

Sir John Franklin's instructions, he is directed to steer south-westward from Cape Walker, which would lead him nearly in the direction of the strait in question. If Sir John found Barrow's Strait as open as when Sir Edward Parry passed it on four previous occasions, I am convinced that (complying exactly as he could with his instructions, and without looking into the Wellington Sound, or other openings either to the south or north of Barrow's Strait) he pushed directly west to Cape Walker, and from thence south-westwards. If so, the ships were probably shut up in some of the passages between Victoria, Banks's, and Wollaston's Lands. This opinion, which I have advocated in my former communications, is rather strengthened by the laborious journeys of Sir James Ross having disclosed no traces of the missing ships.

Being apprehensive that the boats I left on the coast would be broken up by the Esquimaux, and being, moreover, of opinion that the examination of the opening in question might be safely and efficiently performed in the only remaining boat I had fit for transport from Bear Lake to the Coppermine, I determined to entrust this important service to Mr. Rae, who volunteered, and whose ability and zeal in the cause I cannot too highly commend. He selected an excellent crew, all of them experienced *voyageurs*, and capable of finding their way back to Bear Lake without guides, should any unforeseen accident deprive them of their leader. In the month of March (1849) a sufficient supply of pemmican and other necessary stores, with the equipments of the boat, were transported over the snow on dog sledges, to a navigable part of the Kendall River, and left there under the charge of two men. As soon as the Dease broke up in June, Mr. Rae would follow with the boat, the rest of the crew and a party of Indian hunters, and would descend the Coppermine River about the middle of July, at which time the sea generally begins to break up. He would then, as soon as possible, cross from Cape Krusenstern to Wollaston Land, and endeavour to penetrate to the northward, erecting signal columns, and making deposits on conspicuous headlands, and especially on the north shore of Banks's Land, should he be fortunate enough to attain that coast. He was further instructed not to hazard the safety of his party by remaining too long on the north side of Dolphin and Union Strait, and to be guided in his movements by the season, the state of the ice, and such intelligence as he might obtain from the Esquimaux. He was, moreover, directed to report his proceedings to their Lordships immediately on his return, and should his despatches experience no delay on the route, they may be expected in England in April or May next. He was also requested to engage one or more families of Indian hunters to pass the summer of 1850 on the banks of the Coppermine River, to be ready to assist any party that may direct their course that way.

With respect to the recommendation of additional measures in furtherance of the humane views of their Lordships, it is necessary to take into account the time for which the Discovery Ships were provisioned. Deer migrate over the ice in the spring, from the main shore to Victoria and Wollaston Lands, in large herds, and return in the autumn. These lands are also the breeding places of vast flocks of snow geese; so that with ordinary skill in hunting, a large supply of food might be procured on their shores in the months of June, July and August. Seals are also numerous in those seas, and are easily shot, their curiosity rendering them a ready prey to a boat party. In these ways and by fishing, the stock of provisions might be greatly augmented. And we have the recent example of Mr. Rae, who passed a severe winter on the very barren shores of Repulse Bay, with no other fuel than the withered tufts of a herbaceous andromeda, and maintained a numerous party on the spoils of the chase alone for a whole year. Such instances forbid us to lose hope. Should Sir John Franklin's provisions become so far reduced as to be inadequate to a winter's consumption, it is not likely that he would remain longer by his ships, but rather that in one body, or in several, the officers and crews, with boats cut down so as to be light enough to drag over the ice, or built expressly for that purpose, would endeavour to make their way eastward to Lancaster Sound, or southwards to the mainland, according to the longitude in which the ships were arrested. I would then beg leave to suggest that the Hudson's Bay Company be authorized and requested to promise liberal rewards to Indians and Esquimaux who may relieve white men entering their lands. Some parties of Esquimaux frequenting the coast to the westward of the Mackenzie are in the habit of passing the winter in the vicinity of the Hudson's Bay Company's post on the Rat River (a tributary of the Peel), and might be interested in the cause by judicious promises. The Russian Fur Company have a post on the Yucan or Colville,