

these ships set out early in 1850, and probably they arrived at the scene of their future researches in sufficient time to enter the ice that season. Having settled the question with reference to the possibility that Franklin's ships might appear at Behring's Straits, the next thing that pressed upon the attention of their lordships was the necessity that Barrow Straits should not be neglected, seeing that Sir J. Franklin might be retracing his steps eastward in boats, or even in the ships themselves, having given up the hope of making a north-west passage. With this sole object in view, four ships were placed in commission, under the command of Captain H. T. Austin, C. B., an officer of high distinction, who had served under Sir E. W. Parry, in a voyage to Port Bowen, Prince Regent's Inlet; and their ample equipment for Arctic service was making rapid progress in the beginning of March. An element, new, with the exception of one poor trial, in the navigation of ice-encumbered seas, was to be introduced: two of the above four vessels were to be screw steamers of sufficient power to advance in calm weather and smooth water at the rate of five or six miles an hour, with the two sailing vessels in tow. It was contemplated that this, the most extensive expedition that had

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