

"North Water" by the 12th of June, and in the years 1825, 28, 32, 33, and 34, the whole fleet of whalers got through early in July. It must be remembered that the whalers do not persevere after the middle of July, while there will be time for a discovery ship to reach Smith Sound, even if she does not get through, before the end of August. It may be counted upon with certainty that two screw-steamers of 60-horse power will get through the *middle pack* (on an average) in about twenty-two days, if they start early in the season, and that they will reach the "North Water." The "North Water" means Smith Sound, for it always extends to the entrance of that great opening whence Captain Ingfield in 1852 saw open water to the northern horizon, stretching through seven points of the compass.

The two gun-boats would winter about 300 miles apart, one near Cape Isabella and the other near Cape Parry, both on the weather or western side of Smith Sound. The march to explore the Polar region would commence in February, along the coast which stretches to the northward. The ice is always firm, and fit for travelling near the shore, from February to May; and this circumstance led Wrangell to advocate the Smith Sound route, for he well knew that his *Polynias*, or open lanes of water, were not encountered until he advanced a considerable distance from the coast. The distance from Cape Parry to the Pole and back is under 1000 miles; so that a party going to the North Pole, and travelling at the rate of about ten miles a day, would be back by the middle of May. Mr. Arrowsmith places Cape Parry in 81° 56' N., or 484 miles from the Pole, and Dr. Kane's steward saw land stretching away to the north as far as the eye could reach. Give us only 184 miles of land north of Cape Parry, and a sledge journey to the Pole is a matter of calculation (1) if performed during the winter and early spring. The discovery of the North Pole by this route does not depend upon a drifting, treacherous pack, upon the opening or closing of leads through the ice in the right direction, or upon a theoretical Polar basin, as is the case in Spitzbergen seas. By the Smith Sound route the discovery is a certainty, so far as human calculation can make it so. Sir Leopold M'Clintock has brought the art of sledge travelling to such perfection, that this may be affirmed with perfect truth. Much has been said, by objectors to this route, about the impossibility of dragging heavy boats over the ice. All who are acquainted with M'Clintock's system of travelling, know well that such an idea would never enter his head. He would probably supply each sledge with a very light India-rubber boat, and narrow lanes of water would never stop him. If he arrived on the shores of a great navigable ocean in an Arctic winter, then, of course, his progress would be arrested. But, at the same time, a marvelous discovery will have been made, and his researches will be turned in other directions, leading to results of equal value and interest. The northern side of the Greenland continent will be carefully examined, as well as all the land to the westward. We may rely upon it that immense results will be insured by the exertions of scientific explorers wintering for two seasons in Smith Sound, that every branch of science will be enriched by their labours, and that, even if success is denied them in their endeavours to reach the Pole, their achievements in other directions will repay the expenses of the expedition a thousand-fold.

The advantages of the two routes will not bear comparison. The Spitzbergen route offers, in the event of success, a chance of reaching the Pole, and the opportunity of exploring the supposed Polar basin; but everything must be done very hastily, and therefore inefficiently, during the brief navigable season. In the probable event of failure the vessels will have accomplished nothing. They will have been a month or two struggling in the

pack, and will at last be drifted out again, either whole or in pieces.

The Smith Sound route, on the other hand, offers the discovery of the North Pole, of the northern side of Greenland, of the land to the westward, and all the numerous results in every branch of science, which are expected from a North Polar expedition. Moreover, the explorations will be made by sledges, and therefore carefully and thoroughly. In the event of failure in securing the main object, all the other results will be attained; so that, under any circumstances, good and useful work will be done.

By the Spitzbergen route there is the bare chance of doing little, by the Smith Sound route there is the certainty of doing much.

Three objections have been raised to another Arctic expedition—first, that it will be no use, secondly, that it will be dangerous; and thirdly, that it will be expensive. After what has been said of the great and beneficial results, both direct and collateral, which may be expected from North Polar exploration, it is unnecessary to dwell upon the first objection. There are many people who, with the *Times*, are altogether incapable of comprehending that there can be anything worth doing, which does not promise good interest on outlay, in hard cash; and to speak to them of advantages other than an actual money profit on goods delivered, would be a mere waste of breath. Yet even they might be reminded of the actual commercial profit that has been derived from Arctic Expeditions. The voyages of Willoughby and Chancellor opened the rich trade with Archangel. The discoveries of Hudson led to the lucrative Spitzbergen whale fishery, those of Davis and Ross to the equally remunerative fisheries in Davis' Strait and Baffin's Bay. The discoveries of the Danes in Greenland have yielded supplies in ivory, cryolite, and graphite. The Russian and Arctic expeditions have opened a rich trade in fossil ivory. Lastly, the voyages up Barrow's Straits have resulted in an extensive series of magnetic observations of practical utility to navigation.

But the public have a right to inquire closely whether any future expedition would incur even the remote possibility of such a fate as befel the "Erebus" and "Terror," and to this objection a satisfactory reply may properly be demanded. There is no analogy whatever between the ill-fated expedition led by Franklin, and that which, it is hoped, will be despatched to Smith Sound for North Polar exploration. No one feels this more strongly than the noble-minded widow of that great explorer. In the latter case, a vessel will be stationed at a point whence annual communication with England is easy and certain, and whence a retreat to the Danish settlements in Greenland is perfectly devoid of all risk; while Franklin was sent into an unknown region, without a thought of providing for his safe retreat in the event of disaster. Had one of Franklin's ships remained off Cape Warrender, at the entrance of Lancaster Sound, and the other not gone beyond Cape Riley, they would have been quite as safe as if they had never left Greenhithe. The Smith Sound exploring vessels, stationed at Cape Isabella and Cape Parry, will be in exactly similar positions, for Smith Sound, like Lancaster Sound, opens on the "North Water" of Baffin's Bay. It is not, however, to be supposed that there will be no individual danger to those who gallantly come forward to serve in a Polar expedition of discovery. On the contrary, it will be a service requiring great powers of endurance, courage, and self-reliance of a high order, and indomitable resolution. But it is the desire to overcome difficulties and dangers, and to emulate the deeds of former naval worthies, which induces men to volunteer for such services. Suffice it to say that the climate is the healthiest in the world, and that a retreat from Smith Sound to the Danish settlement of Upernivik in summer, if it should become necessary, is easy, and free from danger.

The objection on the score of expense will doubtless be raised with more sincerity, at least, than is this unworthy attempt to discourage naval voyages of discovery on the ground of danger. But if the despatch of a scientific expedition, the results of which

(1) A sledge party, commanded by M'Clintock, has walked 1220 miles in 105 days; on another occasion, 1330 miles. Meham did 1203 miles, Richards 1093, Osborn the same. Allen Young 1150, and Hamilton 1150. Sir Leopold M'Clintock says that a single sledge may carry sixty days' provisions, and go over 600 miles of ground, without assistance from depôts.