

CHAPTER III

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AND THE FRANKLIN SEARCH

As related in Chapter I, the efforts to discover a passage to Cathay via the arctic seas ended with the voyage of Baffin in 1616. It is significant of the modern spirit of adventure that the Northwest Passage should be sought again in the eighteenth century, and be discovered in the nineteenth century by a remarkable series of voyages, which brought to man's knowledge the existence of Arctic America.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, it became known that the last voyage of Bering (made in 1741) disclosed that the continents of America and Asia were separated by a strait, as related in Chapter IV. This discovery excited anew the activities of Great Britain in quest of the forgotten arctic route from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The attempt to circumnavigate North America was entrusted to the great navigator, James Cook, who decided to attack the problem through Bering Strait. His selection of this route is doubtless explained, when, speaking of Bering's voyages, he said, "His misfortunes proved to be the source of much private advantage to individuals,