

ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

RETURN of the SAILING ORDERS given to
Sir Edward Belcher relating to the ARCTIC
EXPEDITION.

(Colonel Sibthorp.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
7 May 1852.

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Under 1 oz.

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ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 4 May 1852 ;—for,

A RETURN “ of the SAILING ORDERS given to Sir *Edward Belcher*,
relating to the ARCTIC EXPEDITION.”

Admiralty, }
6 May 1852. }

J. H. HAY,
Chief Clerk.

By the Commissioners for Executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, &c. &c.

1. HAVING appointed you to the command of the expedition (to consist of the ships named in the margin *,) preparing for the further search for Sir John Franklin, you are, whenever such ships shall be in all respects ready, to put to sea, and proceeding down channel, or north about, make the best of your way to Barrow Strait, calling at Disco, (if in your way,) for such replenishments as the place affords, and for a supply of dogs for sledging purposes.

* Assistance.
Resolute.
Pioneer.
Intrepid.
North Star.

2. We have entrusted you with this command, in the full persuasion of your thorough acquaintance with its obligations, and of your judgment and ability to meet them.

3. We do not therefore consider it necessary to encumber you with minute instructions for your guidance at each step of your proceedings ; but furnishing you with papers which point out the views of the Admiralty, as successive expeditions have been despatched from this country, and those also relative to the difficulties occurring to oppose those views, we leave it to you to decide, as the case shall present itself.

4. We deem it right, however, that a certain course of proceedings should be pointed out to you ; and adopting the recommendation of the Committee appointed in October 1851, to inquire and report upon a previous expedition, the plan of future operations there proposed is to be considered as the basis of your proceedings. By that plan, Beechy Island is the point indicated as the basis of your operations, and you are to consider it as the grand rendezvous to which you are to push forward, there to establish the “North Star” as a general depôt.

5. Arrived at this point, two great objects will engage your attention :

1st. The endeavouring to pass up Wellington Channel with one sailing vessel and one steamer.

2d. The advance of a similar force towards Melville Island.

6. The object of the first of these expeditions will be, the endeavour to recover those traces of Sir John Franklin which ceased at Cape Bowden, to the north of Beechy Island ; and to follow up such traces, if they should be found. The object of the other expedition will be, to deposit, if possible, at Winter Harbour, Melville Island, or failing that, at Byam Martin Island, a supply of provisions, fuel, and clothing for any parties that might reach such positions from Captain Collinson’s, or Commander McClure’s ships.

7. As regards the first named expedition, and the possible contingency of coming upon Sir John Franklin’s track ; we cannot too strongly impress upon you the necessity of your establishing along your line of route, caches of provisions sufficient to supply your crews, and those of the missing ships, should any accident happen to your own vessels, and render it necessary for you to return without them to the general rendezvous at Beechy Island ; and you will be most careful along the line of such route, as well as in every other direction you may have to take, to avail yourself of every remarkable promontory, point

of land, or other distinctive locality, to deposit exact notices of your condition and intended proceedings; and you are to give positive orders that these notices or records are to be deposited 10 feet true north of the cairn or staff, and likewise beneath or in the cairn itself.

8. With regard to the expedition to be despatched towards Melville Island, it is scarcely to be contemplated that, under the most favourable circumstances, more could be done in the first season than to reach that point; and the officer in charge of that service will of course have to take into account the having to winter in that quarter.

9. His earliest attention in that case, in the ensuing spring, will be,—1st. The depositing such supplies at Melville Island as he can spare, or endeavouring to convey them thither by sledges, if he should not reach the island with his ships; and 2d. The detaching travelling parties in a westerly direction for the combined purpose of a search for traces of Sir John Franklin, and of depositing notices in conspicuous situations as to where the supplies are left, but being at the same time strictly enjoined to return to their ships before the usual period of the breaking up of the ice, in order that such ships may return to their rendezvous at Beechy Island, or otherwise prepare for quitting Lancaster Sound to return to England, according as the supplies on board of his ships, and the length of time consumed in the above service, shall require.

10. And here, we think it necessary more particularly to call your attention to the instructions to be given by you to the officer charged with this branch of the expedition; for whilst there is a possibility of your calculating on an early return of such officer from Melville Island, in the summer of 1853, and of his being able to afford you support in any particular direction, it is on the other hand not improbable, that from a prolonged detention to the westward, it may be his bounden duty not to hazard a further stay in those seas, but to make the best of his way home; in which case he must endeavour to communicate with the rendezvous at Beechy Island, before finally quitting Barrow's Strait, in order to obtain information of the other ships, and to deposit records of his proceedings.

11. He should, therefore, be made to understand the nature of the responsibility that devolves upon him, both as to the execution of his orders, in the first instance, and determining the point at which the power of compliance with those orders ceases.

12. It is, of course, possible that seasons such as were experienced by the expedition in 1850-51 may again occur to prevent a passage by ships up Wellington Channel, or to the west of Griffith Island, and, under such circumstances, it will be for you to consider how far it might serve any useful purpose to undertake an examination by travelling parties from Baring Bay, or Prince Alfred Bay, in the direction of Jones's Sound, in addition to those which it will be your duty to send out to the north and north-west, for traces of Sir John Franklin, in the direction of Queen's Channel.

13. Our instructions, therefore, are without reference to the possible circumstance of records still being found at Beechy Island, or elsewhere, (and for which it will be your duty to search) at a certain distance from the respective cairns, where it has been stated it was Sir John Franklin's custom to deposit them;* and if by such records it should prove that Sir John Franklin proceeded to the eastward out of Lancaster Sound, after he wintered at Beechy Island in 1845-46, you will still continue to push forward two of your ships towards Melville Island, as already directed by us, and with the other two you are to act as circumstances may render necessary, depending on the information which those records may convey; and adverting to the report of two ships having been seen on the ice in the North Atlantic, in the spring of 1851, we think it expedient to draw your attention to this subject, that you may adopt such steps on your way from Baffin Bay, with reference to search and inquiry on the shores of Davis Straits, as you may consider most advisable under the circumstances above stated, and the information the records may convey.

14. You

* The piece of tin or copper, said, by Adam Beck, to have been dropped from a staff, should also be looked for. See Evidence before Arctic Committee.

14. You are aware of the deposit of stores and provisions at Port Leopold, and of the steam launch left there by Sir James Ross; you are at liberty to employ that vessel in any way that her services may be made available; but with reference to the store of provisions at Port Leopold, and also those for 100 men, which were landed by Mr. Saunders on an island in Navy Board Inlet, it is our directions, that such provisions and stores shall on no account be touched by any of the vessels under your orders, unless compelled to do so by absolute necessity.

15. We have furnished you with copies of these instructions, which you are to deliver to the captain and officers in command of vessels under your orders. And we deem it necessary that you should be directed to communicate freely and unreservedly with your second in command, and the officers in charge of the other ships, on all points connected with the expedition, keeping them acquainted with your views and intentions, that, in case of an accident happening to yourself, or a separation of the ships, these officers may be fully aware of the course of proceedings intended to be adopted by you, and when the ships are separated from you for the purpose of carrying out our orders, the same unreserved intercourse and communication is to be maintained between the officers in command of the respective ships.

16. You are, no doubt, aware of the "Prince Albert," private vessel, being engaged in a like search in the Arctic Seas; you are to afford that vessel every aid and assistance, in the event of falling in with her, but you are in no way to interfere with her orders or take her under your charge.

17. The various logs and private journals, with drawings, plans, &c., are to be sent to this office, on the return of the expedition. And you are to be careful that from the date of your parting company with the ships sent to assist in towing you, your own letters to our secretary, together with those of the officers addressing you, are duly numbered as well as dated; and you are invariably, should any opportunity offer, to leave letters for us at such places as Cape Warrender, Ponds Bay, &c. provided no delay be incurred thereby.

18. Your ships have been fully equipped for the service they are going upon, and it has been our desire that you should be provided with every means and resource that might be made available. We have an entire reliance on the best use and application of those means on your part, and we have equal confidence in the care to be exercised by you for those employed under your orders; but there is one object which in the exercise of that care will naturally engage your constant attention, and that is, the safe return of your party to this country.

19. We are sensible, however, that notwithstanding a wish to keep this part of your duty prominently in mind, yet, that an ardent desire to accomplish the object of your mission, added to a generous sympathy for your missing countrymen, may prevail in some degree to carry you beyond the limits of a cautious prudence.

20. You are, therefore, distinctly to understand our directions to be, that the several ships under your orders shall each be on its way home, and to the eastward of Barrow Strait, whenever their stock of provisions shall have been reduced to twelve months' full allowance; and commending you, and those employed under you, to the providence of God, we trust that success may crown your efforts, and that you may be the means of affording succour to those of our countrymen whose absence we have so long deplored.

Given under our hands this 16th day of April 1852.

To Sir Edward Belcher, C. B.,
Captain of Her Majesty's Ship Assistance,
at Greenhithe.

Northumberland.
Hyde Parker.
Phipps Hornby.
Thos. Herbert.
Alex. Milne.

By command of their Lordships,

W. A. B. Hamilton.