

Backed by all the scientific bodies of this country, our late distinguished President and Council took immediate steps for a revival of English Arctic enterprise, and wrote to, as well as had an interview with, the then First Lord of the Admiralty, His Grace the Duke of Somerset, with a view to obtaining that assistance from the Navy, which we believed would give the best guarantee for a successful geographical exploration of the area under consideration. Unfortunately for the purpose we had in view, an eminent German geographer renewed a theory which he had first started at a still more inopportune time, during the search for Franklin,—and had English navigators then listened to it, that search would have been a failure, the North-west Passage would not have been discovered, and the geography of the lands between Baffin and Behring Straits would still have remained unknown; his theory being that the true way to reach this unknown area, was by following in a very different direction what he believed to be a current of warm water, flowing to the north-east from the tropical regions of the Atlantic towards the shores of Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla. He maintained, in the face of three centuries of experience, that a route could be found into the area round our pole in that direction, and that a navigable sea existed there.

His arguments and opinions caused a division amongst Arctic authorities in this country; and the First Lord of the Admiralty, though apparently sufficiently enlightened to entertain the general proposal, very naturally declined verbally to assume the responsibility of deciding which route was the right one, until geographers and Arctic authorities could themselves agree on so important a point.

Disappointed though I and others naturally felt at this first result of our efforts, still we could not but acknowledge the justice of the course taken by the Admiralty; and, as a matter of policy and common sense, I advised Sir Roderick Murchison to be patient, and wait till time had proved the fallacy of theories based upon the existence of an imaginary open Polar ocean, and upon the possibility of ice-navigation late in the autumn.

Seven years have now elapsed, and though I am prepared to do justice to the zeal, enterprise, and courage, with which the German explorers have endeavoured to give effect to the theories of their speculative geographer, and to the noble fortitude with which they have faced severe hardships in trying to reach the Polar basin, between the east coast of Greenland and the meridian of Nova Zembla, yet I maintain that the result proves the learned but purely theoretical German geographer to be wrong, and the ex-