

8. With respect to the conduct of the officers intrusted with the command of the expeditions and several exploring parties, we most gladly express our highest and most unqualified admiration of the zeal, energy, intrepidity, and perseverance with which every individual amongst them performed their respective duties. They appear to have been animated by a common feeling of determination to endure every hardship, and brave every danger, in their endeavours to obtain some traces of their missing countrymen. The journeys accomplished under the most difficult and trying circumstances far exceed both in distance and duration any to be found in the previous records of Arctic exploration in those parallels of latitude; and the arrangements made by Captain Austin and Mr. Penny were so well considered and so complete that all their parties returned (with only one exception) in perfect health, and without having experienced any sufferings beyond those which were inseparable from severe fatigue in such inclement regions.

Evidence, A. 1158, p. 107.

9. With respect to the results of the late expedition, as regards the search for the missing ships, on which their Lordships desire our opinion, we may remark, that, in the first place, it is a matter of no small interest and importance to have ascertained with certainty the exact position in which they passed the winter of 1845-6, while the careful and minute exploration of the coast to the southward and westward by Captain Ommanney and Lieutenant M'Clintock, without discovering any traces whatever of Sir John Franklin, would seem to afford a very strong presumption that he did not pass that way; and conjecture, therefore, naturally turns towards Wellington Strait, to which it is well known he had often looked, as affording one chance of a passage to the north-west, and which we see by Mr. Penny's account of his examination of the upper part of the channel appears to form at least a possible outlet in that direction.

Sir E. Parry and Sir G. Back's verbal information.

10. It is not without considerable hesitation and anxiety that we proceed to reply to the last point on which their Lordships request our opinion; namely, "what benefits can be expected from any further research, with the means and directions in which the Committee are of opinion that such search should be prosecuted."

11. We should deeply grieve at being considered capable of treating with coldness or indifference the natural and praiseworthy feelings of those who are still without certain information of the fate of their nearest and dearest relatives, who in this state naturally cling to hope "even against hope," and whose thoughts (as might be expected) turn eagerly towards further explorations, in any and every direction; but we have felt at the same time, while considering calmly and carefully this difficult question, that we have an equally important duty to perform towards those brave and meritorious men whose lives must be risked in this arduous and perilous search, and to reflect in what manner it may be best conducted with a due regard to their safety.

12. Taking, therefore, all these circumstances into consideration, we have, after a most careful and anxious deliberation, decided on recommending to their Lordships that an expedition should be despatched next year to Barrow's Strait, consisting of the same ships which composed Captain Austin's division, namely, two sailing ships and two steamers, with orders to proceed direct to Beechey Island, and to