

employed on the search of the missing ships that left England in May 1845 have acted together in concert, with a laudable cordiality and unanimity, while the admirable arrangements of that distinguished officer Captain Austin and of Captain Penny ensured the most complete examination of every part within reach of the position in which they were arrested by impenetrable ice near to Cornwallis Island.

While it is deeply to be regretted that *not a single trace* of the missing ships or their crews have been found, it is satisfactory to have it proved beyond doubt that Sir John Franklin could not have pursued a course westward of Barrow's Strait, which, according to the report and unanimous opinions of those indefatigable officers who have been employed, must have eventually led to his destruction.

Alderman Jones's and Smith's Sounds have not yet been examined. Should no trace be found there by Captain Austin's ships, or by the western expedition under Captain Collinson, the probability is that on their return towards England the ships have been surrounded by heavy ice (i. e. beset), as were the "Enterprise" and "Investigator" in 1849, but having not, like them, been "miraculously" released, they may have suffered shipwreck. It will remain, therefore, but to search the eastern and western shores of Baffin's Bay; the former falling to my lot, while Captain Penny examines the latter. In the meantime my little yacht, the "Mary," is left at Cape Spencer, at the request of Captains Austin and Penny, with provisions, as a retreat vessel, either for the missing ships, Captain Collinson's, or any other that may, at a future period be in distress.

Their Lordships will observe by the report of that excellent officer Commander Phillips that he executed the laborious and difficult service allotted to him in exploring Cornwallis Island with a perseverance and energy that cannot be surpassed, and in which, and on all other laborious services, Dr. David Porteous, M.D., surgeon to the expedition, took a willing and active part; and I beg also to recommend him as a young man of superior talent and education, who would be an ornament as well as an acquisition to Her Majesty's service.

The season being more than usually backward, owing to the severity of February and March, it will probably be late in August before we shall be released from our present winter quarters. As to proceeding further to the westward (were it necessary), that is totally out of the question. The only danger to be apprehended by the *large* ships is being beset in the *pack* of *heavy ice*; but I shall not leave sight of them until they are completely released.

I cannot conclude this letter without acknowledging the obligation I owe to their Lordships, whose kind instructions enabled Captain Austin to afford me every kind of supply and assistance of which I stood in need; and also to Captain Penny, who shared bountifully with me some of the necessaries and luxuries which my limited means did not enable me to provide, and which was very conducive to the extraordinary good health enjoyed by the crews of the three small vessels.

I am, &c.

JOHN ROSS.

No. 3.

Sir JOHN ROSS to the SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

"Felix" Discovery Vessel,
Stranraer, 25th September 1851.

(Received 27th September.)

Sir,

I HAVE to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that this vessel, (one of the two,) which left England under my charge in May 1850, in search of the missing ships under the command of Sir John Franklin, arrived here this day, having posted despatches from Captain Austin, with whose squadron we parted on the 13th of August, then on their passage to examine Jones's and Smith's Sounds, while the "Felix" proceeded towards the eastern coast of Baffin's Bay, after having made a further search