

M'Clintock's belief that the party who had brought her there were returning to the ships, having found their strength unequal to the painful and dangerous journey that lay before them ; while, probably, the stronger portion of the crews pushed on with another boat-sledge, and ascended the Great Fish River.

We must remember, says Captain Sherard Osborne,—of whose admirable summary we have freely availed ourselves,—that some Eskimos met by Dr. Rae in 1854 spoke of seeing forty men dragging a boat near the Fish River ; and said that the officer of that party was a tall, stout, middle-aged man, a description which agrees well with the appearance of Captain Fitzjames. The probabilities are, therefore, that the strongest under Fitzjames pushed on to perish in the wilds of the Hudson Bay Territory (relics have been found on the Fish River fifty miles above Montreal Island) ; whilst the weak, if they ever reached the ships again, only did so in time to see them wrecked by the disruption of the ice in the autumn of 1848. One ship went down, we are told by the Eskimos, and the other was forced on shore, and in her there was one dead person, “a tall, large-boned man.” These wrecks, however, could not have taken place on the coast between Capes Victory and Herschel, for in that case the natives would have swept away the relics discovered by M'Clintock and Hobson. It may, therefore, be concluded that the wrecked ship was driven by the ice upon some spot within the range of the Fish River Eskimos ; and that in the year 1857-58, the ice had in all probability again swept her away and engulfed her.

The point at which the fatal imprisonment of the *Erebus* and *Terror* in 1846 took place, was only ninety miles from the limit reached by the explorers Dease and Simpson, in their boats, in 1838-39. Ninety miles more of open water, and Franklin and his heroic followers would not only have won the prize for which they had so bravely struggled, but have gained their homes to enjoy their well-merited honours. Such, however, was not to be the case. “They were to discover the great highway between the Pacific and the Atlantic. It was given them to win for their country a discovery for which she had risked her sons and lavishly spent her wealth through many centuries ; but they were to die in accomplishing their last great earthly task ; and, still more strange, but for the energy and devotion of the wife of their chief and leader, it would in all probability never have been known that they were indeed the First Discoverers of the North-West Passage.”*]

We have now to say a few words respecting the later voyages undertaken in the Polar Seas.

Before the return to England of Captain M'Clintock (in September 1859), Captain (now Sir Roderick) M'Clure, starting from Behring's Strait, discovered in 1850 the famous northern passage, fruitlessly sought after for so many centuries, between Melville and Baring Islands. On one occasion during his prolonged exploration he

* [Captain Sherard Osborne, C.B., “Narrative of the Search after Sir John Franklin.”]