

I.

United States Arctic Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin.

No. 1.

Lieutenant E. J. DE HAVEN to the SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

United States Arctic Expedition,

Proven, 6th July 1851.

(Received 20th November.)

Sir,

I TAKE pleasure in communicating, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, such operations of H. B. M. search squadrons as have come under my immediate notice, under the impression that no opportunity has occurred of their hearing directly from them since the date of our last seeing them.

An extraordinary bad season retarded their passage through Melville Bay and entrance into Lancaster Sound until late in August, and they were all, my own command included, arrested at the entrance of Wellington Channel; the ice, both to the north and west, being impassable.

Various traces were found on Cape Riley and Point Innes, indicating that these points had been visited by the missing expedition, but when or under what circumstances was left to conjecture.

On the 27th August the schooner "Felix," Captain Sir John Ross, Mr. Penny's squadron, and my own command were moored to the land ice at Beechy Island. A joint search was instituted along the shores, and in a short time one of Mr. Penny's men returned and reported that he had found several graves. On examination his report proved correct, and every other indication was found near the spot identifying it as the winter station of a large and well-equipped civilized party. The following inscriptions copied from the head-boards of three carefully made graves will plainly show whose party it was:

1st. Sacred to the memory of W. Braine, R.M., H.M.S. "Erebus." Died 3d April 1846. Aged 32 years.

2d. Sacred to the memory of John Hartnell, A.B., H.M.S. "Erebus." Aged 23 years.

3d. Sacred to the memory of John Torrington, who departed this life January 1st A.D. 1846, on board H.M.S. "Terror." Aged 20.

The spot was on the inner or north-east side of Beechy Island, which with main land forms a well-protected and convenient harbour, where no doubt the ships passed their first winter in security.

The most minute search was made for written notices or records, but nothing of the kind could be met with.

On the 10th September the vessels were all again arrested a few miles west of Griffith's Island, with little or no hope of making further progress. On the 13th, Captain Austin's squadron of four vessels were left by us near Cape Martyr, three miles to the east of which a small harbour had been discovered, where he proposed taking up his winter quarters in case of not being able to proceed further. Ten miles to the east of this we saw at a distance three vessels, apparently moored near the shore inside some grounded ice; these were supposed to be the "Lady Franklin," "Sophia," and "Felix."

The officers and men were all in good health when I last communicated with them, and the vessels in an efficient condition.

A short detention at this place enables me to make this hurried communication, hoping, however, that before you receive it you may have had much later and more satisfactory accounts direct from the searching vessels.

Would you do me the kindness to impart these contents to Lady Franklin, (as well as to others interested,) with my regret that the limited time at my disposal prevents the pleasing duty of a personal letter.

I am, &c.

EDWIN J. DE HAVEN,

Lieutenant commanding U.S. Arctic Expedition.