

And now as to the main question of all, so far as we at home have to act in this matter, I mean as regards the nature and extent of the "instructions and communications" proposed to be sent out from England for Captain Bird this year.

Opinion of Captain
Sir W. Edward
Parry.

By the tenor of Sir James Ross's instructions it appears that the Board of Admiralty contemplated making use of the whalers for this purpose. If the communication in question were to be confined to the mere delivery and receipt of letters, this mode of effecting it might perhaps answer the purpose; though not with any degree of certainty, as I believe the whalers failed in reaching Lancaster Sound at all last year, and may do so again, for they will not persevere in their attempts to get across the ice in Baffin's Bay in that latitude, beyond a certain time, but run to the southward to prosecute their fishery elsewhere. But as I presume that their Lordships contemplated also sending out some supplies of provisions, fuel, and other stores, and perhaps a few officers and men, to supply the place of any that may have been disabled or permanently detached from the ships, I am of opinion that this object could not be accomplished with any degree of efficiency and certainty, except by sending out a vessel fortified and otherwise equipped for this special purpose, and commanded by a naval officer of intelligence and zeal. I believe that even as a matter of economy this plan would be preferable to the employment of a whaler, since the owner of such a vessel would demand a very large payment for freight, and for the probable injury to his fishery, if the vessel really performed the service honestly and efficiently. I much doubt, however, whether any consideration would induce a whaling ship to prosecute this service, if a good opportunity offered of striking a whale. I trust, therefore, that the Admiralty will not depend on the whalers for performing this important service.

The delivery of stores from a transport to the "Investigator" would best be performed by the latter coming eastward into Barrow's Strait to receive them. But should this prove impracticable or inexpedient, it would be necessary to land the stores in some convenient locality as a depôt for future use, and to be conveyed to the ship or ships as opportunities offer. This service would require all the energy and zeal to be expected only from Queen's officers and men, and would render indispensable some addition to their numbers, since a party must be left to guard the stores.

I do not understand the allusion you make to Sir James Ross's intention of sending home the "Investigator" this year, since his instructions contain no orders to that effect. But whatever were his original intentions, surely the shortness of his first season's operations would induce him to retain both his ships for a second winter, in order to extend to the utmost the search after Sir John Franklin's expedition.

It is important, however, to observe, that in all probability Sir James Ross, if he had any success in pushing to the westward in 1848, will be too far advanced in that direction to have any communication with Captain Bird, or the ship from England, until late in the present season, for it would surely be a poor employment of the short summer merely to get the "Enterprize" back to Cape Rennell, instead of prosecuting his search.

I should therefore expect, that the arrangements for Captain Bird's future operations would devolve on himself according to the instructions he may receive from their Lordships in August. Indeed I should not be surprised if Sir James Ross do not communicate with the "Investigator" at all this summer.

If, on the other hand, Sir James Ross was not able to penetrate any considerable distance to the westward in 1848, he will be the more desirous of retaining the services of the "Investigator" for at least another winter, since, in that case, his work is virtually to be commenced this year. In fact, under any circumstances, I see no use in one of the ships coming home before the other, so as to leave one of the crews helpless in case of shipwreck.

I quite agree with you in opinion, that whenever Sir James Ross's expedition does return to England,—and this ought not to be hastened,—depôts of provisions should be placed in all spots likely to be visited by straggling parties from Sir John Franklin's ships.

Should anything more occur to me on this subject, I will not fail to communicate further with you. In the meantime I shall hope to hear that a vessel is to be prepared for the purpose to which I have herein referred.

(signed) W. E. Parry.