

of the pole receive a frightful expression in the following calm, gallant instruction given by Capt. McClure:—"It is my intention he says if possible, to return to England this season (1852) touching at Melville Island and Port Leopold; but should we not be again heard of, in all probability we shall have been carried into the polar pack, or to the westward of Melville Island,—in either of which events, to attempt to send succour would only be to increase the evil, as any ship that enters the Polar pack must be inevitably crushed. Therefore, a depot of provision or a ship at Winter Harbour is the best and only certainty for the safety of the surviving crew." This, as will be seen by the date, was written last year:—and precisely the steps recommended by him have been taken for the discovery and rescue of Capt. McClure and his companions.

With respect to the navigation of the North-west Passage, which is a subject of great geographical interest, Capt. McClure observes:—"a ship stands no chance of getting to the westward by entering the Polar sea—the water along shore being very narrow and wind contrary, and the pack impenetrable; but through the Prince of Wales Strait, and by keeping along the American coast, I conceive it practicable. Drift-wood is in great abundance upon the east coast of the Prince of Wales Strait, and the American shore,—also much game. The hills in this vicinity abound in rein-deer and hares, which remain the entire winter:—we have procured upwards of 4,000 lb." From the observations which were made, it appears that the set of the currents is decidedly to the eastward.—"At one time," says Capt. McClure, "we found the set as much as two knots in a perfect calm,—and that the flood-tide sets from the westward, we have ascertained beyond a doubt, as the opportunities afforded during our detention along the western shore gave ample proof." This is one of the important facts of Capt. McClure's enterprise,—and established the propriety of making any future attempt at a passage which might be required from the side of Behring Straits.

Up to April 1852, the health of the crew of the Investigator was excellent; but during the past winter scurvy manifested itself—and it was fatal to three individuals in the spring.

According to the last accounts from Captain Kellett, it appears that he had sent his surgeon to report upon the health of the crew of the Investigator; and had given instructions that should there not be among them twenty men who were sufficiently well and would volunteer to remain another winter, Capt. McClure would desert his vessel. This step, indeed, seems to be contemplated; for Capt. Inglefield states, that the Intrepid steam tender was expected at Beechy Island with the crew,—and Sir E. Belcher had ordered the North Star to be prepared on her arrival to proceed to England and to leave the Intrepid at Beechy Island in her place.

We turn now to Sir E. Belcher's despatches:—which, if not so interesting in a geographical point of view as those of Captain McClure, yet contain many important features. At the head of these may be placed,—first, the existence of a polar sea, which Sir Edward feels convinced is now placed beyond a doubt:—and secondly, the discovery of what we would gladly hope may be further traces of Franklin.

When Capt. Inglefield left Beechy Island last year, he brought home the intelligence that Sir E. Belcher had gone up Wellington Channel, and had been absent three weeks. It now appears that he reached Cape Beecher to the north-east, near which in lat.  $78^{\circ} 52'$  and long.  $97^{\circ}$  West, a locality was found for winter quarters. Apprehensive that the open season was fast approaching to a close, preparations were made for boat and sledge explorations to the northward:—and these were commenced on the 23rd of August. On the 25th, when rounding a point where the coast suddenly turns to the eastward, the remains of several

well built Esquimaux houses were discovered. "They were," says Sir E. Belcher, "not simply circles of small stones, but two lines of well laid wall in excavated ground, filled in between by about two feet of fine gravel, well paved, and withal, presenting the appearance of great care,—more, indeed, than I am willing to attribute to the rude inhabitants or migratory Esquimaux — Bones of deer, wolves, seals, &c., numerous. Coal found." There is no mention of any search having been made for a record,—though in all probability this was not neglected; yet the absence of any cairn would seem to render it unlikely that a document existed. It will be observed that Sir E. Belcher does not hazard an opinion as to whether these huts were built by Franklin's party or not:—but if not by Esquimaux, it would be difficult to arrive at any other conclusion.

The explorations of Sir Edward and his officers led to the discovery of various lands,—to the most extensive of which the name of North Cornwall was given,—and of several islands washed by a sea open to the north, which, as we have stated, Sir E. Belcher regards as the Polar basin. Sir Edward gave the name of Victoria Archipelago to a group of islands in  $78^{\circ} 10'$  N. lat.; and the easternmost, forming the channel to Jones's Strait, which communicates with the Polar Sea, he named "North Kent." It is important to add, that as early as the 20th of May he found the sea open in the latitude of Jones's Strait. His words are—"Polar sea as far as the eye could range." He also states that the tides were most apparent, setting from east to west.

Thus, it is due to Capt. Penny to record, that although many of his headlands and visual bearings are erroneous, as might be expected,—yet, the fine open water which he described as existing to the north of Wellington Channel is a reality, and his views of its connection with the Polar basin are borne out by Sir E. Belcher's observations.

In the spring of this year, a very extensive sledge journey was made by Commander Richards and Lieut. Osborne. They started from their winter quarters in Wellington Channel,—and bearing to the north-west in the first instance, afterwards struck south, and, crossing Melville Island, reached the winter quarters of the Resolute at Dealy Island. Here they communicated with Capt. Kellett:—from whom they heard the pleasing intelligence of the safety of the Investigator. By this exploration, which was extended over a period of ninety-seven days, the shores of the eastern side of the Hecla and Griper Gulf were examined; and returning up Byam Martin Channel, its connection with the Polar basin was ascertained.

The last despatches from Sir E. Belcher, dated "H.M.S. Assistance, on return to Beechy Island, about ten miles east of Cape Beecher, July 26, 1853," inform us, that his ships were liberated from the ice on the 14th of July,—and that his future proceedings will be determined by the nature of the despatches that he may find at Beechy Island. He strongly advocates the immediate return to England of the Investigator's crew; not conceiving it desirable that any further expense or risk should be incurred in waiting for the possible disruption of the ice. The probability of Capt. Collinson having followed Capt. McClure's track renders it expedient that a ship should be stationed at Melville Island,—and Capt. Kellett will in all probability be ordered to remain there.

Sir E. Belcher lays so much stress on the existence of an open Polar sea, that we are surprised that he does not state his intention of boldly entering it with his well-appointed ship and steam tender. Such a course would be warranted by his instructions, and at the same time be in harmony with his well-established spirit of enterprise.

It now only remains to notice Capt. Inglefield's despatches.