

## WHALING FOR SPORT.

From The London Telegraph.

The steamship *Esquimaux*, owned and fitted out by Mr. Walker, the late proprietor of the yacht *Ailsa*, has sailed from Dundee for the whaling grounds. Mr. Walker will join the vessel when she touches at St. John's, N. F. The *Esquimaux* has been specially fitted, and the owner is undertaking the trip for pleasure.

Special importance attaches to the voyage of the *Esquimaux*, for nearly a hundred years Arctic whale fishery has been dying hard, much to the regret of those who have read the literature of heroism and adventure of an industry which is so closely associated with the marvels of the mysterious North. The decline of whaling has been attributed to a constant succession of bad seasons, due, according to some authorities, to the almost complete destruction of the cetacea in Greenland waters. Others hold that the timidity of the whale—the instinctive dread of man transmitted from generation to generation—being so great, and his sense of hearing so acute, the advent of steam, with its throbbing propellers, had alarmed the species to such an extent that they no longer come into water sufficiently clear of ice for their capture.

Mr. Walker's venture has been influenced by love of sport, and perhaps he may succeed in doing that which people who burst into the silent waters of the North for pecuniary profit have not yet achieved—namely, obtain evidence whether the views held by some authorities that there are plenty of whales in the open waters beyond the fast ice is correct.

Speaking on the subject to an expert in arctic fishery yesterday, our representative learned that the idea of reviving the British whale fishery was not very cheerfully held by the people who have made a special study of the industry. "You see," the former said, "the Greenland whale has been pretty well exterminated, or, at any rate, exists in such small numbers that it wouldn't pay to keep our fleets going. Even with help from the Government—and from 1732 to 1824 British whalers received a subsidy of so much per ton—the business continued to be very risky. In 1815, when the British whale fishery was comparatively prosperous, less than 164 ships were engaged, and by 1828 the number had fallen to ninety vessels, about fifty of which hailed from Scottish ports. Nowadays, whalebone is so dear that if only one fish is caught the ship's expenses would be paid, while the capture of two would mean a handsome profit for the owner. Whalebone is now worth between £2,000 and £3,000 per ton, and there is no substitute for it.

"Most people," continued the expert, "confuse the Arctic whale, which is sought after for the valuable bone, with the other variety of whale, which is caught for its sperm oil. One differs from the other as much as a tiger differs from a cow, though practically both fisheries have died out. In arctic whaling you can't maintain operations longer than about six months, and modern conditions hardly encourage the owner to allow capital to remain idle for the other six. It is to the credit of whalers, indeed, that for so long a time, when barren seasons were the rule, they continued to send their vessels to sea. Many of them were sportsmen of the best type. 'We have lost this year,' they would say, 'better luck next time.' But the better luck didn't come. As an example of the absence of stamina in the trade, I may state that many years ago, when the great Dutch whalers began the downward path, a bounty of 40 shillings per ton was offered to the English fishery. As soon, however, as the bounty was reduced to 30 shillings, the number of ships engaged in the trade fell in five years from ninety-eight to thirty-nine. In fifty-two years the industry cost the country no less than £1,266,431 in bounties.

"The future depends chiefly upon the whales themselves. We can only hope that the close season, which they are now enjoying, will lead them to increase and multiply. In that case our whaling industry will again revive. Meantime it is satisfactory to know that we have a whaler who is prepared, in the cause of pleasure and sport, to brave the danger and physical hardships which a voyage in arctic seas must inevitably entail."