

Letter from Lady Franklin.

The following interesting letter from Lady Franklin to Lord Palmerston, after having been printed and privately circulated in England, has been furnished for publication here. It will be seen that her ladyship renounces all hope that her husband still lives, and styles herself "the widow of Sir John Franklin."

69, Pall Mall, Dec. 2, 1856.

My Lord,—I trust I may be permitted, as the widow of Sir John Franklin, to draw the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the unsettled state of a question which a few months ago was under their consideration, and to express a well grounded hope that a final effort may be made to ascertain the fate and recover the remains of my husband's expedition.

Your Lordship will allow me to remind you that a memorial with this object in view (of which I enclose a printed copy) was early in June last presented to, and kindly received by you. It had been signed within forty-eight hours by all the leading men of science then in London who had an opportunity of seeing it, and might have received an indefinite augmentation of worthy names, had not the urgency of the question forbidden delay. To the above names were appended those of all the Arctic officers who had been personally engaged in the search, and who, though absent, were known to be favorable to another effort for its completion. And though that united application obtained no immediate result, it was felt, and by no one more strongly than myself, that it never could be utterly wasted.

I venture also to allude to a letter of my own, addressed to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in April last, and a copy of which accompanied, I believe, the memorial to your Lordship, wherein I earnestly deprecated any premature adjudication of the reward claimed by Dr. Rae, on the ground that the fate of my husband's expedition was as yet unascertained, and that it was due both to the living and the dead to complete a search which had been hitherto pursued under the greatest disadvantage, for want of the clue which was now for the first time in our hands.

The memorial above alluded to, and my own letter of earlier date, had not yet received any reply, when, in the month of July, the Lords of the Admiralty caused prompt inquiries to be made as to the probability of equipping a ship at that advanced season, in time for effective operations in the field of search. The result was that it was pronounced to be too late, and the subject was dismissed for that season.

Upon this I addressed a letter to the Board (of which I take the liberty to enclose a copy) respectfully showing that by this unfortunate delay the opportunity had also been taken from me of sending out a vessel at my own cost, a measure which I had previously felt myself obliged to state to their Lordships would be the alternative of any adverse decision on their part. I pleaded, therefore, as the only remedy for the loss of an entire summer season, that the route by Behring Straits was by some of the most competent Arctic officers considered preferable to the Eastern route, and that the equipment of a vessel for this direction need not take place before the close of the year.

In reply, their Lordships caused me to be informed that "they had come to the decision not to send any expedition to the Arctic regions in the present year."

This communication, however, was in answer merely to my own letter. The memorialists had as yet received no reply, and accordingly the President of the Royal Society put a question respecting the memorial in the House of Lords at the close of the session, which drew from one of Her Majesty's Ministers (Lord Stanley), after some preliminary observations, the assurance that Her Majesty's Government would give the subject their serious consideration during the recess. I may be permitted to add, that in the conversation which followed, Lord Stanley expressed himself as very favorably disposed toward a proposition made to him by Lord Wrottesley, that in the event of there be-

ing no Government expedition, I should be assisted in fitting out my own expedition; on assurance which Lord Wrottesley had the kindness to communicate to me by letter.

But my Lord, as nothing has occurred within the last few months to weaken the reasons which induced the Admiralty, early in July last, to contemplate another final effort, and as they put it aside at that time on the sole ground that it was too late to equip a vessel for that season, I trust it will be felt that I am not endeavoring to re-open a closed question, but merely to obtain the settlement of one of which has not ceased to be, and is even now under favorable consideration. The time has arrived, however, when I trust I may be pardoned for pressing your Lordship, with whom I believe the question rests, for a decision, since by further delay even my own efforts may be paralysed.

I have cherished the hope in common with others, that we were not waiting in vain.—Should, however, that decision unfortunately throw upon me the responsibility and the cost of sending out a vessel myself, I beg to assure your Lordship that I shall not shrink, either from that weighty responsibility, or from the sacrifice of my entire available fortune for the purpose, supported as I am in my convictions by such high authorities as are on record in your Lordship's hands, and by the hearty sympathy of many more.

But before I take upon myself so heavy an obligation, it is my bounden duty to entreat Her Majesty's Government not to disregard the arguments which have led so many competent and honourable men to feel that our country's honour is not satisfied, whilst a mystery which has excited the sympathy of the civilized world remains unexplained. Nor less would I entreat you to consider what must be the unsatisfactory consequences, if any endeavours should be made to quench all further efforts for this object.

It cannot be that this long vexed question would thereby be set at rest, for it would still be true that in a certain circumscribed area within the Arctic circle approachable alike from the east and from the west, and sure to be attained by a combination of both movements, lies the solution of our unhappy countrymen's fate. While such is the case the question will never die. I believe that again and again would efforts be made to reach that spot, and that the Government could not look on as unconcerned spectators, nor be relieved in public opinion of the responsibility they had prematurely cast off.

But I refrain from pursuing this argument, though if any illustration were wanting of its truth, I think it might be found in the events that are passing before our eyes.

It is now about two years ago since one of Her Majesty's Arctic ships was abandoned in the ice. In due time this ship floated away, was picked up by an American whaler, carried into an American port, and (all property in her having been relinquished by the Admiralty) was purchased of her rescuers by the American Government, by whom she has been lavishly re-equipped, and is now on her passage to England, a free gift to Her Majesty the Queen. The "Resolute" is about to be delivered up in Portsmouth harbor, not merely in evidence of the cordial relation existing between the two countries, but as a lively token of the deep interest and sympathy of the Americans in that great cause of humanity in which they have so nobly borne their part. The resolution of Congress expressly states this motive, and indeed there could be no other, as it is well known that for any purpose but the Arctic service those expensive equipments would be perfectly useless and require removal.

My Lord, you will not let this rescued and restored ship emblematic of so many enlightened and generous sentiments, fall, even partially in her significant mission. I venture to hope that she will be accepted in the spirit in which she is sent. I humbly trust that the American people, and especially that philanthropic citizen who has spent so largely of his private fortune in the search for the lost ships, and to whom was committed by his Government the entire charge of the equipment of the "Resolute" will

be rewarded from this signal act of sympathy, by seeing her restored to her original vocation, so that she may bring back from the Arctic seas, if not some living remnant of our long-lost countrymen, yet at least the proofs that they have nobly perished.

I need not add that we have as yet no proofs, whatever may be our melancholy forebodings. That such is the fact, in a legal point of view, is shown by a case now or lately pending in the Scotch courts, in which the right of succession to a considerable property is not admitted, on account of the absence of all but conjectural testimony. In this aspect of the question, I have no personal interest, but it is one that may not be deemed unworthy of your Lordship's attention, combined as it must be with the fact that our most experienced Arctic officers are willing to stake their reputation upon the feasibility of teaching the spot where so many secrets lie buried, if only they are supplied with the adequate means.

It would be a waste of words to attempt to refute again the main objections that have been urged against a renewed search, as involving extraordinary danger and risking life. The safe return of our officers and men cannot be denied, neither will it be disputed that each succeeding year diminishes the risk of casualty, and, indeed, I feel it would be especially superfluous and unseasonable to argue against this particular objection, or against the financial one which generally accompanies it, at a moment when new expeditions for the glorious interests of science, and which every true lover of science and of his country must rejoice in, are contemplated for the interior of Africa and other parts which are far less favorable to human life than the icy regions of the North.

But with respect to expenditure, I may perhaps be allowed, as I have alluded to that topic, again to call to your Lordship's attention that the "Resolute" is ready equipped for Arctic service by the munificence of another nation, and that other Arctic ships, equally well fitted for the purpose are lying useless in Her Majesty's dockyards, along with accumulated Arctic stores brought back by the late expeditions, and therefore long since included in the navy estimates; and which, beside, are available only for Arctic service, and if sold would be bought only at nominal prices. In addition to the above sources of supply are those already existing on the Arctic shores, which are now studded with depots of provisions and fuel left from the last and former expeditions, and fit as ever for use, because of the conservative properties of the climate.

But even were the expenditure greater than can thus reasonably be expected, I submit to your Lordship that this is a case of no ordinary exigency. These 135 men of the "Erebus" and "Terror" (or perhaps I should say the greater part of them, since we do not yet know that there are no survivors) have laid down their lives after suffering doubtless of unexampled severity, in the service of their country, as truly as if they had perished by the rifle, the cannon ball, or the bayonet. Nay more, by attaining the Northern and already surveyed coast of America, it is clear that they solved the problem which was the object of their labors, or, in the beautiful words of Sir John Richardson, that "they forged the last link of the Northwest passage with their lives."

Surely then, I may plead for such men, that a careful search be made for any possible survivor, that the bones of the dead be sought for and gathered together, that their buried records be unearthed; or recovered from the hands of the Esquimaux, and above all, that their last written words, so precious to their bereaved families and friends, be saved from destruction. A mission so sacred, is worthy of a Government which has grudged and spared nothing for its heroic soldiers and sailors in other fields of warfare, and will surely be approved by our Gracious Queen, who overlooks some of Her loyal subjects suffering and dying for their country's honor.

This final and exhausting search I still seek in behalf of the first and only martyrs to Arctic discovery in modern times, and it is all I ever intend to ask.

But if, notwithstanding all I have presumed