

new Siberian Island. Now, all around these shores and islands of the Polar Sea, there spreads a ring of ice, the extent of which towards the pole is yet undetermined, but it is known to clasp the entire circuit of the globe, in these northern latitudes. From Nova Zembla to Spitzbergen, thence to Greenland and the American shores, on across Behring's Strait to the coasts of Siberia, this vast ice-belt extends, thus investing the polar regions with an icy rampart, against which all man's skill and endeavour have hitherto exhausted themselves in vain. Numerous attempts have been made to break through this ice-belt, in the hope of reaching an open sea around the Pole, but though the roll of Arctic heroes contains some of the noblest names in the records of fame, and though their deeds have added a new lustre to the pages of history and enlarged the boundaries of science, yet as far as the grand object of reaching the Pole is concerned, their story is one of defeat. True indeed the gallant McClure has, in our own day, solved the problem of centuries, and discovered the north-west passage between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, without, however, being able to carry his vessel completely through; and it is also true that the shores of the Polar sea have been explored with a perseverance and success which leave little to be achieved in this direction. But still the vast Polar region, within the ice-belt, remains unknown; and so long as it is in this condition, must exercise a powerful fascination over the adventurous spirits of our race. While three millions of square miles of the surface of our planet around the north pole, and as many around the south pole, remain unknown, it is not to be expected that men will rest contented. All that they do know will avail some of them nothing, while this expanse is unknown. It will have a resistless charm for the bolder spirits who delight in danger, and will draw them irresistibly onward, in spite of every difficulty. Every avenue leading into this unknown region will be eagerly watched, every opening will be taken advantage of, in the hope of penetrating the ice-belt, and reaching the Pole. The achievement can no longer be reckoned an impossibility. All-conquering steam has given man an immense advantage in these days, in navigating ice-laden seas. Experience has taught him how to construct his ship, so as to make way through the floating ice-masses: and science has instructed him how to face the rigors of an Arctic winter and pass through them unharmed. The dangers of such explora-