

by its scientific importance, was the cruise of the *Challenger*, of which we purpose to give, from the graphic pages of Mr. Spry, the historian of the expedition, a short account.

Through the liberality of the British Government, H. M. S. *Challenger*, a spar-decked corvette of 2,000 tons' displacement and 400 horse-power, was placed at the service of the council of the Royal Society for the purpose of deep-sea exploration and for the discovery of the physical and biological conditions of the great sea basins. With the exception of two 64-pounders all the guns were removed to make room for the chemical laboratories and work-rooms, and the sounding and dredging apparatus—the peaceful instruments of science taking the place of the deadly enginery of war.

Captain, now Sir George, Nares was appointed to the chief command, but before the cruise of the *Challenger* was completed he was recalled to take charge of the Arctic exploring expedition. He was assisted by officers of eminent scientific ability. Professor Sir Charles Wyville Thompson was selected as director of the civilian scientific staff, which was composed of several gentlemen of distinguished reputation in their several departments of physical investigation. The most complete outfit of scientific instruments and apparatus that human skill could devise was liberally provided.

Among the instruments were sounding machines for bringing up specimens of sand or mud, sunk by weights of three or four hundred pounds, which slipped off when the bottom was reached; dredges for collecting sponges, corals, shells and the like, from the bottom; bottles for procuring water from great depths; and self-registering thermometers for recording the temperature. The drums, reels, and hoisting apparatus were very ingenious and successful. Ample provision was also made for the study and preservation of the strange objects of marine or terrestrial life discovered. The expedition, whose object was the questioning of the depths of ocean, and wresting from its bosom the secrets of the sea, was the most thoroughly equipped for that purpose that ever sailed from any shores.

On the 21st of December, 1872, the good ship left Portsmouth Harbour, and the explorers spent their Christmas and New Year's