

that have been made by England, during the last seventy years, to find a north-west passage, was that commerce with the East might be facilitated. After examining every sinuosity of the American shore in both oceans, from north latitude 30° to the Arctic Sea, and expending upwards of one million pounds in the work, it has at length been demonstrated to be impracticable. In passing through the icy portals of the Frigid Zone, in 1850-51, McClure, as far as mercantile interests were concerned, closed the gates behind him. While Polar expeditions have met with defeat, projects have been meditated by France and other powers to pierce the Western Continent within the limits of a foreign country, and, last April, Mr. Laurence Oliphant, M.P., one of the secretaries of the Royal Geographical Society, read a paper before that body on the expediency of cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Panama to unite the two oceans.

But why should England, with unrivalled facilities within her own territory for a north-west passage to Asia and to her colonies in the South Pacific, imperil her monopoly of Eastern trade, and place herself at the mercy of foreign nations? British North America is ready to her hand, a natural link connecting the continents of Europe and Asia, and lying in the track of their nearest and best communication with each other. Why, then, it may be again asked, if this Western route to the East exists, has it never yet become a practical reality? The reason is obvious; the speediest line of transit, though earnestly longed for and industriously sought, has never been sought in the way in which it *does* exist, and cannot be found in the way in which it has nearly always been attempted. A maritime passage has been the object of all preceding ages, and, practically, communication by that medium is impossible. But there is a passage across the continent by rivers, lakes, and land, and that may be made immensely more valuable than any mere maritime passage could have been, even had such been available. "Two irresistible agents are at work, bringing to light the incalculable value of that conformation [across British America] so long deemed an insuperable obstacle. They have changed the requirements for the attainment of the objects of the North-West passage, and have disclosed the inexhaustible latent wealth of a *land* instead of a maritime passage. Railroads and the electric telegraph will cause new commerce and new life to spring up at every step along the distance. . . . It is too late, alas! to lament the waste of life, of money, and of energy, that have been expended in repeated Arctic voyages which were impossible of success, so far as these related to any passage of practical use; but they serve to illustrate very forcibly the predominance of the ideas of *maritime* effort and of *maritime* connection with the Pacific. . . . The lavish and continued expenditure thus incurred appears in striking contrast to the rigid refusal simultaneously main-