Correspondence

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and will probably be called the "Geographical Society of Australasia." Mr. La Meslée has been appointed Secretary, and nearly 100 members have been enrolled in Sydney alone. Some of the chief promoters are Fellows of our Society, and well known for their works, or for the interest they have shown in geographical subjects, among them Mr. J. J. Shillinglaw, Mr. Eccleston Du Faur, Captain C. Pasco, and Mr. R. Arrowsmith.

Projected Scientific Expedition to Mount Owen Stanley.—Mr. Henry O. Forbes, writing from Timor, informs us that he is about to visit the southern coast of New Guinea, and make an attempt to reach Mount Owen Stanley and the snowy range of the interior of the island. With the experience he has gained during his four years' explorations among the islands of the Malay Archipelago and the knowledge and skill he has acquired as a naturalist, he cannot fail of making interesting discoveries if he succeeds in reaching any part of the mountainous centre of New Guinea, and in staying there some months. Since his visit to the Keeling Islands early in 1879, of which he sent us an account,* he has been engaged in exploring Java, Sumatra, and Timor Laut. In Sumatra he fixed the height of many important points in the south-western part of the island, among others Mount Dempo, which he ascended, and determined the altitude by boiling-point observations to be 10,562 feet.

CORRESPONDENCE.

51 HOLLAND ROAD, SOUTH KENSINGTON,

DEAR LORD ABERDARE,

June 18th, 1883.

With reference to my recent letter published in our 'Proceedings' on the subject of the East Bygd of the Greenland Colony, a communication addressed to your Lordship, not by name, but as President of the Royal Geographical Society, has arrived from the Hague, under the date of the 1st of June, in the following words:—

"Sir,—After reading the letter of Mr. Major in the 'Proceedings' of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. v. No. 5, May 1883, page 294, I came by chance on a Dutch chart from about 1705, which I take the liberty to inclose.

"In my opinion, it shows clearly that East Bygd, as described by Ivar Bardsen in 1349, is situated on the coast of Greenland, eastward from Cape Farewell, as supposed by Baron Nordenskiöld.

"As a stranger I beg to excuse the liberty of writing you this letter.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"P. J. BUYSKES."

I think it was a very courteous and obliging act on the part of Mr. Buyskes to send this chart, and one deserving the cordial thanks of the Council, and I would beg permission to say a few words of reply, in the hope that they may be printed in

* 'Proceedings,' 1879, p. 777.

the next number of the 'Proceedings.' The chart, which is without a date, but early in the eighteenth century, is entitled "Pascaerte van Groenland, Ysland, Straet Davids en Jan Mayen Eyland. By Casp^e. Loots-man en Jaco^e. Conynembergh, Zee-Caart-verkoopers op't water in de Loots-man. Amsterdam." The persons named are not of necessity the authors, but the sellers of the chart, the Dutch word "by" being, in this case, the equivalent of the French word "chez," and "verkoopers" is a "seller" or "dealer." On the east coast of Greenland, due west of Iceland, are inserted several names, but most of them in a grossly corrupted form, unquestionably representing places, both in and out of the East Bygd, mentioned by Ivar Bardsen. The occurrence of such information on a published map, is, no doubt, *primâ facie*, of a very imposing character, but where I would beg leave to differ from Mr. Buyskes is in his conclusion that "it *shows clearly* that East Bygd, as described by Ivar Bardsen in 1349, is situated on the coast of Greenland, eastward from Cape Farewell." That printed documents are not always vehicles of correct information is proved by the testimony of this very chart, on which what was till recently known as Frobisher's Strait is placed, not in America, but across the south part of Greenland. The question, like that of the site of the Greenland colony, was a hazy one. Even the learned Icelandic historian Torfæus had already but a short time before adopted and printed the oft-repeated blunder, but it was no less a blunder because it was made by that distinguished man; nor is the author of the Dutch map one whit more to be relied upon because he has adopted a blunder which the illustrious Torfæus had adopted before him. On the other hand, an author's work is not to fall under utter condemnation because he has published a blunder, whether adopted or original. Let us, therefore, revert to the testimony of the Dutch chart as to the Greenland colony. Either it was a purely theoretical inference from the nautical instructions and chorography of Ivar Bardsen, or it indicated a practised and well-recognised route to the site of the colony. That the latter supposition is impossible is placed beyond all doubt by the numerous expeditions sent out by the Kings of Denmark in search of the colony from the sixteenth century downwards to that of Captain Graah in 1828-31, and, in fact, by the present most important exploration of our illustrious medallist, Baron Nordenskiöld, in which we are all so much interested. It remains, therefore, that it was purely a theoretical deduction from the language of Ivar Bardsen. I also formed my own deductions from that language, and stated the grounds of them in my former letter, which I need not now repeat. I propounded them first in 1873, both in my work on the Zeni and also in a paper read before our Society and published in the 'Journal,' and no one yet has pointed out where they were at fault. Practical investigation of the country, however, must be a far more powerful means of proving facts than the most logical deductions from words, and if our distinguished medallist is able to settle this moot point beyond all theory, no one will rejoice more sincerely than myself, whether he confirms or disproves my own conclusions.

Dear Lord Aberdare,

Yours, &c.,

R. H. MAJOR.