Nathan Kite of Philad. giving some acct of J J Gurneys arrival &c
George Back’s NARRATIVE OF AN EXPEDITION IN HMS TERROR, UNDERTAKEN WITH A VIEW TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERY ON THE ARCTIC SHORES, IN THE YEARS 1836-37 (London, J. Murray).
March 18, Monday: George Back had been further honored following his triumphant return, receiving such items as the gold medal of the Société de Géographie de Paris. On this day he was made a “Sir.”

Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Paul Cuffe, a Pequot Indian: During Thirty Years Spent at Sea, and in Travelling in Foreign Lands (Vernon: Printed by Horace N. Bill; Stockbridge, New York).

July: Sir George Back determined to attempt to recover his health at Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně), a fashionable German spa. Finding this treatment ineffective, he would continue to Italy, where he would remain until 1842.
Returning to England, Sir George Back began a comfortable life in London society. He would maintain an active interest in Arctic exploration. He would oppose the choice of Sir John Franklin as commander of the 1845 expedition on grounds of his age and would encourage James Ross to accept the appointment.

The Geological Survey was established in Montréal. Topographic survey to provide geological base maps was begun.

Adolphus Lee Lewes was the 1st person to be formally employed as a surveyor in British Columbia. He was hired by the Hudson’s Bay Company to map the Company’s new establishment at Fort Victoria. He produced a map titled “Ground Plan of portion of Vancouver Island selected for New Establishment taken by James Douglas, Esq.” This map, dated 1842, is the earliest known example of map making by a land surveyor on Vancouver Island.
October 13, Tuesday: Sir George Back got married with Theodosia Elizabeth Hammond, a widow, and the couple left for a honeymoon in Italy.
August: Sir George Back returned from his honeymoon in Italy to take an active part in the preparation of expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin. He would serve with a number of other Arctic veterans on the Arctic council which advised the Admiralty about preparing search expeditions.

At about this point the sailor William Jackman emigrated from Liverpool to New-York aboard the Queen, Captain McLean, and then, after a trip up the Hudson River and on the Erie Canal (there were 2,725 boats paying a passage along this waterway during this year), remarried with Jennett Nelson Scott whom he had met aboard the Queen, probably in Orleans County, New York (the bride had been born on November 2, 1825 in Scotland, and would die on April 14, 1897 in Kinnic, Wisconsin; this union would produce twelve children).
Sir George Back served on the Admiralty’s Arctic committee, which met to investigate the conduct of Horatio Austin and William Penny on their respective expeditions.

Joseph Despard Pemberton was appointed Surveyor for the Colony of Vancouver Island.

In this year and the next there would be no fewer than 6 expeditions involving 15 ships, commanded by “as noble a band of officers as ever volunteered for a service of peril,” looking for the frozen Franklin. Often these ships would be within hailing distance of one another as they negotiated the northern passage of the “middle ice” in Baffin Bay, while on their race for the summer opening of the Wellington Channel. Joseph René Bellot set off to honor Lady Jane Franklin’s desire to find the frozen asset of her husband, Sir John Franklin, in the sunk cost of his expedition:

Poor Woman! If you could have read my heart you would have seen how much the somewhat egotistical desire of making an extraordinary voyage has been succeeded in me by a real ardour and genuine passion for the end we aim at. "I must supply your mother’s place"; you said, as you inquired into the details of my equipment. Well then, I will be for you a son, and have the inexhaustible devoutness of a son who is in search of his father; and what human strength can do, I will do.
Bellot would drown in Wellington Channel.

“Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is?”

— Henry Thoreau

Stephen Pearce was commissioned by Colonel John Barrow, to paint a painting that is now in the National Portrait Gallery in London, entitled “The Arctic Council Discussing the Plan of Search for Sir John Franklin.” An engraving of this painting would be published in 1853, and a photograph would also be made of this painting, reduced to microscopic size. This microphotograph would be made by an optician/microscope maker/inventor, John Benjamin Dancer of Manchester, England. The figures depicted in the painting and the engraving, and on Dancer’s microscopic photographic slide image shown below, include Captain Bird, Sir Charles Ross, Sir John Richardson, and Colonel John Barrow, a Secretary at the Admiralty:
Sir George Back was made an honorary doctor of civil law at Oxford University.
Literary Hermits Recreating Themselves in Their Chapel:
Within Half a Century, How Many Herdsmen Still Amuse Themselves
ARCTIC EXPLORATIONS: THE SECOND GRINNELL EXPEDITION in search of SIR JOHN FRANKLIN, 1853, ’54, ’55. BY ELISHA KENT KANE, M.D., U.S.N. ILLUSTRATED BY UPWARDS OF THREE HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS, FROM SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR. THE STEEL PLATES EXECUTED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF J.M. BUTLER, THE WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY VAN INGEN & SNYDER. (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 124 Arch Street. New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 115 Nassau St.), described what had previously been reported in the newspapers, the finding of 600 preserved-meat cans left by Sir John Franklin. These volumes would be in the personal library of Henry Thoreau, and he would make notes from them in his Indian Notebook #10 and his Fact Book.
WALDEN: What does Africa, –what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered. Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a North-West Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clarke and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes, –with shiploads of preserved meats to support you, if they be necessary; and pile the empty cans sky-high for a sign. Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely? Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice. Yet some can be patriotic who have no self-respect, and sacrifice the greater to the less. They love the soil which makes their graves, but have no sympathy with the spirit which may still animate their clay. Patriotism is a maggot in their heads. What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact, that there are continents and seas in the moral world, to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, but that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with five hundred men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one’s being alone.–

“Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.
Plus habet hic vitæ, plus habet ille viæ.”

Let them wander and scrutinize the outlandish Australians.
I have more of God, they more of the road.
Lady Jane Franklin pleaded with Lord Palmerston for one last official attempt at finding her husband:

This final and exhausting search is all I seek on behalf of the first and only martyrs to Arctic discovery in modern times.
Little did she know, he was hiding from her in a cigar box:

The Admiralty made its final decision to abandon the search for Sir John Franklin. Sir George Back, almost alone among the Arctic veterans, concurred with this decision and was attacked by Sophia Cracroft: “That miserable Sir G. Back,” she wrote, “will say anything that a Lord of the Admiralty tells him, and is held in contempt or something worse by all who have served with him.”
March 19, Thursday: Sir George Back was promoted to rear-admiral on the reserve list. Until the end of his life he would participate actively in the Royal Geographical Society, of which he would be a member in council, and for seven years vice-president.

Thaddeus Hyatt wrote to H.B. Hurd that the low-water steamboat Lightfoot had reached St. Louis.
September 24, Thursday: Rear-Admiral Sir George Back was promoted to vice-admiral.
October 18, Wednesday: Vice-Admiral Sir George Back was promoted to full admiral.

December 6, Wednesday: Admiral Sir George Back presided at a meeting of Arctic veterans who had gathered to greet the returning expedition commanded by George Strong Nares in the *Alert* and *Discovery*. 
June 23, Sunday: George Back died in London.

The Reverend Moncure Daniel Conway lectured on atheism: ATHEISM: A SPECTRE. WITH READING FROM MAX MUELLER’S SIXTH HIBBERT LECTURE. SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL, JUNE 23, 1878. This would be published as a pamphlet.

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY
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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

- Remark by character “Garin Stevens” in William Faulkner’s *Intruder in the Dust*

Prepared: May 31, 2014
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.
Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology — but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.