

return of the 'Investigator' to England previous to the commencement of the ensuing winter (1849)."

Opinion of Captain Beechey.

By Captain Bird's compliance with this order, the "Enterprise" will be left alone in the Arctic regions, without its being known where perhaps, or in what condition she may be in at the time, and Sir John Franklin's party may possibly be deprived of the inestimable advantage of finding an asylum at the mouth of Regent's Inlet, should anything have compelled Sir John to take that route in his boats on his way to Barrow Strait; for it is evidently contemplated by Sir James Ross that he may not be able to reach that spot in time himself. Thus the most likely part of the strait on the south for falling in with the absent parties would be deserted; and be it remembered, at a time when, from the nature of an Arctic summer, it would be most likely that the party would arrive, and when they would be in an exhausted condition from the labour and difficulties attending their reaching that far, supposing them to have abandoned their ships at a distance to the westward, at the early part of the season.

It has ever been the practice to keep two vessels together in those regions, for reasons which are sound and obvious; and to depart from it now, when there are unfortunately more than ever weighty reasons why it should be adhered to, seems to me inexpedient. I am fully aware that the only way in which this can be prevented is by sending out provisions, and incurring an additional expense. But this, after all, will not be so weighty as it at first appears.

We have already promised a communication this season with Sir James Ross, and have even arranged the plan; and we know that this cannot be ensured by a general request to the whalers to look into Lancaster Sound, nor even by a very small reward, seeing how little the reward of last year operated upon them; but that it will be necessary to select one vessel in particular, and contract with her owners that she shall make this service part of her voyage; and I apprehend that it will be necessary to place an officer in her to see that the contract is properly performed, or that there are substantial reasons why it could not be. To lessen the expense, the vessel may be permitted to fish before the ice opens, or at any time when she cannot proceed.

This is the best that can be done to carry out the instructions; but it must be admitted that we make a very imperfect communication of it, if we do not at the same time acquaint Sir James Ross with the result of information which we may be able to derive through Russia during the spring, as to whether the expedition under Sir John Franklin has been heard of at Kamtschatka, or which we might possibly receive by that time through New York, or *via* Mexico, &c.

It is important that Sir James Ross should be in possession of such information, as it will set at rest any expectations he might have sanguinely entertained as to Sir John Franklin having got through, and determine him at once as to any ultimate plan he might be contemplating.

If then the vessel be detained for this very desirable communication, her fishing season must be given up, or nearly so, and the whole expense of the vessel must be defrayed by the Government; so that the expense of this simple communication with the expedition would not be much less than that of hiring a vessel for the express purpose, and then she might carry out the very desirable supply of provision to enable the "Investigator" to remain as long as the "Enterprise" continues in those regions.

And this is the more desirable, for at the late period at which we know the expedition arrived off Barrow Strait, much of the arrangement contemplated for the summer operations could not have been carried into effect; and now, looking to the unforeseen delays, the possibility of accident, &c., it can hardly be expected that that full and efficient examination of every port, in search of our forlorn countrymen, can be made even by the two vessels there: such a search, I mean, as would alone satisfy this country, and, in the lamentable event of hearing no more of the parties, would enable us to lay our heads on our pillows with the inward satisfaction of knowing that we had done all that humanity could suggest, and all that a great nation, jealous of the lives of its subjects, could possibly have accomplished.

Wellington Inlet, Bathurst Inlet, and Regent's Inlet, have all to be examined, in addition to the other routes contemplated by Sir James Ross for his own vessel, and matters have now evidently arrived at such a crisis that merely sailing up and down an inlet will not satisfy us; a rigid, a minute search of the shore must be made in boats from the ship; the hills must be ascended; the points