

ARCTIC EXPEDITION, 1875-6.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS. CAPTAIN G. S. NARES.

Between 22nd July, 1875, and 27th October, 1876.

H.M.S. "Alert," at Valentia,
27th October, 1876.

Sir,

Their Lordships will have already learnt, by telegraph from Valentia on the 27th October, that H.M. Ships "Alert" and "Discovery" have returned from Arctic Service. I parted company with the latter ship during a heavy gale on the 19th instant, Captain Stephenson has orders to repair to Queenstown.

The results of the voyage agree precisely with the expectations of the best Arctic authorities on our leaving the shores of Great Britain last year, and which were expressed by myself to their Lordships at the Admiralty before sailing, viz. :—

That with an ordinary season I would be able to penetrate the northern limit of Robeson Channel, however far it extended, but that wherever it ended and opened out into the Polar Basin there the ship would be stopped by the ice.

And also that, with the ship advanced to a high Latitude as a fixed base, if continuous land was discovered trending towards the north, our sledge parties would certainly reach the Pole; but that journeying over the ice in the Polar Sea would prove impracticable with sledges.

The "Alert" was advanced to the shores of the Polar Sea, and was there stopped by heavy impenetrable ice in Lat. $82^{\circ} 27' N.$, Long. $61^{\circ} 22' W.$, and after a most determined and laborious journey by Commander Markham and Lieutenant Parr, our sledge parties forced their way along the heavy icy road towards the north, and advanced the British flag to Lat. $83^{\circ} 20' 26'' N.$

I am sorry to have to report the loss of four men belonging to the expedition, by death;—Neil C. Petersen, Dog-Driver and Interpreter, on the 14th May; George Porter, Gunner, R.M.A., on the 8th of June; James Hand, A.B., on the 13th of June; and Charles W. Paul, A.B. on the 29th June: the former after a severe frost-bite, received while sledging in the early spring, and the latter three from scurvy, which seriously attacked each of the advanced sledge parties; but I am happy to add that the invalids have now all recovered.

With the exception of the loss mentioned above, the expedition is returning with each member in good health and the ships in as good condition as when they left England.

The "Discovery" wintered in a sheltered harbour in Lat. $81^{\circ} 44' N.$, Long. $65^{\circ} 3' W.$

The coast line from the winter quarters of the "Alert" to the northward and westward was explored by a sledge party under Lieutenant Aldrich to Lat. $82^{\circ} 16' N.$, Long. $85^{\circ} 33' W.$ Cape Columbia, the northernmost cape, being in Lat. $83^{\circ} 7' N.$, Long. $70^{\circ} 30' W.$

Sledge parties from the "Discovery," commanded by Lieutenant Beaumont, using the Polaris Dépôt as a base, explored the north coast of Greenland to Lat. $82^{\circ} 18' N.$, Long. $50^{\circ} 40' W.$

No land was sighted to the northward of the above explorations except the continuation of the Greenland Coast to Lat. $82^{\circ} 54' N.$, Long. $48^{\circ} 33' W.$

Lady Franklin Sound was explored by Lieutenant Archer from the "Discovery," and was found to run S.W. 65 miles, terminating in two small bays.

Petermann Fiord was examined by Lieutenant Fulford and Dr. Coppinger for 19 miles, and was then found to be impassable for sledges, owing to glacier ice.

A seam of excellent coal, 250 yards long and 25 feet thick, was found in the neighbourhood of the "Discovery's" winter quarters near the sea, but only small vessels could obtain sheltered anchorage nearer than at five miles distance.

The ice in the Polar Sea unable to escape to the southward in large quantities is of unusual thickness, averaging 80 feet.

The sea is never navigable beyond the position attained by the "Alert" on the west side and the "Polaris" on the east side of the channel.

From Cape Sabine to the northward the expedition had to struggle constantly with the ice during both the outward and homeward voyage.

Having proved the impracticability of reaching the North Pole by Smith Sound,