

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TAKEN BEFORE

A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE ADMIRALTY TO ENQUIRE INTO THE OUTBREAK OF SCURVY IN THE RECENT ARCTIC EXPEDITION,

AT 13, DELAHAY STREET, WESTMINSTER.

WEDNESDAY, 10TH JANUARY, 1877.

PRESENT :

ADMIRAL SIR JAMES HOPE, G.C.B., in the Chair.

ADMIRAL SIR R. COLLINSON, K.C.B.

VICE-ADMIRAL E. A. INGLEDEN, C.B., F.R.S.

JAMES J. L. DONNET, ESQ., M.D., Inspector-General of Hospitals and Fleets, R.N.

THOMAS R. FRASER, ESQ., M.D., F.R.S.E.

H. J. VANSITTART NEALE, ESQ., Secretary.

CAPTAIN SIR GEORGE STRONG NARES, R.N., K.C.B., F.R.S., *examined.*

1. (*The Chairman.*) Was the "Alert" commissioned by you as Captain on the 15th of April, 1875?—Yes.

2. When was the "Discovery," commanded by Captain Stephenson, placed under your command?—By Admiralty orders of the 25th of May, 1875.

3. Was the equipment of the "Discovery," so far as regards the special service on which she was to be employed, placed under your supervision, and if you received any order to that effect, produce it?—I was more or less in constant communication with the Admiralty Committee, under whose authority the ships were equipped; but I considered myself responsible for the special equipment of both ships. The distinct order to me about the equipment is in virtue of paragraph 2 of my orders of the 25th of May, 1875.

4. It is understood that the Admiralty appointed a Committee, consisting of Admirals Richards, Sir Leopold M'Clintock, and Sherard Osborn, to report to their Lordships on, first, the special equipment of the ships; and, secondly, the instructions for the conduct of the Expedition. Were you placed in official communication with this Committee, and if you received any order to that effect, produce it?—I was ordered to place myself in communication with the Arctic Committee, and although I have not the order I will endeavour to obtain it.

5. Produce all the instructions issued by the Admiralty for your guidance in the conduct of the expedition?—I produce the sailing orders of the 25th of May, 1875, accompanied by papers and correspondence relating to the equipment and fitting out of the Arctic Expedition of 1875, including the report of the Admiralty Arctic Committee. (Appendix No. 1.)

6. Were these accompanied by a letter from the Secretary to the Admiralty, dated May 8th, 1875, forwarding, for your information, and that of Captain Stephenson, and the medical officers of the expedition, a memorandum from the Medical Director-General of the Navy, containing suggestions and recommendations as to the health of the Arctic Expedition of 1875-1876?—Yes. (Appendix No. 2.)

7.* In the copy of the said memorandum, having numbered the paragraphs, I request that you will state, as I read them *seriatim*, whether the suggestions and recommendations therein contained were carried out; or, if otherwise, to what extent, and the grounds on which they were not fully complied with: "First—In connection with arctic service there is nothing more important than the selection of officers and men with regard to their physical fitness, and I would also say moral fitness, where it can be ascertained, as there is no service in which both are more severely taxed: but the remarks to which I have already drawn the attention of the Arctic Committee on this important question appear to be now unnecessary, as the officers and crew had then been entered." Was the recommendation herein contained attended to in the selection of the officers and crew?—Previous to receiving Sir Alexander Armstrong's recommendations, my former experience in the arctic service had impressed me most fully how important it was to exercise the greatest care in choosing the officers and men for arctic service; and the standard on which the men were entered was, after private consultation with other arctic officers, established by myself, and the men and officers were chosen by that standard, and this agreed in all respects with Sir Alexander Armstrong's suggestions received afterwards. I may state that two of the crew were entered below the standard, but only upon very strong recommendations from their previous commanding officers.

8. (*Dr. Fraser.*) Are you prepared to give us the standards now?—I believe the standard of age was between 32 and 25. The reason for not taking younger men than 25 was partly to ensure their medical and moral history being known. No man was taken who had previously ever been in the second class for conduct, and that with the limit of age ensured us the first class men of the navy. The standard of height was, I believe, from 5 ft. 8 in. to 5 ft. 5 in., in order to prevent obtaining heavy men, or men of too little strength.

9. I observe that you mention that two of the crew

Capt. Sir G.
S. Nares,
R.N., K.C.B.,
F.R.S.

10 Jan., 1877.

* The examinations were in some instances conducted on unrevised proofs, and the wording of the documents quoted from may in consequence be slightly different from the revised papers.