

day. We might be content to leave it to the chill obscurity which has been so long its lot, were it not that, as already indicated, the Central part of Canada, and the North-west of the United States are asking whether it does not afford a solution of the problem how to secure for their products the cheapest and most expeditious road to the best markets. A glance at the map will be sufficient to make clear that the shortest possible route between the region referred to and Europe lies through Hudson's Bay. Careful calculations have shown that the city of Winnipeg, for instance, is at least eight hundred miles nearer Liverpool by the Hudson's Bay route than by the St. Lawrence, and the difference in favor of the former increases, of course, the farther you advance north-westward. If, as has been pointed out, you take the central point of the agricultural lands of the Canadian North-west, you will find that the distance from it to Winnipeg is about the same as to Churchill, the finest harbor of the bay. Now the distance between Churchill and Liverpool is a little less (about sixty-four miles) than it is between Montreal and that great entrepot of commerce. The conclusion, consequently, is that as between the said centre and Liverpool there is a saving of the whole distance from Winnipeg to Montreal, by the use of Hudson's Bay, which means in miles no less than 1,291 via Lake Superior and 1,698 via Chicago.

The people of Manitoba having become fairly alive to the importance of the subject, not only called upon Parliament to help them, but, like sensible folk, set to work to help themselves. A charter was obtained for a railway from Winnipeg to York Factory. The line was surveyed and found to be easy of construction. Some eighty miles of it have been already laid down. Two powerful steamers of 6,000 tons each have been ordered to be built expressly for the route, and two others have been chartered. It is intended that these vessels shall begin running between England and Hudson's Bay early in June, 1888. They will finally solve the all-important question as to how early a powerful steamer of the freight-carrying class may be able to penetrate the straits, and they will also furnish the supplies required for the prosecution of the road from York Factory

southwards, meeting it in its progress from Winnipeg northwards.

Seeing how ardent, energetic, and hopeful, Manitobans have been in this matter, it is not a little disappointing to find that such competent authorities as Lieut. Gordon and Mr. Ashe, are by no means sanguine as to the success of the route. The latter has pointed out that, apart from the ice question, which is quite serious enough of itself, there are other difficulties which have to be reckoned with, such as the dangers attendant upon a passage along an unknown, unlighted coast-line, with few harbors of refuge, and very little room to ride out a gale; extreme depths of water, one hundred fathoms being often found right up to the shore, with generally very defective holding ground where the depths are more moderate. In foul weather, no sounding being possible that would be of value, a vessel would receive no warning of her proximity to the coast until it was, perhaps, too late to save her from destruction. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the proximity of the straits to the Magnetic Pole renders the ordinary compass perfectly useless, and even the Thompson compass becomes liable to aberration if there are any disturbing elements on shipboard.

The most serious objection of all, however, to the Hudson's Bay route, is the ice that fills these waters with its destructive floes and bergs. No ordinary steamer could safely venture into its midst. The bow must be armored, and the whole frame strengthened to withstand the rude buffeting that is so inevitable. All this, of course, means increased cost and decreased carrying capacity; and even then the lesson of the three expeditions would seem to be, that the period of navigation for such a vessel is from the 15th July to the 15th October, with a possibility of navigation from 1st July to 1st November. Whether a railroad system eight hundred miles in length, and a fleet of steamships of a very costly kind can be employed with profit where the season for transportation is not more than three or at the most four months in duration, constitutes the problem upon the solution of which depends the future of the Inland Ocean of the North.