

Tufts College; Professor Theodore W. Richards, of Harvard University; Professors H. P. Talbot and A. A. Noyes, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Professor Wilder D. Bancroft, of Cornell University; Dr. Willis R. Whitney, president of the American Chemical Society, and M. Debiérne, of Paris.

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#### THE NORTH POLE

READERS of SCIENCE will have been greatly interested in the full reports published in the daily papers in regard to Dr. Frederic A. Cook's adventurous expedition. It is not necessary to repeat here the descriptions that have been published, and there is not at hand an account of scientific results. The interest is indeed dramatic and human rather than scientific. A performance such as reaching the North Pole or flying across the British Channel would be rather a result made possible by scientific progress than an important contribution to the advancement of science. But courage and resourcefulness make a deep effect on human nature; scientific men may well be pleased to note the exhibition of such traits on the outskirts of their field.

From a scientific man of the highest rank, who has especial competence to form an opinion on the subject, the editor has received the suggestion that men of standing and representative position be invited to sign the letter that is subjoined. The editor would be pleased to receive from scientific men their opinion as to the desirability of such action, but suggests that it would probably be best for the leading geographical societies of the country to unite in appointing a joint committee to report on the subject. The proposed letter reads:

The statements published in the press relative to the claim of Dr. F. A. Cook that he reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908, have been of such a nature as to awaken, in many minds, skepticism as to the validity of the claim. If it be valid, it is highly important to remove these suspicions as promptly and completely as possible. If it be invalid, it is not less important that American men of science withhold their acceptance of a questionable

claim. In view of the fact that the observations and photographs which would be taken by a competent person properly equipped, in the course of a trip to the North Pole, should bear ample evidence of its actuality, we ask you to publish in SCIENCE the following requests:

1. That Dr. F. A. Cook publish as promptly as practicable a full statement of the essential facts with all such data as will bear evidence of the validity of his claim.

2. That, if in your judgment, after conference with men of judicial attitude accessible to you, this statement shall not of itself clear away all reasonable grounds of suspicion, you, as editor of SCIENCE, select a committee of seven persons of critical knowledge in the matters involved and request them to make a critical examination of the data and give the scientific public the benefit of their best judgment.

3. That, meanwhile, all American scientific societies withhold all action relative to the matter, to the end that if the attainment of the North Pole is properly authenticated there may be united action in doing the fullest honor due to Dr. Cook, and that if the claim is not authenticated there be equal unanimity in withholding honor that has not been duly earned.

As the present issue of SCIENCE is going to press, the news is announced of the successful termination of Commander Peary's expedition to the North Pole.

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#### SCIENTIFIC NOTES AND NEWS

MR. PHILIP FOX, hitherto instructor in astrophysics at the Yerkes Observatory, University of Chicago, assumed the duties of professor of astronomy in the Northwestern University and director of the Dearborn Observatory, Evanston, Illinois, on September 1. He is succeeded at the Yerkes Observatory by Dr. Frederick Slocum, for several years assistant professor of astronomy at Brown University, who has just returned from a year in Europe, principally spent at the Royal Astrophysical Observatory at Potsdam.