

Land, but that it was visited previously by Baffin and by Cornelis Roule. His arguments are not at all borne out by the authorities to which he refers. Nor will the British Government be guided by any proposals not originating from those experienced arctic officers upon whose advice they rely, so that Dr. Petermann's suggestions about sending one steamer to the west coast and another to the east coast of Greenland might have been spared.

English geographers have always fully recognised the valuable services of Dr. Petermann as a cartographer, and the important and useful work he has long done in collecting and disseminating geographical information. But at the same time it cannot be forgotten that his persistent adherence to an indefensible theory has retarded discovery, and that in 1865 his inopportune interference had a most injurious effect upon the prospects of arctic exploration from this country. That danger is at last overcome, but those who have borne the heat and burden of the day, cannot but protest against Dr. Petermann's present assumption of the position of an arctic authority and adviser.

Nov. 22

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM

### The Present State of the Arctic Ice Barriers

In a letter from Capt. David Gray, quoted by Dr. Petermann (*NATURE*, vol. xi. p. 39), some very interesting observations on the arctic drift ice of this year's summer are recorded, which Capt. Gray regards as justifying the conclusion that "nearly the whole of the ice was driven out of the arctic basin last summer."

Capt. Gray's observations appear to be limited to the coast of Greenland. If corresponding phenomena were presented in other and distant parts of the Arctic Ocean, they must afford strong confirmation of his conclusion. I have lately returned from a summer visit to Arctic Norway, having sailed round the North Cape and into the Varanger Fjord, stopping a few days at Tromsø and halting at Hammerfest, Vardø, Vadsø, and other arctic stations, and I was much surprised at the curious difference between the climate I found there this summer and that which I previously experienced at the same season.

The following extract describes the temperature between Tromsø and Hammerfest during my first visit in July 1856:—"The weather was excessively hot. During the hottest part of the day the thermometer stood at 77° in the cabin, at 92° in the smoking saloon—a little cabin built on deck—and 108° in the sun: on shore, in the valleys, it must doubtless have been much hotter. The contrast of this glaring Italian, or I might almost say Brazilian sky, with the snow-clad rocks and glaciers dipping almost to the sea-edge, is very striking. It was a continual source of wonderment; one of the few scenes which one does not become accustomed to, but retains its novelty day after day." Such was the prevailing weather during the summer of 1856, and such is the usual summer weather of Arctic Norway from the beginning of July until a week or two after the disappearance of the midnight sun. This year it was miserably different, to the great disappointment of the ladies I ventured to pilot thus far, and vexation to myself. The contrast was strikingly shown in the course of a walk up the Tromsødalen. This summer I made two excursions up this valley with a fortnight's interval. On both occasions the lower part of the valley was a mud swamp from recent snow-thaw. In 1856, three weeks earlier in the season than my second visit this year, the snow water had evaporated, leaving the path hard and dry. In 1856, the poor little Lapps were outside their huts, gasping with heat and varnished with oily perspiration; their huts were so insufferably hot that only one or two out of a party of seven or eight male travellers dared to venture inside. This year, the ladies, as well as myself, were glad to warm ourselves by sitting round the hut fire upon the boulders that serve as chairs. Drizzling rain and cold mists replaced the oppressive heat, the brilliant sky, and rainless summer-time of 1856.

The Duke of Roxburgh, who has spent sixteen summers in Arctic Norway (he has the Alten salmon river opening in lat. 70°), told me that the low temperature and drizzling mistiness of this summer was quite exceptional to his experience; that the summer of 1868, which was memorably cold, was not so bad as this. The usual crops of rye and potatoes were expected to fail completely this summer.

This unusual summer is the more remarkable when compared with that of England, which, judging by the abundance of the wheat crop, must at least have reached, if not exceeded, the average of mean warmth. The exceptional arctic summer must

\* "Through Norway with a Knapsack," p. 139.

have been due to some exceptional arctic influence. The southward drifting of large quantities of polar ice, and consequent removal of some of the barriers that stand between us and the north pole, will account for what I have described, provided the loosened ice was sufficient in quantity and eastward extension.

The North Cape, though in lat. 71°, is not visited by icebergs; the sea there, and for some distance further north, is sufficiently warmed by the Gulf Stream to remain quite open all the year through. The free northward exposure must, however, render this part of the Arctic Ocean very susceptible to the cooling influence of an unusual southward drift of polar ice, and the peculiarities of this year's summer were exactly those which such an abnormal cooling of the sea would produce. These were evidently exaggerated over the open sea a little further north. During the few fine days we had while going round the island of Magerø, the sun was visible until about 11 or 11.30 P.M., but on approaching the north horizon it dipped into a mist-bank which hung with apparent permanency over the northernmost and most distant part of the sea. As we were desirous of seeing the actual orb of the sun quite at midnight, this repeated disappearance just at the critical time was of course especially noted. I afterwards learned that on these same nights, when the midnight sun thus played at hide-and-seek with us over the Arctic Ocean, it was clearly seen by spectators further south, who had a land or near coast horizon.

These facts, in conjunction with "the important information" given by Capt. Gray, justify us, I think, in looking forward with hope for important results from the proposed Arctic Expedition, and afford strong reasons for avoiding any possible source of delay that might stand in the way of an early start to make full use of next summer.

W. MATTIEU WILLIAMS

### Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park

I MUST trouble you with a few words in reply to your correspondents "Viator" and Mr. C. Traill (vol. xi. p. 67.)

It is quite true that our gardens in the Regent's Park are "too small in area." We have for many years endeavoured to get them enlarged; but all we have succeeded in obtaining is the slip of land on the north side of the Regent's Canal, where the new North Entrance has been made. If "Viator" has any influence with the First Commissioner of Works, and can persuade him to grant us a further extension on the south side, we shall be truly grateful.

I admit also that the larger carnivora are at present badly housed, and that their dens are much too confined. This, however, will, I trust, be remedied by the erection of the new Lions' House, which will be commenced early next year.

The plan of establishing a second Garden for breeding purposes out of London was adopted by the Council some years ago, but was not found to answer. It has, however, many advantages, and may be again tried when our funds shall permit of it.

"Viator" finds great fault with our drainage. He cannot be aware that the Sanitary Authorities of the district, who have been much exercised in this matter, have pronounced us free from all blame.

Finally, I may say, without any wish to disparage the continental gardens (with all of which I am well acquainted), that none of them can vie with those of this Society in the extent, variety, and completeness of its living collection, or in the rarity of many of the objects exhibited. That this collection is appreciated by the public is fully evident from the yearly increasing number of visitors and the continual augmentation of the list of members.

As regards the remarks of Mr. Traill, I have to observe that the Society's "Proceedings" contain several papers by the Secretaries and Superintendents of the Gardens relating to points in the economy of the animals in them; and that the Prosector (whose office was created mainly with the hope of utilising the collection more completely in a scientific point of view) has lately devoted considerable attention to this subject, on which he will, no doubt, ultimately give us the benefit of his observations.

Dec. 1

P. L. SCLATER

### Utilisation of Aquaria

I SHALL be glad if you will allow me to use your columns as a medium of inquiry with regard to the Brighton and Manchester Aquaria. Are there any arrangements in force already, or contemplated, whereby these fine institutions can be utilised for the promotion of zoological research? If I am not mistaken, the