

ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 26 May 1848;—for,

A “COPY of the ORDERS from the LORDS COMMISSIONERS of the ADMIRALTY, under which Captain Sir *James Clark Ross*, R. N., has proceeded on an Expedition in search of Captain Sir *John Franklin*, R. N.”

By the COMMISSIONERS for executing the Office of LORD HIGH ADMIRAL of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

WHEREAS the period for which Her Majesty's ships “*Erebus*” and “*Terror*” were victualled will terminate at the end of this summer; and whereas no tidings whatever of the proceedings of either of those ships have reached us since their first entry into Lancaster Sound, in the year 1845, and there being, therefore, reason to apprehend that they have been blocked up by immoveable ice, and that they may soon be exposed to suffer great privation; we have deemed it proper to defer no longer the endeavour to afford them adequate relief. Having, therefore, caused to be prepared and duly equipped, with extra stores and provisions, two suitable vessels, and having had them properly fortified, so as to resist the pressure of the ice, and having the fullest confidence in the skill and experience that you have acquired in those inclement seas, we have thought proper to place them under your command; and you are hereby required and directed, so soon as they are in all respects ready for sea, to proceed in the “*Enterprize*,” under your immediate command, and taking the “*Investigator*” (Captain Bird) under your orders, without delay to Lancaster Sound. In your progress through that inlet to the westward, you will carefully search both its shores, as well as those of Barrow Straits, for any notices that may have been deposited there, and for any casual indications of their having been visited by either of Sir John Franklin's ships.

Should your early arrival there, or the fortunately protracted openness of the season, admit of your at once extending a similar examination to the shores of the Wellington Channel, it will leave you at greater liberty to devote yourself more fully afterwards to your researches to the westward. The several intervals of coast that appear in our charts to lie between Capes Clarence and Walker, must next be carefully explored; and as each of your vessels have been furnished with a launch fitted with a small engine and screw, capable of propelling it between four and five knots, we trust by their means, or by the ships' boats, all those preliminary researches may be completed during the present season, and consequently before it may be necessary to secure the ships in safety previous to the approaching winter. As that winter may possibly prove to be so severe as to seal up the western end of that extensive inlet, and as it would be unwise to allow both vessels to be beset there, we consider that it would be prudent to look out for a fit and safe port near Cape Rennell, and in that neighbourhood to secure the “*Investigator*” for the ensuing winter. From that position a considerable extent of coast may be explored on foot, and in the following spring detached parties may be sent across the ice by Captain Bird, in order to look thoroughly into the creeks along the western coast of Bosthia, and even as far as Cape Nicolai; while another party may proceed to the southward, and ascertain whether the blank space shown there in our charts consists of an open sea through which Sir John Franklin may have passed, or, on the contrary, of a continuous chain of Islands, among which he may be still blocked up. As soon as the returning summer shall have opened a