

34 COMMUNICATIONS IN REFERENCE TO VESSELS OBSERVED

larly anxious that he should be examined, particularly as to the weather, and whether any optical delusions might have deceived him as to their being really ships; I questioned him particularly on those two subjects:

Question 1st. How was the weather while passing the ships on the ice?
The weather was clear.

2. Do you think it possible you could have been deceived by any optical delusion as to the undoubted fact of the objects seen being really ships?

Having seen them in different positions and minutely, I can have no doubt upon the subject at all.

I am therefore decidedly of opinion there were two ships or barques seen on the ice by the "Renovation."

I have, &c.
(signed) *Edward Boxer*, Captain R. N.

No. 46.

Sir,

Colonial Office, 28 May 1852.

WITH reference to your letter of the 14th ultimo, I am directed by Secretary Sir John Pakington to transmit to you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the copy of a despatch from the Governor of Newfoundland, on the subject of the statement which appeared in the "Times" newspaper, to the effect that two vessels had been seen by the crew of the "Renovation" on a field of ice attached to an iceberg, off Cape Race, in April 1851.

Encl. in No. 46.

I am, &c.
(signed) *Herman Merivale*.

Captain W. B. Hamilton, R.N.
&c. &c. &c.
Secretary, Admiralty.

Enclosure 1 in No. 46.

Government-House, St. John's, Newfoundland,
6 May 1852.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Merivale's despatch of the 16th April 1852, together with its enclosure from the Board of Admiralty, respecting two vessels reported to have been seen on a field of ice attached to an iceberg, off Newfoundland, in April 1851, and which it is surmised may possibly be Sir John Franklin's ships; and, in compliance with the instructions therein contained, I have caused inquiries to be made through the Commercial Society of Saint John's, but can obtain no information whatever relative to the above-described vessels.

Sub-Enclosure in No. 46.

I enclose herein a letter received from the President of the Chamber of Commerce, and I share in the opinion therein expressed, that it is well nigh impossible that two vessels on a field of ice, attached to an iceberg of the magnitude and description spoken of by the men of the "Renovation," could have passed along this coast from the north, and have reached the latitude of Cape Race, without having been seen either by some of the numerous sealing vessels which intersect the field-ice in the months of March and April, or by some of the many vessels that pass this island at that season on their way to or from the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, Nova Scotia, or New Brunswick.

In the season of 1851 no vessels engaged in the seal-fishery of this island were lost, and therefore I agree in the opinion that there must have been some misapprehension on the part of the persons who supposed they had seen such vessels, occasioned perhaps by the deceptive appearance that icebergs assume under some peculiar action of the atmosphere; whereas had the inquiry been made with reference to the spring of this year, not two, but many vessels might have been seen in positions somewhat similar to that described by the men of the "Renovation;" for owing to two disastrous gales in the last month, very great damage has been sustained by our sealing fleet, and out of 400 vessels engaged in that fishery, upwards of 60 have either foundered or been abandoned at sea among the field-ice, and many of the derelicts have, after being deserted by their own crews, been brought in by those of other vessels, and vessels have also been dispatched by the local government in search of others, and to bring off from different parts of the coast the shipwrecked sealers, amounting nearly to 3,000 in number.

I have, &c.
(signed) *J. Gaspard le Marchant*.

Sir John Pakington, Bart., &c. &c.
Colonial Office.