

## REPORT OF THE ARCTIC COMMITTEE.

Sir,

Admiralty,  
Arctic Committee,  
20th November 1851.

1. The Committee appointed by their Lordships letter of the 22d October to inquire into and report on the conduct of the officers intrusted with the command of the late expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin, and whether everything was done by them to carry into effect their instructions, and to prosecute the search for the missing ships, commenced their proceedings on the 24th ultimo; and conceiving that the only distinct inculpations are those contained in Mr. Penny's letters to their Lordships of the 15th September and 10th October, we considered it our duty to direct our attention in the first instance to this part of the subject, and we accordingly examined Mr. Penny himself, and all the principal officers of the "Lady Franklin" and "Sophia," with the view of ascertaining satisfactorily every circumstance connected with the exploration of Wellington Strait, and the channels discovered above it, and how far Mr. Penny's subsequent statements are in conformity with those he so distinctly expressed in his letters of the 4th and 11th August, addressed to Captain Austin; and having obtained all the information in our power, and most carefully considered the whole question, we are of opinion that Captain Austin could only put one construction on Mr. Penny's two letters referred to, and that, having been thus assured by him that the open water found above Wellington Straits was (to use his own expression), from "the fearful rate at which the tide runs (not less than six "knots) through the sounds that divide the channel, dangerous even for "a boat, much more to a ship, unless clear of ice, which from its present "appearance would not be so that season," impracticable for navigation at that time, and that the shores and islands on both sides had been thoroughly examined by the exploring parties, without any traces of the missing ships being discoverable, we do not think Captain Austin would have been justified in commencing a fresh search in a direction concerning which he naturally considered himself to have received such authentic information.

2. It will be observed that in Mr. Penny's letter of the 4th August 1851 (from which we extract the preceding paragraph) he distinctly acquaints Captain Austin of his fixed determination to return immediately to England, and that nothing is to be found in it in any way expressive of his wish for a further search in Wellington Strait, and the channels connected with it. In his Journal, also, several remarks occur, all equally discouraging and fully indicative of his opinions at that period; and we can only account for his subsequent change of language on his arrival in England by his considering (as he himself states in his evidence) that "he found everybody disappointed;" that it had been said, "more might "have been done;" and "that he therefore wished to have the means "of going out again;" but we are bound to state that the evidence

Nos. 21 and 29., p. lv. and lviii.

Mr. Penny to Captain Austin, 4th and 11th August 1851. Evidence, A. 331 and 336, pp. 33, 36.

Mr. Penny to Captain Austin, 4th August 1851. Evidence, A. 331, p. 33.

Enclosure No. 17.

Evidence, A. 87, 88, p. 8.