

might have been deemed entitled to more regretful mention. All who are most deeply concerned in this announcement must be well aware that nothing could be further from your Lordships' intentions than to produce such an impression; and we lose our painful sense of the hard official language of your Gazette notice in the severer shock which its meaning gives to those hopes and that reliance which we have hitherto placed in you, as, under God, our sole help and refuge.

Neither, perhaps, can we presume to complain that an expenditure, which cannot be proved to be lawfully due, should be suspended, even had there been no immediate exigencies of the public service, if such exist, to justify its withdrawal. I believe there are few among the representatives of the absent who have not felt that the Admiralty have acted liberally, kindly, and generously, in continuing, during years of uncertainty, the pay and wages, as if certain of their returning to claim their own. The search might have gone on though the payment was suspended, and none would have doubted that on the safe return, however distant, of the rightful claimants, those wages, so hardly won, would have been paid them to the full, and their right standing in Her Majesty's Navy restored to them, even though other brave men had been worthily promoted to fill their vacant places. It is not, then, of the retrenchment, but of the reason on which you have thought fit to base it, that we have cause to complain.

Your Lordships say, in your Gazette notice, that the officers and crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" are, on the 31st of March next, to be considered as dead, if no intelligence arrive in the meantime to the contrary, your Lordships being aware that the arrival of any intelligence before that date is physically impossible.

We knew, my Lords, that this sentence cannot realise the doom of its victims, whose possible return you are compelled for your own financial security to admit; that it is null as touching the fact can be considered no evidence in a court of law, and leaves the truth, whatever it be, untouched.

Yet does it sound on the public ear, and more deeply in the ear of many heart-anxious listeners, as the knell of departed hopes, the warning voice that tells us we are to prepare for the abandonment of those unhappy men to their fate. And if it be not so, and that your Lordships have used this language only as a means of legalising your financial measure, would that you had explained to us that the search now carrying on would not be affected by it, but would be continued till its especial object was accomplished according to the expectations raised reasonably and inevitably by your Lordships' own previous course of action. The special object of the present expedition was to search for the missing ships in that quarter of the Arctic seas where they had not yet been looked for; it was recommended by a great majority of Arctic officers appointed to consider the question, who believed that my husband and his companions had passed that way, and were yet to be found alive.

The expedition of Sir Edward Belcher, founded on these conclusions, was provisioned for a certain absence of three years, and only six months ago was re-provisioned for a longer period. It is not yet two years since the expedition sailed, and it has not yet accomplished its mission nor been absent its expected term of service, nor can we obtain any information as to its proceedings till next autumn, nor perhaps then, unless a special messenger be sent for the purpose, nor shall we learn, perhaps, at that period, the total result of the explorations made or yet making.

These facts, so inaccordant with your Lordships' sentence of death, are the ground of my hopes that that decree may not involve the fatal conclusion as to your intentions, to which, by a too inexorable reasoning, it would seem to lead. Yet in the meantime an unauthorised impression is produced, most discouraging and painful, tending directly to extinguish hope, to paralyse exertion, and even to suppress the expression of honest sentiment.

I am under the necessity, in spite of my innate trust in your Lordships' justice and compassion, of dealing with the "Gazette" notice as I found it, in its literal sense, and it must therefore be my endeavour to prove in this letter why I cannot accept your Lordships' sentence, but am compelled to record my respectful, but most earnest remonstrance and protest against it.

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