



ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS.

COPY of LETTER addressed by Lady FRANKLIN to the LORDS COMMISSIONERS of the ADMIRALTY, dated the 24th February 1854, in reference to their Lordships' Announcement in the *London Gazette* of the 20th January 1854, respecting the Officers and Crews of Her Majesty's Ships "Erebus" and "Terror;" and of a Copy of such Notice.

( Sir Thomas Acland.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
24 March 1854.

## ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS.

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RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,  
dated 17 March 1854;—for,

“COPY of LETTER addressed by Lady *Franklin* to the LORDS COMMISSIONERS of the ADMIRALTY, dated the 24th day of February 1854, in reference to their Lordships' Announcement in the London Gazette of the 20th day of January 1854, respecting the Officers and Crews of Her Majesty's Ships 'Erebus' and 'Terror;' and of a Copy of such Notice.”

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NOTICE respecting the Officers and Crews of Her Majesty's Ships “Erebus” and “Terror.”

Admiralty, 19 January 1854.

NOTICE is hereby given, that if intelligence be not received, before the 31st March next, of the officers and crews of Her Majesty's Ships “Erebus” and “Terror” being alive, the names of the officers will be removed from the Navy List, and they and the crews of those ships will be considered as having died in Her Majesty's service. The pay and wages of the officers and crews of those ships will cease on the 31st day of March next; and all persons legally entitled, and qualifying themselves to claim the pay and wages then due, will be paid the same on application to the Accountant-general of Her Majesty's Navy.

Security will be required in certain cases, for which special provision will be made.

By command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

*W. A. B. Hamilton,*  
Secretary.

The above Notice was inserted in the “London Gazette,” of Friday, 20 January 1854.

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LETTER from Lady *Franklin* to the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty.

My Lords,

4, Spring Gardens, 24 February 1854.

IN a letter which I had the honour to address to the First Lord of the Admiralty on the 20th of January, and which at my request he kindly forwarded to the Board, I expressed in language of deep emotion the feelings of pain and wonder to which your summary and unexpected sentence on my husband, Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin, and the officers and crews of the “Erebus” and “Terror,” had given rise.

You have been pleased to explain to me, in terms of which I cannot but acknowledge the courtesy, that it is for the convenience of winding up the accounts of the financial year, which closes on the 31st of March, that you have fixed upon that moment for consigning 135 seamen in Her Majesty's service simultaneously to the grave, unmindful of the discordant fact that Her Majesty's ships on the other side of the Atlantic are now, and will be on 31st of March next, preparing to discover the abodes of these very men, considered as living beings, yet to be rescued.

My Lords, I make no vain complaints of the manner in which your Lordships' intentions have been communicated to the public, distressing as it is to the feelings of the living, and little respectful as it has the semblance of being to the memory of those who, if they have “died in Her Majesty's service,”

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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The grounds on which it appears to me reasonable that my husband and his companions in the "Erebus" and "Terror," should not be considered dead, but living, are these :

First. Because no evidence has been discovered of any catastrophe having befallen them.

Secondly. Because the quarter of the Arctic Sea, where it is most probable that the missing parties would be found living, or their fate ascertained, has never yet, so far as we know, been explored; Sir Edward Belcher, when last heard of, having advanced only to the verge of the open sea to the North-west, but without entering it; and because the part thus indicated is one of the two courses pointed out to my husband in the Admiralty Instructions, for him to follow, and also because it has been pronounced, after a thorough examination of the other course, that he could not have passed that way.

Thirdly. Because within this unexamined region the resources for supporting life are probably abundant; and

Fourthly. Because my husband and his officers steadily contemplated, and from the first provided for a detention extending over an indefinite period, should difficulties occur to prevent their return at the time expected.

I. And first, as to the absence of all signs of wreck or disaster. This negative evidence of the safety of the expedition has been gained in every part of the Arctic Sea which has yet been visited. Neither the bodies of men, nor parts of ships, timbers, spars, stores of any description have been found, either afloat in the currents, or washed upon the shores. In Wellington Channel, where the missing ships are known to have been, nothing has been found (beyond the signs of their well-being at winter quarters) but some drift pine wood, belonging to the forests of a milder climate to the North or West.

The captains of whaling ships, men the most experienced in such matters, concur in asserting that it is next to impossible that two ships, like the "Erebus" or "Terror," could be crushed and destroyed, without any of their crews escaping, and without some traces of the disaster being found; and one of our most distinguished Arctic navigators has very recently declared that he was never more strongly of opinion than he is now, that it is utterly improbable that Franklin's ships, men and all, have been destroyed by any accident among the ice. I do not think it necessary to adduce any contrary opinions, because they appear to have been adopted rather as a last resort for the solution of a so-called mystery, than from any indisputable data.

There was a time, it is true, when it was somewhat unscrupulously asserted that both the ships had been swallowed up in the ice in their passage across Baffin's Bay, during their first summer, and this opinion, which was utterly devoid of even the semblance of justification, obtained some degree of credit till the discovery of their first winter quarters, on the other side of the supposed field of disaster, put a summary end to the gratuitous tale. And next we were assured that our brave navigators, whose high sense of duty had never been questioned before, had deliberately turned their backs upon the work before them, after only one winter's absence, and been crushed, or had foundered on their way home.

It would be presuming too much on your Lordships' patience, to dwell on other absurd stories of murders, burnings, &c., invented by the mendacious half-caste Esquimaux, Adam Beck, when he desired to put an end at once to the search, in order to get earlier back to the home he had been enticed to leave.

But there is yet a more recent report, which, visionary as I am myself disposed to deem it, on the authority of persons experienced in Arctic visual phenomena, has been deemed otherwise than necessarily a delusive appearance by persons entitled to every respect. And yet I need not argue in addressing your Lordships against this spectacle of the supposed "Erebus" and "Terror" drifting away on the top of an iceberg from some unknown quarter to the banks of Newfoundland, since assuredly had your Lordships believed it at the time the report reached England, which was in the spring or summer of 1852, you would not have lost a moment in taking steps to search the shores which those ships, if

such they were, must have quitted, and where they must have left their human freight, still living, behind, since the spectators of the phenomenon affirm their conviction that there was not a living soul on board. And I am the more persuaded of this, since it was at this very period that I offered for the Admiralty's acceptance, nay, entreated their acceptance of my little vessel, the "Isabel," equipped and provisioned for Arctic service, which had fallen into my hands after the failure of Mr. Beatson's expedition, and thus a search of the shores alluded to, at no further expense to Her Majesty's Government than the manning and officering of the little vessel, might have been effected without a moment's delay. I could not myself, however, have been expected to submit to the particular attention of the Board a search after these iceberg ships, in which I had no faith, especially in the quarter to which it would probably have been directed, namely, the coast of Labrador. Nevertheless, if it should now be your Lordships' pleasure to cause inquiries to be made by any of your returning ships on the coast of Labrador, for the unfortunate people alive so late as 1851, and thus, as it is supposed, bereft of their floating home and means of transport, I could not but regard the measure with grateful satisfaction, though I may humbly express my opinion that it is not from the coast of Labrador that these supposed discovery ships could have drifted. But it is always an advance towards the undisputed settlement of our missing navigators' position, to know where they are not, and, indeed, I would readily give heed to this, or any other not impossible conjecture which promotes search, if it were not that by so doing, efforts are diverted from the only course which I believe to be the right one.

But before closing these observations on the absence of all evidence of any fatal catastrophe having happened to the missing expedition, I am reminded of a passage in a despatch of Captain M'Clure, deposited on Melville Island, which has been exultingly quoted by a writer in the "Times," in confirmation of his opinions to the contrary.

Captain M'Clure says, "It is my intention, if possible, to return to England this season, touching at Melville Island and Port Leopold, but should we not be again heard of, in all probability we shall have been carried into the Polar Pack, or to the westward of Melville Island, in either of which to attempt to send succour would only be to increase the evil, as any ship that enters the Polar Pack must be inevitably crushed." And again he says, "A ship stands no chance of getting to the westward by entering the Polar Sea, the water alongshore being very narrow and wind contrary, and the Pack impenetrable."

The value of these remarks of Captain M'Clure is, I conceive, to be limited by his personal observation and experience. It is evident he was speaking of that portion of the Polar Sea with which he was himself acquainted, without noting the distinction which appears to have been recognised of late years between the sea lying within 15 degrees around the Pole, and that section of it to the southward, between the chain of the Parry Islands and the face of the American continent, which, in the earlier annals of Arctic discovery, was included in the general name of Polar Sea, and is so called in the published narratives of my husband's overland expeditions.

We have had no description of ice seen in those northern seas which I believe the missing ships to have entered, corresponding to that encountered by Captain M'Clure in the narrow channels, and in the ice-clogged shores of Banks' Land and Melville Island, where it is supposed to be caused by the prolongation of the land westward towards Behring Strait. Dr. Scoresby has justly observed, that had the chain terminated near the meridian of Mercy Bay, a far wider space of open water should have been observed there, after the southerly gale, than seems to have occurred. It appears, therefore, not reasonable to draw any unfavourable conclusion as to the safety of ships which entered a Polar Sea north of the chain of islands, from any appearances which come under the observation of Captain M'Clure in his lower latitude and confined position. And this reasoning, as it affects the safety of the "Erebus" and "Terror," will be the more readily admitted when it is remembered that the passage between Melville Island and Banks' Land, respecting which Captain M'Clure's observation was made, was expressly pointed out to Sir John Franklin, in his instructions, to be *avoided*. It was the only part of the Arctic seas which he was enjoined not to approach, and whatever therefore may be the nature of the ice

ice within or near, the missing expedition has assuredly avoided exposure to it. For this reason I have always been persuaded that there was no probability of the ships ever being found, or even retreating upon Winter Harbour, or anywhere on the south coast of Melville Island, which has been the object of so many attempts both from the east and from the west, and has become, in fact, in consequence of its halfway position, the rendezvous of the searching squadron.

I may add, that though in that portion of the Polar Sea which Captain M'Clure had in his eye, he believes no ships could live, yet that towards that other part of the Polar Sea, which I doubt not my husband entered, a little solitary vessel of less than 150 tons, bearing the American flag, is now dauntlessly pursuing her way, undeterred by any conjectural dangers, but aiming to solve in some degree, in subordination to the higher object of humanity, the geographical problem of what exists further north than any discoverer has yet penetrated.

II. I have ventured to make the assertion that my husband and his companions have never yet been looked for in that part of the Arctic seas where a great probability exists that they would be found.

By your Lordships, who are acquainted with the proceedings of every successive expedition, of each division of the search, and of the results of the whole, this position will hardly be disputed. To the great majority of the public who have heard of one costly expedition after another, and believe that by this time the superficial area of Arctic waters must well nigh be swept, it would appear a startling assertion difficult of acceptance. Yet it requires but a transient glance at the Polar chart, as it appears with the very latest geographical acquisitions, to see that between the meridian of Wellington Channel and Behring Strait, there lies a blank space, in which neither sea, nor coast, nor island is laid down. It comprises about 70 degrees of longitude, or, if measured, in the parallel of 78 degrees (the most southerly which could apparently have been navigated by the discovery ships), between 800 and 900 miles. What discoveries my husband may have made in this space he has not returned to tell; no one has followed him there. And lest it should be objected that I assume too much in asserting that this must have been the course taken by the missing ships, allow me a few further explanations.

It cannot be denied that the Admiralty Instructions presented to my husband two routes by which to endeavour to effect a passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The southern route, by Barrow Strait to the south-west, was recommended to him in preference, or in the first instance, and was the object of his own predilections, inasmuch as, if practicable, it would lead to the northern front of the American Continent, already known to him by his own and other surveys. But my husband anticipated that before arriving on these familiar shores, he would probably meet, in particular latitudes and longitudes which he pointed out, with insuperable obstacles, and accordingly his mind was greatly occupied before his departure with the alternative course, or northern passage, which was wholly new, and moreover extremely popular amongst his officers. It was anticipated with enthusiasm by Captain Fitzjames, the commander of the "Erebus," that the ships would descend from a high northern latitude upon the coast of Asia, and that he would be sent home with my husband's despatches through Siberia.

One thing I can affirm with certainty, that it was my husband's determination to try both routes before his return, and so strong was the feeling of interest and importance attached, as it was said, by the Admiralty themselves to that which led into the unknown northern waters, that a confident expectation existed that even should the ships effect a passage into the Pacific by the southern course, they would, on their return to England, be dispatched afresh on another voyage of discovery to report upon the high Polar regions.

In confirmation of these facts, or of the inference to be derived from them, we find the first winter quarters of the "Erebus" and "Terror" at the opening of Wellington Channel, where the northern route separates from the western one, and whence each could be watched with advantage. The passage westward was probably first tried, and found impracticable, as it afterwards proved

to Sir James Ross and Captain Austin, and thus with increased eagerness and solicitude would the commanders of the expedition fix their attention upon the northern passage. It has been found that their sledge tracks were multiplied in this direction, and at a look-out station commanding it, papers were picked up, showing that the watches were unremitting. Who can doubt that the same open water, seen by Captain Penny from the heights of Cape Spencer, verified afterwards by himself and his parties, when so early as the month of May the progress of their sledges was arrested by it,—who can doubt that this open water was first seen by the observers of the “Erebus” and “Terror,” and that the earliest disruption of the intervening barrier of ice was the signal for their departure from Beechey Island, accomplished, as it evidently was, in haste, but without disorder? All the conjectural difficulties and impediments which were brought before the Arctic Committee contrary to this presumption, have been overthrown by the undeniable fact that Sir Edward Belcher has since carried his ships in clear water up the same channel, even to the very verge of an expanse of sea to the north-west, to which he saw no limit, and which is all we require to complete the presumptive evidence.

It has been wondered at, and much deplored, that no writings were found at the winter quarters on Beechey Island, to indicate to those who might come after them the course the ships were about to take. It appears to me that writings could scarcely have made it clearer, but it may be that the suddenness and hurry of their departure caused the eager voyagers to neglect this precaution, or (which I think still more likely) that they left nothing behind them, because they expected no one to follow. They were beyond the reach of the whalers, and consequently of all communication with England, were not contemplating disaster, but thinking only of progress, and looking rather to Behring Strait for succour, if needed, than to anything in their rear. The answer made by my husband to the commander of the transport which left him at Disco proves this fact. But, be the cause of the absence of records what it may, it is clear that all were alike influenced by it. Not an officer or a man in those two ships has deposited a line on the spot where he spent so many months of rest and leisure. It was not then to be expected that such documents were to be found higher up, at a greater distance from the winter settlement. None, I believe, have been found, nor any vestiges whatever, which seems to me so far from discouraging, that I do not see what more favourable evidence could be desired of their having passed without obstacle into the open sea, which retains no ship's track upon its bosom. There may be vestiges of their course, or rather of their second winter quarters, further on; but to this point they have not been followed. It seems to have been thought until now that one season was sufficient to overtake ships which may have been years striving to advance, till retreat, even if desired, was impossible.

On the negative evidence, in favour of my husband's having taken the northern passage, a few words will suffice. It is unnecessary to enter minutely into the researches of each expedition, especially as all, or almost all, had to go over the same ground before they could make a step in advance; and as this ground was minutely examined by each party in succession, we had the discouraging report of “no traces of Sir John Franklin” echoed and re-echoed, till it produced, I believe, upon the minds of many who were not aware of this explanatory fact, the painful and delusive impression that it was of no use looking any longer for those who were not anywhere to be found.

The coasting expedition of Sir John Richardson between the Rivers Coppermine and Mackenzie, first proved that the ships he was seeking had not arrived on that part of the American coast, and consequently, as it might be inferred, on the coast further to the westward. Thus the examination of this closing portion of the south-western route narrowed the search, but it could not prove that my husband had not taken that course, and been arrested in it by obstacles in the nearer and earlier portion of it. This conclusion, however, was at length obtained by a branch of Captain Austin's expedition in 1851, when Captain Ommanney and Lieutenant Osborn, advancing beyond the limits of previous explorers, examined on foot the coast which tends southward beyond the 100th degree of west longitude, being the precise course pointed out to my husband in his Instructions. These two officers came to the conclusion, not only that he had



had not passed that way, but that there was no navigable channel for ships in that direction. There remained no other reasonable alternative but that the missing ships had passed up Wellington Channel, which had always been little less probable than the other course, though as yet unexamined.

If my own steadfast convictions as to my husband's plan of action can give any additional force to the arguments I have already adduced, my Arctic friends will bear witness to the anxiety I have ever felt for the exploration of the route through and beyond Wellington Channel from the earliest period. It was not, however, till the intelligence received from Sir James Ross, at the close of 1848, showed the improbability of its coming within the sphere of his operations, that I ventured to implore the Admiralty to make it a distinct and primary object of their attention. Failing to persuade them to allow the "North Star," then about to be dispatched with supplies for Sir James Ross, to remain out for the examination of this strait, and failing also in my endeavours to equip a private vessel for the express purpose of examining at least the headlands of the channel, I went to Dundee, and asked Captain Penny if he would undertake the search, in case that the Admiralty could be induced to accept his services. His enthusiastic reply was followed (after the return of the Government expedition the same autumn, 1849) by his submitting his wishes and plans to the Board of Admiralty, and grateful indeed did I feel for their ultimate acceptance of his proposals; and when Captain Austin's nobly-appointed expedition was organised, it appeared to me that both the south-western and the northern routes were now sure to be thoroughly explored.

It was not till then that I dispatched my own little vessel, the "Prince Albert," into Regent Inlet (which was not included in the instructions given to either expedition), under the idea that if the crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" had been forced to abandon their ships on the south-western route, for we were yet ignorant which route they had taken, they might retreat towards the perhaps nearer and well-known resources in that quarter, rather than upon the more distant and more barren shores of North America.

The "Prince Albert," in her way back, touched at Beechey Island, and brought home, in September 1850, some small vestiges of the missing ships, which had been found on Cape Riley, and reported the traces of an encampment. It was the first gleam of light that had been shed on the expedition. A year elapsed, and then came accumulated and exuberant evidence of the winter quarters of the ships, and their prosperous condition at this spot up to the spring of 1846.

But it was the searching ships themselves that brought home prematurely the news. The south-western course had been explored in vain, but this northern one had not been attempted. Doubt even was thrown on the open water expanding to the north, which had been seen by Captain Penny, that most important discovery which alone, at this critical period, saved the pioneers in the "Erebus" and "Terror" from being consigned to destruction. But their doom was delayed.

In 1852, Sir Edward Belcher was sent out to make further researches in Wellington Channel, and in the autumn of the same year the "Prince Albert," touching again at Beechey Island, brought home the joyful intelligence that he had already passed up the channel in open water; and a month later Captain Inglefield arrived in the "Isabel," with the additional and satisfactory information that Sir Edward Belcher had not returned, and had, therefore, probably met with no obstacles. Both ships brought home despatches and letters, showing that additional supplies were urgently wanted, if the objects of Sir E. Belcher, and those of Captain Kellet, to the west, were not to be brought to a premature conclusion; and, accordingly, last summer large reinforcements were sent out in the "Phoenix" steamer, under Captain Inglefield, for the use of both branches of the squadron.

When this officer left the depôt at Beechey Island, on 24th August last, it was known that Sir Edward Belcher had verified the existence of the open sea to the north and north-west beyond Wellington Channel; and it was also known that Captain Kellet had dispatched a foot and sledge expedition, prepared for an absence of 90 days, across Melville Island to the north and north-west, with the

view of exploring such portion of the northern shores of this land as could be effected with the resources at command.

This exploration, under the leadership of that most able and energetic officer Commander M'Clintock, is one of the utmost importance, as being in the right direction; but, when Captain Inglefield sailed from Beechey Island, its result was not known, the period not having elapsed for Captain M'Clintock's return.

This is the latest intelligence we have from the Arctic regions, and this, alas! is the moment chosen by your Lordships for pronouncing authoritatively on the fate of the absent.

It is true that Captain Inglefield brought home also, in the "Phoenix," the news from another branch of the searching squadron, of the discovery of the North-west Passage. It was great and welcome tidings, of itself, perhaps, a sufficient compensation for all the pains and all the expenditure bestowed, with exclusive intention, as we have your Lordships' authority for stating, on the other and still nobler cause of humanity. And yet the solution of the geographical problem appears to have sealed the doom of my unfortunate husband and his brave associates; of those without whose self-sacrifice for the same object, in the fulfilment of their duty, this geographical problem might never have been solved at all.

The intelligence of the North-west Passage was brought home in October last, and before the close of the year the removal of the names of the officers and crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" was, if I am not misinformed, under deliberation, and was confidently announced in the "Times," which paper, notwithstanding that your Lordships assured me at the time that it had no authority for the statements, proved to be the correct exponent of your Lordships' sentiments.

My Lords, I cannot but feel that there will be a stain on the page of the Naval Annals of England when these two events, the discovery of the North-west Passage, and the abandonment of Franklin and his companions, are recorded in indissoluble association.

It is with reluctance I have spoken of my own efforts, for the purpose of proving that from the beginning, and not recently only, and in consequence of the failure of expeditions in other parts, or from an insatiable desire for random explorations, have I urged upon your Lordships the examination of the Northern Sea, its coasts and islands, between Wellington Channel and Behring Strait, or beyond, as the quarter where the missing ships and crews have yet to be looked for.

The expedition of the "Isabel" screw steamer, which, for two successive seasons, it has been my endeavour to send to Behring Strait, has had the same object in view, namely, that of entering, though at the opposite extremity, this unexplored region, or at least of discovering a channel into it. Yet your Lordships are well aware that it was only as, year after year, my entreaties that you would yourselves send effective steam-vessels to this quarter were unavailing, that I felt myself forced to resort to my own feeble resources.

The expedition of the "Isabel" met with the most cordial support and approval from the President and many distinguished members of the Geographical Society, from the Hydrographer of the Admiralty, and from many Arctic officers, including all those whose experience in Behring Strait gave them the best title to judge of its utility. I was assured by the latter, that if I could succeed in getting my little vessel to reach the field of search in season, her services might be valuable.

Nor did your Lordships, though declining to take the measures which were recommended to you at this period, refuse to help me in my own. Without your kind aid, or that of your predecessors in office in 1852, I could not have obtained possession of the vessel without the facilities which last year you kindly gave me for her outfit; and especially without that valuable document addressed to your officers in the Pacific, which seemed to promise all the aid that could be required in time of need, I could scarcely have ventured to send the "Isabel" to sea.

My Lords, I felt grateful for these benefits ; yet, if I could have foreseen that on the first emergency, and when the greatest difficulties of the outward voyage were already passed, you would have denied the interpretation which, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific, it was capable of, and which would have enabled the "Isabel," to carry on her mission, it would have been a kinder thing to refuse me all. Much toil, anxiety, and money would then have been spared, and the vessel would not now be lying at Valparaiso, a monument of my own blighted efforts and of your unlooked-for desertion.

I have purposely omitted, as in no way affecting the question of the necessity of such an expedition as that in which the "Isabel" has failed, the researches of the "Enterprize" and "Investigator," in their course eastward from Behring Strait to Melville Island. In this course, Captain M'Clure has been fortunate enough to find that much-desired link between previous discoveries on the east and on the west, which, like the keystone of the arch, binds the labours of former and present generations together. But as affects the fate of the missing expedition, his brilliant discovery leaves it untouched. Indeed it might have been confidently predicated of those ships, by those who knew the results of Captain Austin's expedition, which were unknown to their commanders, that on the route the "Investigator" was taking, and in which the "Enterprize" appears to be following her, the missing navigators could never be found. Hundreds of miles and intervening land separate the courses north and south of the opposite navigation.

III. Notwithstanding, the experience of Captain M'Clure, during his voyage and long detention in the ice, is not devoid of important deductions. It proves that men may be absent in Arctic climes three or four years, and need not on that account be given up for lost ; nay, that they may return in full health and vigour, thus adding new force to the remarkable fact, that the loss of life in the Arctic service, whether arising from casualty or disease, is less than in any other part of the globe where our Navy is employed, in spite of all the hardships and dangers which necessarily attend it. To bring forward the unknown fate of the "Erebus" and "Terror" in opposition to this statement, would evidently be a begging of the question. Rather may it be asserted, that justice has not been done to the favourable side of the argument. We know that Captain M'Clure was safe and well after nearly four years' endurance of icy imprisonment ; that Sir John Ross, under much more unfavourable circumstances, and after a somewhat longer absence, returned home in safety to tell his fate ; and that the four Russian sailors, thrown without resources of any kind upon the coast of Spitzbergen, were not liberated till after the lapse of between six and seven years. But shall it be affirmed in any of these cases, and especially in that of the Russian sailors, who endured the longest, and were yet found in health and good condition, that the moment of their liberation or rescue was the utmost term to which their existence would have been prolonged ? And yet, such is the conclusion too often involved in the reasonings upon this subject, and because at the end of seven or eight years the crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" have not been rescued or liberated, or heard of, they are considered to be dead ! Indeed I think this a rash and unjustifiable conclusion, and that it would be more reasonable to argue, that if they could live six or seven years, as the Russian sailors did, who were still in health and vigour, they might live double that period, or more.

It will be said we do not know that they have lived seven years. No, my Lords, but we know nothing to the contrary, and it may be that the reason we do not know they are living men, is because your messengers of mercy and deliverance have not been to the spot where alone the truth is to be found, for their voices cannot reach you across the waste of waters, and they are helpless to extricate themselves. Captain M'Clure was shut up in a position from which he could, by abandoning his ship, fall back upon an inhabited coast, or advance on foot to a depôt of provisions of which he knew the existence at Port Leopold. Sir John Ross also was not so far distant from the fishing grounds of the whalers but that he could risk embarking in an open boat to reach them. The Russian sailors were on an island visited annually by ships ; but the lost crews of the "Erebus" and "Terror" are presumed to be in a part of the Arctic seas where, having lost all locomotive power, they may hoist their signals of distress in vain.

And if this be their position, it may well move our deepest compassion, but it is not such as should lead us to despair of their prolonged existence.

One of the most experienced of Arctic explorers has consolingly assured us, that life may be maintained in the farthest Arctic lands under circumstances at first sight seemingly the most hopeless; and I believe the same accurate and philosophic observer has remarked, how readily nature accommodates herself to circumstances, and that the hardships and sufferings of the first years would be mitigated afterwards.

But still farther. There are grounds for hope that in the high latitudes, where we believe our exile-navigators to be imprisoned, a dreary existence may be rendered more supportable by a climate of less intense severity, and by an increased abundance of natural resources. Even in the lower latitudes with which we are best acquainted, both sea and land are described, here and there, as "teeming with animal life;" but as Dr. Kane remarks, "at the utmost limits of northern travel attained by man, hordes of animals of various kinds (including the ruminating animals, whose food is a vegetation), have been observed travelling still further north. Birds, of which such almost incredible numbers are occasionally seen, take their flight northward, and the highest waters yet attained are frequented by the whale, the walrus, and the seal, which furnish not only food, but fuel and clothing."

The experience of Captain M'Clure adds something to the mass of facts we already possessed on this subject, for he found a large island where only a blank space existed on our charts before, abounding in game of the noblest description, and supporting a race of well-conditioned and contented Esquimaux, whose existence in that part had never been suspected. Why should not such another island, or more than one, be found in that northern space, the white paper of the charts, of the nature of which we at home know nothing, though it may even now be the abode, and if not timely rescued by Divine or human interposition, may become the grave of our hapless countrymen?

Again, the experience of Captain M'Clure seems to add something also to our evidence in favour of a less inhospitable temperature in the north, for he tells us, though apparently without drawing any conclusion from the fact, that whenever the north wind blew it was warmer.

Nor should it be forgotten, in enumerating the elements of a reasonable confidence in the prolonged existence of the absent voyagers, that they were most abundantly supplied with ammunition, and that, as Captain Penny has judiciously observed, they were all the more likely to be preserved in health, because they would have to seek their subsistence, and thus have their minds and bodies actively employed.

IV. I shall not trouble your Lordships by dwelling further on this head. My husband's conviction, that where Esquimaux can live, there also can Englishmen, with their superior intelligence and larger appliances, has been often quoted. But it is not so constantly remembered that Englishmen are also more provident than Esquimaux, and that at the very outset of his voyage, and while Captain Fitzjames was writing home, that so deep and heavily laden were the ships, that if they reached the Pacific that year, some of the provisions must be thrown overboard for safety. While this sanguine officer was thus writing, my husband, than whom no one could know better what the day of need might require, was diligently adding to his already abundant stock, by means of the guns of his shooting parties, and contemplating a detention of several years.

The evidence of this latter fact, and of the early means he was taking to provide for it, is undeniable.

The deposition of Captain Martin, of the "Enterprize" whaling ship, who was for some time in company with the "Erebus" and "Terror" in the middle ice of Baffin's Bay, was to this effect: that "Sir John assured him, in answer to questions put to him by Captain Martin, that 'he had provisions for five years, and if it was necessary, he could make them spin out seven;' moreover, that 'he would lose no opportunity of adding to his stock.' Other officers made the same declaration, stating also, that the ships would winter where they could find a convenient

a convenient place, and in spring push out as far as possible, and so on, *year after year.*"

This "solemn declaration" of Captain Martin was made before the provost of Peterhead, who has assured me, as have also several other respectable inhabitants of that place, that he is a man of the strictest integrity, truthfulness, and accuracy.

The declaration of Captain Walker, of the whale ship "Union," who, at the time alluded to, was first mate of the "Enterprize," was also made before the provost of Peterhead, and was precisely to the same effect.

Your Lordships are aware that there are letters from the expedition, dated in Baffin's Bay, of like purport; that from Mr. Blenby, icemaster of the "Terror," to his wife, begging her to let no one dishearten her as to the length of their absence, which might be six or seven years, has been published. Mr. Blenby had shared the rude captivity of Sir John Ross in Regent Inlet, and knew how the long absent may be given up for lost, and yet return again to their homes and country.

These last words of men so full of faith and hope, at a moment when they were about to quit the precincts of the known world to plunge into the unknown, seem to me a touching appeal to the long-enduring sympathy and untiring patience of their countrymen.

And even if their hopes may be considered too high, or that they can be convicted of rashness in entering into those unknown seas (were not all the Arctic seas once unknown?) without any harbours of refuge in advance, or any line of depôts in their rear, without assurance of reinforcements or relief from home, or any promise but that which their own heart-trust in their country, and in you, gave them of being looked after; even if this were rashness, is that a reason to abandon them? They went forth, my Lords, at your bidding, and went to those seas which you gave them liberty to explore; you gave them no restrictions such as have abounded in the orders of those who have gone in search of them; they were not told to spare themselves, not enjoined to run no risks, nor restricted in time, though their mission was evidently thought to be a much shorter and much easier matter than it has proved to be. They were themselves prepared, however, to do a work of unknown difficulty and danger, and I well know were not prepared to return till they had spent themselves in its attainment. They have deserved, surely, I may say, they have deserved of their country that she should ascertain their fate.

And I need not tell your Lordships that to follow them whither they have gone is not to encounter the same dangers that they have done; I could not urge it if it were so. But with such vastly superior ships as you have now in the Arctic seas, provided with powerful steam machinery, and other appliances, with the experience in sledge travelling which has been of late years acquired, and with those large precautionary measures as to depôts in advance and in the rear, which you know so well how to devise, it could, I believe, be done with comparative safety. And doubtless it will one day be done. The most northern portion of our globe will not always be a *terra incognita*. When Arctic expeditions for the sake of the missing navigators have long ceased to be familiar to the public ear, and wars and rumours of wars have passed away, the interest in those geographical and other problems which were left unsolved in the year 1854 will again appear worthy of a great national effort for their solution; and then will arise in touching association, the memory of the men who, in pursuit of this knowledge, and in obedience to their country's command, first penetrated into the fastnesses of the north and were left there to their fate. Perhaps it will be the wonder of that future generation that this should have been done, or that any discoveries of great scientific interest and importance should have been abandoned by the Government at the conspicuous moment when it had at its disposal a fleet of invulnerable ships, fit, and fit alone, for Arctic service, and still afloat in Arctic seas, and a host of trained and brave explorers, better disciplined for their work than ever, a combination such as was never seen before, and may never be seen again.

Pardon me, my Lords, that I express myself thus strongly. I would not appear ungrateful for what has been already done. When I look at that fleet of invul-

nerable ships, at that phalanx of gallant and devoted men in hard conflict with nature, yearning for the distinction of saving their fellow men, and consider the generous expenditure and the boundless sympathy which have produced the noble spectacle, I pause, and for a moment doubt whether I should have written as I have done.

And yet it is still true that your noble work is incomplete, and that the glory which has hitherto invested it, is about to set in clouds and darkness. It will remain an imperishable fact that the search for these brave martyrs to their duty was given up, not because every part of the Arctic seas had been searched for them in vain, as is too often asserted, but because you have not distinctly authorised, nor sufficiently enabled them to be followed where alone they are to be sought, with any probability of success. Any attempt to divert men's minds from this melancholy truth will I am sure eventually fail.

It is to record my own dissent from such a fatal conclusion, and respectfully to protest against the arbitrary decree you have announced, that I have thus ventured to address you. Would that others who might prevail with you better than I can do, had rendered my hard task unnecessary; that they could induce you to feel that the blessing of them who were ready to perish might yet be yours.

My advocacy must be weakened, perhaps even my facts suspected, because I am too deeply interested, and indeed in some respects my position is a false as well as painful one, for as I could not have dared to plead with you at all unless I had had a husband's life at stake for my excuse, so it may look as if for his sake alone I pleaded, and expected such great things to be done.

There are some I trust amongst those who share with me a common sorrow who will not judge me thus, and all I think must feel, that had my humble endeavours met with any measure of success, it would have been for the good of the whole, as well as of him whose name has sometimes been too exclusively used as the representative of a corporate misfortune.

As to the approbation or the censure to which any poor efforts on my part have been obnoxious, my heart has been too full, and is so still, to be either oppressed by the obloquy or elated by the praise.

It remains for me only to thank your Lordships for the communication you have been pleased to make to me, that the widows of those who are to be considered as having died in the service of their country, after the 31st of March next, will be entitled to pensions, according to the existing regulations. Your Lordships will scarcely require me to tell you, after what I have written, that I do not feel it in my power either to claim or to accept a widow's pension.

Before concluding this long and painful letter, allow me to express a hope that I have not now, nor at any time, abused the privilege which belongs to weakness and irresponsibility, or which has been accorded to me by your generous indulgence; and if any hasty expression such as I ought to have avoided has escaped my pen, I entreat you to overlook it, as not intentionally disrespectful.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Jane Franklin.*