

INSTRUCTIONS to Captain Sir *Edward Belcher*, C.B., or the Senior Officer of Her Majesty's Ships at Beechey Island.

Sir,

Admiralty, 28 April 1854.

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have directed Her Majesty's ships "Phoenix" and "Talbot," under the orders of Captain Inglefield, to proceed with provisions and stores to Beechey Island, for the purpose of replenishing the ships and depôts under your orders; and I am commanded by their Lordships to acquaint you, that on the return of the "Phoenix" from Beechey Island last year, they had the satisfaction of hearing of the safe arrival of Her Majesty's ship "Investigator," under the command of Captain M'Clure, at Banks Land, having completed the discovery of the North-West Passage, though unhappily without discovering traces of Sir John Franklin; and that part of the crew had been enabled to reach Captain Kellett's station at Melville Island. By despatches which they received from Behring Straits, they have information, that in August 1851, Captain Collinson, in Her Majesty's ship "Enterprize," passed the entrance of the Colville River; and their Lordships trust, by the reports he may have obtained from the natives of Prince Albert's Land, as well as from the records deposited by Captain M'Clure on his passage along that shore, that he may also have been enabled to reach some harbour on Banks Land, from whence he has made known his position either to Captain M'Clure or Captain Kellett.

Their Lordships have desired me to direct your special attention to the measures they now require to be adopted for at once withdrawing, if possible, the whole of the force now employed in the search of Sir J. Franklin from the Polar Seas. For effecting this object, they refrain from issuing any positive instructions how you are to act, or what steps you are to take, as they are aware you must be entirely guided by the position of the ships, and those varying circumstances which in that region must influence your operations; but their Lordships' views may be stated generally as follows:

1. If the crews of the "Enterprize" and "Investigator" are at Banks Land, they must abandon their ships; and every endeavour should be made to get them to Beechey Island, that they may return to England. If this has already been effected, and Captain Kellett, with his ships, has returned from Melville Island, you are immediately to proceed to England with the whole of the ships and their crews, abandoning all further search for the missing expedition, unless any circumstances (on consultation with the senior officers of Her Majesty's ships) should induce you to believe that your remaining out another year would tend to clear up the fate of our missing countrymen. But if Captain Kellett has been unable to move from his position at Melville Island, it may be necessary to give orders to him to abandon the "Resolute" and "Intrepid," and secure his retreat to Beechey Island; but as this cannot be accomplished this year, you need not detain any officers or men who may have already reached Beechey Island, but send them to England forthwith.

2. Should no tidings have been heard of Captain Collinson, in Her Majesty's ship "Enterprize," it becomes absolutely necessary to provide for his safety. For this purpose, the Melville Island Depôt must be replenished with provisions and stores; and it will be necessary for a ship and steam tender to remain there, also the "North Star," or "Talbot," with a tender, at Beechey Island, and at those stations everything which can add to the health and comfort of the crews should be deposited; and having done this, it does not appear to their Lordships to be necessary that any of the other ships should remain another year in the Polar Sea, unless, as before stated, you consider further search to be prudent and necessary.

These are the views of their Lordships; their great object being to recall, with the least possible delay, the whole of the ships or crews named in the margin, if it can be done. If not possible to do so, they leave it to your judgment and discretion to send home such of them as may not be required, and to adopt those measures which you consider most necessary to ensure the safety of Captain Collinson and his crew, and their speedy return to England. This, their Lordships are aware, must depend on the information you have received from Melville Island,

Assistance.
Pioneer.
Resolute.
Intrepid.
Enterprize.
Investigator.
North Star.
Phoenix.
Talbot.