

The vast ocean lay scientifically unexplored. All the efforts of the previous decade had been directed to the strips of water round the coast and to enclosed or partially enclosed seas; great things had certainly been done there, but as certainly far greater things remained to be done beyond. This consideration led to the conception of the idea of a great exploring expedition which should circumnavigate the globe, find out the most profound abysses of the ocean, and extract from them some sign of what went on at the greatest depths.

The following correspondence extracted from the Minutes of Council of the Royal Society giving expression to this idea, and tracing the progress of its realisation, will best show how all the difficulties in the way of inaugurating an undertaking of such magnitude and novelty were successfully surmounted; and their perusal will be a fitting introduction to the chapters containing the Narrative of the Cruise, the study of which cannot fail to convince the reader that, high as were the hopes entertained by the promoters of the Expedition, the performance was even greater than had been anticipated.

“ June 29th, 1871.

“ Read the following Letter from Dr. Carpenter :—

“ “ UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, BURLINGTON GARDENS, W.

“ “ June 15, 1871.

“ “ DEAR PROF. STOKES,—The information we have lately received as to the activity with which other nations are now entering upon the Physical and Biological Exploration of the Deep Sea, makes it appear to my colleagues and myself that the time is now come for bringing before our own Government the importance of initiating a more complete and systematic course of research than we have yet had the means of prosecuting.

“ “ The accompanying slip from last week’s ‘ Nature ’ will make known to the Council what is going on elsewhere, and the feeling entertained on the subjects alike in the scientific world and (as I have good reason to believe) by the public generally.<sup>1</sup>

“ “ For adequately carrying out any extensive plan of research, it would be requisite that special provision should be made; and as the Estimates for next year will have to be framed before the end of the present year, no time ought now to be lost, if the matter is to be taken up at all.

“ “ In order that the various departments of Science to which these researches are related should be adequately represented,—so that any Application made to Government should be on the broadest basis possible,—I should suggest that the Council of the Royal Society, as the promoters of all that has been already done in the matter, should take the initiative; and should appoint a Committee to consider a Scheme, in conjunction with the President of the British Association, and the Presidents of the Chemical, Geographical, Geological, Linnean, and Zoological Societies. Such a Committee might meet before the Recess, and decide upon some general plan; and this would be then considered as to its details by the Members representing different departments

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, vol. iv. p. 107, 1871. The paragraph states that the Governments of Germany, Sweden, and the United States were preparing to despatch ships to various parts of the ocean expressly fitted for deep-sea exploration.