

for several years in that period of the company's history, and it is in our money as if they spent \$90,000 and got back \$130,000, and this is their own showing under such circumstances as to make it the course of wisdom not to boast of their profits. They had three times trebled their stock and otherwise increased it, so that having been 10,500 shares at the outset, it was now 103,950 shares.

And now that we have seen how natural it was that they should not then bother with exploration and discovery, in view of the remuneration that came for simply sitting in their forts and buying furs, let me pause to repeat what one of their wisest men said casually, between the whiffs of a meditative cigar, last summer: "The search for the north pole must soon be taken up in earnest," said he. "Man has paused in the undertaking because other fields where his needs were more pressing, and where effort was more certain to be rewarded with success, had been neglected. This is no longer the fact, and geographers and other students of the subject all agree that the north pole must next be sought and found. Speaking only on my own account and from my knowledge, I assert that whenever any government is in earnest in this desire, it will employ the men of this fur service, and they will find the pole. The company has posts far within the arctic circle, and they are manned by men peculiarly and exactly fitted for the adventure. They are hardy, acutely intelligent, self-reliant, accustomed to the climate, and all that it engenders and demands. They are on the spot ready to start at the earliest moment in the season, and they have with them all that they will need on the expedition. They would do nothing hurriedly or rashly; they would know what they were about as no other white men would—and they would get there."

I mention this not merely for the novelty of the suggestion and the interest it may excite, but because it contributes to the reader's understanding of the scope and character of the work of the company. It is not merely Western and among Indians, it is hyperborean and among Esquimaux. But would it not be passing strange if, beyond all that England has gained from the careless gift of an empire to a few favorites by Charles II., she should yet possess the honor and

glory of a grand discovery due to the natural results of that action?

To return to the Parliamentary inquiry into the company's affairs one hundred and forty years ago. If it served no other purpose, it drew for us of this day an outline picture of the first forts and their inmates and customs. Being printed in the form our language took in that day, when a gun was a "musquet" and a stockade was a "palisadoe," we fancy we can see the bumptious governors—as they then called the factors or agents—swelling about in knee-breeches and cocked hats and colored waistcoats, and relying, through their fear of the savages, upon the little putty-pipe cannon that they speak of as "swivels." These were ostentatiously planted before their quarters, and in front of these again were massive double doors, such as we still make of steel for our bank safes, but, when made of wood, use only for our refrigerators. The views we get of the company's "servants"—which is to say, mechanics and laborers—are all of trembling varlets, and the testimony is full of hints of petty sharp practice toward the red man, suggestive of the artful ways of our own Hollanders, who bought beaver-skins by the weight of their feet, and then pressed down upon the scales with all their might.

The witnesses had mainly been at one time in the employ of the company, and they made the point against it that it imported all its bread (*i. e.*, grain) from England, and neither encouraged planting nor cultivated the soil for itself. But there were several who said that even in August they found the soil still frozen at a depth of two and a half or three feet. Not a man in the service was allowed to trade with the natives outside the forts, or even to speak with them. One fellow was put in irons for going into an Indian's tent; and there was a witness who had "heard a Governor say he would whip a Man without Tryal; and that the severest Punishment is a Dozen of Lashes." Of course there was no instructing the savages in either English or the Christian religion; and we read that, though there were twenty-eight Europeans in one factory, "witness never heard Sermon or Prayers there, nor ever heard of any such Thing either before his Time or since." Hunters who offered their services got one-half what they shot or trapped, and the captains of vessels kept in the bay