

The grounds on which it appears to me reasonable that my husband and his companions in the "Erebus" and "Terror," should not be considered dead, but living, are these :

First. Because no evidence has been discovered of any catastrophe having befallen them.

Secondly. Because the quarter of the Arctic Sea, where it is most probable that the missing parties would be found living, or their fate ascertained, has never yet, so far as we know, been explored; Sir Edward Belcher, when last heard of, having advanced only to the verge of the open sea to the North-west, but without entering it; and because the part thus indicated is one of the two courses pointed out to my husband in the Admiralty Instructions, for him to follow, and also because it has been pronounced, after a thorough examination of the other course, that he could not have passed that way.

Thirdly. Because within this unexamined region the resources for supporting life are probably abundant; and

Fourthly. Because my husband and his officers steadily contemplated, and from the first provided for a detention extending over an indefinite period, should difficulties occur to prevent their return at the time expected.

I. And first, as to the absence of all signs of wreck or disaster. This negative evidence of the safety of the expedition has been gained in every part of the Arctic Sea which has yet been visited. Neither the bodies of men, nor parts of ships, timbers, spars, stores of any description have been found, either afloat in the currents, or washed upon the shores. In Wellington Channel, where the missing ships are known to have been, nothing has been found (beyond the signs of their well-being at winter quarters) but some drift pine wood, belonging to the forests of a milder climate to the North or West.

The captains of whaling ships, men the most experienced in such matters, concur in asserting that it is next to impossible that two ships, like the "Erebus" or "Terror," could be crushed and destroyed, without any of their crews escaping, and without some traces of the disaster being found; and one of our most distinguished Arctic navigators has very recently declared that he was never more strongly of opinion than he is now, that it is utterly improbable that Franklin's ships, men and all, have been destroyed by any accident among the ice. I do not think it necessary to adduce any contrary opinions, because they appear to have been adopted rather as a last resort for the solution of a so-called mystery, than from any indisputable data.

There was a time, it is true, when it was somewhat unscrupulously asserted that both the ships had been swallowed up in the ice in their passage across Baffin's Bay, during their first summer, and this opinion, which was utterly devoid of even the semblance of justification, obtained some degree of credit till the discovery of their first winter quarters, on the other side of the supposed field of disaster, put a summary end to the gratuitous tale. And next we were assured that our brave navigators, whose high sense of duty had never been questioned before, had deliberately turned their backs upon the work before them, after only one winter's absence, and been crushed, or had foundered on their way home.

It would be presuming too much on your Lordships' patience, to dwell on other absurd stories of murders, burnings, &c., invented by the mendacious half-caste Esquimaux, Adam Beck, when he desired to put an end at once to the search, in order to get earlier back to the home he had been enticed to leave.

But there is yet a more recent report, which, visionary as I am myself disposed to deem it, on the authority of persons experienced in Arctic visual phenomena, has been deemed otherwise than necessarily a delusive appearance by persons entitled to every respect. And yet I need not argue in addressing your Lordships against this spectacle of the supposed "Erebus" and "Terror" drifting away on the top of an iceberg from some unknown quarter to the banks of Newfoundland, since assuredly had your Lordships believed it at the time the report reached England, which was in the spring or summer of 1852, you would not have lost a moment in taking steps to search the shores which those ships, if