

(From second page.)

means prepared, or the vigour and spirit with which they were employed. The utmost latitude at which they arrived fell short of 83 degrees; and consequently, though the highest, probably, ever attained by man, it comprised only a small part of the progress towards that high boundary, which it was their object to reach.

What conclusion, then, are we to draw from so signal a failure, in which the skill, intrepidity, and enthusiasm of British seamen, in their utmost exertion, failed in even an approach to the accomplishment of their object? Must the hope be finally renounced of ever reaching that grand boundary of nature? Must we seek no more to invade the secrets of that vast and awful domain, which has remained for so many ages unexplored by mortals?

We do really feel a considerable interest in this question—and would not willingly give a discouraging answer. There is something sublime in the idea of reaching this high and solitary pinnacle of nature, and looking down at once upon both hemispheres. To the glories which already circle the brow of Britain, it were something to add that of first reaching the Pole of the earth. Pondering the subject under these impressions, and comparing together the two plans, one pursued by Captain Parry, and the other recently proposed by Mr. Scoresby, we do not feel exactly satisfied with either; and shall therefore venture to suggest a third, by which there does seem to us to be a fair hope, without any very mighty difficulty or danger, of bringing to a happy issue this extraordinary adventure.

In regard to the course pursued by the late expedition, although it would be excessively unfair to impute blame to those who engaged in it with such slender experience, it seems fully ascertained that its mere repetition would issue in a repetition of failure. Other seasons and other points might be somewhat more favourable; but the rugged and irregular surface, the sinking and unstable nature of the icy ground on which he trode, its almost constant movement to the southward, carrying them in the very opposite direction from that to which they were tending—these would, in every instance, be enough to baffle any effort which could be made for the completion of the undertaking.

Mr. Scoresby's proposition is therefore to be considered; and it deserves certainly the most attentive and respectful examination. To Mr. Scoresby belongs the merit of having first drawn the attention of mankind to the possibility of accomplishing this grand enterprise; and he now comes seasonably forward, after so great a disappointment, to revive our drooping hopes. Nothing can be more superfluous than Mr. Scoresby's apologies for treating a subject on which, we do sincerely believe, he is better entitled to speak than any man alive. The three particulars in which he proposes to modify the plan recently followed, are with regard to the materials and consequent weight of the boats—the meridian on which the journey was attempted—and the season in which it was performed.

The weight of the boats, amounting to three quarters of a ton, is considered by Mr. Scoresby as alone sufficient to defeat every hope of success. The only fitting conveyance, in his view, would be a "sledge consisting of slender frames of wood, with the ribs of some duradruped for lightness and strength, and coverings of water-proof skins or other materials equally light." He holds forth as a pattern the omiak, or women's boat, of the Greenlanders, which will contain from ten to twenty people with furniture and fishing implements, yet which six or eight men can take up on their heads, and carry across any point of land which interrupts their progress. Now, with the utmost deference to Mr. Scoresby, we must say that we feel not a little alarm at the idea of facing the Polar tempests in this huge leather bag, which the Greenland matrons may indeed contrive to row hundreds of miles between the ice and the land, but which could never be expected to sustain any violent shocks or concussions. Yet it could not be assured of not having to encounter an open and even a stormy sea, either in the circum-polar regions, or, at all events, in the ultimate run to regain the ship. Besides, if the boat was three quarters of a ton, the provisions and other equipments were a ton and upwards; so that no reduction upon the former could render the entire weight at all so manageable as that of the Greenland fishers. Such as it was, it proved not more than could be dragged with tolerable ease by fourteen stout British seamen over any ground that was not excessively rugged.

Mr. Scoresby, however, proposes that the boat shall be dragged not by human force, but by the rein-deer, that most useful traveller over the snows of the north. A single suggestion of Captain Parry's seems, however, fatal to this proposition. The reindeer requires at least four pounds of moss in the day; to supply which to eight animals during ninety days, it would be needful to carry an additional weight nearly equal to that of the boat and all its other contents.—The entire drag would thus be doubled, and would be placed, we fear, beyond the reach

either of men or rein-deer to move over so arduous a route. It is but fair, however, to observe, that Mr. Scoresby contemplates, with these faithful animals, a swiftness of movement which would give a new character to the whole undertaking. His original scheme actually specifies a fortnight as the period in which they might fly over the whole space to and from the Pole! Could this be relied upon, the equipment might no doubt be so much reduced, as to oppose no obstacle to the most rapid movements.—This, however, would really be carrying the Pole by a coup-de-main; and though it is not perhaps absolutely impossible, yet we cannot but think that it would be playing much too deep a game to set out on such a calculation. Supposing that by some of the many accidents which it is impossible to foresee, these animals should break down at an advanced stage of their career, how were the biped adventurers, thus slenderly equipped, victualled perhaps but for seven days—to trace their slow and difficult path? If any of the adventurous sons of Britain choose to make a dash at the Pole in this style, at his peril be it; but we, as sober journalists, addressing a people justly chary of the likes of her sons, dare not recommend this headlong drive over the Polar snows.—To us a sure and steady, though slower and more laborious movement, appears preferable; and it therefore seems very hazardous to attempt any material reduction in the equipments provided for Captain Parry's expedition.

The meridian on which the expedition moved, is another point to which very great importance is attached by Mr. Scoresby. It is obvious, however, that a meridian, as such, can have no influence on the character and surface of the ice which extends along it. Mr. Scoresby could not have meant to convey such an idea; and the expression which seems to import it, must be allowed not to be very well chosen. All that can be said is, that the southern extremity of the Polar ice, which is alone open to observation, is more level at one point than another; but it is obvious that this does not afford the most slender presumption that this level character will extend along its interior in any direction. The state of the ice appears at all points to be excessively fluctuating, modified by the varying action of winds, currents, and storms. Mr. Scoresby, in the journal of his last voyage along a very westerly meridian, nowhere describes the ice as in a very much smoother state than it was found by Captain Parry. There is one view, indeed, in which we should be rather afraid of a very westerly meridian. The great features of the globe have usually a certain continuity; there is reason therefore to apprehend, that where a line of coast has been continued far in one direction, it will be prolonged still farther. But as the continent, or the continuous archipelago of islands, which we call Greenland, stretches for 20 degrees from Cape Farewell in a line of which the general direction is north-east, it is more probable than otherwise that it will maintain that line farther, and, perhaps, even to the Pole itself—which if it does, it will cross the path of the travellers moving in any meridian west of Spitzbergen. Now the encounter of rugged and mountainous land, such as Greenland always invariably is, forms almost the only obstacle which would be absolutely insurmountable.

Mr. Scoresby finally points to the season at which the expedition set out; and here, we think, he does touch upon the main cause of its failure. Almost all that train of disaster, which render the best efforts of the travellers abortive, seems referable to the progressive conversion from solid to fluid of the surface upon which they moved. It is a fact which could scarcely have been foreseen, that every step through which ice passes in dissolving, till it arrives at that of water, renders it more and more rugged. First, when the fields separate, the pressure of the sides against each other, produced by wind and tide, squeezes them up into hummocks of ten, twenty, or even forty feet high. Then, as the ice is penetrated by rain at various points, the undissolved portion rises in pointed prisms, which, becoming always smoother and sharper, arrive finally at a state in which they have been compared to clusters of vast pen-knives. Next, the surface on which the traveller treads is perpetually sinking beneath him, the snow, converted into a pulp causes him to plunge up to the knee; the surface of the ice breaks, and the sea opens under his feet. Lastly, while he is moving northward, the ice on which he travels, having lost its continuity, by the prevailing northerly gales, is carried to the southwards, and drifts him along with it, so that, after several-days of laborious journeying to north, he will find himself farther south than when he began.

For these and other reasons, we entirely agree with Mr. Scoresby, that the season at which the last expedition set out was inevitably fatal to its success, and must be so to that of every one undertaken in similar circumstances. But we doubt the sufficiency of his proposed remedy; which is to set out by the middle of May, or, at the earliest, by the end of April. This might be fitted to his own expectation of galloping out and back in three weeks, but not to our more sober estimate, which extends to three

months. The favourable season would comprise only a small part of this period, and then would begin all the disastrous circumstances which occasioned the recent failure. Indeed, June being the month in which the grand disruption of the Polar ice usually takes place, might perhaps be formidable beyond any other. It appears also singularly perilous, that the expedition should go out in one state of the Polar regions, and return in another state. The main security, that whatever ground they had once traversed they could traverse again, would be lost. They might find obstacles rising, or abysses opening, of which, in their progress onwards, they could not suspect the existence.

This leads directly to the exposition of the plan by which, in our conception, a Polar expedition might proceed with the fairest chance of success. We would start at the first dawn of the Arctic morning, as soon as the sun's disc, beginning to circle along the verge of the horizon, had broken the long wintry midnight, in which these regions had been involved. The travellers could thus go out and return, before the chains of ice, by which the whole Arctic world was bound into one solid mass, could be materially loosened. Every thing would be sure, fixed, and solid. The two requisites of a good road every where, are, that it should be smooth, and that it should be firm; and the Polar road would certainly be both much smoother and much firmer at this season than at any other.

The surface would be smoother. Many of the rugged forms into which the ice had been thrown up during the preceding summer would have been destroyed by its conversion into water, when it would be re-frozen in a level form. The whole, too, would be covered with a thick coating of snow, highly crystallized, and divided into minute portions, which are blown about with the utmost facility. The effect of this blowing is to fill up every crevice, and obliterate all minute varieties of surface. Its operation on a much smaller scale in our climate converts the country, as represented by the poet, into

"One wide, unvaried plain of boundless white."

Captain Lyon mentions the island in the vicinity of their wintering place, in the second Arctic voyage, as having been, while seen in the depth of winter, considered a complete level; but, to their great surprise, as soon as the snows had melted, it proved to be peculiarly rugged and irregular. We should not therefore much wonder, if the whole route should present one great and uniform surface. Even if the more elevated hummocks were not wholly obliterated, they would, by the snow blown up round their sides, be so graduated into the surrounding plain, that their ascent would cease to be very formidable, and those tremendous operations, technically called "a standing pull," or "a bowline haul," would seldom or never be demanded. It may be almost superfluous to observe, that the extreme danger which, in a civilized country, attends the obliteration by snow of all the landmarks, could have no place in an unknown region, where landmarks do not exist, and the expedition could in no case have any guide but the compass and the sky.

Next, the surface would be comparatively firm. The softness of the ice, which always increased as the season proceeded, was a fruitful source of misery to the late expedition. Both men and boats sunk at every step, and could make their way only by the severest efforts. But the mid winter snows of the Polar world would compose a hard surface, affording probably a steady support to the traveller moving over it. Even in June, over a great part of Melville Island.—Captain Parry found the snow so hard that a heavily loaded cart did not sink into it.—On this smooth and hard surface, wheels, which were found wholly inapplicable, might be brought into play, and be made greatly to alleviate the labour of dragging.—That movement also of the ice to the southward, which was so fatal to the progress of the former expedition, would have no existence here, or would be felt only in the latter period of the return, to which it would be favourable.

While we thus set forth the advantages of this plan, we are far from denying that certain questions must be answered, ere it can be put down either as expedient or safe. The first and most obvious is this: can the human frame endure that extremity of cold which must be felt in these frozen regions, of which the Midsummer temperature is often scarcely tolerable? The question is serious, because that period of early spring which we recommend is undoubtedly the time when the temperature, lowered by the continued absence of the sun for four months, reaches its utmost depression. We should certainly hesitate therefore to answer this question in the affirmative, were it not for the decisive statements which we find in Captain Parry's own records. During the intervals of most intense cold throughout his four winterings, when the thermometer was seventy or eighty degrees below the freezing point, there never was a period when it was not possible, and even advantageous, to spend several hours a-day in the open air; and it is all in our favor, if brisk motion was a necessary accompaniment of

this exposure. In this last voyage he comes to the conclusion that with proper precaution no serious injury can arise from the most intense cold of the Arctic regions. When we consider, therefore, that the proposed expedition would, in cases of drift or tempest, have always the boats in which to seek shelter, and in the perpetual northern twilight, could choose any part of the twenty-four hours for their journeyings, the risk of perishing with cold seems really not admissible, with reference to any well-conducted expedition.

Captain Parry has treated the question of an earlier season; but only in connexion with the employment of rein-deer. When that particular is thrown out, his objections do not appear to have much weight. It would be necessary to winter at Spitzbergen. We should think this highly expedient in every event. The going out in spring involves delays and casualties, which it is impossible to foresee, and which, as in the last instance, may be deeply injurious. As for the dread he expresses of the physical courage of the men being reduced by this wintering, we really cannot entertain it, after the experience of his own four winterings, two of them successive. The expedition would not require to set out till August, and the men thus would not be above seven months on shipboard, before they began the grand movement. The additional supply of food and of clothing, which would be requisite is of more importance as making a very inconvenient addition to the weight of the equipage. We calculate, however, that both might be doubled for 300 lbs., not quite a twelfth of the entire weight, which could not very materially affect the means of progress.

There is another statement applying equally to the expedition under any circumstances, and upon which we feel somewhat anxious. It appears to have been ascertained by the last experiment, that the portion of food allotted for each member was insufficient to support him under the hard labour and the inclemency of the elements. Hence, in the course of the journey, there was noticed a gradual abatement of strength, which, towards the close, became somewhat alarming. We are disposed to take this matter very seriously; for really it would be dreadful to think of sending a party to the Pole upon short allowance. Yet the required addition of one-third to the weight of the victuals, would not be very practicable. This point must then be seriously considered; and the question is, since it is difficult greatly to enlarge the quantity, whether the quality of the food might not be raised. Are pemmican, or dried beef, and hard biscuit, the most concentrated forms into which human nutriment can be brought? Captain Parry thinks they are; but upon this point we feel exceedingly sceptical. Our attainments in the culinary and dietetic sciences are certainly very limited; and yet it appears very easy to point out substances containing much more nourishment within the same space and weight, than the dry and ungenial aliment on which Captain Parry places his sole reliance. Portable soup, for instance, might surely be so prepared, as to comprise within the same limits a much greater amount of nutritive juice, in a fresher state, than dried meat, of which a large proportion must be fibrous and vascular; and, if judiciously and somewhat highly seasoned, would form a most comfortable mess under the snows of the Pole. In the farinaceous department again, cakes, copiously impregnated with the nutritious matter of eggs and butter, would afford chyle much more copiously than mere dried flour. Salted butter and cheese, both the richest that could be had, seem deserving of mention. At all events, with such an object in view, the preponderance on the late occasion, of farinaceous food over animal, which affords so much more nourishment and strength (628 lbs. biscuit to 564 lbs. pemmican), seems very incomprehensible. Meat thoroughly dried, if we mistake not, could be eaten with very little bread.—The Russian sailors, who wintered eight years in Spitzbergen, found that their dried meat could not only be eaten without bread, but could be eaten as bread with other meat. We can never then be persuaded that on these principles, and with a little contrivance, the deficient third might not be fully made up, without encumbering the equipment with any material addition of weight.

Such are the hints which, with much diffidence, we venture to submit to the daring spirits who may again seek to arrive at the grand boundary point of earth and nature. Bold as the scheme may seem, we sincerely believe, after diligent search into the Arctic records, that it is, on the whole, the most secure as well as the most promising of any that could be adopted. It is submitted, however, as still subject to the strictest revision, by those who, having made personal observations on the phenomena of an Arctic expedition, may be able to point out particulars, which, though minute, perhaps themselves, must be carefully taken into account, in reference to a voyage beset with such peculiar perils and difficulties.