

to a sailing vessel, especially in calm weather, when there is scarcely a hatful of wind, as frequently happens in the strait between May and the end of October. The stories of detention in the ice really mean, when properly understood, that sailing vessels have been becalmed in a loose pack, and forced to drift with it. A steamship in the same circumstances, would have no trouble in pushing through, and, when sailed from the masthead, almost without diminution of the usual speed. The trouble has been, in the first place, that we have not understood the nature of the ice, and in the second, that we have imposed upon ourselves by judging of the navigability of the strait from the performances of sailing vessels.

But, it may be said, we have the experience of those two *Alert* expeditions. So we have; but do the public understand how little difference there is between the *Alert* and a sailing vessel? Her steam was auxiliary merely, and her power nominal. The fastest time she was ever known to make was nine knots, with full steam on, and all sails set to a spanking breeze. On this occasion, the sails ran away with the screw, which went pounding through the water. In these expeditions to the bay, she was commanded by a skilled seaman, who, however, had no experience of ice navigation, and who, in presence of any new condition, was cautious to the border of timidity. This will help to explain the extraordinary prominence given to his various experiences with ice in the reports made to the Department, as well as his exaggerated notions of it. Yet, he reported a period of from four to four and a half months of navigation. Even that will do if we cannot get better. Capt. A. H. Markham, who knows something of ice, and who accompanied the last *Alert* expedition, is fairly certain of five, and hopeful of six, in many years. To give his own words: "There will, I have no doubt, be many years when naviga-

tion can be carried out safely and surely, from the 1st of June until the end of November." There were five observing stations established at points along the strait, and from the reports of the officers in charge, the following tabulated statement is compiled. It may be explained, that, by "opening" is meant when the pack runs abroad, or becomes scattered, and is easily navigable by steamers; "closing" means when the pack sets fast:—

STATION.	YEARS.	OPENING.	CLOSING.
Port Burwell.....	1884-5	May 1.....	Nov. 4
	1885-6	May 1.....	Nov. 30
Ashe's Inlet.....	1884-5	May 5.....	Dec. 1
	1885-6	May 1.....	Dec. 1
Stupart's Bay.....	1884-5	April 3.....	Dec. 21
	1885-6	April 7.....	Nov. 30
Port DeBoucherville..	1884-5	April 25.....	Dec. 7
	1885-6	May 1.....	Dec. 3
Port La, erriere.....	1884-5	May 5.....	Nov. 24
	1885-6	May 1.....	Dec. 1

This table is chiefly valuable as showing when the ice begins to move in the spring and set in autumn, during which period it is always possible for a steamship with the usual power to go through, subject, of course, to delays natural under such circumstances, but very rarely more or greater than St. Lawrence steamships experience from fog. My contention, which is borne out by those most familiar with ice conditions in that region, is that, excepting in the winter months, the strait is always navigable with plenty of steam power, the only risk, and not an invariable one by any means, being a detention of a day or two in passing through. During four or five months, the risk is too insignificant to be taken into account. I assume, of course, it is generally known that the bay is always open, and as free to navigation as the ocean itself. There remains, then, the difficulty of the harbor, but this is overcome, by making the terminus of the railway on the Nelson River near its mouth, the channel of which, owing to the tide, is open nearly all the year round. If I have established a case for the navigation, and I think I have, the whole case is made out.