

Swedish expeditions have been repelled in their exertions made between Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla by formidable ice about the 80th parallel; while within the last few weeks we have heard that the Austrian explorers who left Norway in 1872 reached the latitude of 82° by sledge journeys, and observed continuous land as far as 83°, but were obliged to abandon their vessel in the ice barrier near the 80th parallel.

Notwithstanding these continuous and earnest efforts, it is remarkable that our own Parry, in his boat and sledge journey, made in 1827 from the northern part of Spitzbergen, attained the highest latitude yet reached, and that the credit due to the geographical achievement of the position nearest the North Pole still remains with England. The failures, however, of Germany, Sweden, and Austria in the directions they have respectively made their explorations, notwithstanding the fine achievement of the latter nation, have a material bearing on the question of Great Britain again assuming Arctic exploration. The area for attacking the Pole has, in consequence of those failures, been narrowed, and is shifted to regions originally explored by Englishmen, held by a majority of their living representatives to be the clearest and fairest gateway to the Pole, and only lately abandoned by the Americans, by a combination of untoward circumstances, the failure of perfect success on their part being anticipated, it may be observed, by those experienced in Arctic voyaging and travelling, who well knew the necessity of skilled training, proved appliances for voyaging, and lastly (but having a most important bearing on the subject now under consideration) discipline, as elements of success.

The retrospect of the extended exertions of Great Britain in the field of Arctic research, the important results that have been obtained therefrom, their cessation in past years, and, in this interval, the persevering efforts of other nations to supplement, and, if possible, to eclipse the century of exertions made by this country, form, it must be allowed, reasonable grounds, so far as a worthy emulation is concerned, for all interested in geographical science, and especially for Arctic travellers, to urge another trial.

2. Under the second head, or the objects to be attained from an Arctic expedition :

The benefits that will accrue to science are very ably, and I believe, truly set forth in Memorandum 3, at page 8; they are thus generally stated: "It may be shown that no such extent of known area (the immense unknown area round the North Pole) in any part of the world ever failed to yield results of practical as well as of purely scientific value. Further, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Polar area is, in many most important respects, of an altogether special character, affording exclusive opportunities for observing the condition of the earth's surface, and the physical phenomena there to be seen, under certain extreme and singular circumstances, which are due to the relation of this area to the position of the axis of revolution of the terrestrial spheroid, and which have to be considered not only with reference to the present time, but to the earth's past history. It may therefore be received as certain that discoveries will be made in all branches of science, the exact nature of which cannot be anticipated."

The advantage to Hydrography and Meteorology deserve special notice; see page 8. In Magnetism and Physics (p. 9), it is well stated, "Investigations in all branches of Physics in the proximity of the Pole, where so many of the forces of nature operate in an extreme degree, either in excess or defect, will surely be followed by the acquisition of knowledge which can only be obtained in those exceptional localities." The succeeding observations on the study of the Aurora, the Solar Spectrum, the results that may be expected to advance Geology, Botany, Zoology, and Ethnology, are stated in a manner worthy of the eminent men of science under whose auspices the Memorandum was drawn up; and are convincing that, cheerless and barren as are the Arctic regions to the ordinary observer, there, nevertheless, to the skilled explorer, will be found a wide field for research, and the promise that his labours will worthily add to the sum of human knowledge.

3. On the best route to be adopted :

In Memorandum 3, at page 18, it is stated that, "The distinguished naval officers who are members of the Geographical Council, and who have carefully considered the evidence accumulated since 1865 in a Special Committee, are now unanimously of opinion that the route by Smith Sound is one which should be adopted, with a view to exploring the greatest extent of coast line, and of thus securing the most valuable scientific results."