

Opinion of Captain
Sir Edward Bel-
cher.

should be made to meet the anticipated launch, or "Investigator." It is to be regretted that no preconcerted dates should have been given for looking out; but we have pretty fair presumptive evidence to lead us to the improbability of any boat or vessel, from the interior of Lancaster Sound, reaching Agnes' Monument under the most promising season before the 15th of August. From this date until the 15th September, therefore, we may assume that there may be a chance of a whaler communicating, even in the ordinary cruising ground, with that part of the coast. In Parry's case they had no motive to approach, beyond their own interest, and yet he communicated with the "Lee" off that coast, in soundings. As it is the practice amongst the whalers to cruise in company, and also within signal distance of each other, I think that some arrangement might be entered into with them, previous to their approaching season, to carry out portions of coals as well as provisions in each vessel, so that they might on certain dates arrange to form a chain of connexion with the land, and upon signal made of "sighting any of the Discovery parties," close and contribute their quota. The coals, at the low price at which they could be shipped at Hull, could be retained as ballast, and when "full ships" needed its absence, be thrown overboard; if they succeeded in transshipping it to the Discovery Vessels, they should then be paid the value of coal in that region. If necessitated to throw it overboard, they should be remunerated at a per-centage over cost price.

Under some arrangements of this nature, duly entered into with the owners and masters at Hull, I have little doubt that all that has been contemplated may be carried into effect.

Failing in this, the time taken by one of our small steamers, adapted with the screw, and acting in concert with the whalers, would perform the service most expeditiously. In this latter case she need not quit England before the 1st August, and might return by the third week in September.

It appears very clear to my mind, that Sir John Franklin could not have adopted the opening to the south-west from Melville Island, for two reasons: First, because he would have fallen in with the Esquimaux, who seem to observe about the 70th to 72d degree of latitude; and from the visits of deer and musk-oxen to Melville Island, it is more than probable that they come from the haunts of man. The reindeer we are aware will take the water and cross from island to island, but I do not think the musk-ox is partial to this cold bath.

Secondly, from the tenor of the remarks of Captain Parry, during his visit to Melville Island, it is not probable that he would be able to penetrate the frozen barrier there noticed; and it is clearly, I think, the opinion of all the Arctic voyagers, and certainly of Sir James Ross, that progress can only be effected by sticking to the land, and taking advantage of those clear spaces of three to five fathoms and upwards, where the larger bergs ground and form a barrier, leaving a smooth-water canal between them and the shore. It can be only under such a conception that Sir James Ross would suggest the method of detaching his steam launch.

If Sir John Franklin has met with the difficulty noticed in the voyage of Parry in 1819, he will of necessity have sought for a more northern route, probably in the direction from which Captain Parry experienced "northerly winds." It therefore occurs to my mind, that in this latter case he may have steamed against them, and if he succeeded, I think that the probabilities are in favour of his safety until he reached the Arctic Circle; there he would be reduced to the necessity of following any open channels which offered southerly, and they may have led him to the northward of Asia, whence I have some slight suspicion that he will eventually emerge. In this latter case his provisions, or what perhaps is equally important, fuel, may fail; he must then make use of his consort.

Under this latter consideration, I think it unlikely that either Ross or any of the parties sent in search of him, will be able to obtain any trace; as they will not attempt, as I read the instructions, to prosecute the northern channels.

As Parry should be conversant with all these matters, do you not think that these remarks, or at least the main suggestions, should be submitted for his opinion (without giving mine)?—you would then possibly get a new and better light, which the points started might lead him to discuss.

If I can be of any further use in any way, it will afford me much satisfaction.

(signed) *Edward Belcher*