

#### 4 COMMUNICATIONS IN REFERENCE TO VESSELS OBSERVED

No. 5.

Sir,

Sunderland, 28 March 1852.

In reply to your confidential letter of the 26th instant, directing me to make minute inquiries respecting two ships having been seen in the spring of 1851, drifting with an iceberg off North America, ascertaining as far as possible the credibility of Mr. Storey's statement on the subject, and to report thereon for their Lordships' information;

I beg leave to inform you, that I immediately proceeded to Tynemouth, and saw Mr. Storey, who states that he left Bristol for Quebec, as master of the brig "Agnes," on 5th April 1851; crossed the banks of Newfoundland about the 20th, arriving at Quebec on the 5th May. Here he met Mr. Edward Coward, the master of the brig "Renovation;" and as both their vessels belonged to the same owners, the Youngs of Shields, and were both ready at the same time for their voyage home, they frequently met at the custom-house, when they entered into conversation respecting their outward-bound passage, and were of opinion that they had crossed the banks about the same time, namely, the 20th of April. Mr. Storey then proceeded to state, "He (Captain Coward) also related as follows, as near as I can recollect:—

"When near the east edge of the bank, in latitude  $45^{\circ} 30'$  N., wind N.E., fresh breezes and clear weather, as much as I could carry fore-topmast studding sail, fell in with icebergs; one of which was very large, with field-ice attached to it, in which were two three-masted ships, having their masts struck, and yards down, and all made snug; to all appearance they had passed the winter together on the ice. At about five o'clock in the morning, when within one mile of them, the mate called me to see the berg and ships. By the time I got up and dressed and on deck, my ship was abreast of them; took spying-glass, and carefully examined them, to see if there was any one on board, but could see no one; at the time I did not think of Sir John Franklin's missing ships; anxiety to get ahead out of the danger whilst the weather was clear from fogs, and being too far passed before I could make up my mind, caused me not to reduce sail, and examine them more accurately. I am since of opinion they might possibly be the missing ships."

The above can be depended on as a faithful report of Mr. Storey's statement to me, of what (so far as his recollection serves him) Captain Coward related to him: and in answer to a query of mine, whether any one was present besides himself when this conversation took place; he replied, "Yes, a Mr. Cleugh, the master of a ship I do not now recollect the name of; but he is now with the same ship, either at Portland or Weymouth, having gone there with a cargo of Canada timber on Government account, for the breakwater constructing at the island," and who he thinks might corroborate the main facts of his own statement.

In concluding what Mr. Storey knows on this subject, I beg to remark, from what I understand, and from my own observations respecting him, that he appears a straightforward, plain-spoken seaman, and a most unlikely sort of person to circulate an untruth.

Having further ascertained that the wife and a brother of Captain Coward's were now residing at Shields, I then proceeded there, and called on Mrs. Coward, an intelligent young person; and on my asking if she had ever heard her husband relate anything about meeting ships beset in the ice, she replied, "Yes; that within the last two or three months he had mentioned, in the course of conversation with her, that he had passed two ships embedded in a very large iceberg, near each other, the one upright in the ice, the other with a slight inclination, and with the general appearance of having been a considerable time there, though not much damaged, and not a living soul on or near them." She further informed me that her husband still commands the "Renovation," and sailed from Shields last Thursday fortnight (the 11th instant), for Venice, and that he had left his address, which I forward, as per margin.

On my asking if any of the officers and crew of the "Renovation" who were with him at the time of seeing the ships in the ice were at present in Shields, she replied, That the same crew were with him now, but that the mate, a Mr. Robert Simpson, is now master of the "British Queen," and that he sailed from Shields last Monday (the 22d instant), for Limerick, to take emigrants to America, and

Capt. E. Coward,  
brig "Renovation,"  
Marco Trevisanato,  
Esq., merchant,  
Venice.