

No. 12.

Letter from Mr.
W. P. Snow to
Captain Hamilton,
R. N.

In 1849, according to Dr. Scoresby, the "St. Andrew" whaler got into the west water on the 12th June, and Captain Penny, in 1838, on the 13th June. And in his "Franklin Expedition," page 56, the same authority observes, that "the northern and north-western parts of Baffin's Bay, with a considerable space within Lancaster Sound, may at the same time (termination of the spring of the year) be clear of ice."

Again, a little craft of the kind and size I have named would be in no more danger than one 30 or 40 tons larger, and she would have the advantage that the "Prince Albert" possessed, of being enabled to run between any grounded bergs and the shore when examining, and also of making more rapid way through the ice, by taking every opportunity afforded by the smaller openings.

The expense of such a vessel would not be much. If she were lost, the loss would be of little importance.

The object sought to be obtained could be effected by her as well as by a larger vessel, if intelligence from the Arctic squadron or their outposts be all that is desired.

That such intelligence may be obtained this summer is, I venture to suggest, extremely possible, if considered necessary.

That any intelligence from or of them is important is evident; for who can tell whether those ships themselves may not get so blocked in that they cannot well get out? And how great, in such case, would be the value of our knowing what they have done and where they are. Who can say that they may not now have got fast hold of the end of that chain, the beginning of which was found at Cape Riley? It is, therefore, with great respect that I venture to submit the plan I have here mentioned. The details of that plan I shall feel much pleasure in forwarding, if called upon; but I may observe that my calculation makes 1,200 *l.* sufficient for the outlay (wages excepted). The purchase of the vessel, strengthening, stores, and provisions included.

Her crew to consist of one master, two mates, and six seamen; the master and four of the men forming the boat party on arrival at Lancaster Sound, or where else the ice stops the vessel in that part of the exploring ground.

Two whale boats, one of them a gutta percha, to accompany her; a cradle for the boat when on the ice, as a substitute for a sledge; a knapsack for each of the party; a staff, like a Swiss Alpine stock; and a board six or seven feet long, strong, but not heavy, to form part of the boat equipment. The staff is to hold horizontally when walking over the ice, thus proving a means of safety should any one using it fall through a narrow crack. The board is for the purpose of acting as a bridge, when coming to any opening in the ice, or rugged pieces that cannot be well leaped over; it should be like a knife-board, with a locker at one end, and lined at that end with gutta percha underneath; a moveable spike should also be affixed at each end, so that it might remain firm when acting as the bridge; lanyards to be attached to the extremities. In travelling on the ice, this board could be dragged along very easily and without encumbering any one, by passing the lashing loosely round a man's shoulders.

In conclusion, I have only to observe, that should I be considered worthy of such honour I willingly offer my humble services in assisting to carry out either of the plans I have named, by taking an active part therein. Were I permitted to take charge of a little vessel, such as I have described, I can only say that unceasing labour and perseverance, with due attention to any commands I might receive, would be devoted by me to the furtherance of the object in which I should be engaged. It is not for any man to say that success will crown his exertions, but I would do all that it is possible for man to do to achieve that success; and should hope to prove that I was not undeserving of the honour and confidence bestowed upon me.

I have, &c.

Captain W. A. B. Hamilton, R. N.
Secretary of the Admiralty.

(signed) *W. P. Snow.*