

Report to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the Cause of the
 Outbreak of Scurvy in the Recent Arctic Expedition; on the adequacy of
 the provision made in the way of Food and Medicine; and on the propriety
 of the Orders for provisioning the Sledge Parties.

ADMIRALTY COMMITTEE ON SCURVY,

13, DELAHAY STREET,

3rd March, 1877.

Sir,

YOU will be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that, in pursuance of the instructions contained in your letter of the 9th of January last, we, whose names are hereunto subscribed, having heard and duly considered the evidence of the Commander; of the Principal Officers, and certain of the inferior officers and men of the late Arctic Expedition; of Officers and Men who have taken part in previous Arctic voyages; of the Medical Director-General of the Navy; and, after communication with the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, of Eminent Medical authorities; have to report as follows, on the matters submitted for our inquiry:—

First.—The Cause of the Outbreak of Scurvy.

We attribute the early outbreak of scurvy in the spring sledging parties of the Expedition to the absence of lime juice from the sledge dietaries.

We are further of opinion that the long winter, extending over 142 days, involving, during that period, absence of sunlight, confinement during the greater part of the twenty-four hours to a lower deck, of necessity not free from damp, and an atmosphere comparatively vitiated, accompanied by exposure to extreme changes of temperature and deprivation of fresh meat—especially in the "Alert"—had not been without effect on the health of the officers and men, notwithstanding the apparent good condition in which they started on their sledging journeys.

* Number of days on which fresh meat was issued:—
 "Alert" . . . 14
 "Discovery" 53

These predisposing causes of scurvy were aggravated by the severe cold and arduous labour encountered by the sledging parties immediately on leaving their ships, followed by the usual results, inability for some days on the part of those concerned to take their proper allowance of food and to obtain sufficient sleep.

How far, with due regard to the length of the travelling season, dependent on the breaking up of the ice in the Arctic Sea, these evils could have been mitigated by a recourse to short journeys, utilized for laying out depôts of provisions, and other preparatory purposes, prior to those of a more extended character undertaken to effect the main objects of the Expedition, we are not prepared to say, but it is obvious that the adoption of such a system would have afforded an amount and description of that previous training so essential to the success of sledging, far more efficacious than the exercise obtained during the winter, but limited by its severity.

Secondly.—The adequacy of the provision made by the Admiralty in the way of Food, Medicines, and Medical Comforts.

We find that the provision made in the way of food, medicines, and medical comforts, was in every respect adequate for the performance of the special service in which the Expedition was engaged, and more complete than that made for any previous Expedition which has proceeded on Arctic Service.

In reference to which we forward the following returns:

- (1) Provisions, medicines and medical comforts supplied to the Expedition on leaving England, and received back into store on its return.
- (2) Savings during the winter of 1875-76.
- (3) Reports on such articles of provisions as have been analysed by direction of the Committee.
- (4) Report of survey on certain articles of provisions to which exceptions were taken in the evidence tendered to the Committee.