

Fish River, where, had proper foresight been exercised, they could easily have been rescued. Subsequent experience has shown that the fatal omission which led to this catastrophe was the want of proper depôts of provisions being arranged so as to cover the escape of the crews, in the event of disaster to the ships—a measure of precaution which, since that disaster, has always been carefully provided for in all subsequent expeditions with signal success. This expedition of Sir John Franklin in 1845 was the last *scientific expedition* sent by Great Britain into the Arctic regions. In 1848 the search for Franklin's expedition was pressed on the Government by the public, and from that date up to 1861—a period of thirteen years—was steadily persevered in, no less than fourteen public and private expeditions having gone and returned during that period. So far as the people in those expeditions were concerned, they all returned in safety, and the proportion of deaths from climate and disease was considerably less than the average death-rate of our naval seamen on any other service; and this in spite of the extraordinarily severe exposure and labour to which men and officers were subjected, by the novel introduction of sledge-travelling whilst the expeditions were frozen in winter quarters. Dr. Donnet, Inspector-General of Fleet and Hospitals, shows that at one period, out of 1,878 persons who wintered repeatedly in these expeditions, the death-rate was only 1·7 per cent., and states that the risk from climate and disease in a voyage to the Arctic seas “is not greater than that which a ship like the *Challenger* will incur in her voyage of discovery.” These fourteen Searching Expeditions were equipped simply for the purpose of rescuing Franklin, and in nowise professed to be of an exploratory or scientific character; and it was only incidentally, and as a pure matter of individual zeal, that anyone turned his attention to scientific observation, although, as a matter of fact, the various observations made by officers during their explorations contributed considerably not only to geographical, but to other branches of natural knowledge.

The general result pointed distinctly to the two following conclusions: that with the introduction of steam power in Arctic ships, and the remarkable improvements in victualling them, navigation in Polar seas had been rendered comparatively safe, and those maladies warded off from which seamen had suffered in ancient times. Further, that with proper organization and good discipline double the work could be accomplished; whilst the men employed sought Arctic service as the most popular employment in the navy. The circumstance that for some years past the ordinary sailing whaler to Baffin's Bay has been entirely superseded by the fortified steam-ship, and that since this transition no fatal accident has occurred, but that these vessels annually reach a high northern latitude in pursuit of their calling, and return with ease and safety, is one the significance of which cannot be over-stated.

On the solution of the fate of Franklin's expedition in 1861 Great Britain again withdrew from the field of Arctic research; but it was not so with other European nations. They, fired by the accounts of these different Arctic explorers, and of the honours reaped by British seamen and travellers, sought immediately to enter a field which had so redounded to our national honour; and Sweden, Germany, Austria, Russia, and notably America, year after year, made efforts to extend the area of human knowledge towards the North Pole, which, creditable and honourable as they were to those concerned, were undertaken with totally inadequate means and resources.

Under Dr. Kane and Dr. Hayes and Captain Hall, the Americans have attempted, with private expeditions, to emulate the achievements of the public ones of this country. The sufferings, the hardships, insubordination, and small results, in comparison with the expenditure and expectations of these American private expeditions, fully confirm the opinions of all British Arctic authorities as to the necessity for the officers and seamen in such expeditions being always under naval control and discipline, and strengthen us in saying that no amount of private enterprise, enthusiasm, or funds will justify the risk to lives or the success of an expedition, such as the Royal Geographical Society contemplates, except under Government auspices and Government control. That conceded, the safety of an expedition is comparatively guaranteed, so far as life is concerned, and its success for the objects set forth rendered doubly sure. It is contrary to fact, as has been alleged, that in public Arctic expeditions life has been sacrificed; and it is easy to show that the greater portion of the suffering and danger to which Arctic explorers have been subjected is owing to the want of organisation and discipline incident to private expeditions, and to the expeditions being entrusted to unprofessional leaders. Moreover, it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that, with modern improvements and appliances, navigation in those seas has been made far more certain than it was in former years. That some risk may be incurred by individuals in prosecuting