

basis of all life, is a production entirely confined to our small planet.

That the "Challenger" Expedition has been a great scientific success has been fully acknowledged, and all praise is due to the Government which promoted it, and to the present Government which has supplied funds for the publication of the results. The highest praise is, however, due to those naturalists, especially Sir Wyville Thomson and Dr. Carpenter, who, by their energy and perseverance, actually originated the Expedition.

With regard to any future scientific expeditions, it would, however, be well to bear in mind that the deep sea, its physical features and its fauna, will remain for an indefinite period in the condition in which they now exist and as they have existed for ages past, with little or no change, to be investigated at leisure at any future time. On the surface of the earth, however, animals and plants and races of men are perishing rapidly day by day, and will soon be, like the Dodo, things of the past. The history of these things once gone can never be recovered, but must remain for ever a gap in the knowledge of mankind.

The loss will be most deeply felt in the province of Anthropology, a science which is of higher importance to us than any other, as treating of the developmental history of our own species. The languages of Polynesia are being rapidly destroyed or mutilated, and the opportunity of obtaining accurate information concerning these and the native habits of culture will soon have passed away.

The urgent necessity of the present day is a scientific circumnavigating expedition which shall visit the least-known inhabited islands of the Pacific, and at the same time explore the series of islands and island groups which yet remain almost or entirely unknown as regards their botany and zoology. These promise to yield results of the highest interest if only the matter be taken in hand in time, before introduced weeds and goats have destroyed their natural vegetation; dogs, cats and pigs, their animals, and their human inhabitants have been swept away, or have had their individuality merged in the onward press of European enterprise. There is still, to the disgrace of British enterprise, even in the Atlantic Ocean, an island the fauna and flora of which are as yet absolutely unknown. The past history of the deep sea, of the changes of depression and elevation of its bottom, is to be sought to a large extent in the study of the animals and plants inhabiting the islands which rear their summits above its surface. These insular floras and faunas will soon pass away, but the deep-sea animals will very possibly remain unchanged from their present condition long after man has died out.