

testing the point has not hitherto arisen, and the fact that these waters have been successfully navigated by ordinary sailing vessels for 200 years, in order to secure what little trade the country afforded, indicates what may be expected from properly equipped steamships, so soon as the larger business of the future may require their services in this direction. The conditions of the sea-borne commerce of the North-West, in relation to Hudson's Bay, will probably turn out to be similar to those of the rest of Canada with reference to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In both cases, everything must be done during the summer. Yet Hudson's Bay is, of course, open all the year round. No one would be likely to suppose that a sea of such extent, in the latitude of the British Islands, would ever freeze across. The Lower St. Lawrence is also partly open even in the middle of winter. But the difficulty in both cases is the impossibility of getting into harbours. A harbour such as that of Churchill on Hudson's Bay would have the advantage over Quebec or Montreal of communicating directly with the open sea, and hence in the autumn vessels would not be liable to be frozen in, as occasionally happens in the St. Lawrence—as for example in the autumn just passed; and also in the autumn of 1870, when the outward-bound shipping got frozen in below Quebec, occasioning a loss, it was said, of over a million dollars. Again, in the spring there would probably be less uncertainty about entering from the sea than in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where vexatious delays are not uncommon after the open season is supposed to have arrived.

There has been some discussion as to the length of time during which Hudson's Strait and Bay might be navigated each year, but there does not seem to be much evidence that the strait, any more than the bay, is closed at any season. Its great width, depth, and strength of the tides probably keep it open all winter. My own experience, and that of many others lead me to believe that the climate generally of Hudson's Bay is much better than some writers have represented it to be. From all that I could learn or observe, it appears that the strait and bay may be navigated and the land approached by steamers during an average of four and a half months each year, or from the middle of June to the end of October. The strait and bay could probably be navigated by steam-vessels earlier than the middle of June, but nothing would be gained, except perhaps by whalers, in going in before an open harbour can be reached. Much has been recorded in favour of the above opinion from the days of the Danish Captain, John Munck—who wintered at Churchill in 1619-20—to the present time; and other evidence, which is not to be found in the books, leads me to the same conclusions. Churchill Harbour does not freeze up until November, and the sea is open close to it during the whole winter.

I have a record of the principal phenomena of the seasons at Martin's Falls, on the Albany, extending through a period of fifty years, and from it I find that the river is open there on an average for six months of the year. I have also a record of dates of the opening and closing of Hayes River at York Factory, extending over more than fifty years, from which it appears to enjoy an average of fully six months of open water. The Nelson River is open for a longer period. I think, with these facts before us, we need not despair of successfully navigating Hudson's Bay, as far as the length of the season is concerned. Even were the time of open navigation shorter than it is known to be, the very great benefits which the North-West and Canada generally would derive from possessing an outlet in that direction are sufficient to make it well worth an effort to open it. The freedom of