

# SCIENCE :

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JOHN MICHELS, Editor.

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1881.

THE glad tidings of the safety of a large proportion of the crew of the *Jeannette*, and the probability that the missing members of the company will probably be soon heard from, will be a relief to many aching hearts, and welcome to the general public who have taken a great interest in this expedition.

As the success of the expedition has not been referred to in the despatches, the probability is great, that the discovery of the North Pole is still a problem to be solved, but the experience of Captain De Long will doubtless prove very valuable in making future plans for Arctic explorations, and we trust that no time will be lost in obtaining authentic details of the expedition.

From what we know respecting the voyage of the *Jeannette*, and from other information to date, our opinion is that the route by Smith's Sound, is the most practicable for all who attempt to reach the North Pole, and we still maintain that the plans of Commander Cheyne present a higher prospect for success, than any other scheme which has been announced.

The first step which we advise, is to establish firmly a small colony at St. Patrick's Bay, where coal exists in abundance, and ample protection can be found for stores and shelter for men. This spot is less than 500 miles from the North Pole, and, with such a base of operations firmly established, the coveted prize can surely be won by continued and persistent efforts.

We approve of Commander Cheyne's proposal to utilize balloons, on the ground that no facilities which can be devised by practical scientific men should be neglected, and it is far from impossible that some means of aerial navigation may be invented, which may be at least sufficient for this purpose.

The establishment of the colony at St. Patrick's Bay, should be the immediate plan which should

claim attention, without desiring by a rush to accomplish the remaining distance. Time should be given for traversing the 500 miles which intervene before reaching the Pole, and all the devices which science can suggest should in turn be put to the test.

We cannot conclude these remarks without giving a due acknowledgement to Mr. James Gordon Bennett for his liberal outlay in the cause of geographical exploration. Inspired by his generous hand, Stanley braved the horrors of tropical climates and penetrated to the unknown recesses of Africa, and by Mr. Bennett's aid De Long has added new laurels to the American flag, and increased our knowledge of the Arctic regions.

THE presence of fossil organisms in meteorites alleged to have been discovered by Dr. Hahn, was fully explained in "SCIENCE" (No. 50, June 11, 1881) by Dr. Rachael. Since the appearance of this article I have discussed the subject with many specialists, with the result of finding a general distrust of Dr. Hahn's discovery.

I, therefore, endeavored to obtain a portion of the Knyahinya meteorite which fell in Hungary on the 9th of June, 1866, as many of the most convincing specimens were obtained by Dr. Hahn from it, and by the aid of Messrs Ward and Howell of the Natural History Museum, Rochester, N. Y., a small fragment of this meteorite recently reached my hands. From this specimen two sections were cut, and ground down to a condition of transparency by a gentleman skilled in such preparations, and are now mounted as microscopical objects.

An examination which I have since made confirms in every respect the correctness of Dr. Hahn's statement, as to what he saw, and it therefore remains only to decide whether the deductions he made were correct. The doubtful forms are very clearly defined and sufficiently large to be examined with precision by a 1-inch objective; one prominent object, which to the uninitiated might be taken for a diminutive clam shell, is found to measure 1.25 by 1.20 of an inch. I was disappointed to find that high powers failed to develop structure which indicated decisively the nature of these forms, and to show the difficulty of arriving at a correct solution, I may state that the two persons to whom I have so far shown the specimens, differed entirely as to their interpretation; the one pronounced them veritable fossils, and the second was equally sure that they were merely interesting forms of crystallization.

I reserve an opinion until the section has been studied with more attention, and comparison made with other specimens now being prepared; in the mean time I shall be pleased to show the section to any person who is interested in this subject, or able by previous study to throw any light on the subject.

JOHN MICHELS.