

ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 6 April 1852 ;—for,

A COPY “of any further CORRESPONDENCE which has been transmitted to the Admiralty between Admiral Sir *John Ross* and the Danish Inspector-General, touching the Fate of the Expedition under Sir *John Franklin*.”

(*Captain Jones.*)

Admiralty, }
18 May 1852. }

J. H. HAY,
Chief Clerk.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 21 May 1852.

COPY of further Correspondence which has been transmitted to the Admiralty between Admiral Sir *John Ross* and the Danish Inspector-General, touching the Fate of the Expedition under Sir *John Franklin*.

— No. 1. —

My very dear and revered Sir,

Copenhagen, 13 Jan. 1852.

Your exceedingly kind and friendly letter I received at my father's house, Montebello, on the 9th inst.

With deep regret I read that you have suffered from a severe illness, but who the deuce can be well in such weather as we have had these six weeks past? As you were already so much better, I sincerely trust that you, with the blessing of God, will be wholly recovered by this time, and I hope this will find you in London hearty as usual.

You may depend upon it I lost no time in executing the first commission I received from you—for me, always a command—and I pray to God it may not be the last you give me. I immediately ordered horses, and in a few hours found myself domesticated in one of the hotels here. I have been very successful indeed, having met with great cordiality from the members of the Royal Danish Mission, with whom I immediately put myself in communication.

I have the satisfaction to inform you that in the course of a few weeks I shall be enabled to send you several copies of every book we possess in the Greenland language, and likewise that I have entered into an agreement with Mr. Wandahl, lector of the university in Greenlandish, and formerly minister in Greenland, and trust to be able to send you the translation at the same time as the books. Mr. Wandahl promises to do his best, and I am very happy to have secured such a valuable assistance as his.

At Godhavn, where I arrived on the Saturday as you had left on Wednesday, I saw and spoke to Adam Beck. He persisted in the truth of his assertion, and I am myself of the opinion that Sir John Franklin must have been lost on his return. I am therefore most decidedly of your opinion that any attempt in further exploring Wellington Channel will utterly fail in discovering anything relating to the unfortunate expedition. With this expedition I, like yourself, would have nothing to do; but are you sent out, and you really would give me a command under you, say the word, and I am yours, heart and hands, soul and body. Proud, very proud indeed, will I be if allowed to follow such a leader, even if that leader were not the hero of my youthful and mature fancy.

My seamanship, I trust, will stand its test in any part of the globe, and believe me, my dear Sir, never had you a more devoted and attached follower than I will be, if you allow me. My life has, like your own, been one of

adventures; I am therefore used to any climate, however warm or cold, and having spent four years and a half in Greenland, I have of course acquired not a little knowledge of the manners of the natives, which I hope may not be without its use on such an expedition. I am still young and hearty, and can undergo a good deal of fatigue without complaining; and as to my courage, I bear a name that never yet during centuries was ever sullied. Poor dispenser of words as I am, and necessarily also a poor letter writer, I could almost be eloquent when I think that I possibly might have been spared from severe hardships and dangers to render my services on such an occasion; but I daresay you are heartily tired of this already, and I will therefore break off at once.

I have seen Petersen (the interpreter to Penny), but do not put any great confidence in him, for reasons I possibly some day may impart to you. He is not the man I would recommend; there is none like a native.

(Some hours later.) I return this instant from a visit I paid the English minister, who declares that he has not received the deposition of Adam Beck, on which you say the setting out of the expedition will for a great part depend, and that he never heard of its existence. I showed him your letter, and he told me to write immediately, and let you know that when the deposition did come, he would endeavour to get it translated, though he did not know how; on which I told his Excellency to forward it to me, when I would have it translated in the shortest time possible. As to the contents of the deposition, they are well known here in Denmark. I have seen a copy of it in the possession of Mr. Möldrup at Godhavn, and it certainly went to say that the writer, Adam Beck, on his oath declared that he had seen and spoken some of the natives in Melville Bay or thereabouts, who had told him that two ships were wrecked there several years back; that the natives had provided their crews (some of whom wore uniforms) with the means of living for some time; but the bad season coming on, had discontinued to supply them, on which the Europeans had taken their provisions by force, and that eventually the natives had risen and killed all the strangers. It is not at all any improbable or unlikely story.

His Excellency having kindly offered to forward this along with his own despatches, and the time allowed me to write being nearly up, I am forced to conclude with a heartfelt expression of gratitude for your last letter, so kind and welcome; and assuring you once more that I am yours, soul and body, in this or any other enterprise you might undertake.

Pray write me soon, and believe me

Admiral Sir John Ross, c. b.,
&c. &c. &c.

Yours, &c.
(signed) *L. Platon.*

Memo. of Rear-Admiral Houston Stewart, on the foregoing letter of Mr. Platon's to Sir John Ross:—

“To be annexed to Sir John Ross's letter, requesting to have the command of an expedition to explore the East Coast of Baffin's Bay.

“*H. S.*”

— No. 2. —

Sir,

267, Strand, 17 January 1852.

I AM to request you will be pleased to inform my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that in the event of their Lordships being desirous that the east coast of Baffin's Bay, north of Uppernavick, and the inhabited part of the west coast, should be examined to determine the fate of the missing ships, I am a volunteer to perform that important service, which from the fact of my being the only naval officer who understands the Danish language, I am undoubtedly the best qualified to perform, as the Esquimaux of Greenland understand no other language but the Danish and their own.

I am to request that you will also inform their Lordships my belief of the ships under Sir John Franklin being lost in Baffin's Bay, is strengthened by the fact, that Adam Beck, the interpreter, has deposed that the words “3rd of September, 1846,” were on the tin plate which was lost, as appears by the
translation

translation arrived from Germany, and which is believed to be true by the Danish authorities.

I request also you will be pleased to inform their Lordships, that Mr. Lewis Platon, an intelligent Danish gentleman, who had been sent to Greenland to audit and inspect accounts, has volunteered to accompany me, and that we are both of opinion, and confident that we should be able to put an end to the question, which will not be the case by the plan recommended by the Arctic Committee.

In order to perform this service, I should require two small vessels (the "Lady Franklin" and "Sophia") and a small steamer. I should have no occasion to sail before the end of May, and I would return about the 1st of November in this year.

Lastly, I beg you will inform their Lordships, that on purpose to perform this service, I shall most willingly hoist my pendant as a captain, instead of hoisting my flag as a rear-admiral.

Captain W. A. B. Hamilton, R. N.,
&c. &c. &c.

I am, &c.
(signed) *John Ross,*
Rear-Admiral.

— No. 3. —

Sir,

Admiralty, 22 January 1852.

HAVING laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 17th instant, placing your services at the disposal of my Lords in the event of a further expedition being fitted out for the Arctic seas, I am to convey to you their Lordships' thanks for the offer you have made them, but at the same time to acquaint you that they are not prepared to avail themselves of your proposal.

Rear-Admiral Sir John Ross, C. B.

I have, &c.
(signed) *J. Parker.*

— No. 4. —

Sir,

North West Castle, Stranraer,
17 February 1852.

I HAVE the honour to send you herewith a letter, with which I have been favoured by Mr. Lewis Platon, the intelligent Danish gentleman whose acquaintance I made at Holsteinborg, in Greenland (touching the probable fate of the missing expedition, under the command of Sir John Franklin), and which I request you will be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, for their Lordships further information on that important subject. See Enclosure to No. 4.

I beg to add, it is my firm belief, that the interpreter, Adam Beck, has sworn to the truth as stated in my former communication, and in the letter from Mr. Platon, forwarded through Admiral Houston Stewart to their Lordships. See No. 2, p. 2.
See No. 1, p. 1.

Although I do not put the slightest credit in the report of Mr. Penny, touching the Wellington Channel, I have no desire that it should not be more fully examined, while it is evident that if my proposal for an investigation of the truth of Adam's Beck's assertion is successful in deciding the fate of the missing ships, it would lead to the early recall of the searching expeditions both to the westward and eastward, and thereby save a considerable expense to Government, and probably many valuable lives, as such an expedition as I have proposed in my letter of the 17th ultimo, need not leave England before the 1st of June, and would return at the latest by the 1st of November, and as the vessels I recommended are nearly ready, the additional expense would be trifling. See No. 2, p. 2.

Their Lordships knowing the deep interest the gallant Franklin took in my rescue under similar circumstances, and the sacred promise I made to him on his departure, will I am confident pardon my zeal in his cause, even if the steps I have taken do not meet with their Lordships' high approbation.

Captain W. A. B. Hamilton, R. N.,
Secretary of the Admiralty,
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.
(signed) *John Ross,*
Rear-Admiral.

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE

Enclosure to No. 4.

Copenhagen, 6 February 1852.

My dearly revered Sir,

From your very welcome letter, dated 29th ult., which I received to-day, I find that the Admiralty has not yet been pleased to appoint you to the command of one of the now fitting Arctic expeditions, likely from not having received the deposition of Adam Beck, which their Lordships probably eventually may think fit to disbelieve.

My candid opinion is, that Government will seek Sir John Franklin everywhere but where he is most likely to be found, and I certainly must say that it is most surprising to me and everybody here in Denmark, that the Government having already expended a heavy sum in their different attempts to ascertain the fate of Sir John Franklin, should now draw back, when there is the best reason to suppose that a new effort, made in a proper direction, would lift the veil that is thrown over the fate of Sir John Franklin and his gallant crews.

It is a matter of course that there is many opinions abroad as to the direction Sir John has taken, after leaving Beechey Island. I have in the papers read several very good arguments in support of his having pushed on and proceeded through Wellington Channel. Allowing that to be the case, let an expedition be sent out in that direction, most certainly; I will even say, such an effort ought to be made; but there is not one argument to be found or deduced from all the late reports, that can induce anybody to deny the possibility of his intended return, even if his preserved provisions have remained good, which you know is at least doubted.

Several circumstances seem to prove that he is lost on his return to England from Beechey Island, or perhaps a place somewhat farther up the channel, and this I think will be proved, firstly, by the fact, otherwise unaccountable, that nothing whatever is heard of him after leaving his winter quarters, which undoubtedly would have been the case if he had by slow degrees proceeded onwards, whereas his returning would leave no trace; secondly, by the fact observed by myself and others, that the ice in the years 1846, 1847, and 1848, was uncommonly heavy in the Greenland seas, and not unlikely prevented his further progress; and, lastly, certainly not the least conclusive evidence, by the depositions (for he has made two, as I shall prove) of Adam Beck.

You say that the authorities do not place any great confidence in his assertion; let me say, they know nothing at all about the Greenlanders, or else they would not for a moment doubt the statement of a Greenlander, when made on his oath. The Greenlanders are not yet civilized enough to commit perjury. I will allow that the natives, and especially Adam Beck, would not in the least scruple to tell a falsehood on his bare word, but once put upon his oath, he would bite the tongue out of his mouth before he uttered a syllable he did not himself believe to be the truth.

Adam Beck has made two statements, both of which I have seen; the one transmitted to Mr. Grundrig is made in more general terms; the other which, as I in my last letter observed, is in the hands of Mr. Möldrup, who, like myself, did not for a moment doubt that Adam Beck at least believed himself that he had uttered nothing but the mere truth. I saw Adam Beck at Godhavn, and as you well remember, that I procured him for you at Holsteinsborg; I had thus a double interest in his speaking the truth; I examined him several times and very severely, but even if I had not some lingering doubts as to his veracity, his straightforward answers to my questions would have convinced me that he has asserted nothing but the truth, but not all the truth, as he himself remarked to me, in very bad English, of which language he seemed very fond: "I had sworn to God, and on his book, that I would say nothing but what I was sure of, and that I said, but I could not so positively remember many things I heard from the natives, that I could swear to them, although I am perfectly sure of it myself; I cannot swear that the words I should use were the same as those I heard, and therefore I said nothing."

I thought that quite conclusive evidence enough (besides the idea of a Greenlander inventing such a story is really too ridiculous), and I will therefore maintain that Adam Beck has thrown a light on the probable fate of the missing expedition, which, in my eyes, it would be unpardonable not farther to investigate. That, next to being with you, is my reason for wishing to join you in this expedition, which I have little or no doubt would at once solve the question. These, my remarks, I give you leave to use in any manner you may think fit. The books, and especially the translation, I must acknowledge have cost me great pains in procuring for you. The books were, without exception, in the hands of several royal and private institutions, and therefore not easy to procure. I have however surmounted every obstacle, and have now the last copies at the binder. I have collected three copies of all the works (about 25 in number) published; will you have them all three, or can I keep one copy for myself? If you wish it, I will certainly send you all three copies. From the secretary of the Rönal mission, Mr. Rung, I have met great kindness, and it is partly owing to his exertions that I have been able to procure a collection as complete as is found in any public library. You would do me a favour if you would enclose me a few words of acknowledgment to this gentleman. The translation has caused me a great deal of grief. Mr. Wandahl, who you know had promised to execute it, sent me it back with word that he did not find himself competent to translate the words, as they were spoken, with a due reference to grammar, and recommended the Rev. Mr. Nösted as the only man in Denmark who was able to execute such a work. I found out Mr. Nösted, who very readily undertook the task, which I think he has executed extremely well.

I received my notes (you know I had to translate it from English to Danish) from him some time ago; when I had put the whole in order, I delivered it to be copied, but, good
God!

God ! how it was rendered. I have tried two other places since with equal success, and must now attempt what I can do myself. As soon as I am done with it, and Mr. Nösted has revised it, I shall send it you per post. Mr. Nösted refused to accept of any remuneration I offered him, but only insisted on keeping the book, which interested him greatly. Pray inclose me a few lines for him, as he would feel very proud in accepting a few words from you.

I am offered an appointment, but have declined accepting it, as I still hope to hear more favourable tidings from you, and trust and hope that I may have the pleasure in a few weeks to be able personally to assure you that I am

Yours, &c.
(signed) *L. Platon.*

Admiral Sir John Ross, C.B.,
&c. &c. &c.

—No. 5.—

Sir,

Admiralty, 6 March 1852.

I AM commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, to transmit to you herewith, for your consideration and report, the enclosed copy of a letter* from Adam Beck, relative to the missing expedition under Sir John Franklin. Encl

I am, &c.

Rear-Admiral, Sir John Ross, C.B.
&c. &c. &c.

(signed) *W. A. B. Hamilton.*

Enclosure to No. 5.

Holsteinsborg, 3 July 1850.

At my departure, everything went well for the first two days; nothing disagreeable happened to me; but on the third day my first misfortune happened. Three men took me and threw me overboard; they cast me into the water, and my head went round. [I became light headed.] At that time I could not speak English; and it was, therefore, these three men treated me in this manner, either to make game of me, or with serious designs on my life. These people who thus threw me into the water, and were three, were called, the first, Alexander Tudar; the second, Alexander Murray; and the third, James Fresier; these are the chief of them. But my ship's captain knew nothing of my being treated in this manner. His name was Sir John Ross. This Ross had a great regard for me, and I was not less attached to him. As we advanced we observed no natives among the ice masses, but as we went on still farther, there came ships towards us with large crews; they approached very near, and told us to keep outside the great ice. When we had passed the heaviest ice masses, towards evening of the next day, steering along the outer edge of the land, we got sight of three natives, who came towards us. Our chief told me to meet them as soon as we came nearer the land-ice (with the ship), the distance in depth of half a [Danish] mile. At this distance we met people, and when we came to them, Captain Philipps, one of our ship chiefs, told me to speak to them in my own language, but I answered him, "Wait a little, till we come nearer to them." I now walked over the ice, and said to them, "How are you? Answer me!" One of them shouted to the others as loud as he could, "They have a native with them!" His comrades repeated, "They have a native with them; he talks as we do; yes, it is an inuuk; let him come to me, for he spoke first to me." But I answered them, continuing to ask whether they had seen any ships. They replied, "No, we have seen none." But I answered, and continued, "But saw you none last autumn?" They replied, "Yesterday we saw two ships." I then asked them, "Where are the ships which you saw?" But the natives answered, "To the east and south of us we met some which had a native on board, but some of his words we did not understand." I knew by this directly that it was Carl Petersen; and I said to them again, "Have you seen no other ships?" "Yes, one ship have we seen, which was at Omenak." And I said, "Have you not seen others?" "No, we have seen no others; but the chief of one of the strongly-manned ships gave his natives their pictures (or pictures of European women)." But one of them whispered to his comrade, and said, "Well, let us kill them directly, for their women are, doubtless, like them." But I straight asked them, "Who is it you would kill?" They answered only, and said, "The Europe people are not worth fearing! Certainly not, we shall not fear them; they and we are equally to be feared. By Omenak (not far from Omenak) we have seen two ships, which were set on fire last fall by the natives." But I asked, "Where have these natives gone to?" They answered me, "The ship has certainly

* This document should have been designated a copy of a translation of the deposition made by Adam Beck.

tainly had them as father (=carried them on board).” And I inquired, “Whither?” And they replied, “They went down!” And I asked them again, “Down where?” And they answered, “They went to the sea-bottom!” The next day, on our departure, we saw two ships to the east of us. They came to us, but I did not know them; but they called them Lide (?) Franklin, Esquire. With a strong-manned (=ship, vessel, sloop), we went towards them, and got alongside them on the left hand, at some distance. While we kept still they came over to us in a ship’s boat; I directly knew the man again whom I saw yesterday, whose name was Kallasæk (=Navle*), in company with Carl Petersen. He came near us, after he had climbed up the edge of the ship, and said, “Adam, you are a liar!” As he addressed me in this way I did not answer him. This Kallasæk asked me directly [? I asked this Kallasæk directly], “Where are these ships, then? Have you destroyed them (perhaps =lost sight of them)?” They answered me, “We don’t know!” Petersen knows the language of the Europeans; yet this same Petersen would not talk of their manners (way of acting.) I now turned straight to him, and ordered him to tell me directly what ships these were, as I did not know whether they were whale-ships, or whether they were the royal discovery ships. He answered me deceitfully, “Don’t speak in that way. If we two are away several months yet, our earned money will be much more.” I answered him, “It is the same to me whether I earn money or not. This seems to me to be enough, as long as my father lives. If you see him alive, I shall be glad, but do not tell him that I am gone away, and travel continually onward. He lives always in my memory, as an old man when I left him.”

To this I will add: This native, Kallasæk, said to me, that these ships had four swords; that one of them should be taken with the sword; its name was Kàrcok, and it had three united swords. For this cause I, Adam, have spoken the truth, and shall not grow weary of speaking the truth; if hereafter I am ordered to Omenak, I can go too.

God be thanked, that Sir John Franklin is come!

When we in the autumn made a journey, we came to (the place) Pitsé (Fabricius’ Ordbog [Dictionary], p. 380; north of Pitserfik (= the place where any one has died), got ashore, and saw the first place he (Franklin) had landed at. That is, we saw his three (buried) dead, who had died in the autumn of 1846. There we remained four days, and there I got one of the ship’s company as my enemy. This was Murray. There, on the morning of the fourth day, while I was running away, and three of the ship’s crew were after me (to the hills) without their getting up to me, and who, therefore, turned back again, while I continued to fly, I got eyes on a cross-tree. I went to this timber-cross, and saw that a brass-plate was hammered (inlaid) in it, with a long inscription in the English tongue. But I did not understand it, as it is not my speech. I only knew [could read] thus much: September 3d 1846. I thankfully drew it out directly from the side [of the post],† and intended to take it home with me. On my way over the hills I slid over the snow, for the snow, like an ice-hill, had first been thawed, and then had frozen again. This brass-plate, which I had found, I lost again, and could not go back [to look for it], as I had no weapon (ice-hook) with me, and could not walk up the ice-hill.

Only the wood did I bring back with me, and lost what was written upon it. The wooden post alone was brought home, to use for fire-wood in the summer. This wood which I found I have marked with my name, because I will keep it.

In my winter abode I have been very unlucky, for my wicked shipmates spoke ill of me to my master. They forged a lie against me, although they were the guilty persons. They opened a cask of brandy with a gimlet, and now and then they stole some of it. The people who did this laid the blame on me, and I was therefore dangerously situated, although I was altogether innocent. In the meantime I am glad of this lying accusation against me, inasmuch as we shall all be placed before God after death.

I hope that Heaven will preserve my friend, the dear Ross, in the coming time. Now I part from you; I give you my hand, and bid you farewell. Hereafter shall we see each other no more to our life’s end; may we meet in the joy of Heaven!

Godhavn, 30 August 1851.

Farewell! I, thy very dear,

Adam Beck.

The undersigned has translated literally the Greenland document, so as to express the natural phraseology of the Eskimoes as correctly as possible. As far as I can judge by the hand, the style, and the construction of this document, it has been written by the schoolmaster, Paul Erik Rasmussen, of the Godhavn station.

Copenhagen, 6 February 1852.

(signed) *Nösted,*
Seminary Warden and Missionary
at Jacobshavn.

The

* Anglicé, Navel.

† What follows shows the meaning to be:—I directly drew it (the post, brass-plate, and all) from the side (of the hill); for he has the post safe.

The contradictions and obscurities in the above strange opus are not my fault. I have translated it as literally and correctly as I could from the Danish, without regard to elegance of expression. To make sense of it is another thing. I have added the explanatory words within brackets []; those within parentheses () are in the original Danish.

Copenhagen, 10 February 1852.

(signed) *George Stephens*,
Professor of English Literature in the
University of Copenhagen.

— No. 6. —

Sir,

North West Castle, Stranraer, 10 March 1852.

I AM to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated the 6th instant, and the therein enclosed copy of the translation of a letter written by Adam Beck, the Esquimaux interpreter of the "Felix," being the deposition sworn to by him in my presence at Godhavn, in the island of Disco, Greenland, and requiring my consideration, and my report on the same as relative to the missing expedition under Sir John Franklin.

And I have to acquaint you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that I have carefully considered the said translation made by Professor Nösted, and am decidedly of opinion that it confirms the statement often made to myself by Adam Beck, during the voyage, when I put questions to him in the Danish language on the subject, namely, that the two missing ships were lost on the east coast of Baffin's Bay, in the autumn of 1846. Had his deposition been more coherent, I should not have placed so much reliance on it as I now do; because then it would not have been his own composition. Referring also to Mr. Platon's letters before transmitted to you for the information of their Lordships, it will be seen that Adam Beck had subsequently made a more satisfactory deposition, and had been strictly questioned by that gentleman, who then held a responsible situation under the Danish Government at Greenland, and who is decidedly of opinion that Adam Beck has spoken and sworn to the truth, and the evidence he has given touching the fate of the missing ships ought not to be rejected in consequence of its incoherency and its contradiction by the Dane, Petersen, who did so for obvious reasons.

Having seen in the weekly paper "Nautical Standard," that Mr. Penny had published his letter to the Admiralty, in which I am called on to explain "Why I believed Adam Beck's assertion?" I obtained his pamphlet, and in the same paper, I have published the enclosed reply, to which I beg to refer, and which will account in a satisfactory manner for the disbelief (in the first instance) of Adam Beck's story, and the observations made by the Arctic Committee, and evidence touching the document written on board the "Assistance," which arose from his being taken there against his will, to write down what the Esquimaux boy said (who had been tutored by Petersen to say nothing about the lost ships), but not what he himself had heard, and of course (from Petersen's contradiction) Captains Austin and Ommaney believed that Adam Beck had been telling a falsehood, because otherwise it would have been their duty to have made a search in that locality.

See Enclosure to
No. 6.

It will be impossible that the expedition now fitting out can examine the east coast of Baffin's Bay, and the Wellington Channel also, during this season, besides which a knowledge of the Danish language is a qualification absolutely necessary, as the Esquimaux of Danish Greenland understand only the Danish and their own language, and in fact, I was the only person in the seven ships who could obtain the information from Adam Beck touching the fate of the ships.

And referring to my plan for effectually examining the said locality, as the only chance of setting the question at rest, See No. 2, p. 2.

Captain W. A. B. Hamilton, R.N.
Secretary of the Admiralty,
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.
(signed) *John Ross*,
Rear-Admiral.

Enclosure to No. 6.

To the Editor of the Nautical Standard.

Sir,

It is with no less concern than reluctance that I feel myself under the necessity of noticing the vain, silly, and supercilious attempt which Captain Penny has made in justification of his extraordinary conduct while in charge of a Government Expedition in search of the missing ships, by an ill-advised letter to the late Admiralty, which he has published. For being employed on the same interesting service, and our vessels being frozen up within 200 yards of each other, and rendering each other every assistance in our power for 11 months, I have to acknowledge many marks of his kindness, in bountifully sharing with us some of those luxuries supplied to him by Government, which my limited means did not enable me to procure; a circumstance which was, without doubt, conducive to the comfort, if not to the health we enjoyed, during the severity of an Arctic winter.

I shall not, however, notice the many misrepresentations with which his almost unintelligible statements are replete, leaving Captain Austin either to refute them, or to treat them with their merited contempt. But I am called upon by Captain Penny to explain why I continue to believe the assertion of Adam Beck, and in doing so, I have to regret that I must make an exposure which cannot be agreeable to him, and which, but for his temerity in demanding it, would have been buried in oblivion. As, however, this circumstance is closely connected with the fate of the gallant Franklin, all personal considerations must give way to truth and justice.

Captain Penny left England early in the month of April, when (taking into consideration the severity of the previous winter) he must have been well aware that he could make no progress to the northward in Baffin's Bay, but his double pay of a Post Captain of the Royal Navy, to which he had been fortuitously elevated, began earlier, and he had an object in visiting Uppernavik, to procure from this northernmost of the Danish settlements, the services of his friend, Mr. Petersen, whom he induced to leave his situation of 20*l.* a year (with which he was dissatisfied), for the position of interpreter with him, at 75*l.* a year, and without the Danish Governor's permission. In the month of August, the "*Felix*" overtook the whole of the Government ships, when about the 12th of that month the aboriginal Esquimaux were seen on the margin of the land ice, and had on the preceding day been communicated with by Captain Penny, and whose note delivered by them to the officers of the "*Intrepid*" and "*Felix*," for Captain Austin, proved that no inquiries had been made respecting the fate of the missing ships. Adam Beck, the interpreter of the "*Felix*," having obtained information from the stranger Esquimaux, which he could not fully communicate (the "*Felix*" being then at a distance), Captain Penny's interpreter was sent for, and flatly contradicted the statement of Adam Beck, calling him "a liar," which being ironically repeated by the poor fellow, who was frightened (and no wonder, as it is well known that these Danish overseers are often severe on the poor natives of Greenland). In the meantime a young Esquimaux was brought on board the "*Assistance*," and being tutored by Petersen, also denied the truth of Adam Beck's story, and every one, as well as myself, believed it was a fabrication, although no one could conjecture why he should, in a moment, have conjured up such a story; and Petersen's motive did not, at that time, become apparent. We all proceeded on our voyage, arrangements having been made that Captain Penny, according to his instructions, was to visit and examine Jones's Sound (which indeed was the origin of his being employed), and the others to examine the positions within Barrow's Strait; but Captain Penny did not wait near Jones's Sound for its opening, which could not be expected for some days, but proceeded up Lancaster Sound, where he spoke the "*North Star*," and by her his despatches were sent home, among others, a letter from Mr. Petersen to his wife at Uppernavik, which will be noticed hereafter. We subsequently communicated with each other at Union Bay, Beechey Island, where Captain Penny, unjustly to Captain Phillips and Mr. Abernethy, appropriated to himself the credit of discovering the graves of the deceased men that had belonged to the "*Erebus*" and "*Terror*." Having remained in the Wellington Channel two days longer than any other vessel, the "*Felix*," owing to a disruption of a part of the edge of the barrier which crossed, we were enabled distinctly to see land to the north of this barrier, which I named "*North Victoria*," but which was subsequently claimed by Captain Penny as his discovery, and named "*Albert Land*." After passing Wellington Channel, and ascertaining that the passage between Griffiths' and Cornwallis' Islands was closed by ice for the season, we were returning to Wellington Channel with the intention of obtaining a position as far north in it as I could, when we unfortunately fell in with Captain Penny, who informed us that Captain Austin's squadron were proceeding to a bay discovered in Cornwallis Island, to which we accompanied the "*Lady Franklin*" and "*Sophia*," expecting that, as nothing more could be done that season, I should be requested to return to England with despatches. On the following day, we were finally frozen in, and Captain Austin's squadron did not reach our harbour.

During the whole winter, Adam Beck continued to assert the truth of his statement respecting the fate of Sir John Franklin, and as he began to understand English, explanations and information were elicited from him that convinced almost all on board the "*Felix*," that he had told the truth. Before leaving our position at Cornwallis Island, I had several conversations in the Danish language, which he understands, which convinced me that there was at least so much probability in his report, as demanded that a search in that locality should be made for the wreck of the missing ships.

It was therefore my determination to endeavour, even with the slender means and small quantity

quantity of provisions I possessed, to make the search, which seemed to give much delight to Adam Beck, who exclaimed, "Now you see I not tell a lie!" I communicated to Captain Penny that I intended going round the north side of the main ice, and land Adam Beck at Disco, where I hoped to find the provisions directed to be landed there by the "North Star," and he communicated to me (in presence of several persons) that he believed the missing ships had been wrecked on the west coast of Baffin's Bay; and, as he had an interpreter, he would examine the whole coast between Lancaster Sound and Cumberland Strait, a distance of 600 miles, and knowing, in that case, he could not reach England before November, I sent no despatches by him. We proceeded to carry out our intentions into execution, but found that the land ice, from the latitude of 77° to 74°, extended 30 miles from the east coast, and as we were unprepared to winter, having only three months' provisions left, we had no alternative but to proceed to Godhavn, in Disco Island, where we hoped to obtain a supply that would enable us to return to the northward. On approaching Disco (which we found quite clear of ice) we fell in with the Danish Government store-ship "Hyalfisken," Captain Humble, who kindly piloted us into Godhavn. On our arrival I discharged Adam Beck, and in conversation with Captain Humble, I obtained the following astounding information. Captain Humble said:—"I have just come from Uppernavik, and have seen Mr. Petersen's wife, who had received a letter from her husband, dated July, Lancaster Sound (which I read), saying that it was now certain that they would comfortably spend the winter in some snug harbour, and as he would be carried to England and spend another winter there, he would have plenty of money from the English Government, and that he would come out with Captain Penny, who would have the command of another expedition, and come home to Copenhagen, desiring her to sell her furniture, &c. Another came to the wife's sister, who is married to the mate of one of the Government ships—hoping that Petersen would be carried to England, as, in that case, he would return with sufficient money to enable him to quit this wretched country." Thus it appears that Captain Penny's plans, which it is evident he attempted to put into execution, by making the best of his way home, had been organized as early as the 23d July 1850, but as he could not have left England with the addition of a steamer before the 1st October 1851, it was impossible he could have reached the Wellington Channel that season. His object must have been, therefore, to have comfortably wintered at Ball's River, or Holsteinsborg, or some port in Greenland, on full pay (800*l.* a year), and proceed in June 1852, and would have been just as far forward as though he had left England at that time. His plans were, however, happily frustrated by the absence of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the decision of the Arctic Committee.

In the meantime, Adam Beck voluntarily appeared before the resident at Godhavn, and deposed as to the truth of his former statement, subsequent to which he was examined by Inspector-general Lewis Platon, who has written to me that he is fully convinced that Adam Beck has spoken the truth.

The following is an extract of the third letter on the subject which I have received from Mr. Platon:—

"Montebello, Feb. 17, 1852.

"From the interest I take in the question where Sir John Franklin ought to be sought, and being, as you know, most decidedly of opinion that Sir John Franklin was lost on his intended return, I feel myself bound to say a few words on this subject, which you will use as you think proper.

"I shall merely premise what you are already aware of, that I have, during four years and a half, held a responsible government situation in Greenland. Three years of this time I resided at Holsteinsborg, and had thus ample opportunity of observing the character of the natives generally, and of Adam Beck individually, as he during that time never omitted an opportunity of thrusting himself into my notice, and he several times, temporarily, was attached to my household. I think therefore I may, without presumption, claim to be considered as not incompetent to judge of what confidence there ought to be placed in what may be deduced from such a document as his. From my knowledge of the character of Adam Beck, I may safely assert that it is beyond doubt that he has heard something about the two lost ships; but certainly it would be difficult to say what it is he has heard, merely by reading his deposition. As I informed you in a former letter, I have seen this man after his discharge at Godhavn; I therefore look on the deposition in a far different manner than others unacquainted with these facts undoubtedly would do; and I maintain that it throws a light on the fate of Sir John and his gallant crew, and that it would be shameful altogether to reject his evidence. I cannot but regret that you did not get a copy of the other deposition he made, as it was far more satisfactory than the one you got. I must make haste to be in time for post that leaves here at two o'clock, and must therefore conclude, angry with myself for not being able to write such as to convince any but myself that the greater reliance may be placed on his assertion. Pray write me as soon as possible, and believe me, &c., &c.

(signed) "L. Platon."

Mr. Platon's former letters, with my own, have been sent to the late Admiralty. In one of them he says, "The people of Denmark think it strange that the English Government are sending to search for Franklin in every place but where he is to be found."

Captain Penny must no longer assert that I am the only person who gives any credit to Adam Beck's assertion; but in return I must be permitted to say, that I yield not the smallest credit to the assertion of Captain Penny, that Sir John Franklin ever went up the

Wellington Channel. I was present at the interview he had with Captain Austin on board the "Resolute," on the 11th of August, when I can testify that Captain Penny made no application at that time for a steam-vessel; moreover, I can testify that the application for a steam-vessel would have been absurd, as it was quite impossible she could have proceeded up that channel. The "Felix" was the last vessel that left that spot on the 13th of August, at which time the barrier of ice was still across it; on that day, no water could be seen from Cape Spencer to the northward, and then Captain Penny's vessels were both to the eastward of Cape Riley. Captain Penny asserts that Captain Austin took the "Felix" in tow to take her home, that she might take the credit of his discoveries; but the truth is, that Captain Austin offered to tow Captain Penny's vessels out of Lancaster Sound, which offer he did not accept; and it was then that he offered to take us as far as Union Bay, Beechey Island, where Captain Penny must have seen the "Felix" as he passed.

I have now only one more subject to disabuse. Captain Penny's whole idea that Sir John Franklin went up the Wellington Channel, was based on the fact of his having found upon the ice two chips of wood, which I verily believe must have been thrown on the ice by some of his own crew, for otherwise they would have been found sunk considerably below the surface, and they were such pieces of wood as were numerous where the ships wintered. But if Captain Penny really believed that the missing ships had gone up what he now calls the Victoria Channel (not marked as such in the chart he gave to me), why did he not remain himself to explore it in the spring?—He ventured to say that he had not enough of provisions, because he had given some to the "Felix"; but this he denied on the Committee, as two cwt. of carrots and a bag of potatoes were all we got, and for which we would have supplied him with ten tons of coals, and six casks of flour; but Captain Austin would certainly have supplied him up to three years; besides the depôt at Leopold Island was within 60 miles of where his vessel would be. When I said in my evidence that Captains Austin and Penny were both justified in coming home, it was with the conviction that they both thought and believed that the locality was completely searched, and that they both believed (as I do) that the missing ships never went up that Channel. I have no doubt that they lost both seasons of 1845 and 1846, and that finding they had only provisions for another year (and perhaps less, as many of Goldner's canisters were found with only one cut at the top, which being convex were clear proofs of their putrescent condition), that they were lost on the passage home. Captain Penny's assertion (page 10), that the loss of two ships with the whole crews is next to impossible, and contrary to all experience; this observation cannot apply to ships wrecked in Baffin's Bay; after the month of September there is no experience of any ships being lost in Baffin's Bay, but in the summer.

In conclusion, I deeply regret that Captain Penny has been so imprudent as to publish what he has done; I believed that he really had been actuated by feelings of philanthropy, touching the rescue of my gallant friend Franklin and his brave companions; he had at one time gained my esteem and regard, and he knows that I acted as a peacemaker between him and those whom his virulent temper had offended. I was an admirer of his zeal and unflinching perseverance, and I then believed that he had no sinister motive; it has been therefore with mixed feelings of sorrow and of pity that I have been constrained to change my opinion of an individual who has proved that he ought not to have been elevated to the position in which he was unfortunately placed.

(signed) *John Ross*, Rear-Admiral.

—No. 7.—

Sir,

Admiralty, 13 March 1852.

I HAVE received and laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 10th instant, with its enclosure, on the subject of Adam Beck's deposition relative to the missing ships under the orders of Captain Sir John Franklin.

I am, &c.

Rear Admiral, Sir John Ross, c. B.

(signed) *Augustus Stafford*.

—No. 8.—

Sir,

267, Strand, London, 23 March 1852.

ENCLOSED you will receive the extract of a letter I have this day received from Inspector-general Lewis Platon, touching the fate of Sir John Franklin's expedition, which I am to request that you will be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for their Lordships' serious consideration, and

and to inform their Lordships that I entirely agree with the Danish Inspector-general that there is no chance of deciding the question of the missing ships but by the examination I have recommended.

I have, &c.
(signed) *John Ross*,
Rear-Admiral.

To Captain W. A. B. Hamilton, R.N.,
&c. &c. &c.

Enclosure to No. 8.

EXTRACT of a Letter from the Danish Inspector-General of Greenland touching the Fate of Sir *John Franklin's* Expedition.

Montebello, Denmark,
5 March 1852.

My dear Sir,

Yours of the 26th ult. I had the pleasure of receiving this day.

I am really both surprised and vexed that nothing yet has been decided on. The season is already far advanced, and it is time Government should decide whether they will indeed search after Sir John Franklin in earnest, or if they intend to rest satisfied with sending the expedition under Sir Edward Belcher in a direction where others have failed in tracing the unfortunate voyagers farther than Beechey Island, and where the chances are a thousand to one that the expedition will return as wise as they leave. I really do hope the Government will pay less attention to the representations of others, and listen somewhat more to the voice of reason. The people of England are strangely infatuated as regards this question.

The more I think, and the more I put this and that together, the more convinced I am that Sir John Franklin never committed such an act of madness as to push his way farther on, after leaving Beechey Island, having most likely at the time scarcely provisions enough left for the space of time it had taken him to reach this place. Don't tell me about his procuring, and with ease too, such a lot of provisions as the officers of the different expedition ships seem to lay such weight upon. I know the country too well for that; but even suppose they could get an inexhaustible supply of birds, had he salt enough to cure such a number? Still an Englishman is no Esquimaux, and no one but an Esquimaux or a Russian can live and do his duty on board any length of time on such a diet, in such a climate. Sir John was too old a hand in those regions not to know that, and it is my firm belief that having made up his mind to return to England, he was lost on his home passage.

Should you consider my presence in England likely to forward the cause, pray let me know, as I take a very deep interest in the solution of the question. I wish to Heaven that your next would contain the joyful intelligence that Government had at last decided in your favour, as I feel confident that it will be the only expedition with any chance of success.

I remain, &c.
(signed) *L. Platon*.

— No. 9. —

Sir,

Admiralty, 26 March 1852.

I HAVE received and laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 23d instant, with its enclosures, respecting the further search after Sir John Franklin's expedition.

I am, &c.
(signed) *W. A. B. Hamilton*.

Rear-Admiral Sir John Ross, c. B.

ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

COPY of further Correspondence which has been transmitted to the Admiralty between Admiral Sir *John Ross* and the Danish Inspector-General, touching the Fate of the Expedition under Sir *John Franklin*.

(*Captain Jones.*)

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

ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 19 November 1852;—for,

- “COPIES of any CORRESPONDENCE received at the ADMIRALTY from Sir *Edward Belcher*’s Squadron, detailing the Proceedings thereof since leaving *Greenhithe*, and from any other of the ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS since the Dates of the last Returns from the same respectively :”
- “Of any COMMUNICATIONS received at the ADMIRALTY from Mr. *Kennedy*, of the ‘Prince Albert’ Discovery Ship :”
- “Of CORRESPONDENCE from Commander *Inglefield*, of the Screw Vessel ‘Isabel,’ reporting his Discoveries and Proceedings in the Polar Sea :”
- “Of any Plans or Suggestions of SEARCH for Rear-Admiral Sir *John Franklin*, and the Ships and Crews of his Expedition :”
- “And, of any further CORRESPONDENCE on the subject of the ARCTIC REGIONS, since the last laid before this House in the late Session (in continuation of Arctic Papers, Session 1852).”

Admiralty, }
16 December 1852. }

J. H. HAY,
Chief Clerk.

(*Sir Robert Harry Inglis.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
20 December 1852.
