

CHAPTER XXI

THE ANTARCTIC REGIONS IN GENERAL

UNTIL the end of the nineteenth century there had not been sufficient exploration of the area within the antarctic circle to justify extended consideration of the subject as a whole, although isolated efforts and results were of importance. The reasons for this seeming neglect of the south-polar regions are not difficult of justification.

The lands within the arctic circle are not alone contiguous to powerful and enterprising nations, but they are also so favored by climate and soil as to present suitable conditions for animal and plant life. Indeed Arctic America, Asia and Europe have large habitable districts where human activities now present life environments not always harsh and forbidding, but in places attractive and productive. In addition the northern seas, filled with abundant life, furnish subsistence and wealth to thousands of daring men who annually seek their accessible waters.

At the other pole of the world we find the antarctic region to be a veritable land of desolation, — forbidding, uninhabitable and in places inaccessible. Its northern confines and surroundings are